

Who, What and “Y”

by Lori A. Hoffner

This generation has been raised being told that they can do everything. They have been multi-tasking their entire lives through the myriad of activities that their parents scheduled for them as well as the expectation of success in their academic careers. Those attitudes and abilities are now a part of the core values that they bring to the workplace.

They are not called the “Y” generation just because it follows the letters of the alphabet and the “X” generation. Typically, individuals in this generation ask “why” before they ask how. Disrespectful you say; insubordinate you might think; but to them, it’s how they approach the job. Most often it’s not an attempt to get out of doing a task (although let’s face it, we’ve all wondered why sometimes) but rather, they are seeking to answer the reason behind a task and quite honestly, to determine for themselves if there is a different way of doing it.

Whether this is right or wrong, good or bad for you and your organization, remember; the one thing that is not being suggested is that managers stop being leaders and leaders stop being managers. In fact, one common theme for “Y’s” is that their supervisors be mentors or career advocates in the workplace. You are the key to your and their success.

5 Ideas for Engaging the “Y” Factor:

1. Provide leadership and guidance. Gen “Y’s” want to look up to you, learn from you and receive daily feedback from you. They want “in” on the whole picture and to know the expectations and final outcomes of the job. Plan to spend a lot of time teaching and coaching and be aware of this commitment to “Y’s” when you hire them. They deserve and want your very best investment of time in their success.
2. Multi-tasking comes second nature to Gen “Y’s. Talk on the phone while doing email and answering multiple instant messages – yes! This is a way of life. In fact, without many different tasks and goals to pursue within the week, the “Y’s” will likely experience boredom. Giving them several tasks with clear expectations of the outcomes will equal success for both of you.
3. Being explicit versus implicit. Generation “Y’s” value simplicity, therefore, if the information is not provided on the way the job needs to be completed, they will seek the route of least resistance. As managers, we must be explicit with the details so that they can understand our vision. If possible, provide trainings that teach through learning activities.
4. Provide a life-work balanced workplace. Your Gen “Y” employees are used to cramming their lives with multiple activities. They may play on sports teams, walk for multiple causes, spend time as fans at company sports leagues, and spend lots of time with family and friends. They work hard, but they are not into the sixty hour work weeks defined by the Baby Boomers. Home, family, spending time with the children and families, are priorities. Don’t lose sight of this. Balance and participating in, experiencing, enjoying multiple activities are important to these Gen “Y” employees.

5. Allow the “can-do” attitude. “Y’s” who are just beginning to enter the workforce, have grown up multi-tasking, and believe that they will be able to pursue more than one line of work at the same time. Your success comes from encouraging those “Y’s” self-assuredness, “can-do” attitude, and positive personal self-image. They are ready to take on the world. Their parents told them they can do it - they can. Encourage - don’t squash them or contain them.

Lori A. Hoffner, Professional Speaker ~ Trainer ~ Consultant, draws on years of experience of leadership in both the for-profit and non-profit business world. She can offer staff-development programs helps promotes a cohesive internal team and positive culture of support within your organization that helps benefit your bottom line. Please share this article as long as the information above and Lori’s contact information is included.