



LEADING AND ENGAGING A MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

Sustaining Employee Engagement to achieve Organisational Success

The New Realities

Demographic and social trends will have a significant impact on the workforce in the coming years. Thus, in today's struggling global economy, it is more important than ever that organizations leverage the knowledge, skills and abilities of all workers, from all generations. By capitalizing on the strengths and values of different generations, business leaders can create a sustainable competitive advantage for their organizations.

An unprecedented number of workers from four generations – Traditionalist, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers and Gen Yers – are working alongside one another and bringing their own values, goals and communication approaches to the workplace. Such generational dynamics in the workplace affect morale, productivity, recruitment and retention. Organizations are facing immediate challenges when it comes to optimizing productivity, protecting profits and growing their businesses.

Each Generation bring different experiences, perspectives, expectations, work styles and strengths to the workplace. Despite the perceived "generation gap" from differing views and potential conflict, organizations have the opportunity to capitalize on the assets of each generation to achieve competitive advantage.

Role of Leader in Engaging the Multi-Generational Workforce

Managers who harness this unprecedented opportunity for growth, development, and collaboration, and build bridges between generations, will thrive in particular in today's turbulent economic landscape.

For Managers who have four generations of employees sitting in a meeting or working on a project, it can seem like each generation has its own worldviews, priorities, career models, motives and values. Manager need to enhance their understanding of generational characteristics and the impact of their own management practices on each of these groups. Managers need to leverage on the strengths of each generation. Taking full advantage of the multi-generational workforce will enable employers to effectively attract and retain employees, build teams, deal with change, and increase employee engagement.

Impact of Leadership Effectiveness on Employee Engagement and Organizational Success

Organizations need to deliver service value and build good customer relationships in order to generate sustainable results through their satisfied and loyal customers. Employees being at the fore-front of the service delivery chain hold the key to building the satisfied and loyal customer base (See Figure 1).

Employees who are engaged and motivated are instrumental in delivering the service experience. The level of employee engagement is dependent on the “Organizational Climate”; where “Organizational Climate” (sometimes known as Corporate Climate) here simply refers to “how employees feel about working in the organization/business unit/department/division.” Organizational climate is the process of quantifying the “culture” of an organization. It is a set of properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by the employees, that is assumed to be a major force in influencing employee behavior and engagement.

“Organizational Culture” refers to the shared values, beliefs, or perceptions held by employees of an organization. Having an “Organizational Culture” that enhances employee commitment and capability will lead to increase in customer loyalty. Achieving a “Conscious Business” (Fred Kofman, 2006) culture requires impeccable coordination amongst the team members, authentic communication with one another, and engaging in constructive negotiations in their dealings with one another and other stakeholders.

We know that leaders create, transform and manage organizational cultures. The leader’s values, beliefs and leadership styles will impact the organization’s climate. We need “Level 5 Leaders” (Jim Collins, 2001) who demonstrate ontological humility and possess emotional mastery. They also need to possess essential integrity in discharging their day to day role and responsibilities towards engaging the employees.

Figure1





Reverse Mentoring

Mentoring does not only have to mean older workers coaching their younger counterparts; younger employees have a lot to offer older workers, too. Specifically, Gen Yers' cutting-edge technology skill set can help transform organizations—if the organization seeks their input. Organizations that don't take advantage of this risk falling far behind. Managers should encourage Gen Yers to share their expertise with older workers. Gen Yers are naturally predisposed to helping others, and like to feel they are contributing and making a difference.

Conclusion

The multigenerational workforce offers both challenge and opportunity. In the current labor market, the Traditionalist is delaying retirement (or returning to work), Baby Boomers are beginning to retire, Generation Xers have realigned their work/family priorities and Generation Yers is entering the workforce with distinctly different demands of their employers than those of previous generations.

Because engaged employees are already performing well, some managers think they should leave them alone. However, "Great managers do just the opposite...they spend most of their time with their most productive and talented employees because they have the most potential. A manager who coaxes an average performance from a below-average employee still has an average performer. But a manager who coaches a good employee to greatness gains a great performer." Engaged employees can inspire other employees, furthering positive change within the organization.



PROFILE OF AUTHOR: PROFESSOR SATTAR BAWANY



Professor Sattar Bawany is the Master Executive Coach with EDA Asia Pacific based in Singapore and the Honorary Academic Advisor of IPMA Asia Pacific. He has over 25 years' international business management experience, including 15 years in executive coaching, group facilitation, and leadership development and training with global management consulting firms.

Prof Bawany is also a Member of Frontier Strategy Group's Expert Advisory Network (EAN) on Human Capital Management Issues.

In addition to his business and consulting career, Prof Bawany has over 10 years of concurrent academic experience as an Adjunct Professor teaching senior executives international business strategies and human resource courses at various leading universities including Paris Graduate School of Management.

Prof Bawany was until recently the Managing Director and Coaching Practice Leader for DBM Asia Pacific, a global human capital consulting firm in the career transition and talent development/coaching space. Prior to joining DBM, he has assumed various senior management roles including Regional Business Leader, Business Development Head, Coaching Practice Head and Executive Coach with Mercer HR Consulting, The Hay Group and The Forum Corporation.

Prof Bawany is an astute advisor to executives who need to know how they are perceived and want to focus on what is most important in their professional and personal lives. He has coached a range of leaders, from CEOs, to senior vice presidents, and high potential managers. His current work in organisations focuses on encouraging individual initiative and leadership from a systemic perspective in order to achieve clearly defined business results. His specialty is effectively linking people processes to business outcomes.

He is a Graduate of Corporate Coach U and a Licensed Coaching Clinic Facilitator. He is certified in the administration and application of various psychometric instruments including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator™ (MBTI), Bar-On EQ 360™ and EQ-i™. He is also certified in the administration and application of the MRG's suite of instruments including "Leadership Effectiveness Analysis™" (LEA 360 Assessment tool) and "Strategic Leadership Development". He is also accredited in the administration and application of the Benchmarks® and Skillscope® Profiling Instruments.

He holds an Executive MBA from Golden Gate University and a Bachelor in Business Administration (Marketing) from Curtin University. He is currently pursuing his PhD in Business Administration with Asia e University and his Doctoral Research is on "The Impact of Executive Coaching on the Personal & Professional Development of Leaders".

Prof Bawany is a Fellow of International Professional Managers Association (IPMA) and The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM). He is a Professional Member of the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). He is also a Practicing Member of the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and International Association of Coaching (IAC).

He is a highly effective facilitator and coach and has been very well regarded by his clients for his practical "how to" approach, and for his ability to communicate with his audiences and to make workplace learning fun and a pleasurable experience.

Prof Bawany can be contacted at: eda.singapore@gmail.com