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Engaging the Power of a Multigenerational Workforce

The world is changing. Today, we see greater diversity of ages in the workplace. Some companies may have as many as five different generations working together. With all of these different generations in one workplace, managers are faced with a variety of backgrounds, expectations, experiences, and preferences.

In most workplaces today, the primary active workforce is made up of Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z, while some Traditionalists remain employed or serve in advisory roles. The common characteristics that are shown do not necessarily define each generation.

Traditionalists (Silent Generation) born 1928–1945 and they are loyal, disciplined, value structure and experience.

Baby Boomers born 1946–1964 and they have strong work ethic, team-oriented, value dedication and stability

Generation X born 1965–1980 and they are independent, adaptable, value work-life balance

Millennials (Generation Y) born 1981–1996 and they are tech-savvy, collaborative, purpose-driven, value flexibility.

And last but not least is **Generation Z born** 1997–2012 and are digital natives, entrepreneurial, value diversity, inclusion, and flexibility

It's important to recognize the value a multigenerational workforce can add to an organization. One type of value added is superior results through increased diversity. How does this work? Think innovation. In a recent study, 86% of participants said they come up with more innovative ideas and solutions from working in a multigenerational

team of colleagues with at least 10 years of age difference between them.

Workers with years of experience can offer skills honed over time and perspectives based on their history in the organization. Younger colleagues can bring an easy familiarity with digital applications and savvy connections to modern culture. This combination of different kinds of experience and expertise creates a dynamic environment for generating diverse ideas and superior solutions.

Another value that multiple generations can bring to an organization is a rich pool of skill sets. A mix of older and younger workers can offer a synergy and diverse mix of talents; that's an asset for companies. Often, these generations have different attitudes and work practices that enhance their skill sets.

Employees from an older generation may value loyalty and a steady work ethic as well as consistency and stability. Younger generations often hold mindsets that emphasize the flexibility and agility needed to deliver in the modern marketplace. Every generation has advantages that can contribute in different ways to a competitive workforce. By placing these age-diverse peers together, managers and their teams can learn and grow through daily interaction.

When colleagues from different generations work together, they learn about each other as individuals. They can begin to dismiss inaccurate assumptions as they learn firsthand what people of different ages, genders, and cultures are thinking and expecting. This can lead to a greater open-mindedness and acceptance. Breaking stereotypes is crucial for the health of an organization. An office devoid of stereotyping attracts diverse employee talent and customers, too.

Finally, consider the business advantage of shared wisdom through an exchange of ideas across generations. Each generation has its

own experiences, knowledge, and judgments to share. Older colleagues often have experience in the field and a deep understanding of how things work.

Younger colleagues may bring fresh perspectives that can influence and direct idea creation. They're often less limited by "this is how we do it here" mentalities and questionable assumptions based on successes in the past. In a multigenerational workforce, these different types and sources of wisdom are naturally shared as team members exchange ideas.

Law of Influence

The Law of Influence says your influence is determined by how abundantly you place the other person's interests first. Now, this may sound counterproductive at best. But it's actually quite practical. When you really think about it, the greatest leaders, the top influencers, the highest-producing salespeople, this is simply how they run their lives and conduct their businesses.

Now, let me qualify this. When I say, "place other people's interests first," I certainly don't mean you should be anyone's doormat, a martyr or self-sacrificial in any way. It's simply that the golden rule of business, is that all things being equal, people will do business with and refer business to those people they know, like, and trust.

And there's no faster, more powerful, or more effective way to elicit those feelings toward you from others than by genuinely and authentically moving from an "I" focus or a "me" focus to an "other" focus. Looking for ways to make your win about the other person's win. And, you know, you can begin doing this the very moment you meet someone, whether online or in person. It's simply a matter of asking, "How do I add value to that person's life?" And when you meet someone for the first time, it's investing 99.9% of the conversation with this person, asking questions about them and their business.

For example, let's say Tom sells copying machines. You might ask, "Tom, how did you

get started selling copying machines?" Well, it's a simple, mundane question and it's all about him. Not about you or your products or services. And he feels great about that because he's rarely been asked that question.

You might then ask, "What do you enjoy most about it?" These are what I call "feel-good questions" because they simply make this person feel good about himself, about you, and about the conversation. And to communicate to that person that you're a person of potential value in their life.

You can also ask what I call the one key question that will set you apart from everyone and truly position you as a person of value, a person of influence. And that is, "Tom, how can I know if someone I'm speaking with is a good prospect for you?" What have you done when asking that question? Two things.

First, you continue to show him that your focus is on adding value to him. And secondly, you've asked the question in such a way that his answer will help you to help him. He'll probably say, "Well, if you're ever in an office and notice a copying machine and that copying machine is filled to the rim and overflowing with crumpled-up pieces of paper, that's a good sign that copying machine has been breaking down a lot lately, and that would be an excellent prospect for me.

So, he feels good about you and the relationship can now be developed further. That's just a start, of course. There are many ways to add value to a person. If you want to be a person of influence, find those ways, including connecting good people with other good people. Remember, the Law of Influence says your influence is determined by how abundantly you place the other person's interests first. And by focusing on doing that constantly and consistently, you're creating the context for massive influence in your life and in your business.

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