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As you progress as a leader in your life, you become older, wiser, and are often put in positions of having to coach people from different generations. One thing I learned many years ago was the need to understand different perspectives from different generations. When I attempted to apply the same logic and mindset to everyone, I failed miserably in the area of motivation. Each generation has certain generalizations (not stereotypes) you must keep in mind when coaching and motivating people from different age groups. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind:

1) *Understanding the Matures (born between 1922-1946)*. Matures, also referred as Traditionalists or the Greatest Generation, hardly remain in the traditional workplace. Many are now in consulting or other part-time work, teaching, working for nonprofits, or are retired. They value financial security, teamwork, sacrifice, delayed gratification, and the government. They respect authority, and loyalty is one of their biggest values. They would have preferred to have a lifetime career with one employer. They work hard, are dedicated, respect rules, put duty before pleasure, and think there is a “right” way to do things.

In order to coach a mature worker, consider that he or she wants respect for the long years of work, dedication, and service. Listen to these workers to hear what their experiences have been. Acknowledge their contributions. They have a group orientation--they typically support the best thing for the group. Ask them what has worked for them in the past and fit your approach to that experience.

2) *Understanding the Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964)*. The Boomers are the people who are known as the most influential generation because they are a large population, and their sheer size has created a force in every aspect of life. They have been disillusioned with government, big business, traditional religion, and parents. Their values are self-fulfillment, individualism, and material

wealth. They are unusually protective of their children and are strong idealists with passion for personal and social improvement. In the workplace, they brought us the concept of workaholic; they brag about how many hours they work. They believe in teamwork.

In order to coach this generation, utilize their optimism. Goal attainment is one way to focus their energy. They have redefined everything and want to make the world a better place. Some are not comfortable with technology, so investigate preferences, whether phone or email. Some of them recognize that they are candidates for burnout and want relief from the long hours they have given to their organization.

3) *Understanding Generation X (born between 1964-1980)*. Gen Xers grew up as “latch-key kids” with single-parent households. They are an independent, self-sufficient generation that is often described as cynical and pessimistic. While parents were striven for self-fulfillment and financial success, their children were left to manage on their own. Their parents, in fact, could depend on them to get things done.

In order to coach this group, you have to remember that they want all the options on the table. They want answers to “why,” and they want people to follow up and keep their commitments. They see time as money and, in general, don’t trust management. Unlike their Boomer parents, they assume their identities when they leave work, not at work. They want respect, autonomy, skills, and nontraditional orientation to work and life.

4) *Understanding Generation Y (born between 1980-1996)*. Gen Yers, also referred to as Millennials, grew up with the Internet. They have incredible skills to assess and apply information, giving them a sense of competence and optimism about their future. They are tech-savvy and are used to quick feedback and instant gratification. Multitasking is natural to them. They have had positive relationships with their parents and, generally, they believe they can do anything. They stay connected to large groups. In fact, a project with their

friends is a motivator. They are service-minded, so time off to provide service is valued. When you coach a Gen Yer, it is best to listen to hear what his or her experiences have been and acknowledge his or her contribution. Gen Yers are confident and achievement oriented. However, they want flexibility, and they want immediate feedback. They need to know their work has meaning.

5) *Understanding Generation Z (born between 1997-2014)*. This generation is right on the heels of Millennials. This group has just entered the workforce and makes up one-quarter of America’s population, making this generation larger than Baby Boomers or Millennials.

In order to coach Gen Zers, understand they are motivated by social rewards, mentorship, and constant feedback. They also want to do meaningful work and be given responsibility. Like their predecessors, they also demand flexible schedules. Other ways to motivate this generation is through experiential rewards and badges, and opportunities for personal growth. They also expect structure, clear directions, and transparency. And something very intriguing about Gen Zers is that 53 percent prefer face-to-face communication!

An important thing to remember when reading about all of these generalizations mentioned herein is that they are just that: generalizations. One generational shoe doesn’t fit all in that generation. Some people are simply different and unique and it’s your responsibility to realize what that uniqueness and difference is. Furthermore, some people born on the fringe of two generation borders may resemble characteristics from both generations.

As an impacting leader, you must be capable of influencing people from different generations in order to achieve organizational, societal, or business success. These generational groups are part of the diversity that makes America great.

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