

Work with Me: Real Life Answers . . .

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Managing different generations is like herding cats! How can I be more effective?

Most learning, whether it is personal or organizational, starts with gaining insight into the issue. This book gives you an overview of managing generational issues.

Pay close attention to the situation at your work. Observe your employees and take note of generational differences, such as off-the-cuff comments and body language (rolled eyes, sighs). Ask your management staff to share their observations and experiences in managing across generations and begin a dialogue on how to deal effectively with people of all ages so you can maximize your engagement and retention efforts.

Also consider promoting generational understanding through workshops, setting up intergenerational work teams to solve problems, and encouraging intergenerational mentoring, which can work both ways—not just older people mentoring the younger ones.

How much Internet access should I give my employees? I'm paying for their time, and I don't want them spending time on personal Web sites at work.

First, do you have evidence of employee abuse of Internet access? If so, address it immediately and make sure that all employees understand company expectations and/or policies for using the Web. If you don't have a policy or guidelines for e-mail or Web use, check out www.epolicyinstitute.com for suggestions and commonsense guidelines for Internet and phone use at work.

After you take care of the policy and legal issues, view this as a great opportunity to look through a different generational lens. Consider asking an intergenerational group to help establish guidelines for using company-owned technology. You will probably find that Gen Xs and Gen Ys view this issue very differently than their older coworkers do. For example, they might want to know why you care if they're on personal Web sites once in a while, as long as their work productivity is good. Does it cost the company anything? What if they do it on their lunch or other breaks?

Be careful of being too draconian on issues like this—younger workers see it as taking away their freedom, and it can lead to loss of engagements.

I DON'T HAVE A COMPUTER AT HOME. IF I DID, I WOULD VERY MUCH RESENT HAVING TO CHECK MY E-MAILS WHEN I WAS ON VACATION, HAD A DAY OFF, OR WAS HOME SICK. IT IS IMPORTANT TO COMPLETELY SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM WORK AT TIMES.

Traditionalist