

Millennials need workplace communication skills

Millennials bring an array of hard skills across multiple fields to the table, such as analytics, computer programming, accounting, finance analysis and similar, but lack soft skills.



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"College degrees and internships have given them the knowledge and specific skill sets to add to their portfolio, but inexperience of the business world has left them lacking in the soft skills department," says Premie Naicker, CEO of AIGS.

She describes soft skills as being more personality-driven abilities, such as professionalism, teamwork, communication, flexibility and suchlike.

"By their nature, millennials are eager and ready to get down to business, having the impression that hard skills are what matters in the business world. However, studies show that there is a blatant disconnect between the skills that business leaders and millennials deem to be important. Integrity, professionalism, good attitude are all vital to success in the workplace, but are being undervalued by today's millennials and, although it is easier for an employer to train a new employee in a particular hard skill, it is far more difficult to train an employee in a soft skill.

"Soft skills are developed and boosted over time and without them, it is virtually impossible for any employee to achieve success and promotion in the workplace. Millennials are known for being technologically savvy but soft skills do not work that way. These are developed through on-the-job learning and face-to-face training initiatives."

Soft skills training to improve performance

In order to introduce and integrate millennial employees into the workplace, learning, training and development teams should build programmes that focus on the soft skills deemed necessary to do well within the business. "These should include courses such as working effectively within a team, maintaining diplomacy while being assertive, positively processing feedback, as well as learning how to approach your manager for more coaching or mentoring.

"A good place to start is to set expectations about communication skills that employees will need to develop. The ability to express themselves articulately, with clarity and simplicity, to engage one-on-one, within small groups and larger groups, in a way that is both engaging and accessible, are not easily learned.

"In addition, mentoring is very important to millennials. Partner new staff with a good mentor that already has the soft skills you want the millennial to develop."

Naicker concludes that both skill sets are crucial for anyone wishing to thrive in today's economic climate. Learning and development teams need to ensure that training initiatives focus on developing both skill sets, with an additional focus on soft skills for today's millennials.

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