



Gen Y's Interpersonal Communication Skills

Heather Huhman June 19, 2012

Millennials are beginning to pour into the workforce, and some employers and HR managers aren't sure how to deal with this tech-savvy, multitasking generation.

Some of those working with Gen Y feel they are lazy, entitled, and bad communicators. But the key to communicating with Gen Y lies in recognizing the type of circumstances in which they've grown up — and working with them to ensure they're able to perform at their best.



“Boomers and Gen Xers should be mindful of the fact that Millennials are not better or worse, they're just different,” says Brad Karsh, President and Generational Guru at JB Training Solutions, a training and development company in Chicago.

Read on for more advice on how to work with Gen Y from Karsch and a variety of other human resources and workplace experts:

Tim Elmore

Founder/president of Growing Leaders, an international nonprofit dedicated to mentoring members of Gen Y to become the business leaders of tomorrow

I've found the number one trait Gen Y employees need to improve upon is the EI, or emotional intelligence. When a young professional has a high EI, all other areas fall into place. Here's why:

- EI allows one to receive compliments or criticism without letting it ruin them or give them a distorted view of themselves.
- EI keeps one in a spirit of humility and not consumed with drawing attention to oneself.
- EI means seeking wisdom before acting and not being ashamed of seeking counsel from more experienced colleagues.

To achieve this, young employees must also develop their listening skills. When talking to a superior, a young employee should maintain eye contact and not text or look around. Also, asking questions is a good idea to prove comprehension and interest.

Buddy Hobart

Author of “Gen Y Now” and owner of a consulting business that allows him to consult and speak on the issues facing multiple generations in the workplace

After all of my research, I have become an advocate for Gen Y—and as a boomer myself, that makes me rare.

If employers want to ensure Millennials will embody good work habits and communication, HR departments will need to include additional guidelines during the onboarding process. Things like timeliness, dress, gadget rules, texting, and Internet use should be addressed. Gen Y tends to feel it’s okay to do something until told otherwise, but they’ll follow the rules once they’re addressed—hence, setting expectations up-front is key.

Additionally, Gen Y likes to know why the rules exist. If a rule makes sense, Gen Y is fine with following it, but they won’t be satisfied with authoritative answers such as “because” or “it’s always been that way.” Let them know why you want something done a certain way, or why you want it to be done at all, and they’ll be less likely to drag their feet throughout the process.

Brad Karsh

President and Generational Guru at JB Training Solutions, a training and development company in Chicago

HR managers should do a few things to allow Gen Y to thrive:

- **Provide feedback, early and often.** Millennials want to learn, grow, and develop. Unlike boomers, they will not benefit from only an annual review. They expect to be given constructive feedback on a daily basis. Be open, honest and direct and meet face-to-face. Share your management philosophy and style.
- **Give them structure.** Unlike boomers and X’ers, Millennials want to be told exactly what to do. For their entire lives, their days have been structured while parents, teachers, tutors, nannies, and coaches have told them exactly what to do. In the workplace, they struggle with taking initiative and prioritizing. You don’t have to give them a step-by-step action plan for each of their tasks, but do schedule “check points” for their assignments, and make time to answer their questions.
- **Offer flexibility.** Millennials value a parallel life, and the work-life balance is incredibly important. They are digital natives who believe technology allows work to be done anytime, anywhere. Consider flexible work hours and trust them to work from home on a case-by-case basis.

Overall, employers should take advantage of Gen Y's positive attitude, ability to multitask, technical skills, and multicultural awareness. Don't be afraid to defy the golden rule and treat them the way they want to be treated, as opposed to the way you want to be treated.

What advice would you give to employers and HR managers who are struggling with Gen Y's interpersonal communication skills? Share your thoughts below!

Article may be found at: <http://blog.cachinko.com/2012/06/19/gen-ys-interpersonal-communication-skills/>