HOW CAN EMPLOYERS RETAIN TALENT IN THE MILLENNIAL AGE

The millennial generation has a different way of thinking about work. Embrace it and you can have lifelong, loyal and productive employees. It’s the entrepreneurial age and everyone wants to work for themselves. By 2025, Gen Y is going to make up 75% of the global workforce, and the millennia, independent-thinking and entrepreneurial mindset is going to change the way companies are run.

Dan Schawbel, founder of Millennial Branding and author of a new book Promote Yourself, recently partnered up with oDesk, a global job marketplace, in a survey that found millennials have a different definition of the word “entrepreneurship,” and 90% of them don’t actually think of it as starting a company, but rather, having a risk-taking and self-starting mindset of someone who “spots opportunity.” Speaking to Schawbel about what millennials want most out of their workplaces—it’s more than just flexible hours—and how employers can keep them happy and productive in their jobs.

PROVIDE CAREER ADVANCEMENT:
“The number-one reason why “Gen Y employees leave is a lack of career opportunities,” Schwabel says. “If you can’t show them a path up, if you are not going to mentor and support them, they are out.” Millennial don’t want to wait several years to find out where their career is headed, they want to make the most out of every opportunity today. This mindset comes in part because the job market is so uncertain and they don’t know where they will be tomorrow. Find ways to challenge your employees, and be clear from the beginning as to what their career path can be.

COMMUNICATE THE MEANING BEHIND PROJECTS:
Schwabel explains that Gen Y has a need to “solve the world’s problems” and if companies want to keep talent in their organizations, they need to clearly communicate long-term company goals with their hardworking and inspired workers. “They’re doing whatever they can to make a living because there is no promise for tomorrow,” he says. “You can lose your job in two weeks. There could be a merger or acquisition. There are so many things out of your control but the one thing that is in your control is becoming a go-getter and having the entrepreneur mindset.”

One of the main reasons young people quit their jobs is because they want to work on their own projects. If the “passion project” is related to the employer’s mission, you should encourage this entrepreneurial way of thinking. In fact, Google allows its engineers to take 20% of their time to work on something that they are passionate about.

Companies that employ a decent number of young people could support this independent thinking ability by developing entrepreneurial programs. Allowing workers to do this also increases loyalty, because employees know you care about their happiness and well-being. In the end, they will work harder for you, because you’ve allowed them time to work on something they care about. In short, the typical 9-to-5 grind is on its way out and, as Schwabel says, “it’s going to be less about who you work for, but who you are working with.”

(Taken in part from How Employers can retain talent in the Millennial Age: www.openforum.com/articles/how-employers-can-retain...)
TIPS FOR MENTORING NEXT-GENERATION LEADERS

A study of next generation leaders shows that managers have several concerns about the young people they employ. One of these concerns is that young people aren’t getting the coaching and mentoring they need to equip them to lead in complex environments. Many business owners don’t have a strategy for preparing these future leaders. Research shows that only one in eight companies have a written plan for leadership continuity. Many think that writing a plan is too much, too soon. Scarce training budgets and limited resources are also contributing factors of neglecting such a crucial aspect of any business. When succession planning takes a backseat to day-to-day operations, the months and years go by without addressing this strategic imperative. This will inevitably leave you with a team of leaders and managers who aren’t ready to take charge.

What can be done? Mentoring is the answer. It’s a low-cost and extremely effective way to prepare future leaders early on. Mentoring is as simple as a gentle push in the right direction. It’s also an easy way to preserve the intangible assets of your company—the minds and capabilities of the young people who are the future face of your brand. Mentoring increases retention of your best and brightest, builds your reservoir of talent, speeds employee growth and shortens the learning cycle. It also engenders loyalty; don’t continue to ignore the need for this. A few pointers on getting started:

1. **Establish two-way, cross-generational mentoring.** When we think of mentoring, we conjure up the image of a wise, senior executive mentoring a young professional. While there’s no doubt that this is one of the most beneficial mentoring situations, it’s no longer the only mode. As The Center for Creative Leadership study outlines, young employees are generally willing to learn and eager to make a difference. They are technology savvy, highly adaptable and comfortable with the rapid pace of change. They also have multicultural awareness. Companies need these skills from all their employees and leaders. Younger employees can mentor their long-tenured bosses and colleagues in these areas while established leaders can help the younger ones channel their ideas and enthusiasm in ways that promote innovation.

2. **Support informal mentoring.** Being mentored in a formal mentorship program doesn’t work for everyone, and some employees resist it. Studies even seem to suggest that informal mentoring works better. If this is the case with some of your employees, support informal mentoring relationships that occur spontaneously throughout an organization. You can do this by offering education and training.

3. **Offer flexible mentorship programs for millenials.** Jeanne Meister, co-author of *The 2020 Workplace*, explains that the mentorship program for millennials is different from traditional mentorship. For example, mentoring for these groups should be expanded beyond the face-to-face model by using social media. As she writes in her book, “Millennials respond better to innovative and mature management, suggesting the importance of experience in management while using more up-to-the minute techniques. “On-demand, online mentoring appears to be a top preference for millennials. It matches the mentee with a mentor outside the organization using psychological testing to profile the mentee. The entire mentoring experience is then online, and anonymous, for both mentor and mentee. It can be short term or last up to a year.

4. **Use external mentors.** In addition to using internal company mentors, consider expanding your program to give people an option to be mentored by leaders in other organizations. At *Instill Corp*, a B2B technology company for the food industry, CEO Mack Tilling has developed a highly successful mentoring program where all executives are required to choose a mentor they admire – usually an executive at another company—who is in the same functional area. This does not need to be limited to senior executives. Consider setting up a similar program for your young key employees. Peer mentoring with equivalents in other companies provides powerful opportunities for learning and “cross pollination.”
5. **Keep it democratic.** Take inspiration from Intel’s mentoring program. At this company, anyone can mentor, regardless of position. One of the star mentors mentioned in the article is a senior administrative assistant, and she’s a great mentor because she has the skills that are vital to Intel. She is a master at tapping into informal communication networks that make the company tick. Take a look through your entire company, comb each department—from HR to engineering—and see what universal skills and abilities can be passed on to others.

6. **Make mentoring a part of the organizational strategy.** Encourage all leaders to look at their followers and commit to helping them to grow in their jobs. This should be applied to everyone, not just those who opted for formal mentorship. We owe it to younger leaders to guide them and pass on expertise and wisdom. To solidify this, include a commitment to mentoring in the performance appraisals.

7. **Encourage people to seize mentorship moments.** No matter how good your mentoring program is, help mentors understand that the most important part of leadership development occurs in everyday actions, outside of formal programs. Encourage mentors to seize the opportunity when they see a mentoring moment. It can be in the hall, in the elevator, or just after a meeting. People need to understand the value of letting it happen serendipitously.

8. **Identify the skills and wisdom needed.** Evaluate what skills and knowledge are needed to sustain your organization in the future. Consider the research on attributes required of leaders to come. This study looks at global trends in leadership challenges and outlines the skills and knowledge needed to address any challenges ahead. Some of these are business acumen, conflict management, and effective communication, flexibility to adapt to environment, people, innovation, internal and external accountability and performance appraisals. Take these into account when you set up your monitoring program so that you can equip your people for the future.

**Follow the best practices.** Make sure to follow all the required steps for establishing a proper mentorship program. Some obvious (but important) reminders: being clear about the purpose and potential outcomes, setting reasonable expectations, matching the right mentor with mentee in terms of strengths and affinity, defining roles and responsibilities, developing a mentoring agreement, and stressing confidentiality, to name a few. Qualcomm has made its Mentorship Toolkit publicly available, and you can also access resources at The International Mentoring Association.

*(Author Briaan Martinuzzi is the founder of Clarion Enterprises Ltd, and the author of two books: Presenting with Credibility: Practical Tools and Techniques for Effective Presentations, and The Leader as a Mench: Become the Kind of Person Others Want to follow.)*

**LEADERS WHO WANT TO NURTURE INNOVATION**

Leaders who want to nurture innovation can reverse the anti-innovation rules and eliminate the practices that stifle innovation, in order to create a pro-innovation culture. For each of these innovation-stiflers, innovation-promoters can move to the opposite behaviors. In a culture of innovation, these actions allow innovation to flourish:

- Encourage new ideas, especially from below and from unexpected sources.
- Look ahead, not behind. The past is prologue but not necessarily precedent.
- Leave some slack for experimentation, whether spare time or seed money.
- Look for improvements, not critiques. Encourage collaboration toward common goals.
- Be flexible. Stress substance over form, action over calendar. Allow for unplanned opportunities.
- Open strategic discussions to new voices.
- Accept that stretch goals mean some things won’t work. Avoid public humiliation; promote public recognition for innovative accomplishments.
- Foster respect for people and their talents. Know learning is imperative; everyone, even the most experienced, must be open to learning.
Leaders seeking innovation should adhere to these pro-innovation principles, but it might also be a good idea to keep the innovation stiflers posted as a reminder of what NOT to do. (Taken in part from Rules for Stifling Innovation by Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Harvard Business Review)

**Four Ways to Motivate Detached Employees**

*Are your employees struggling with their work? Here are 4 tactics to revive their excitement.*

It’s not easy to talk about performance with employees. It can be awkward and downright tough to focus on someone’s weaknesses. But every leader has the opportunity and responsibility to be a catalyst for change within his or her organization, and that starts with knowing how to motivate and inspire employees.

Marnie Green, principal consultant at Management Education Group and author of *Painless Performance Conversations*, says that performance conversations should happen regularly, not annually. It takes practice to handle them well. “Managers fail at these conversations because part of it is (having the right) skills,” Green tells us. “There is definitely a skill to it that can be learned.”

For managers, it’s important to have the right attitude before having these conversations. According to Green, there are four critical mindsets that every leader should embrace:

1. **Lead with Behavior:** Don’t let emotions get in the way. Take a more methodical approach. Identify the problems you would like to discuss and then explain how the employee’s behavior affects company culture and productivity. …Rather than telling employees what they should stop doing, focus on what you expect from them instead. “It could be that you expect a higher level of production, a faster response rate or higher levels of productivity from the entire team,” she says. Whatever it is you expect, verbalize this clearly and never let your own attitude toward the employee get in the way of professional communication.

2. **Eliminate Judgment:** “When you have the conversation, you need to hold your judgment and focus on the performance issue instead,” Green says. “You can’t change an employee’s behavior unless it’s specific and something you observe. If you lead the conversation with ‘I don’t think you care,’ it won’t get you anywhere with the other person, because they are immediately defensive.

   For example, instead of asking “Are you overwhelmed? I know your work hasn’t been as good as before,” say, “I noticed your work has been different. Is this the case?” Green also says it’s important to determine whether the issue you have with your employee is a pet peeve or something that actually affects the work environment.

3. **Ask Solution-Oriented Questions:** Savvy leaders allow employees to come up with their own solutions. “The idea is that you have to create space for the employee,” Green says. You can do this by asking questions that will lead to a solution both of you can agree on. Once you have both identified and discussed specific behaviors, ask your employees why they think they are adopting these behaviors. For example, say, “Why do you think you haven’t been speaking up during team meetings?” or “What do you think has been different between last month compared to this month?”

4. **Give them ownership:** Through these conversations, you want to help the employee feel a sense of ownership over his behavior and capacity to change. Putting the ball in his court gives him a greater sense of control and responsibility. That’s why asking questions – and getting feedback from an employee—is the smartest way to go. Managers can troubleshoot, but they don’t always have all the answers.

   Rather, employees know themselves best and may come up with the most reasonable, innovative solution that benefits everyone. Managers, as catalysts for change, can help facilitate this by continually making expectations and goals clear and consistent and striking up these performance conversations regularly. “Managing employee performance means
you are leveraging your resources,” Green says. “If you could do it all yourself, you would. But you can’t. It is critical to
develop trust with your employees. Allow them to excel. As a manager, your employees’ success makes you look good.

[Taken in part from “4 Ways to Motivate Detached Employees; https://www.openforum.com/articles/4-motivational-tips]

ARE YOU MISSING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD TRUST?
By Jennifer V. Miller/10/18/12

ARE YOU A TRUSTWORTHY LEADER?

You probably answered with a resounding “Yes!” and perhaps a bit of indignation. The subject of one’s trustworthiness
is a tricky one – have you ever met anyone who wholeheartedly agreed that they were untrustworthy? That’s because
people mistakenly equate “trustworthiness” with “personal integrity.” Both attributes are important ingredients to
leading with character, but they are not synonymous. When you have leadership integrity, it means that your MORAL
COMPASS is aligned with ethical goals. When you are trustworthy, people have faith that you will do what they expect.

There’s more to trust-building than your impeccable integrity, and that’s where some leaders may fall short. If you are
relying only on your integrity to build trust, you are leaving trust-building opportunities on the table because there is yet
another aspect to becoming trustworthy. At work, people use their own unique yardsticks to determine whether they
trust someone. These yardsticks are internal, so leaders can’t always be exactly sure how their trustworthiness is being
measured. I call these yardsticks Trust Touchstones. A touchstone in ancient times was a rock that people used to
determine the value of a piece of metal. They would strike the metal up against the touchstone to gauge the metal’s
purity.

In today’s world, people use a trust touchstone in much the same way – they are watching a leader’s actions, striking it
against their trust touchstone(s) and deciding if they deem the leader trustworthy. Metaphorically speaking, people are
carrying around a unique pocketful of touchstones – and these stones are what they use to decide if they have faith that
you will do what they expect. If they have faith in you, then they’ll put their trust in you. You’ll need to pay close
attention because expectations vary. Some people expect a fast turnaround on decisions. Others expect a collaborative
leader. Still others want a leader who is high-energy. Some clues to determine your team members’ Trust Touchstones:

ORGANIZATIONALLY: What is the “trust history” like in your organization? Is there a track record of leadership trust?
What do your organizations’ policies say about trust? Typically, the more extensive the policies, the less that employees
perceive they are trusted.

INTERPERSONALLY: Where does this person tend to naturally focus his/her attention: on “task” or “people” issues? Is
this person high-energy or low-profile? What is this person’s patience level when it comes to waiting for organizational
decisions? Is this person naturally skeptical?

CULTURALLY: What role does your organization’s culture play in your employee’s level of trust? What racial, ethnic or
other cultural factors may play into your employee’s belief that you will meet his/her expectations?

Trustworthiness starts with personal integrity. Beyond that, leaders can strengthen the trust factor with their team
members by applying the concept of the Trust Touchstones to create a personalized approach to trust-building – one
person at a time.

STEVEN GRONER, DIRECTOR: IL SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER AT KASKASKIA COLLEGE
325 S. POPLAR, CENTRALIA IL 62801; 618-545-3262; sgroner@kaskaskia.edu