

Let's Talk: Generations in the workplace

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Hi, my name is Lynn, let's talk about managing different generations in the workplace. As a manager these days, you may have up to five different generations in the workplace, and it can be a real challenge to manage people of all different ages.

Issues that may arise

So some of the issues might include how do I interact with different generations? How do I manage people that might be older than me? How do I handle any kind of generational tensions that might come out of disrespect between generations? And how do I learn how to interact appropriately with each generation?

Things to avoid

One thing's for sure, stereotyping is not helpful. For example, if you think to yourself that all older workers have trouble with technology or computers, that's just not true, and it's not fair. Likewise, if you think all younger workers are just out for themselves and don't have the same work ethic as I do, that's not fair either, and it's not true. What is true is that everyone is unique. We're all products of our environment, but at the same time, we're all unique.

Differences in generations

So what are the differences between generations? Well, let's start with experience. You may be managing people who have been in the work force for 20, 30, 40 years, and you may be managing people who are just out of school and are just beginning their careers. Also, you may be managing people that have very, very different short-term and long-term goals.

Different needs

Then there are needs. Different generations have different ways that they like to be recognized, rewarded, and perhaps even handled when something goes wrong. And skill sets, everybody has different skill sets when it comes to interpersonal skills, or technical skills, everyone is different.

How you can help

So here are some tips for how to deal with those differences in generations. First of all, expect them. Know that if you have people from different generations, you may have some of these generational divides. And then collaborate. Try not to necessarily be in charge, as much as being a partner and working together with the person so that you do get to know them as a person, and not part of a generation. Also, don't make any assumptions. As I said earlier, don't stereotype. You just don't know what different people are capable of.

Connecting generations

When you're dividing people up to work together, or having work groups, don't do it by age. Mix and mingle people, so that you get a combination of skills and styles, and also encourage people to mentor, and mentor people above them, and also be mentored by people who might be younger than them. It's a great way to learn from each other.

Equal opportunity for success

As a manager, it's really good for you to be aware of generational differences. At the same time, you wanna show respect for everyone. You wanna treat everyone equally, and especially you wanna give everyone the same chance to succeed on your team.

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