A Physician's Perspective on the Four Generations of Today's Workforce

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ABSTRACT

Today's workforce has a mixture of all the four generations, and here one has to understand the differences in their values, and experiences in order to be able to work in a homogenous and a friendly environment. For business leaders to implement a total rewards plan, they should be able to know who will design the plan, what types of rewards are included, how will it be funded, and how it will operate. Missing any of these points will risk developing a plan that delivers bad outcomes once implemented
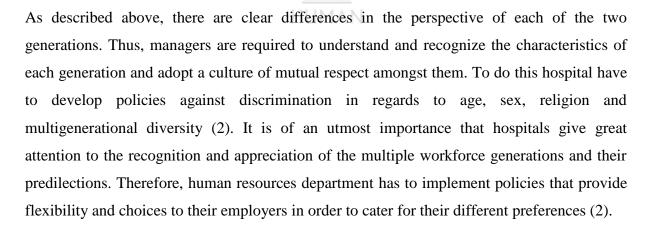
INTRODUCTION

The four generations of today's workforce has been described as the traditionalist's (before 1945), baby boomers (1946-1964), generation X (1965-1978), and millennials (1979-present) (1). Today's workforce has a mixture of all the four generations, and here one has to understand the differences in their values, and experiences in order to be able to work in a homogenous and a friendly environment. The Baby boomers workforce has been described to work with individuality, they are driven by goals for success, they measure work ethics in hours worked and financial rewards, they believe in teamwork, emphasize relationship building, expect loyalty from co-workers, they believe that their career equals their identity, and the seek for work-life balance (1). On the other extreme comes the Millennials who are image conscious with a need for constant feedback and support, who value prompt gratification and are idealists, team-oriented, and prefer open communication. They seek for a person who can help them achieve their goals, and look for jobs that fulfill their personal needs and search for ways to reduce their stresses and look at racial and ethnic identification as the least important (1).

GAP ANALYSIS

As described above, there are clear differences in the perspective of each of the two generations. Thus, managers are required to understand and recognize the characteristics of each generation and adopt a culture of mutual respect amongst them. To do this hospital have to develop policies against discrimination in regards to age, sex, religion and multigenerational diversity (2). It is of an utmost importance that hospitals give great attention to the recognition and appreciation of the multiple workforce generations and their predilections. Therefore, human resources department has to implement policies that provide flexibility and choices to their employers in order to cater for their different preferences (2).

With the Baby Boomer impending retirement, organizations are concerned due to the urgent need that will arise to fill critical leadership positions. There is shrinkage in the pool of 25- to 65-year-olds. In 2020, the supply of skilled labor in the US, and similarly in Saudi Arabia, will not catch up with the increasing demands of the workforce where there aren't enough workers from younger generations to take their places (3). When the Baby Boomers start to retire, they will leave a gap in the upper management positions since the younger generations are inexperienced to fill in these gaps. Increased focus is needed to be applied on skills, labor

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shortages and retention of the current and future workforce in order to fill in the talent of the older retired workers (2).

Implementation and creation of a policy and program development and management strategies to attract and retain the four generations in today's workplace (2). Therefore, human resource departments can adopt the Total Rewards program to achieve this.

THE ELEMENTS OF TOTAL REWARDS

The Total Rewards consist of five elements that include programs, practices, elements and dimensions that describe an organization's strategy to attract, motivate and retain employees. The 5elementsare: Compensation, Benefits, Work-Life, Performance and Recognition, Development and Career Opportunities (4).

These elements help the organization choose and align a value proposition that creates value for both the organization and the employee. The main aim of the total rewards is to enhance the business performance and results which can be achieved with satisfied, engaged and productive employees. The elements, as World at Work has defined them, are not mutually exclusive and are not intended to represent the ways that companies organize or deploy programs and elements within them (4).

The program provides the desired outcome of attracting, motivating and retaining satisfied and engaged employees who create business performance and results (4). It also determines the dynamic relationship between employees and employers by allowing the employees to contribute in time, talent and efforts for desired business outcomes (4).

The Compensation has been defined as a "Pay provided by an employer to an employee for services rendered (i.e. time, effort and skill)"'; they include fixed and variable pay tied to levels of performance.

Benefits are defined as cash compensation provided by the employer to the employees; they in turn provide protection, savings and retirement programs that give security for employees and their families.

Work-Life has been defined as "A specific set of organizational practices, policies and programs, plus a philosophy that actively supports efforts to help employees achieve success at both work and home"(4).

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PERFORMANCE & RECOGNITION

Performance: It works on establishing expectations, skill demonstration, assessment, feedback and continuous improvement of team and individual efforts toward the achievement of business goals and organizational success (4).

Recognition: Programs that acknowledges employee actions, efforts, behavior or performance immediately after the fact and appreciates the efforts and can support business strategy which eventually adds to organizational success. The awards are not necessarily monetary; they can also be non-cash like trophies, certificates, plaques, dinners, tickets (4).

Development and Career Opportunities: Development: Learning experiences of the employee that enhances applied skills and competencies and engages employees to perform better and pushes leaders to advance their organizations' people strategies (4). Career Opportunities: Opportunities for employees to advance their career goals. These may be progression into a more responsible position in an organization. Supporting career opportunities internally can help delivering added value to the organization (4).

RETAINING STAFF OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

To meet hospital's workforce, steps need to be taken to retain current staff since they already have the training, experience, skills, and understanding of the organization and its culture. Members of Baby Boomers are different than Millenials, for example. Managers have to recognize and acknowledge the characteristics of the four generations and foster a culture of respect for all the generations not only in the workplace but also in the patient population (1). To retain staff of different generations it is, therefore, crucial to appoint managers who understand the multiple workforce generations and managers have to change the traditional human resources policies which were applied uniformly to all workers with policies and programs that include flexibility and choices in regards to roles, schedules, and benefits for continuing to work full- or part-time (1).

ATTRACTING STAFF OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

Millenials have different cultural expectations than what a typical hospital has. A typical hospital culture usually has a Hierarchical workplace, 24 hour and fixed schedules, prefers face to face communication, separates between work and personal life, limited career

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mobility, and education is not articulated to facilitate progression and is highly regulated (1). The Millenials on the other hand, prefer to have workplace flexibility, flexible schedules, they like to multi-task, prefer texting and cell phone communication, like to integrate between work and personal time, have multiple jobs and are self-directed (1). With these preferences, it becomes mandatory for hospitals to change their cultural beliefs and adapt to the new Millennial generation predilections in terms of its dependence on virtual networks, instant communications, social networking, and flexible activities and hospitals need to evaluate their organizational cultures and work on understanding the diversity of their workforce, including the young generation entering the workforce (1). Additionally, Baby Boomers, for instance, prefer to work for managers that treat them as equals, take a democratic approach, work in teams to achieve a mission, are caring and assure them that they are making a difference. For instance, certain managerial preferences that appeal to one generation may not appeal to the others (1).

Therefore, in order to attract the new generation of workers managers need to lead jointly with their employees and give lots of feedback. Managers also need to provide part-time and project-based positions for younger generations which give more value for and help identify what kind of employee he will be. Most importantly, get the different generations linked together in that senior employees teach skills like negotiation to the young ones, and have the young generation teach technical skills to the Baby Boomers and the Traditionalists (1).

Hospitals need to educate and mentor the young generations about the expectations from the elder generation in respect to the generational differences in dress, cosmetics, body art, and communication patterns, as well as to differences in expectation by gender, race, and ethnicity. Additionally, there should be clear policies and guidelines for access use of internet sites, and social networking sites (1).

Ways that have been described to motivate employees are to provide employees with information and resources to perform a good job, get their input, question what motivates them, congratulate them for excellent performance, recognize their needs, establish good communication with them by being accessible (5).

It is essential to have a good design and execution of the rewards program. In 1996, Neuborne had described how organizations were offering rewards in their organizations. They had a New Pay reward that is linked to the achievement of the strategic objectives.

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There have been several attempts by the HR professionals and managers to come up with new types of rewards; they had eventually discovered that the right total rewards system is a mixture of both monetary and nonmonetary rewards to employees that results in valuable individual and organizational performance to improved job satisfaction, employee loyalty, and workforce morale. For a total rewards program to succeed, companies have to ensure proper design, delivery, execution plan and eventually the means to evaluate them (6).

TOTAL REWARDS, A LOOK WITH SCRUTINY

Total reward program does not only include the compensation and benefits given to employees, it also encompasses personal and professional growth along with a motivating work environment. These new incentive programs can be explained due to the inability of the cost-conscious organizations to propose higher earnings and benefits. Employers had to find alternative forms of rewards that cost less to implement and motivate employees to excel (6).

Following a process to properly implement the total rewards program is crucial for the success of the program. In an organization like ours, KFMC, implementing such a new total rewards program will be a definite challenge especially that HR personnel lacks the adequate training and knowledge of such a program. It is essential that the program goes through the four phases of implementation: assessment, design, execution, and evaluation, and it is similarly important to get feedback from employees in the organization. A proficient implementation of the rewards program can provide organizations a competitive edge and produce the business outcomes that are linked to strategy (6).

These outcomes maybe employee retention, productivity, job satisfaction, or service quality that is provided by a well-designed and implemented total rewards system can provide (6).

ASSEMBLING THE RIGHT PROJECT TEAM

Start by naming the naming the Project Leader and the best leaders were found to be the senior HR professionals with project management and total rewards experience. Then start selecting additional members who may be consultants from another organization and who has expertise in finance, employment law, and HR information and payroll systems, as well as someone to represent the middle and lower layers of management in an organization. The team should contain HR professionals with extensive total rewards experience and the ability to develop policies and procedures. Each member should understand his role (6).

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IMPLEMENTING TOTAL REWARDS STRATEGIES

To implement the program, the project must reside with senior management, the project task force and consultants coordinate the effort along with a separate subcommittee who reports back to the larger task force, takes responsibility for each element of the company's compensation system (6).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to come up with recommendations, one has to understand the root cause differences, misunderstandings and conflict in the workplace. Additionally, one has to know that despite the different values present among generations, there are also similarities. Family, love and integrity have been shown by research to be the top three values for all generations. Therefore, managers and employees should be aware and skilled in dealing with the four different generations that make up the workforce in order for an organization to thrive and excel.

There are two important areas that need to be fostered in any organization in order to retain and enhance the talent of all generations: retention and motivation (5) along with Work/life balance, rewards and recognition, health care, training and development, succession planning.

Work-life reward program that has been defined as " a specific set of organizational practices, policies and programs, plus a philosophy, that actively supports efforts to help employees achieve success at both work and home" (3).

Work-life reward strategy in terms of Workplace Flexibility/Alternative Work Arrangements would, in my opinion, create value to the employee and will result in satisfied, engaged and productive employees who will eventually give a desired business performance and results (3).

A study in 2008-2009 done by Next Generation Consulting (NGC) and World at Work was conducted to show how employees prioritize their rewards at different life stages. However, Women with children who are all under the age of 6 chose "work-life" first as their total rewards prioritization instead of compensation (7). These women gave an average of 26.3 points out of 100 to work-life, compared to 20.5 points for the rest of the employees (significant at p=0.002). These results showed that women with young children do value

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work-life more than any other life stage group and were unhappy with the level of flexibility at their workplaces and were at risk for leaving. In order to help retain this group and other working women, managers should promote a healthy work-life balance, provide flexible work arrangements (e.g., telework, reduced workload, compressed work weeks) and flexibility should be offered to meet the needs of both women's professional and personal life (7).

Research at World at Work has found that it is essential to engage and retain women at all levels in the enterprise, and must reconsider the importance of work-life solutions (8).

Ethical Framework

There are different views on work ethics. The traditionalist and Baby Boomers think that the younger generations lack work ethics. They define a strong work ethic as being part of the organization for long hours where they are actually present for long working hours in the office (2).

The other factors that Baby Boomers consider as work ethics are collaboration, teamwork and meetings while Generation X and Millenials see work ethic as working hard and providing a positive impact on the company along with their life outside the premises of their work (2). Several important actions have to be implemented by HR in order to clarify ethical issues for employees of all generations. Business Managers have to put ethics as number one priority for the organization and employees through internal campaigns, avoid labeling their employees according to their generation, recognize both the organization's and employees priorities, understand the values and motivations of the employees in order to link them to their and the organization's goals, and understand that all groups want to contribute in different ways and thus focus on business results (2).

RISK ANALYSIS

For business leaders to implement a total rewards plan, they should be able to know who will design the plan, what types of rewards are included, how will it be funded, and how it will operate. Missing any of these points will risk developing a plan that delivers bad outcomes once implemented (1).

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