Advantages Of A Multigenerational Workforce

When many people think of diversity in the workplace, what often comes to mind first is hiring employees of different race, gender, and ethnicity. But allow me to give small businesses something to think about related to the topic of “diversity”.

You can also achieve a richly diverse workforce by hiring employees from various age groups. Multigenerational hiring enriches the work environment, providing a wider range of knowledge, skills, creativity, perspectives, and work styles. When you have a broad range of ages represented in your workforce, you get years of experience and maturity along with youthful enthusiasm.

Last week our local SCORE chapter held their regular meeting at the Collider which is a hub for local and visiting entrepreneurs, freelancers and remote workers to work, learn and connect. They offer desk and conference room space to their members and visitors in a unique historic setting. Collider also offers monthly events and educational opportunities to fuel our growing entrepreneurial community.

We had the great opportunity to hear from and interact with a couple of small businesses that are a part of this entrepreneurial culture. The reaction that I had was WOW!! I wish I could insert/transport this spirit and expertise into several of the SCORE client small businesses with which I interact and mentor.

Putting that reaction together with the need for many small businesses to get an infusion of new perspectives and ideas into their operation, I devote today’s column to another side of “diversity” in the workplace.

What Beneficial Traits Do The Various Generations Offer?

While generalizations don't hold true for all individuals, some common strengths within each of the categories include:

- **Traditionalists** (Born before 1946) – These employees hold respect for authority and have a desire to preserve traditions and follow rules. They value teamwork and are task-oriented.

- **Baby Boomers** (Born 1946 – 1964) – These individuals are often resourceful and disciplined. They typically exhibit a strong work ethic and drive to achieve goals.

- **Generation Xers** (Born 1965 - 1976) – These self-sufficient workers are usually versatile and receptive to learning new skills. They accept change and have a generally good grasp on using technology.
Millennials (Born 1977 - 1995) – Employees in this age group are known for bringing a collaborative attitude and strong technology skills to the table. They tend to value openness of communication and candor. Most have a keen interest in advancing in their careers.

Gen Edgers (Born after 1995) – Also known as Generation Z, these individuals have strong self-reliance instincts. As early adopters, they aren’t afraid of trying new approaches for fear of failure. They are adept at using technology and tend to be well-connected and influential socially.

What Can Your Small Business Gain From Hiring Inter-Generationally?
The diversity in abilities and attitudes among employees of different age groups can create a more dynamic atmosphere within your business environment. With a healthy mix of traditional approaches and innovative thinking, you can strike a successful balance without becoming too stuck in your ways or too far out of the box. From your sales and customer service efforts to your product/services development and operational processes, having diversity can help you better recognize deficiencies and make improvements to your business by tapping the unique ideas and frames of reference within your team.

A Reminder
Remember that in all your hiring efforts, you need to follow all the applicable federal, state and local anti-discrimination and other labor laws. To understand the requirements, consider talking with a human resources consultant and/or an attorney. A mentor at your local SCORE chapter can assist you in finding appropriate resources in your area and provide you with additional guidance and insight about starting and running your small business.

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