

Babysitter or Employer?

Hiring Generation Y and the new "Millenials"

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If you are involved in the hiring of new recruits for your organization you are going to need what is called *Flexible Management Leadership* to survive the next wave of Generation Y and the new Millenials that will be crossing your doorway looking for a job. Yes I said job, not necessarily a career, but a job. They may not stay; in fact it is likely they won't. In the 1980s when I graduated from high school there was one job for every four students. Going to some post secondary school was a better option to wait and see if more jobs opened up. Today, there are four jobs for every student and the new graduates of high school and post secondary institutions have their pick. You may or may not be one of them.

I am a Generation X'er (1965-1974) of which most of us are coming to the middle or end of our careers. We are the bridge between the baby boomers and the Generation Y's. We watched our parents work themselves to death and want a little bit more of a balance of work and home. We are loyal to people, not organizations and we want to have a friendship with our superiors; not so much "Yes sir, no sir" as the previous generation. We are your leaders of today and the near future.

In comes Generation Y (1978-1994). These are our junior constables or new recruits. They have a casual attitude towards superiors and are opinionated and challenge the rules. Their parents were older when they had them and were more babied by their parents. They lived at home late in life - and may still live at home while working for you. They belonged to schools where you were never failed, there was no winner or loser and everyone got a "participant ribbon" just for showing up. They are three times the size of Generation X and one in four were brought up by a single parent and three in four were latch-key kids. They were brought up with the influence of TV, internet, cell phones and video games and learned to have instant satisfaction for any and all outputs through these instruments. They have the inability to concentrate for a long time at one task and are constantly doing many things at one time; talking on cell phone while on the internet and listening to their iPods. At work they want to work alongside of friends not co-workers and they want to have fun. They do not want a rigid schedule but want a positive fun environment in which to work.

The New Millenials - crosses over the Generation Y's with years 1980-2000. There are 80 million of them. These are the young people coming up into our hiring processes. These are the people we need to attract to policing. To do that we need to know what they want. If they have four jobs to choose from how do we get them to choose our profession and how do we keep them here once they get here? They too were born of doting parents who coddled them; in fact us Generation X'ers are producing these kids as we speak! We have taken away their ability to fall on their face and learn from their mistakes. You may even find the parent of a millennial phoning in and asking why his/her son or daughter did not make it onto the police force or the application fees written on mommy or daddy's bank account. Millenials come first and live and breathe themselves and nothing else, especially the organization. They have climbed Mount Everest, been to Fiji and ate sushi in Japan but have never punched a time clock and said "Would you like fries with that?" Work evenings and weekends? I don't think so. They will sell themselves to the highest bidder, just like E-bay. Adulthood for this generation starts at about 26 years of age. What's important to a millennial? Themselves, friends and then family. It's like managing a teenage babysitting pool.

So now what? Flexible Management Leadership. Demographics don't lie. Birth rates are down, retirement is up. There is more demand for people in management roles and a dwindling pool of talent for policing. 3% of young people think of policing as a career. 63% never would consider polic-

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ing as a career. That leaves 34% undecided. It's time to wake up and reposition ourselves as the employer of choice. Change is not a sign of failure and the failure to change in this case is not an option.

So what do they want?

1. They want a fun work environment
2. They want to work with friends
3. They want mobility not stability
4. They want more instant satisfaction more often
5. They want to have a say and have their opinions listened to
6. They need a coach - not a boss
7. They need to feel appreciated and valued
8. They want choices and less rigid schedules
9. They want lots of different stuff to do not the same old mundane work

What can we give them?

1. Decrease the militaristic influence in your organization and become more inclusive
2. Give feedback more often
3. Create positive feedback mechanisms such as Recognition and Awards Programs
4. Build pride in the brand or label of "policing". Make them proud to be a police officer as much as they are proud to wear their Billabong shirts or their Nike hats.
5. Put in place processes for input even at a lower level. Focus groups, suggestion boxes, great idea programs with incentives.
6. As long as it does not jeopardize their work, give them the opportunity to work alongside friends instead of pairing them up with the grouchy ol' timer who is waiting to retire and finds a "batcave" so he can sleep on nightshift.
7. Call their trainers coaches and give them coaching courses - We have them at the Saskatchewan Police College
8. Build in variety to their daily work. Give them opportunities to go in plain clothes, work a sting or create a rotational training program where they work for three months with the Drug squad or with Homicide.
9. Create a fun environment, Platoon BBQs, Golf Tournaments, Family picnics.

Babysitter or Employer?, cont'd

Although the research allows for generalization and the ability to categorize people into Generation X or Y, we will have many applicants that do not fit the stereotype of one of these groups. The best thing we can do as employers is look at the changing world and accept that these young people are different than we were, for whatever reason. Creating a flexible work environment to attract our young people may be what we need to do to be the employer of choice.

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