

November 2008 HR-Xchange Summary:

Millennials: Preparing for the Next Generation of Talent

Although set in a smaller room with a slightly different table layout than our usual roundtable setting, this November's HR-Xchange was still packed and bursting at the seams with discussion and participation from community attendees! Given the topic, it was pleasing to note the cross-representation of different generations that turned up to the event--even some 'Millennials' joined in the mix.

As we enjoyed a light breakfast, there was a definite anticipation to dive straight into our topic area and waste little time.

Geeta kick-started the meeting with a short video presentation by from "60 Minutes" entitled 'The Millennials are Coming!' It was interesting to hear the number of audible grunts of incredulity, sighs of disbelief, and 'aha moments' that erupted from the audience. Needless to say, the groups could not wait to share their thoughts regarding the Millennials.

Recap of generational groupings:

1922 - 1945: Veterans/Traditionalists
1946 - 1964: Baby Boomers
1965 - 1980: GenXers
1981 - 2000: Millennials, Gen Y, Nexters

The groups were given two questions to address:

1. Discuss how the Millennial generation needs are different from those of other generational groups.
2. Relative to recruitment and retention, what are some of the methods and tactics that we can deploy to best prepare for this Millennial generation of talent?

Responses were as follows:

Discuss how the Millennial generation needs are different from those of other generational groups.

Rapid career progression

This a group that is characteristically impatient and raised in an environment of instant gratification. Related to the workplace this generation expects an aggressive career path toward achieving their career goals at a much more rapid pace than previous generations, while still expecting work/life balance. Many expect to roll into work with their Ipods and flip flops by noon yet still expect to be CEO by Friday.

Need for rewards, attention & praise

This is a generation that were told they were 'special' and raised by hands-on 'indulgent' parents; they were praised and given certificates/trophies for just attending or participating. In fact, some parents of Millennials confessed that they fell into this category and referred to themselves as 'helicopter' parents who hovered over their children.

It was agreed that constant feedback was very important to this generation and that they frequently need to know how they are doing, perhaps more than any other generation.

Feedback example:

Traditionalists: No news is good news.

Baby Boomers: Once a year with lots of documentation.

Gen Xers: Sorry to interrupt...but how am I doing?

Millennials: Whenever I want it...at the push of a button.

Have high expectations

Millennials believe they have options; they have been told you can be 'anything you want'. They are not afraid to job hop and will not 'settle' like their parents did. They actually see job-hopping as an asset...after all, they can go back home and live with their parents to get the help and support that they need.

The average length of time someone spends in a job has shortened from 27 years in 1955 to barely 4 years today. A college graduate in 2008 can expect to hold 8-16 jobs over 40 years. Millennials can be unreservedly blunt and expressive, where self-expression is favored over self-control and making their point is most important.

Tech savvy

This is a generation that is technologically plugged in; one that will create MySpace profiles; send instant messages; post photos of family and friends; chat online with strangers; create a blog about their experiences and unreservedly share their opinions.

Efficient multi-taskers

These guys are seen as the kings and queens of multi-tasking—they talk, walk, listen, and type text messages all at the same time. A few parents shared their experiences with their children completing homework while watching TV, surfing the net, or texting their friends. There was a high level of agreement about how highly capable these young individuals, and how a task that would take 'senior' managers longer to do can be whipped out in no time by their more junior counterparts. In fact, Boomers and GenXers confessed that Millennials spend far less time at the 'water cooler' than maybe their predecessors.

Work/life balance (WLB)

WLB is extremely important to this group; friends and family are high priorities. Raised in a time of insecurity, war, single-parent families, and economic challenges, this group-- although optimistic--know what they value most and expect employers to accommodate their personal/social priorities outside of work. This group is far more intent on having a 'life outside of work.'

Relative to recruitment and retention, what are some of the methods and tactics that we can deploy to best prepare for this Millennial generation of talent?

Hi-tech recruiting

Take advantage of technology and use the tools that Millennials are intimately familiar with. Having a polished, user-friendly, branded career site is a must-have for reaching this target audience. Use video testimonials, search engine optimization, Google ads, search engine marketing e-cards, and online application process. However, prioritize where you spend your budget. Before you invest in Second Life, Facebook or the latest technologies, fix your career site.

Even though Millennials are technologically plugged-in they only appreciate technology when it is useful to them. Email and internet are fine and they accept this most of the time,

but not during the hiring process. They expect one-on-one personal and frequent communication.

All your recruiting messages must seek to answer the candidate's central question - W.I.I.F.M -- What's in it for me?

Get ready for the parents!!! Are we at a time, or will we ever be, when it is appropriate or expected to have parents of Millennials involved in the hiring process???

Manage expectations

Provide full disclosure about what you expect from your new hire. Use realistic job previews to provide insight into what the job will be like day to day. Instead of fudging or faking what they will be actually doing and making it appear 'glamorous', go to the bottom line—be authentic and transparent. Keep in mind that this generation is not afraid to walk.

One attendee provided an example of a high-turnover position for which she had been recruiting. Instead of following past practices with posting the same job description, she actually had a video created of a person in that actual role demonstrating the duties associated with the position. It resulted in a much higher retention rate for the same position.

The decision to accept a position involves a number of factors, no longer defined by monetary gains alone. Millennials often accept a job because they want to work for a given organization.

Coaching

More and more managers will be expected to assume the role of a 'therapist.' You cannot be harsh with Millennials or tell them you are disappointed with them. Training is very important to this segment; this is the most education-oriented generation in history. If you want a job well done, you will have to tell them clearly how to do it. Don't just give them orders, give the reasoning behind the request, and help them understand the importance of what they are doing.

Have mentors available to them who are able to provide feedback, both positive and negative. Buddying up new hires with mentors from the same generation allows them to acclimate to the culture and duties of the position more quickly.

Be flexible

Create customized career paths. Don't expect this generation to pay their dues or go learn the ropes the same way you may have had to. Instead, look at how you can provide Millennials with a sense of control, while at the same time provide them with a realistic account of their progress. One GenYer in the group proclaimed that you can provide Millennials with 'short-term wins' which allow them to track their progress and therefore have a sense of accomplishment. Be flexible with the position, especially the title. While you may not be able to provide them with the salary that they immediately desire, you can be flexible with their title.

The same is true regarding work hours...if the work allows, be flexible in your approach, basing performance upon outcomes rather than a pre-set way of conducting business.

We barely touched the tip of the iceberg related to this topic with many staying behind to continue the dialogue. Many people suggested having a 'Part 2' session on this topic. A question that arose out of the discussion, which we did not have time to address, was whether or not generational stereotyping can be classed as a new of breed of ageism. Stay tuned--we will include this for further discussion in Part 2!!

In closing, one Millennial from the room finished with a touching note letting us know that their intent is to work with the rest of the generations in harmony; and, while there are differences in work styles, we do indeed actually complement one another. Millennials can bring fresh ideas and values to the workplace and push us to raise the bar with the quality of our work life. Really, who does not want more support from their managers and better communication? Which of us wouldn't like more flexible scheduling and better defined career paths? What is clearly evident is that in the future we will have more jobs than talent, and so understanding and being sensitive to the needs of this particular generation will be a key factor in recruiting and retaining this talent segment.

Join us for a Holiday special next month at Sinclair Community College where we will be addressing:

“Job Readiness for Today's Workforce”

Tuesday, December 16, 2008 @ 7:45am.

Deb Norris will be leading out the session. As Vice President for Workforce Development and Corporate Services for Sinclair Community College, Deb brings 25+ years of extensive business experience including consulting, management, and B2B marketing and sales in a variety of business environments. These environments include Fortune 500 companies, a technology startup, a B2B brand consulting agency, and a management consulting firm. For the past fifteen years she has held leadership positions and actively participated in senior management roles. Deb's proven track record of creative problem solving and strategic thinking assists client companies in aligning their people strategies with their corporate business goals. Deb holds an M.B.A. and B.S. in Business from the University of Dayton. She is currently President of Clothes that Work! Board, serves as Vice Chair for the March of Dimes Board, and has been elected to serve a 2-year term on the Governing Board of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce. Deb also serves as Professional Development Chair and is a board member of the Miami Valley Human Resources Association (MVHRA). Deb was honored in 2005 by being selected as one of Dayton's Ten Top Women by the Dayton Daily News.

Make sure to mark your calendars for the 3rd^d Tuesday of every month from 7:45am to 9:00am for the HR-Xchange.

Note the location change for December -- We will be meeting at
Sinclair Community College – Building 12- Charity Early Room

Remember, you do not have to be an MVHRA member to attend the HR-Xchange; and, if you know of others who are interested in being connected or attending the HR-Xchange, have them register at <http://mvhra.org/hr-xchange.php>

Looking forward to seeing you all there!

Geeta,

(Community Relations Chair)