Leading a United Multigenerational Workforce

For the first time in history, there are five generations in the workforce. Effective leaders will not only need to become familiar with each generation's core values and workplace habits, they will also need to learn to create symbiotic relationships, playing each generation's best qualities off the other to leverage and capitalize on work-force diversity. If you are in an audit leadership position, your leadership style is a pivotal factor because it affects the culture and tone within the department.

The key to developing an effective multigenerational audit team is to be a leader, not just a manager. Not all leaders are managers and not all managers are leaders. "Manager" is a title given to anyone who directs, coordinates and controls a group's efforts to achieve an organization's goals and objectives. De facto, your role is managerial. The critical issue is the effectiveness and appropriateness of your leadership style.

Both leaders and managers demonstrate an ability to work with others, handle conflict, run meetings and set priorities. However, when dealing with different generations at work, leaders distinguish themselves from managers in the following ways.

- Leaders manifest calculated and strategic risk-taking and results-oriented behavior. They are comfortable taking risks because they either like certain types of stress or deal with stress effectively.

- Leaders are able to see problems where others don't, and arrive at solutions which others don't see.

- Leaders are persistent, self-confident, and have a distinct sense of personal identity.

- Leaders are able to influence their colleagues', clients', and boss' behaviors, planting seedling ideas that shape the structure of ERM and over-arching risk management practices.

- While managers understand the necessity of keeping pace with new ideas and technological developments, leaders exploit new ideas and technology to manage the generational diversity.

Both managers and leaders identify with superiors and organizational goals. And, both managers and leaders accept and deal effectively with a wide range of personalities. They are adaptive to myriad social and business situations, people and circumstances.

Your challenge as a leader is to keep all of your team members ---regardless of their generation--- focused, energized, and highly productive, while defining the criteria that define the attributes of a quality audit work product. A crucial step is to empower your employees to appreciate and leverage other generations' workplace habits. This is even more critical in today's competitive environment in which our organizations need marathoners, not sprinters, if we are going to win the endurance competition triggered by the global economy.

Following are some general patterns that can help you diagnose each generation's workplace habits:

	VETERANS	BABY BOOMERS	GENXERS	GENY	GENZ
ALSO KNOWN AS	Matures, Gray Panthers, Seniors	Boomers	Xers, Post-Boomers	Millenials, Nexters, Generation Net	iGeneration, Net Generation, Homeland Generation
WHEN BORN	1922 – 1943	1943 – 1960	1960 – 1980	1980 – 2000	1992 - 2000
CORE VALUES	Dedication/ sacrifice, hard work, conformity, delayed reward, respect for authority, honor	Driven to pursue personal gratification and growth, team oriented, "me-oriented", health and wellness	Balance, diversity, technoliteracy, informality, self-reliance, pragmatism, "you can't have it all", "I am a product available for sale to the highest bidder"	Determination, optimism, confidence, achievement, sociability, street smarts, diversity, civic duty	Technological sophistication, diversity, keenly aware of and participatory in social issues, instant gratification, less concerned with privacy, distrustful, "do-it-yourself",
ON THE JOB ASSETS	Stable, detail-oriented, loyal, hardworking	Service-oriented, driven to perform, good team players	Adaptable, technoliterate, independent, unintimidated by authority, creative	Optimism, tenacity, multitasking capabilities, technological savvy	Calculated risk-takers, technological chameleons, value ongoing education, multitaskers
PAIR WITH:	Gen Yers and Zers – perhaps the hardest to mix, these three generations can meld old-school experience with modern workplace techniques and technology	Gen Xers – balance this generation's self-reliance with the Boomers' drive to pursue personal gratification and growth to encourage solidarity	Veterans – Veterans' respect for conformity can encourage Xers to see the benefits of synchronizing personal individualism with team individualism	Boomers – their mutual desire for personal gratification can create a bond where they will work together to finish audits efficiently and thoughtfully to reduce turnover	Gen Yers – these two generations' overlap, coupled with Millenials' determination and optimism can be leveraged into creating a tech-savvy, forward-thinking audit department

TIPS TO ENCOURAGE GENERATIONAL "MINGLING"

Candor and communication are essential. Communicate constantly and encourage Senior Management to be accessible. Encourage managers to survey the staff periodically to get input and to assess results. Hold periodic meetings in which respectful two-way communication is encouraged. Use e-mail as a mass communication vehicle to provide information concerning current events and progress against goals.

Acknowledge that generational differences trigger diverse perspectives and varying sets of experiences and values. Behavior deemed to be unethical and at odds with what your organization advocates may occur as a result of these different viewpoints.

One way to do this is to give promising individuals plenty of one-to-one contact with proven leaders in your institution as a way to develop the company's future leaders. Create a mentoring program for the most promising and talented people as a means of bolstering the institution's succession plans. Make career counseling available to employees. Where you can, give them some authority. It will pay off in loyalty and make them better decision-makers and future managers in the end.

MULTIGENERATIONAL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Since the new breed of employee ascribes to "what gets measured gets done", make sure that the appraisal system aligns with the whole organization's behavior and its core values. Additionally, make sure that the "game" rules, i.e., desired performance results, are clearly explained.

Millenials are also referred to as the "Me generation" because of their seemingly constant need for validation and approval, no matter how small the success. While this may be counterintuitive to the older generations, it teaches us the important of recognizing people as often as possible. It may be helpful to institute a series of recognitions, including ones which require employees to nominate each other. This will encourage employees of all generations to be more observant and appreciative of each other, which could lead to emulation of the desired behavior. Thus, the Millenial desire for individualism is built into a system of department-wide appreciation.

Generation Z, whose oldest constituents are now entering the workforce as interns or new hires, are often perceived as spoiled, having short attention spans, and expectant of a parent-child relationship in the workplace. However, because they are competing with historically more people than ever for jobs, they recognize the value of hard work and try to stand out in order to stay ahead. Take advantage of this vulnerability to encourage workplace education and reward effective behavior.

Specifically, tie pay to performance for individuals and teams. Include the input of teammates in arriving at an individual's performance appraisal. Teammates are likely to be more knowledgeable and objective concerning an individual's performance. Tap into the older generations' maturity and workplace experience to assess the youngers' performance.

The most critical training need is to develop people management competency as soon as an individual becomes an auditor. All too frequently, the newly promoted auditor-in-charge has excellent technical skills and displays tireless attention to detail (e.g., test workpapers are clearly organized and cross-referenced). Often these abilities and proficiencies are the reason the auditor was promoted. But, as leaders, we need to help the newly promoted manager acquire an appreciation and a desire to delegate, build bench-strength, and get work accomplished through others.

WAYS TO LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY

If you are a Veteran or Boomer, use technology to stay in constant communication on the project. Since auditors are mobile, the job inherently lends itself to leveraging technology and remote work. Gen Xers, Millenials, and especially Gen Zers see email or text messaging as important a communication tool as a phone call. As such, tell them you expect an e-mail or text message with regular updates on a project. Require an e-mail response confirming their understanding of the project and direction you have just given. Ask to see them capture the "to

do" in their smart phones or tablets. Finally, ask that they factor in a tickler system that automatically reminds them what their due dates are.

This way you will respond with your thoughts and advice using their technology, and suddenly you have the immediacy they like and the accountability you need and want.

However, too much e-communication can be counter-effective. Auditors lose interpersonal, rapport-building skills, which are critical if they want to move up the chain. Encourage them, especially Gen Z employees, to adopt the old-school approach of talking to the person in person or by phone instead of sending a series of progressive emails whenever possible.

Because communication is so varied in our age, put on your development hat, and try not to infer your auditors' motives. Keep an open mind about their ideas. If you give them the benefit of the doubt and believe they are asking out of curiosity, then you view the questioning from a different framework. This is crucial when dealing with the older Generation Z employee (born in 1990, 1991), whose norm it is to communicate important messages via text message or email, and nuance often gets lost in translation.

SOME MULTIGENERATIONAL COACHING TIPS

Be sure to answer their "why" questions before they even ask them. Stay a step ahead of them by giving frequent and detailed briefings that provide information they wouldn't be able to gather on their own.

Give them the benefits of your experience, the history and context of a situation, your thorough understanding of the corporate political climate, some big-picture thinking, tips on how to deal with that difficult colleague or the inside "scoop." Gen Zers may not directly ask for your expertise, so find ways to incorporate these practical tips in conversation, but primarily through example.

Where practical, do accommodate flexible working hours. Once a requirement associated mostly with Gen Xers and Gen Yers, the ability to accommodate employees' lives makes for happier customers, increased employee loyalty, and lower turnover. More staff members are finding it a necessary tool to achieve work-life balance. Get non-traditional work arrangements, e.g., flexible hours, work at homes, etc., defined in writing before these arrangements begin. Keep the ground rules simple and fair, e.g., all employees must start their shift between 7:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. and the shift length is 7 1/2 hours.

In summary, take advantage of today's five-generation workforce by bringing out the best in each and nurturing desired behaviors by highlighting them --- focusing on the differences can potentially beget more differences. Keep in mind that before you develop and implement an initiative to motivate the different generations of employees, you must ask them what they want. Otherwise, you risk spending time and money on initiatives that do not appeal to them.

An effective leader fosters open environments where employees of all generations feel free to learn from each other while individually contributing to the organizational culture. Ann M. Butera, MBA, CRP, is President of The Whole Person Project, Inc., an organizational development consulting and training firm, is a frequent conference speaker, and serves as audit committee chair for a financial services firm. She welcomes your reactions and questions, and can be reached at annbutera@cs.com or 516-354-3551. Please visit www.wholepersonproject.com for more information on her consulting and training services.