



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.

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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.

Managing with emotional intelligence

To be a good manager you need to be organized, highly efficient, an on-the-spot decision maker, and a creative thinker. But to be a *great* manager you need all of that, and a fine sense of **emotional intelligence (EQ)**. What is emotional intelligence, you might ask? It is an increasingly used term that refers to a set of skills that reside in the realm of feelings. Emotional intelligence is often broken down into a few areas that interact with each other to form a whole:

Perceiving emotions. This is the ability to read and understand the emotions of other people as well as your own.

Using emotions. This means having a facility with emotions that allows you to harness them into productive engines - emotions are there for a reason and learning to listen to them can help with problem solving and decision making.

Understanding emotional sources. This means you understand that there are lots of underlying causes of emotions, and they aren't necessarily obvious. For example, if someone appears rude to you, and you're tapped into this aspect of EQ, you're able to acknowledge that it may or may not have anything to do with you; they could be having a bad day.

Managing emotions. Emotions are a part of every person's life, and the ability to integrate them is important to maintaining emotional health. Managing emotions means not allowing them to overwhelm you, while staying attentive to what they are trying to say, and eventually dealing with what is causing them.

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Reading this, you can probably begin to get an idea of why emotional intelligence is so important for managers. Managing is as much about being conscious of your employees' personal and interpersonal well-being as it is about taking care of organizational tasks and structures. Being compassionate and empathic goes a long way to help a team and an organization to run smoothly.

Thankfully, EQ is something that it is very possible to improve and strengthen. Here are some ways to become more aware of your team's emotional well-being:

- Pay attention to all members of your team. If someone seems angry, constantly frustrated, or consistently stuck in a low mood, let them know you're there for them and willing to listen.
- Thank your team for their hard work and acknowledge their strengths and successes.
- Track your own feelings, especially negative ones. Becoming more aware of your emotions will strengthen your ability to manage them. For example, if you are feeling overly stressed, it is important not to take this out on your team, and increased emotional awareness will greatly reduce the likelihood of this.
- Demonstrate empathy: even if you don't feel the same way as someone else, you have probably experienced a similar emotional state, use this experience to try to understand where they're coming from, even if you don't agree.
- Get outside help: talking with a mentor, life coach or counsellor can greatly increase your ability to perceive and manage your emotions.

Remember, emotional intelligence is never about suppressing or ignoring emotions, but in fact about integrating them gracefully into all that you do. This means it's integral to successful leadership to learn to understand and express your emotions constructively. This can set a great example and even be a source of inspiration for your whole team.

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