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Five Steps to Getting the Best Out of Generation Y'ers for Your Business

The Takeaway

The Tourism and hospitality industry relies heavily on the skills and talents of young people at the customer interface. Right now this means trusting in "Generation Y" to add value to "credit crunch" customer expectations in a demanding and competitive market place. However, Generation Y employees have different values to previous generations and present real challenges to more traditional learning and development solutions. HT Training's new white paper suggests five steps to help you get the most for your business out of your young talent and keep your customers satisfied.

Gen Y - What's all the fuss about?

Generation Y exploded into our workplaces a few years ago plugged into their ipods and fully loaded with challenging expectations. Born between 1980 and 1999 they typically:

- Are highly educated and well informed.
- Have technology imbedded into their daily lives.
- Are likely to have a strong self sense of worth.
- May appear to embrace change and will change for changes sake.
- Work to live not live to work.
- Are "Sir Richard Branson meets Paris Hilton", according to specialist research consultancy Ask Gen Y.
- Have a savage appetite for the sort of knowledge that can't be found online or in a text book.
- Adopt the attitude "tell me straight I want to fix it".
- Are typically highly mobile, fickle and adventurous.

Step One – Change Traditional Thinking

Accept that Gen Y are different. The times we live in are also different. Recognise that as an employer you are less likely to be able to offer long term job security in return for your employee's loyalty. But you can offer employability. The US government predicts that by the age of 38, the average Gen Y'er will have had between 10 and 14 jobs. Instead of security you could trade their loyalty for future employability, ensuring that this becomes the best two years of their working life.

Things you could do.....

1. Review your employee contract. Why is it possible to personalise customer contracts but not employee ones? Where are the opportunities to be more creative and flexible? Could you negotiate flexibility in the same way you negotiate pay?



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2. Ask the Gen Y employee "How can we make this the best Summer Job/2 years of your working life?" and listen to them. Incorporate ideas into their personal development plans in line with overall business aims and goals.

Step Two – Harness the power of technology

Gen Y are used to 24/7 access to the internet and many will already host their own blogs or web sites that interact with the world and where they share their private thoughts, opinions and experiences. In the most recent series of the BBC's "The Apprentice", fan sites, Twitter accounts and Facebook fans are commenting on each episode in real time during the show.

Things you could do.....

1. Provide access to PC's in staff areas and make sure that they can log onto their favourite social networking site. Many Gen Y'ers are far away from home and would welcome PC access to Facebook, gMail and Twitter during their scheduled breaks.
2. Start your own employer site on Facebook, MySpace, Twitter or any other social networking site. Give your employees the ability to blog and post what they are up to and communicate with each other.
3. Create virtual "team rooms" on your company intranet for key teams within the organisation where employees can post and share up to date department information, customer notes and make suggestions.

Step Three – Operate a mentor scheme

Gen Y want information that is caught **NOT** taught. They are hungry for professional knowledge, the sort of knowledge that generally comes with experience. Harness their impatience and create a work based mentor scheme that gives them access to senior managers, drives their motivation and improves their skill base.

Things you could do.....

1. Launch an in- company mentor scheme for all new recruits.
2. Incorporate life skills into your training and development program. These could incorporate a wide cross section of topics and examples include:

Managing your money

Many of your younger employees will be studying at University or may have graduated recently with significant personal debt or a student loan that they have to pay back



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now they are working. Reduce stress and improve productivity by running a free session on "managing your money" for those new to the workplace?

English as a second language

Improve the confidence and skill of your employees for whom English is a second language. Run your own in-house classes in conjunction with local education professionals and local colleges. This way the group can focus on improving their workplace English and become more confident to deal with your customers.

Step Four – Transparent Talent Management

Make sure your organisation has a clear career development path that you can share with your potential young talent at interview stage and during induction. Your appraisal and performance review system needs to demonstrate to individuals that they have a clear and defined plan for their own career development during the time that they stay with your organisation. Go the extra mile by ensuring they have the necessary support to achieve their goals. Add perceived value by offering nationally recognised vocational skills and qualifications that can be transferred to future employers.

Things you could do include.....

1. Signpost potential employees to your Facebook site which includes stories and experiences of existing Gen Y'ers in your organisation currently benefiting from your professional development initiatives.
2. Add "case studies" to your external web site that demonstrate your commitment to young talent development.
3. Work in partnership with external funding agencies to tap into National and Regional Funding to support ongoing professional development.
4. Operate an effective performance review and appraisal system that links into ongoing professional development and learning.
5. Build nationally recognised professional qualifications into your training programmes.
6. Incorporate action learning sets into your induction program using your new recruits as nominated experts for designated sets.



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Step Five – Daily feedback

Coursework and continual assessment at school, college and university has meant that Gen Y'ers have largely been drip fed feedback at regular intervals on their progress through the education system. They prefer to know what they are doing right or wrong NOW so that they can fix it or build on it quickly. Consider the rapid rise of social networking site Twitter which simply answers the question in 150 characters or less "what am I doing now?".

How can you creatively incorporate the answer to "how am I doing now?" into your companies culture and timetable?

Things you could do include.....

1. Introduce a "How are you doing now?" initiative for Managers which would see them engaging on a daily basis with their teams and individual staff.
2. Open up text and social networking channels for employee communication.
3. Provide instant access to customer feedback through intranet sites and trip advisor...managers could receive a text when a new post for your hotel, venue or attraction is published. Circulate this instantly to the team and give them the opportunity to take the necessary action.

Summary

The current economic climate means stiffer competition amongst the unemployed and newly graduated for jobs. Cutbacks in HR and Training reflect these challenging times, however, successful businesses looking to thrive and grow will recognise that to deliver value added service and exceed customer expectations they need to manage and motivate talent effectively.

Five steps to getting the most out of Generation Y for your business:

1. Change traditional thinking
2. Harness the power of technology
3. Operate a mentor scheme
4. Transparent talent management
5. Daily feedback



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WHITE PAPER DETAILS

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