

"The Kids are Alright"

How to understand and place workers from the Facebook Generation.

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The "Millennial Generation" has gotten a lot of attention in the past few years as more and more individuals from this section of the population enter the workforce. Other monikers for this group include "Generation Y" (or "Gen-Y") and "the Facebook Generation." People born after 1980 came of age in a brave new world, one where sharing one's life events online is commonplace, music has always only been downloaded and texting always trumps a telephone call.

Sadly, this generation is a target for judgment and ridicule by the generations that came before it; Gen-Y folks are often viewed as narcissistic or having a larger than fair sense of entitlement. This can prove to be an obstacle to employers and the sooner they figure out a strategy for hiring and working with Millennials, the better. That's because it's been projected that by 2020, people from Generation Y will make up close to 50% of the work force. But not to worry, the kids are in fact all right and once you figure out what's important to them, you can place them in work environments where they will perform, flourish and keep your clients happy.

Money doesn't always talk

What may have previously been perceived as shortcomings with this group are actually advantages when they are better understood. For instance, if you want to ensure a Gen - Y employee remains content and continues to perform, don't merely offer compensation as an incentive. Millennials want far more than a high pay rate in order to stay engaged.

The millennial worker wants meaningful work; he needs to know that his position will be one where he can develop and grow and that he will be supported. So, the Gen-Y candidate isn't lured to a position by mere dollar signs but is also interested in making a difference and will commit to a position where he knows he will grow in his career. This equals productivity and loyalty for whomever can provide this work environment.

"Two roads diverged in a wood and I - I took the one less Tweeted about."

It goes without saying that the Generation Y workforce is a collaborative and technologically advanced one. As the modernized Robert Frost quote above suggests, technology and social media are both greatly affecting the way Millennials view the world they live and work in. There are rarely lone wolves among this group because this is the generation that grew up with Skype, Google, Wiki and microblogs. The sense of community, albeit virtual at times, is very strong. In fact, one might say that this connectedness is a global one as many Millennials have been sharing their lives with people across the world seamlessly through social media throughout their formative years.

Gen-Y people are easily disheartened by technological setbacks in the workplace. It is important to the millennial candidate to know that his input is valued at work because due to the way he's conducted himself in his developmental years, he probably also values the opinions of others. The typical Gen-Y candidate will be attracted to employers with cutting edge technology and a model of informal and open communication.

So you won't be coming into the office?

Work-life balance is foremost in the mind of the millennial worker. The personal life and the professional life blend a great deal for this generation, their work certainly gets done but no longer within the confines of the traditional work day or in the traditional way. They will manage to be productive outside of the brick and mortar office. They will crack open their laptops on their couches and in coffee shops and get the work done just as efficiently and professionally as generations before.

Hiring managers will need to get comfortable with the fact that the traditional idea of what and where the workplace is has been changing. The employer who understands that work can happen around the clock and virtually anywhere will reap the rewards that come with attracting this type of candidate.

Will it be all right?

So, where does that leave you when you're sitting across from a Gen-Y candidate who probably wasn't alive in 1966 when the song used to name this article was first released? Well, a good part of the challenge is past you as you are now armed with the knowledge of the cultural nuances of this generation. Placing them might prove easier since you probably know which of your client end-users can provide the work-life balance, career development and sense of group collaboration many in this group need in order to be the dynamic producers your clients want.

The missing piece is that not all hiring companies are completely up to speed yet or not accepting of the fact that the workplace must conform itself to the impending influx of millennial workers. However, the signs are there and present and as time goes on, more and more hiring managers will realize that they will need to alter their view of the world of work in order to attract and keep Gen-Y candidates.