

The how and what of Y

More and more members of Generation Y will enter the work force this year — are you ready? **By Pamela Schuck**

Summer help wanted. Part-time help wanted. Internship available. Entry level position available. Looking for new college graduates.

If your company finds the need to fill a position with any of the above descriptions, chances are you're going to be hiring a younger employee, maybe even a member of the infamous Generation Y. Born between 1980 and 2000, the oldest members of Generation Y are beginning to graduate from college and enter the work force.

I'm often asked how to work with and train these younger employees. It is important to remember that for many, this is their first job. They may have little or no work experience and minimal training. Extra efforts in recruiting, training, motivating and supervising younger workers is often called for, not to mention an extra dose of understanding.

When dealing with younger employees, keep in mind:

- Honesty and integrity are the traits they most admire.

- A spirit of adventure and a desire to have fun are important.

- Technology and the fact that they started using computers at an early age changed the way they think. It affects how they collect, organize and analyze information.

- Tolerance is prevalent in younger employees. They often embrace diversity and actually prefer it, and readily accept people different from them.

- Members of this group have grown up with a different type of stress. They are overscheduled and too connected. They are used to doing many different things. Having to stay in one place, such as the workplace, may be frustrating at first.

Here is a checklist to get you started in working with, dealing with and understanding members of Generation Y.

- Clearly communicate expectations and work standards. Don't assume they are innately aware of policies.

- Younger employees need to see the value in what they do. Coach them in the importance of all tasks and help them understand the value to their personal and professional growth.



- Avoid a bureaucratic atmosphere and management style. Younger employees are more receptive to team or family-like work environments. Meaningful collaboration with others to get the job accomplished is more important to them than competing to climb the organizational ladder.

- Walk the talk. People respect competency and judge people according to the contributions they make, rather than the position they hold. Young employees prefer to be part of an ethical company acting in the interest of the community.

- They thrive on innovation. Younger employees will ask, "Why not?" when leadership is hesitant to try new ideas, and like to investigate everything and question assumptions. They want to work quickly and creatively and do it in their own way. Most important, they want to be asked for their ideas and solutions.

- Coach and nurture, rather than control. Younger employees appreciate supervisors who are friendly, and want supervisors to get to know them as individuals.

Pam Schuck (pschuck@strivetraining.com) is president of STRIV=E Training, which specializes in motivating customer service excellence for businesses. She can be reached at (330) 273-8790