

# 3 Steps to Maximise Productivity in a Multigenerational Workplace<sup>1</sup>

As the Baby Boomers trickle into retirement and members of Generation Z start applying for internships, this is a complex time to be managing an office. Now more than ever, generational differences are being highlighted as four age cohorts coexist under the same roof, each presenting unique challenges for their managers. The question begs: How are today's management teams attracting and engaging with employees with such diverse motivations, values and attitudes? This is what the 2016 Randstad Award set to uncover in its recent global employer branding survey.

## Step One: Understand Key Motivations and Drivers

The Randstad Award 2016 employer branding research revealed generational trends that can help employers understand how to better motivate employees.

### Salary, Atmosphere, and Work-Life Balance

The top three motivators for job seekers have remained consistent across all generations. Number one is no surprise: a competitive salary and employee benefits. As progressive as the younger generations may seem, money remains a key consideration when employees are looking for a new job. The two other leading motivators include having a pleasant working atmosphere and ensuring a good work-life balance. In maintaining these three aspects, employers are able to increase their overall desirability for members of all four generations (Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y/Millennials and Gen Z).

### Financial Health

As we delve deeper into other attributes, generational preferences become more prominent. For example, the importance of a company's financial health is far more essential to Baby Boomers than to Generation Z. This discrepancy could be attributed to the state of the economy at different points in time. While older generations were confronted with the market upheavals caused by the 2007 global financial crisis, most of Generation Z was too young to feel the full effects. Instead, Generation Z witnessed the success of startup tech companies such as Facebook, giving them more confidence in joining a company that is early on in development.

### Flexibility

Flexible working arrangements is another area that is becoming increasingly important. With the improvements of smartphones and laptops, employees are constantly connected to their job. This makes it difficult to keep professional and personal lives separate. The integration of work and leisure has created a demand for the ability to work beyond the confines of the office, paving the way for initiatives like flextime and teleworking. As technology evolves and generations continue to shift, this is an area that will require much focus in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> I used the skills I have learned in the last 3 years to revise the article that I ghost wrote in the summer of 2016 for my manager at Randstad Recruitment Firm. The original can be found at <http://goo.gl/f1ihC2>

## **Step Two: Leverage Unique Skills**

To truly thrive as an organization, it is vital to nurture and leverage the unique skills that each generation has to offer. Accomplishing this means establishing a corporate culture that serves as a platform for greater communication and collaboration. This could be done through training and retraining programs.

### **Training Programs**

Training programs are a great way to get new, younger employees up to speed on corporate guidelines and to refine skills that are necessary for the job. These programs also allow older employees to act as mentors, establishing a pattern of communication that could bridge the generational gap. Finally, managers are given an opportunity to observe first hand the behavioral differences between age groups in order to better adapt their management strategies.

### **Retraining Programs**

The retraining of older employees is equally as essential to the growth of a company. While seasoned workers are familiar with the company policies and day-to-day responsibilities, they often need to be upskilled on the latest technology and tools that are currently available. This again provides an opportunity for collaboration between generations, although this time younger employees are in a better position to offer their knowledge to older employees.

## **Step Three: Know What Makes Each Generation Happy**

Since generations Y and Z will soon take over the majority of the workforce, understanding the ways in which to keep them satisfied, engaged and motivated is vital to productivity. Arthur Woods, Randstad Awards 2016 keynote speaker, discussed a new lens through which to view efficiency and performance. Through his research he found that 28% of the surveyed workforce identified with higher purposes within their jobs. This group of purpose-oriented employees also displayed a 30% increase in performance. Employees that find purpose in their work not only feel 64% higher fulfillment in their work, but also have 20% longer tenure and higher employee net promoter scores.

This changes the entire corporate model of transactional relationships that has ruled the business world for decades. An organization can no longer just offer a competitive paycheck in order to keep an employee working effectively; managers are having to dig deeper and emphasize the personal, cultural and societal impact an employee stands to gain and contribute towards by working with their company.

## **Final Thoughts**

We often over complicate matters when instead we should be focused on doing the simple things brilliantly. This is a motto that I strive to live by, and therefore incorporate into my management style and strategies. By offering employees their three most important job attributes, creating a corporate culture that values their unique skills, and providing them with more than just monetary motivation to come to work, we can set a strong foundation for attracting and retaining our best people. This then puts the organization in a competitive position to dominate the “war for talent”.