

More Coaching, Less Bossing – For Employers of Gen Ys

By Linda S. Thompson



Every where you turn these days, you hear someone lamenting that “these kids” just don’t have the work ethic we have; that there are challenges in keeping them on the job.

Perhaps it’s time we take a look at what has caused this seeming lack of interest our Gen Y workers are exhibiting. Mr. Rogers, bless him, had good intentions, but when his philosophy spilled over to the parents, I believe that’s where we took a wrong turn.

Parents of the Gen Y and Millennial generations (those born after 1977) gave their kids gold stars for everything, even mediocre work. There was no competition, no winners or losers – every one got a prize. Parents set no expectations, no goals to work for, and if they did, even a partial achievement of those goals resulted in kudos.

The youth of today enter the job market expecting to be accepted for their intelligence and their technical superiority, and they expect to climb the ladder in a very short time. It’s not unheard of for the manager of a human resources department to receive a phone call from a parent expressing displeasure that Little Johnny didn’t get a great performance review.

What now?

Okay, so what do we do now? How do we replenish the workforce currently being depleted by the Boomers moving on? We talk about work ethic, dress code, the need to arrive at work on time, but what are we doing about it?

Yes, parents seem to have abdicated their responsibility for instilling these values in their children. But we, as a society, need to step up and take over where parents left off. It falls upon us to take these kids in tow, become their friends, and mentor them into an efficient, productive workforce. Because if the employers don’t do it, who will?

Employers absolutely must respond to the needs of these young workers by providing such previously unheard of things such as free food, fun, and flexibility on the job. Threatening tactics don’t work anymore. The young worker just doesn’t care if he or she works for you or someone down the street. They are, after all, still living at home, with support and encouragement from their parents. Is adolescence lasting until thirty? Maybe, but maybe not. But I do know one thing. I’ve met many young workers who are enthusiastic about their jobs and they want to be productive employees – they are just not sure what’s expected of them.

What they need

But more than expectations, they need coaching, mentors, and friends. Because, after all, they don’t believe they work **for** you; they feel that they work **with** you. There’s a major difference in the thought processes behind those two words. “Big Brother” breathing down their necks will have them jumping ship faster than you can say, “Man overboard.”

Last but not least, to all my Boomer and Xer friends, these kids are in control of *our destiny*. They will control the money, the programs, and the social services needed to keep our standard of living at or above what we are used to.

Be kind; be gentle, but also offer guidance and advice. Don’t demand, but ask. Don’t assume; explain. You’ll be surprised at the result. A great new, young, energetic workforce will be yours. Sure, they won’t look and act like your more senior employees, but that doesn’t mean they won’t be just as valuable to your organization (or perhaps more?).

Linda Thompson is the author of *Planning for Tomorrow, Your Passport to a Confident Future*, a common sense approach to life planning; and *A Caregiver’s Journey, You Are Not Alone*, a survival guide for working caregivers. Linda’s most recent book is *Every Generation Needs a New Revolution, How Six Generations Across Nine Decades can Find Harmony and Peaceful Coexistence*. To find out more about Linda’s books and presentation topics, visit her web site at <http://LifePathSolutions.biz>.