

Adapting to 21st century employment evolution

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South Africa has a diverse workforce and business leaders, employees and job seekers need to adapt and hone their skills to succeed and grow in the 21st century business landscape. Soft skills such as emotional intelligence, tolerance and flexibility are becoming increasingly more important in the workplace.



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With a backdrop of high unemployment and specifically youth unemployment, employees and job seekers need to think and act innovatively in order to 'stand out from the crowd'. This can assist them in securing employment and 'climbing the corporate ladder', as 21st century employers appreciate new ways of thinking which can contribute to business success.

With tolerance and a willingness to learn from others (of different ages and backgrounds), employees who adapt will go further than their less flexible colleagues will. Likewise, leaders need to become more skilled at managing three generations currently interacting in the same space.

Generational differences

These are the Baby Boom Generation who were born between 1946 and 1964; Generation X who were born between 1965 and 1980; and Millennials (also known as Generation Y) who were born after 1980. These generations have very different work styles and values that they can share with one another to ensure high levels of productivity.

Baby Boomers are associated with traditional values such as hard work, respect and authority and prefer face-to-face communication. Gen Xers, on the other hand, are comfortable with authority in the workplace but are not impressed with titles, they are great team players and astute at internal promotion. The most recent entrants to the workplace, Millennials are influenced by the spirit of Ubuntu, are comfortable with new technologies and like to share and communicate through social networking.

With this in mind it is also vital for business leaders to prepare for the new generation, Generation Z (born in the early 2000s), who will be entering the workforce in the not-too-distant future. We can only imagine that this generation of workers will be even more techno-savvy than Millennials and may be more demanding in terms of flexibility and independence.

The workplace is evolving

With new technology coming onto the market, employees are now able to work flexi-hours, from home, or from satellite offices. These are all considerations employers need to keep in mind when negotiating with potential employees as these factors contribute to making an organisation attractive to 'top talent' - improving the employment brand of the business.

The key to a successful 21st century business lies in understanding the different needs of a diverse and evolving workforce. Companies need to harness the strengths of each employee through mentorship, building relationships and fostering an environment of inclusiveness while employees embrace opportunities to learn from others and share their experience and innovative thinking.

ABOUT KAY VITTEE

Kay Vittee is the CEO of Quest Staffing Solutions.

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