



“Cool” Is the New Recruiting Tool

You can't attract and motivate younger workers with the same old methods. Here are some new approaches.

By Joanne G. Sujansky

The first of 80 million young people born between 1984 and 2002 have entered the workplace, and boy are they shaking things up! The millennials (also called Generation Y) are technologically savvy multi-taskers, and they bring a different attitude with them. And if managing them is formidable, recruiting and retaining them are even bigger challenges.

For many Gen Yers, a fun and engaging work environment is as important as a good salary. A job that pays well but has a tedious atmosphere won't keep these free agents for long. They'll likely take their skills and education to a “cooler” organization.

Does Your Organization Have the “Cool Factor”?

How can you tell which organizations possess that elusive factor? Here's what some of the coolest organizations are doing to bring employees together, foster communication, encourage flexibility, and promote loyalty:

Creative communications. Boring meetings have been replaced with fun events, everything from special trips and theme days to paint-ball fights.

Contests and rewards. Service competitions are only the beginning. These days organizations are also offering employees prizes for completing training programs and receiving knowledge certifications. To build enthusiasm, many organizations let employees define the prizes.

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Employee-centered facilities. “Cool” organizations offer open office layouts (no walls), exercise rooms, healthy and hip refreshments, Internet cafes, and on-site services, such as dry-cleaning pick-up and childcare.

Work flexibility. Time continues to be a powerful recruiting tool, with flex-time, family leave, and work-from-home options topping the list.

If there's a common theme to these perks, it's the message to employees, “You matter to us. Your well-being, comfort, and enthusiasm are an important ingredient to our success.”

But Don't Go to Disneyland

Fun and games aren't all it takes to attract and retain talented millennials. In addition to innovative workplaces, they're looking for meaningful, engaging work.

One manager expressed her frustration dealing with her Gen Y employees. “They think they know everything, starting from day one,” she complained. “One of our employees was telling me about better ways to do things after she was on the job less than 30 days!”

You can't afford to squash that kind of enthusiasm! Why not ask that new employee to dig into a department-wide problem, explore some causes, build some relationships, and provide suggestions?

This way you tap that supreme confidence and give your rookie a feel for her new workplace.

Organizations of all sizes are restructuring their work environments to attract and retain more Gen Y employees. While millennials can be a handful sometimes, they can also be enthusiastic, energetic, visionary workers. The key is knowing how to connect with them. ■

Joanne G. Sujansky, Ph.D., C.S.P. (Certified Speaking Professional) is CEO of KEYGroup® (keygroupconsulting.com), which is a leader in making workplaces more productive.

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Keep Your Cool

More ways to connect with the cool generation (www.snpo.org/members):

- **How to Overcome Organizational Indifference** (Vol. 24, No. 2)
- **Are You Prepared for the Multigenerational Workplace?** (Vol. 28, No. 6)
- **Nonprofits Can Be Cool** (Vol. 21, No. 1)
- **How to Use Your Organizational Culture as a Competitive Tool** (Vol. 20, No. 2)
- **The Millennium Generation and the End of Charity** (Vol. 29, No. 2)