



7 SECRETS TO HIRING GENERATION Y

By Patrick Stafford

They're spoiled rotten, selfish and demanding and you need them in your business.

While many business owners have built up an (at times unfair) stereotype of Generation Y as being lazy, overpaid and arrogant, the group of workers aged between 15 and 31 after becoming the most prominent demographic in the workforce and entrepreneurs must be ready to face them head-on.

KPMG demographer Bernard Salt warns SMEs to be prepared to accept Gen Y staff and points to statistics that show the Generation Y group now number 4.67 million, making them an even bigger group than Gen X.

"Generation Y range from about 15 to 31 years old. So they're coming off the conveyor belt, so to

speak, and they're simply growing as a cohort."

"Every year the number of baby boomers is shrinking, so as a result, Generation Y is expanding in the workforce."

But it isn't all bad. While some experts warn employers they should be wary of hiring anyone under the age of 30, others suggest a different approach.

They argue Gen Ys are motivated and responsible when given the opportunity to do so.

Mark McCrindle of McCrindle Research argues there are strong business reasons for hiring Gen Ys and understanding them.

"They do need to be a priority. We have a skills shortage, and baby boomers are retiring. We're going to see a massive exit of boomers while the Gen Ys double their share – that's where all the action

is, therefore it bodes well to understand them. "

Here are the seven secrets to hiring Gen-Y workers:

Look for responsibility – in whatever form possible

Many Generation Y workers are looking for their first job and won't necessarily have a lot of office experience. Instead, Salt says you need to be looking for someone who is more well rounded.

"You want experience, but you're not necessarily going to get corporate experience," he warns.

"If you're a 21-year-old at university, then you'll want to see more experience in the way of dealing with real people, in real situations. These are qualities that should be highly regarded."

Salt says many young workers will have been travelling and working

overseas during their university career. He recommends that employers look into those areas for hidden gold.

"Perhaps in their volunteering they've had some specific management role. For instance, constructing a school in Africa for a charity, or so on."

"Look for that, because that is a sign you're getting someone who is quite well rounded, which is very important in an organisation."

Spoon-feed them

For many Gen-Y, the first time you hire them will be the first time they work in an office. Skye Recruitment chief executive Kye MacDonald says that does create challenges.

"I'm not sure whether it's simply not being exposed to work, or a generational thing, but for Gen Ys it's the first time they're in an office, and

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they're really asking what's expected of them."

MacDonald says you shouldn't be alarmed if they tend to need a lot of direction in their first year, particularly around office etiquette and demeanour.

"It's very important that things are clearly outlined, and not just in their career and where it is heading, but in their day-to-day expectations."

"We tend to think of it as spoon-feeding a little bit, and it seems to be those people who haven't worked in a professional environment before, there needs to be an easing into the transition, and they require some help settling in."

Ask for a response

Performance reviews should be a critical part of any HR strategy, but MacDonald warns your approach

may need to be a little different when it comes Generation Y.

"Where we've given them feedback and said that person's performance isn't where it needs to be, it hasn't been terribly well received. They haven't particularly received the information well and the outcomes

Gen Ys aren't necessarily impressed by how much you can offer them

haven't been great."

Instead, MacDonald says the opposite occurs – when Gen Y employees are asked to evaluate themselves after seeing statistics on their work, they end up criticising themselves more so than if the manager had done it.

"When we've put those figures in front of them and asked them what they think, they tear themselves

to shreds. Far more than we ever would."

MacDonald says there are different managerial positions you must take when dealing with Gen Ys, and you must pick the one that produces the best outcomes.

"It seems to me that having the formal opportunity to sit down, be assessed and actually make them assess themselves does really crystallise things for them."

"If you don't do that the fear is they'll show up, do a job and then go home. You don't want them doing a job and not paying attention to what's going on around them."

Figure out their travel plans

Many Gen-Ys are fickle creatures and adopt a "work to travel" attitude. Many entrepreneurs have been burned before when they find



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out their new employee who they thought would be in for the long haul abandons the company for a trip of unknown length.

Salt says businesses need to address this in the interview stage. Ensure you find out if they intend to travel for long periods of time and determine if they can handle a long-term commitment.

"Typically businesses are very interested in their travel arrangements... you'll want to ask about that and make sure you know what their plans are."

Negotiate on work-life issues

Gen Ys aren't necessarily impressed by how much you can offer them, as they've grown up in an environment where money hasn't been an issue – many are still living with Mum and Dad.

"Their parents have always been relatively well off, and with the Australian dollar being strong for quite some time, they've never had the position of thinking, "Do I have enough money for groceries?" and so on," MacDonald says.

As a result, employers need to be willing to negotiate on other issues,

such as shifts, social networking access and perhaps even a dress code.

"But at the same time, they're looking for non-monetary benefits. So

a flexibility in their schedule, and I guess you could say

engagement on the social side of things. They want to work in an environment where they get along with colleagues and can enjoy their work."

That flexibility could mean anything from accessing social networking sites to being able to make up extra hours if they have to leave work early. MacDonald says Gen Ys want to work in an environment where they

feel they are helping people and contributing towards an overall goal – this means in an interview you need to clearly spell out to them what your expectations are of their role.

"To be honest, it's been very hard to identify what has been driving their motivations, because they're

...they prefer inspiration rather than instruction from above...

much less easily measured and intangible."

"There have been many factors, such as feeling as though they are helping people, feeling as they are doing a good job. There is much less motiva-

tion for money, and that comes out in the things they prioritise."

Career progression

For those Generation Ys who are actively seeking work, they want to know where they are going and how to get there. For all the talk about younger workers being fickle, many Gen Ys are actually quite concerned with where their careers are heading, and they want to

know the next step.

OfficeTeam associate director Stephen Langhammer says businesses need to consider how their new recruits are going to move up. Without providing career opportunities,

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he warned they may get bored and leave.

“Has the organisation sat down with each staff member and found out what they are looking for? There needs to be good communication on both sides, because this is a serious working relationship.”

“They desperately want career progression, because it motivates them to do better. If they can see that there is a place for them within the organisation within 12 months, or so, they know where the next promotion may come from.”

Training

The same rule applies to training. While Gen Ys want you to provide career opportunities, they also ex-

pect that you'll give them the training and encouragement for them to actually get there.

“They want training and investment in their skills, they prefer inspiration rather than instruction from above and they look to keep their options open. If there is a better offer, then they are off. The idea of corporate loyalty is much less likely,” Salt says.

These experts say training courses are a good start – whether they are in-person or online doesn't matter – and providing books and other resources is appreciated. You want to give your employees the resources to move up in the company, otherwise they'll find another company that will.

“Mentoring is quite important,” McCrindle says. “If they can see they are learning from mistakes, or so on, they enjoy that type of instruction.”

“They want clear training, pathways and a leadership style that will engage and involve them rather than a traditional command and control type of structure.”

More responsibility

The temptation for businesses may be to restrict Generation Y from having any responsibility at all, but McCrindle says the opposite is true – they'll be more likely to excel if given extra tasks. Research conducted by McCrindle's company has found that one-quarter of Gen Ys intend to own a business at some point in their lives. He says Gen Ys can add an entrepreneurial flair to your business if given the right opportunity.

“They see themselves as entrepreneurs within an organisation,” McCrindle says. “So if they've got that interest, then give them that responsibility and leadership – they can be self-motivated.”

Direction is paramount when it comes to Gen-Y – don't just give them a task and expect them to follow through. McCrindle says if you give them other areas of responsibility, but inform them they will be held accountable for that business, they'll usually do quite well.

“If they have that business-minded motivation, give them an area of leadership to express it. Give them responsibility and accountability over an area and see that they can be self-motivated and produce good work.”

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