Retaining Adrift Young Employees



Many younger workers today have been set adrift in a sea of job, career and even economic uncertainty. Faced with rapidly expanding and contracting choices and opportunities your young workers usually benefit from hands on guidance in the workplace.

Over the past 10 years I have worked extensively with Millennials seeking to identify, define and establish their careers. On some levels Millennials have more awareness of their place in the world compared to previous generations. Weaned on a vision of an interconnected and interdependent world they have more exposure to world events, more interaction with people from other cultures, beliefs and lifestyles and are more in-tune with their impact on the natural world. This does not mean they have processed and integrated this information fully into their lives. While Millennials have access to Exabytes of information they do not always know how to apply this information to their own life choices.

The Same Yet Different Problems

Not unlike generations before them, young workers today frequently lack a vision of their own career future. However, over the past 100 years young Canadian workers who lacked a personal vision of their career paths had the benefit of looking to family and friends or older workers in their places of employment to see examples of career paths ahead. This does not mean they made good but it did offer roadmaps to consult. But today many of those roadmaps are redrawn before the pictures on Google maps have been rendered.

The result is a lot of young talent in the workplace who are ready to work hard and who want to make a contribution to the success of a business or who are equally ready to leave for the next opportunity that catches their attention.

Young workers can offer invaluable contributions in today’s workplaces as a result of not only their youth, technology integration, ability to learn quickly and adaptability but because they will also be needed in the years to come. If you want to hang on to your talented and hard working younger employees you will need to be proactive in providing them reasons to stay.

5 Millennial Enticing Strategies You Can Implement Today

Coaching and mentorships: Relationships are important to Millennials. They are also used to more direct input and guidance from helicopter parents, schools and teachers who had to accommodate request and friends and acquaintances in social networks. They often look for opportunities to collaborate with those who have additional knowledge and experience and can offer additional perspectives.

Ongoing education and training: integrating opportunities for exposure to learning, including learning about other career tracks in your organization, is an useful way to engage a generation who is always looking to learn something new. Not annually, biannually or even quarterly, but every month. Provide them the opportunity to participate in both virtual and in-person learning. Include both internal and external content and training opportunities.

Interesting and challenging experiences: Of course all employees want interesting and challenging experiences but previous generations could be more patient in achieving these opportunities. The Millennials have a shorter span of attention and become board quickly. Provide these employees internal and external opportunities to try new things, play roles in interesting projects and meet more people.

Build in work-life flexibility: Millennials may be willing to put in extra hours in the evening or on the weekend but they expect flexibility in return. As much as possible find a way to negotiate a flexible work routine that enables mobility and reshapes the traditional workday. However, build a process or technology to enable easy tracking of this flexibility or you may find the Millennials flexible boundaries extend further then the job can bend.

Off board them well: There have always been good reasons to off board employees well; to avoid litigation, bad feelings and damage to the organizations reputation in the community. However in today’s atmosphere of economic uncertainty and shifting workforce numbers letting go of and then brining back workers is on the table. In fact, letting go employees and then hiring them back as independent contractors or as part of a relationship with another small business is a possibility.

You may have to build different types of employment relationships with your younger, creative and hard-working employees to keep them engaged, around or wanting to come back in the future. These changes may well fit other employees also so explore them well for all employees.