

Communication with the digital generation

Whether we call them millennials, digital natives or generation Y, people born after 1980 have a different relationship to technology than those born before. As a manager, it is important to engage multiple generations and access their different skill sets and proficiencies. It can feel isolating and confusing to have such different experiences, values and abilities in relation to the people you work with. As someone older you can feel threatened or lost in relation to younger people's ways of using technology socially and professionally. This generation is going to be more and more present in the workforce, and while they are for the most part still too young to fill roles in executive leadership, there's no question they will be filling leadership roles sooner than later.



Both recognizing and integrating their skills into your management style will help keep your company current and competitive. Here are some ways to integrate the skills and knowledge of the millennial generation into your management.

Understand digital reputation management

One skill that millennials have access to that the generations before them often don't is a sense of how important online reputation building is. For this generation, the individual not only exists in face-to-face encounters, but also has one or even several versions of themselves that exist online. Millennials have less of a distinction between their private lives and work lives, as social media pushes these spheres into overlapping territory. This is a way that people brand themselves and build their reputations over social media. Be aware of this when you see them engaging with these tools - it's not just fun or social to them, it's actually integral to their work lives as well.

Use their skills

Millennials have an unparalleled proficiency with all things digital. Put these skills to good use by making social media a part of your business profile, both on the level of your company and as an individual. To better understand the people you work with, make a Facebook page, open an Instagram account, and start Tweeting. This will allow you greater access to the way millennials think and communicate, and you won't be left in the dark when information is shared via these means.

Ask for help

In relation to the above, don't be afraid to show that you don't have the same proficiency when it comes to social media as your direct reports. Ask for help on how to use these tools - sharing knowledge can be a wonderful way to build team morale.

Share your knowledge

Recognize that you too have access to unique generational skills and abilities. While millennials have great facility with social media and online communication, some of them have less experience with face-to-face communication. Organize knowledge sharing sessions where different generations can exchange their specific generational skill-sets.

When you're working with people from a different generation, pay attention not only to their different skill sets but also to differing values. Listen to the younger generation and don't expect that they view work and success in the same way as previous generations. Making room for this diversity is paramount in building a happy and well-rounded team.