

One size doesn't fit all; remember the 'Platinum Rule'



Speaker Kip Lilly talked about "Factors Affecting Behavior" at last month's PHCC Leadership Conference.

When dealing with generations in the workforce, don't assume that one management style fits all. Instead, follow the Platinum Rule: "Do unto others as they would want done to them."

While more pay and benefits may inspire previous generations to work hard and long, many PHCC contractors are struggling with how to motivate younger workers. This became very apparent during a variety of seminars and breakout groups during the PHCC Leadership Conference last month in Arlington, Va. The session was

sponsored by the PHCC Educational Foundation.

Keynote speaker Kip Lilly advised the group that when dealing with different generations in the workforce, it is important to find out what motivates each individual, and then determine how to communicate with and reward that person based on his or her values. For example, he said that while money, title and office may motivate baby boomers (born 1943-1963), freedom may inspire the generation X'ers (1964-1978), and work with meaning may stimulate the millennials (1979-2001).

To convince these different generations to stay with the company, Lilly

suggested the following strategies.

For baby boomers:

- Refresh their job every three years;
- Tie incentives to retirement benefits/ownership; and
- Emphasize health benefits and vacation.

For generation X'ers:

- Give a bonus for anniversaries;
- Tie the job a to career path; and
- Set productivity goals.

For millennials:

- Provide flex schedules;
- Offer a bonus if they return to the company; and

- Emphasize career options.

When supervising the different generations, Lilly said, it is important to realize that although baby boomers may want to discuss goals and receive regular feedback, generation X'ers may want to know the project's facts and time limits and then be left alone. In contrast, millennials want to know the job's purpose and process, and then receive feedback as "tips."

All this understanding of the younger generations is important because they are going to be an important labor pool of the future. Unfortunately, there are not as many of them as previous generations, PHCC members learned. For example, while baby boomers number 73 million people, generation X'ers total only 38 million.

So to be successful at recruiting and retaining the workforce of the future, try these tips from Lilly:

- Learn about the differences in the generations;
- Be respectful of other points of view;
- Gain insight into others through the books, movies and music they like; and
- Remember that successful people are flexible.

To Learn More...

You can learn more about anticipated generational and cultural workforce changes at Quality Service Contractors' Business Coach Mike Maynard's "Changing Face of the Workforce" seminar offered during ISH North America Sept. 28-30, 2006. Go to www.net-work06.org for more information.

Practical ways to motivate younger generations

"I just don't know how to motivate them. They don't want overtime, and they don't want to work hard. They want time off. I feel like a Navy Recruiter."

This is how one p-h-c contractor described his frustration with employees younger than 25 during a breakout session at the PHCC Leadership Conference last month in Arlington, Va.

Another contractor's solution was, "He needs to get married and know what responsibility means," while another said he didn't think that would even work.

So what are some ways to motivate and retain younger workers? The following ideas represent some methods that PHCC contractors shared at the conference.

In training and managing employees:

- "Before a job begins, I go out in the field and tell them my vision of what the finished product will be, when it should be completed and then ask them for suggestions. This gives them ownership. I also encourage them to call me with any ideas for the project."
- "I guarantee 40 hours of work in a four-day week. This gives them their free time."
- Consider setting up a two-way mentoring program for baby boomers and younger generations. For example, a baby boomer could give advice to a 24-year-old employee on how to engage in "small talk" in exchange for tips on how to fully use a Blackberry communication device.
- Think of ways to help provide balance to younger employees' lives through flex time and other family-friendly options.
- Try to understand younger people's values and priorities so that you can manage and motivate them effectively.
- "The more they learn, the more they stay."

For rewards:

- "I offer incentive pay because younger workers are interested in making more money. They're eager to make a fat paycheck."

- Offer training opportunities to learn new skills.

- Create tangible benefits, such as "Service-man of the Month" gift certificates to restaurants or "Employee of the Year" awards that provide \$1,500 in merchandise and racing tickets.

- "For baby boomers, we provide a financial planner because that is of interest to them."
- Generation X'ers want feedback immediately or within a few days of completing a project. Freedom is the ultimate reward.
- Millennials (early 20s) are motivated by both tangibles (gift certificates, discounts, etc.) and intangibles (fun environment, bosses they can relate to, participating in work decisions). Offering a job that adds a skill or builds a resume is an excellent reward.

(Note: Some tips provided in Leadership Conference handouts come from David Stillman, co-author of "When Generations Collide.")

	Traditional	When Generations Collide Boomers	Xers	Millennials
• GOALS	Build legacy	Build stellar career	Build portable career	Build parallel career
• REWARDS	Job well done	Money, title, office	Freedom to do	Work with meaning
• TRAINING	Learn hard way	Train 'em & they leave	Training an incentive to stay	Continuous learning
• FEEDBACK	No news, good	Annual review & data	Will ask when wanted	Instant feedback
• CHANGING JOBS	Change a stigma	Change puts you behind	Change necessary	Change a daily routine
• LIFE BALANCE	Support in shifting	Help me find meaning & balance everyone	Give me balance now, Not at 65	Flexibility to balance all activities
• RETIREMENT	Reward	Retool	Renew	Recycle

Adapted from *When Generations Collide*