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Hiring Adjustments For Generations X And Y

By Derrick Moe

Work-life balance. Flexible work hours. Corporate mission. What is the point of focusing on these non-traditional hiring topics? Two letters - X and Y. Generation X (born between 1963 and 1980) and Generation Y (born after 1980) are establishing a more prominent position within the employment landscape as the Baby Boomers prepare to exit the workforce. The shift to these younger generations is prompting a new focus in hiring tactics.

The Baby Boomer generation was cut from the cloth of work first and foremost, climb the corporate ladder and retire with a healthy pension plan. Those days are all but gone. Today, younger workers are creating a paradigm shift in employee hiring based on their priorities. We have observed this accelerating transition firsthand over the past 2 years.

We work with companies in many market spaces, industries and geographic locations. The hiring landscape has already changed and companies that do not frequently hire may be unaware of the new focus. Certain patterns exist today that are universally consistent when hiring Gen X and Gen Y employees.

--WORK-LIFE BALANCE-- Perhaps there is no more profound shift in values than this topic. Gen X, and even more so Gen Y, is focused on a position's time requirements. This isn't to say the younger generations are not hard workers. On the contrary, they put tremendous effort into their work, but they also place a high value on their personal time away from the office. This balanced approach has been mistakenly interpreted by the Baby Boomers as a "slacker mentality."

The younger generations search for opportunities where they can grow their skill set without having to sacrifice every other area of their life. As an employer, it is imperative to understand this desired balance. Positions that lack the needed support, tools or technology often will be a red flag to the Gen X or Y candidate. The reward for accepting such a position clearly has to outweigh the perceived imbalance it may cause in their life.

--SKILLS PATH-- Most people are familiar with the term "career path." The Baby Boomer generation experienced a marketplace where preordained opportunities existed to climb the corporate ladder

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within the same company. Today's younger generations generally do not have such consistent opportunities before them. More importantly, many of the younger generation do not subscribe to the same loyalty as the Baby Boomers.

Gen X and Y candidates are looking for a "skills path." They desire to understand what skills are needed to be successful in the position today. The long-term incentive is to understand what skills they will personally develop or acquire within the company. They prefer a horizontal management structure and respond to personal skill development. Titles are out. Responsibilities are in. It is imperative to share with the candidates the responsibilities they will inherit as their skills become more advanced over their tenure with the company.

—SHERPA MANAGERS— As mentioned, the younger generations have a fairly horizontal view of the org chart - whether accurate or not. We have seen this approach wreak havoc in an office dominated by Baby Boomers. The Baby Boomers expect an almost military-style chain of command while the

younger generations have a more fluid approach to positions of authority.

Gen X and Y highly value the manager-employee relationship. They view their manager as a guide - an experienced Sherpa to make sure they are on the right path. In debriefing Gen X and Y employees after they are hired, the vast majority consistently mention the impression of their manager as having the most influence on their decision to join the company. The hiring manager needs to connect with the Gen X and Y candidate on a personal level during the interview process. Clearly the manager-employee relationship is a two-way street so this approach affords the hiring manager a beneficial insight into the candidate also.

—WORK SMARTER NOT HARDER— These generations are plugged-in to technology from Bluetooth to Blackberries. They have spent much of their working careers, even entire lives for some, having Internet information available to them at a moment's notice. This fact can work against employers in that these younger candidates are savvy about Internet job boards and have a tendency to always have an eye out for new opportunities.

However, the upside of this technological ability is far greater. A subtle item we have observed among Gen X and Y candidates is their strategic thinking. Their youthful age belies the fact that they have sharp minds for understanding macro markets. We have seen these younger candidates ask amazingly insightful questions that make the hiring managers pause during the interview. We have also seen strong candidates pass on opportunities because they were skeptical of the hiring company's shallow business plans.

The Gen X workforce will be ascending into prominent management positions at a brisk pace over the next 5 years. The next wave of change will occur in the management ranks as they shift the hiring process away from the Baby Boomer approach. The aforementioned topics will move to the forefront of the hiring process as the newly crowned Gen X managers hire the Gen Y employees. Until that happens, progressive companies will perceive these current shifts and adjust their hiring tactics in advance.

Derrick Moe is a Managing Partner of Select Metrix, a process-based hiring firm located in Minneapolis, MN that specializes in sales selection services. Select Metrix uses an array of approach & assessment techniques to find the strongest salesperson for clients' specific needs. For more info visit

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I Don't Need A Resume - I Can Tell Them What I Do When I Get There

By Ann Baehr

Gone are the good old days when you could walk in off the street and speak with the hiring manager for a competitive position. Although some companies still operate that way, a resume is usually required first.

Pretend for a moment that you are a hiring manager. The receptionist knocks on your office door and announces that Mr. Smith has arrived to interview for the currently advertised pharmaceutical sales representative position. Baffled, the hiring manager states that there must be a misunderstanding because she never scheduled Mr. Smith for an interview. She instructs the receptionist to tell Mr. Smith to forward his resume and cover letter to express his interest in the company and the position.

Some people might think the hiring manager should have interviewed Mr. Smith since he showed an effort to apply for the position. Others would have done exactly what the hiring manager did. Why? Because she didn't know anything about this candidate. She would have been unprepared to address his qualifications without having had the opportunity to review his resume beforehand. What's more, she really didn't understand what his situation was or if he even qualified for the job. For example, does he have a required bachelor's degree? Does he have sales experience? Is his background in bio chemistry, pharmaceuticals or in medical equipment sales? Is he a job-hopper? Was he out of work for many years? Is he changing careers? Did he recently relocate? These are all very important factors to consider when trying to paint a picture of a candidate to get a feel for who they are and how they would be a good fit for the company.

This is why it is so important that a resume is sent first so that the hiring manager can PRE-QUALIFY a jobseeker. This saves a lot of time and hurt feelings. After all, why would the hiring manager want to spend a half hour interviewing a candidate that does not qualify for the position? If every unqualified candidate showed up unannounced and was interviewed, there wouldn't be time to interview the qualified candidates! Believe it or not, there are still occasions when a resume is not needed. But, that is only when a company invites applicants to fill out a job application form or if there is a mutual acquaintance who puts in a good word for the candidate, and the hiring manager schedules and interview without needing to see a resume. Keep in mind, the hiring manager has been introduced already by the mutual acquaintance who has done the job that the combination of a resume and cover letter --- the dynamic duo --- is intended to do: to introduce them to the reader and to provide a professional background and expressed interest in a company and a particular position.

Ann Baehr is a CPRW and President of Best Resumes of New York. Notable credentials include her former role as Second Vice President of NRWA and contribution to 25+ resume and cover letter sample books. To learn more visit

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