

Working with the Millennials – Keys for Success (Part 3 of 3)

If on the other side of a locked door in front of you were:

- Employees with a "can do" attitude,
- Work teams that embraced change instead of resisting it,
- Increased efficiency, productivity and profits,

Would you want the key? Would you use the key if someone gave it to you?

In our previous installments of Working with the Millennials, we have discussed who the Millennials are and how they are different from previous generations. In this installment we are going to reveal some of the keys to success when working with the Millennials.

Provide Leadership and Guidance

You are probably familiar with many of the clichés describing the difference between "management" and "leadership" as the world of business has transitioned from the manufacturing/industrial age into the information/service age. Just in case you have forgotten, here are a few quick reminders:

- Manage things, Lead people
- Management is the "stick", Leadership is the "carrot"
- Management directs, Leadership inspires
- Management hides behind a desk, Leadership comes along side of the worker

Do I need to go on?

The argument for becoming a leader has been that if you remain a manager then you are destined to have a workforce that complains, bickers, is unmotivated and unhappy, never reaches its productivity potential and settles for "good enough". When working with the Millennial generation all of that remains true, with one critical addition. If you try to manage the Millennial generation you won't have to deal with the above consequences for long because you won't have a workforce. That's right – you will manage the Millennials right out the door. The Millennials know they have options, they know they are in a "buyers" market when it comes to jobs. They know the Baby Boomers are retiring in record numbers and they didn't make enough of their own babies to fill the void they are leaving in the workforce. They know that they don't have to subject

Tom Horvath
P: 407-557-8903
E: Tom@TomHorvath.com
www.TomHorvath.com

themselves to your outdated management style when they are one "monster.com" search away from their next opportunity to find an employer that values and treats them as special as they think they are. Yes, that sounds quite narcissistic, but that is the reality of the Millennial generation.

The Leadership Key:

Instead of telling a Millennial **what** to do, try explaining **why** the task needs to be performed and more importantly **how** it contributes to the overall success of the organization – how it makes a **difference** for your customer.

Instead of telling/showing a Millennial how to do something, challenge them to create a better way to do it – while still meeting minimum requirements of performance that you outline. I recently read an article in a CFO journal that told of a new Millennial team member innovating a long standing work process using technology. The end result was taking a work process that had consumed weeks of someone's job and accomplishing the same results in four hours using the new process.

Management or Leadership? The choice is yours.

The 3 Ts of working with the Millennials

Teams

Millennials are very comfortable working in, and across, teams – in fact, most of them would prefer to work in a team and contribute to success of the overall team. Millennials want to be part of something, they want to be heard, they want their ideas to be validated and then made better through collaboration and interaction.

Most Millennials have an affinity to network, they have countless "lists" of friends spanning various interests, geography and frames of reference (email, instant message, in person, facebook, blogs, LinkedIn, Twitter...). The next time you are trying to assemble a group for some community service work – ask a Millennial for help and stand back! Want to recruit for an open position or get some feedback on some ideas? Ask a Millennial to "put it out" to their network and watch what comes back – you will be amazed.

Technology

How often have you desired to have someone on your team that could harness the power of technology? Let's be perfectly honest here – the Millennials have forgotten more about technology than most of us will ever know. Mention 8-tracks or floppy disks and get ready for the "What's that?" response. A byproduct of their comfort with technology is that the Millennials are multi-taskers at a level that most of us have trouble comprehending. When we walk by a Millennial at their desk and they are bopping to the music from their iPod,

Tom Horvath

P: 407-557-8903

E: Tom@TomHorvath.com

www.TomHorvath.com

texting someone on their cell phone and have a spreadsheet up on their desktop, we think they aren't focused. The reality is that they are effectively multi-tasking – this is the way they work, and they have the ability to work very effectively.

Transition

A few years ago, "Who Moved My Cheese" was a best selling business title because countless of managers gave them to their teams. The implied message was "change happens, don't fight it, make the best of it." While many people still tighten up when they see change coming, change is "normal" for Millennials. They don't care where the cheese was or who moved it, they are thinking "How fast can I find it?" The change – technological, political, geographical... - that has us catching our breath is the only world the Millennials know.

These are just a few suggestions that work when working with Millennials. Start with these. Try one or two. You will be amazed at the results.

One of the mental hurdles we must overcome is thinking that this generational divide is the first of its kind. Sure, it is different, but each generation has had to come to grips with the generations that have followed. To help you realize that the future we face is not much different from the future that faced the generations before us, I'll close with a verse from the Bob Dylan song, "The Times, They are A-changing":

Come gather round people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown
And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone.
If your time to you
Is worth savin'
Then you better start swimmin'
Or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin'.

The question isn't whether the times are a-changin', the question is what we are doing in response to the change. Whether the metaphor is rising water, or cheese that has been moved, the answer remains the same – identify, understand, adapt and embrace the future.