

Debunking the Generational Myth

By Rudy Karsan, Kenexa

Members of Generation X and Y (the younguns-uns) are different from you and me (the old codger-codgers).

If you believe in the above statement, then you need to develop separate processes for employee recruitment and retention. Who exactly is this group of Generation X and Y? First and foremost, they are human beings with the same needs, wants, desires, ambitions and dreams that we all have. What they want from their employer is no different from what you and I want from our employer, namely a place to make a difference, an opportunity to shine, a place to be successful and an organization to be proud of.

A research study by Human Resources Institute has shown that Generation X and Y are less optimistic about the future than any other preceding generation. They are also the only generation that has not said that they would do better than their parents. This should come as no surprise given what they witnessed as children of parents who were laid off, downsized, right-sized, fired, and in many cases, had to take lower earnings, which resulted in a less affluent lifestyle. This climate has created a sense of skepticism and doubt on their opinion toward their employer. As a generation, they are shrewd buyers and can smell a phony story a mile away. They have seen more ads in the first 10 years of their lives than a baby boomer has probably seen in their lifetime. Generation X and Y are quick to learn, quick on their feet, easily bored, intolerant of fuzzy answers and not as interested in the "rat race."

Organizations should consider no significant changes in their hiring and retention processes. The do's that exist in all hiring such as clear job descriptions, strong assessment, powerful and sincere selling of the value proposition, building relationships, and engaging the employee are all tried and true methodologies. These processes should only be enhanced with this generation. They are more aware of discrepancies and are quite quick on logical deduction.

All recruiting processes should focus around the cost, the time to fill a position and the quality of the hire. It is significantly more important that the right match be found for the organization regardless of what generation they belong to. One finds that with the right cultural fit, it is just as easy or just as hard, depending on our vantage point, in engaging members of this generation. It always goes back to the fundamentals of the organization.

In closing, the only changes I would make for this generation are:

- Tightening the processes, the stories and the assessment. This generation sees through any level of fuzziness that may exist within your organization.
- Being more communicative about career plans and growth opportunities of the organization. They have been scarred by their parents and wish to understand what the organization stands for and its ultimate viability. ■

About the Author

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