**Entitled Employees and the New Working World**

When many of us joined the workforce, the rules were:

* Get a good education
* Find a job with a large, strong organization
* Work harder than everyone else
* Obey your superiors (those with authority)
* Don’t jump from job to job
* Get rewarded ***in the future*** with a title, compensation and possibly a pension.

As new graduates with lots of ideas, we yearned for the day when our opinions would matter.  Meanwhile, it was advisable to:

* Remain quiet in meetings
* Defer to whatever your boss said
* Make sure you arrived early and stayed late
* Remain patient by staying in one position for a long while “until your time came”
* Demonstrate that the only thing that mattered in your life was your job. (namely, refrain from talking about families or displaying any evidence of them…no pictures on your desk!)

Did we have a desire for greater input into decisions?  You bet.  Yearn for greater flexibility with our working hours?  Oh, yes!  Want to challenge traditional thinking?   Absolutely!  But that was not the path to success.

FAST FORWARD to today….

* People can succeed in start-ups as well as established companies.
* Working smarter beats working harder. That means using technology to produce more product or service quickly and cheaply.
* Success is measured by results, not the number of hours of “face time” spent at work.
* Employees of all experience levels expect to be consulted and have input on decision-making.
* Remaining too long in the same job may raise eyebrows.  The question has changed from “Why are you jumping jobs?” to “Why have you remained with the same organization for so long?”
* Employees are expected to take more responsibility for their own future.  Make your own investments and find your own benefits.  Don’t rely on your employer to provide a guaranteed benefit for retirement.
* If you are not being developed by your manager, you may consider leaving to seek another opportunity.

*So, how can you manage people who are not playing by the “old” rules?*

**First, think of yourself as a partner.**

* Human Resources is a link between management (which may have some old-school ways of managing in some cases) and employees. If you are not able to understand and articulate the need for transparency and flexibility, who will?
* This means engaging in two-way communication and negotiation with employees.  Share information readily.  Make standards 100% clear.  Help people manage themselves by sharing strategies to meet deadlines.
* This also means educating managers to step back when they feel an employee is “entitled”.
* The old ways are changing whether you or your company change with them or not. All “entitled” means in some cases is that employees feel empowered to express their opinions and ask questions. In most cases they can find another company that is comfortable with those needs if yours isn’t.
* If you are anxious about responding to questions and needs, consider this: Wouldn’t you have benefited in the past from asking whether a job was going to progress anywhere or whether you might be able to pick up a child from school once in a while?
* Companies who have “hidden rules” will have confused employees. When making rules, make sure that your company is not making rules solely to avoid making decisions or avoid conflict, then make them clear.

**Second, think of yourself as a coach.**

* Identify what motivates your employees.  Help them discover their strengths and then find ways to leverage them to get the work done.  Listen to people and ask them questions.
* Don’t make all the decisions yourself; instead, talk through the process together and give them latitude to decide how to accomplish projects.  Inspire them to think and do more for themselves.
* Help your managers understand how to manage effectively. Provide management training. Managers need to do more than point at the handbook. They need to discuss, explain and be flexible in some cases.

**Third, think of yourself as a facilitator**.

* Your job is to get the right people together, engage them in the planning process, help them find resources and foster creativity. Micro-managing people is completely out-of-style!
* Your managers may need more help as they ease into this new world. Your job is to be the bridge between them and their staff.

Were the “good old days” really that great?  Perhaps for those at the top who could avoid the stress of “gray area” discussions and decisions. But today’s workplace is much better for people entering the workforce.  Organizations have learned that old industrial models don’t work in most places; instead, technology liberates us from mundane work, allowing us to be more creative and focus our energy on those we serve.

In 1982, no one talked about balance. Today, you are likely to be asked to describe your organization’s work/life balance when you are interviewing candidates.  It’s a wonderful new world out there.  Embrace it!

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