



6 STRATEGIES TO CONNECT WITH GEN Y/MILLENNIALS IN THE WORKPLACE

By Dr. Maura Cullen

Currently, there are three generations that dominate the work place; Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y also known as Millennials. How do we get each of them to benefit from one another's strengths and perspectives without rolling our eyes or shaking our heads? The short answer is lots of patience and communication. That's easier said than done, particularly given just how different each generation has been taught to communicate. These different communication styles will be challenging at times but can be easily overcome with the proper frame of mind.

Let's take a look at the newest members of the workforce and how we can foster an environment that will set them up to succeed in the workforce. Some of the information I will share is from Neil Howard, Millennials in the Workforce and Julie Coates, Generational Learning Styles. From here on I will refer to this generation as Gen Y. According to Howard and Strauss, they classify the Gen Y as born between 1992-2002.

Here are some strategies to connect with Gen Y.

1. REVERED-RECORDED-REWARDED

No generation has been more **revered** by their parents or caregivers than Gen Y. They are used to and expect to be the focus of much attention. Not giving them attention is akin to saying you don't care. Most of them were raised to believe that they are special and unique. Their parent(s) or caregivers are exceedingly active in their child's success so much that the term "helicopter" parents was created to demonstrate the over-involvement of parents compared to previous generations.

No generation has been more **recorded**. Advancement of technology makes it easier than ever to record every meaningful and meaningless moment in Gen Y's life. This serves to reinforce how special they are. The proliferation of YouTube videos and their near constant changes to their Facebook status reflects their belief that nothing is too insignificant to record.

No generation has been **rewarded** more for everything and anything. As kids, they were given trophies for participation not outcome. At some level merely showing up was cause for reward and praise. As a result, they are accustomed to instant feedback and encouragement. The Boomer generation created these expectations for their kids, but once the Gen Y's enter the workforce the Boomer's tend to forget to apply those same concepts. To effectively working with Gen Y means providing them with quick and consistent feedback while rewarding them with praise. The Boomer supervisor or manager might ask, "Why should I reward or praise them for simply doing their job?" Simple. If you want them to work and succeed at a high level then this is how you show them respect. Otherwise they will not feel valued and most likely will underperform or even leave your company.

One way to make an instant connection is to ask for their help or advice. Once they believe that you value their skills and perspective then they are more likely to value yours.

2. THEY DON'T NEED YOU TO BE LIKE THEM, THEY NEED YOU TO LIKE THEM.

Authenticity is critical for this generation. Where Gen X's are considered to be tolerant of differences, Gen Y's are said to celebrate and embrace differences. They have had more interaction with the Boomer generation and will connect with you as long as they perceive you are keeping it real. They want you to like them and they want to like you. They have little patience with BS and will dismiss you quickly if they you seem like a fraud.

3. MAKE A HEAD-HEART CONNECTION.

As a group, Gen Y's have a very high rate of civic volunteerism. They value money more than their Gen X counterparts, but they also donate more of their time and money. They want to do well and do good. It is perhaps one of the reasons why diversity issues are supported by this generation. They connect their intellect in understanding the business case for diversity while balancing their emotional and moral compasses.

4. TAKE AN INTEREST IN WHAT INTERESTS THEM.

Become familiar with how they navigate through life and learn the challenges and interests they encounter. Connect with them on their turf by using social networking, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and texting. At a minimum, become familiar with some of the terminology they use routinely.

Gen Y has a better balance of work and play than Boomers. You will not see Gen Y's hoarding vacation or sick days like Boomers. They won't think twice about taking a day off to go skiing or surfing. Nor will you see them 'burning the midnight oil' as their Boomer parents. For this generation working harder does not always translate into working longer. They work hard and play hard. Bottom line, become a student of their world.

5. START WITH THE NOW & THE HOW NOT THE HISTORY

Blah Blah Blah. That's what many Gen Y's will hear when you begin a history lesson. Whether it's world history, the history of the organization or the history of how a decision is made, Gen Y couldn't care less. They are more concerned with the now and how a situation can be resolved. If you believe that sharing history will be of value for them, then you are best to take the Dial Back approach. This means starting with the now, which is most relevant to them, THEN going back in time, connecting the dots along the way.

6. ENGAGE-ENTERTAIN-EDUCATE

Gen Y has always been highly stimulated through technology and engages technology both as a source of education, entertainment and social connection. It's a group that has gone from Chuck E Cheese to PlayStation to YouTube. Your meetings and training programs need to incorporate these

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three key elements in order for you to get your information across. Use of technology is an asset, the more creative and interactive the better.

Whether you are educating in a more formal setting such as a training session or in a classroom, you must actively engage them in either through activities, dialogue or hands on learning. And like all adult learners, the experience is much more enjoyable and the information will stay with them longer if it is presented in an entertaining manner.

Generation Y is a special group of people and they know it. And if we want to connect with them then we mustn't forget it.

To receive Dr. Cullen's **FREE** video series visit
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