

## Learning Issues

### For Young Employees

*Gen X employees learn best when they need to learn – when they face knowledge or skill gaps that prevent them from achieving specific tangible results. And they thrive in a corporate culture that values personal growth and development.*

**W**henever a new employee starts in your company, particularly a younger and less experienced employee, it will take some time for that person to get up to speed. It can take from 6 to 24 months until a new employee is earning more for you than he or she is costing you. So, you have to make it clear that until they start earning, it is their job to be learning.

Work with Gen Xers to establish specific learning goals on a clear timeline with concrete deadlines. Then, flood them with learning resources. But, do not make the mistake of front-loading your commitment to Xers' learning and then abandoning that commitment once they start earning for you. Your commitment to Xers' ongoing learning is the most direct support you can provide for Xers' self-directed learning process.

#### **Recommendations**

Give Xers clear goals, concrete deadlines, and 100% responsibility for getting up to speed on their current responsibilities in their current job. But, also give them 100% support.

Let Xers grow. Support Xers' pursuit of learning goals which will help them (a) improve in their current job; (b) advance in your company; (c) move to another company; (d) start their own business; and (e) develop aspects of themselves which may seem totally unrelated to work and career. If you do this, they may never leave.

Provide learning resources in as many media as you can afford: Printed materials, videotapes, audiotapes, CD interactive, classroom style seminars, informal discussion groups, mentors / coaches, and hands-on experience.

Place resources in Xers' control. Allow Xers open access to all learning resources, whether related to their job or not, and allow Xers to use those resources at their own pace and in their own way.

Encourage Xers to employ different learning methods to achieve different learning goals. Remind them that they will have to study facts to achieve knowledge; they

will have to practice technique to achieve skill; and they will have to master perspective to achieve wisdom.

Gen X employees learn best when they need to learn---when they face knowledge or skill gaps that prevent them from achieving specific tangible results. In today's information environment, knowledge and skills become obsolete at an increasingly rapid pace. That's why they need to be learning constantly if they are going to succeed in the workplace of the future. But, as it would take more than one lifetime to master the information produced even on one day, the real stars in the workplace of the future are those who know how to be strategic learners. Strategic learners know how to learn constantly and just in time to get the job done.

Provide maximum information resources in different media and give Gen X learners the power to control the pace and direction of their training. Try to anticipate the learning needs that may come up over time; skill and knowledge gaps; refreshers; information that may come in handy. Prepare people to anticipate their own needs as well, and make sure they have the necessary learning resources at their fingertips when gaps appear.

Transform your corporate culture by treating EVERY employees as a knowledge worker. Require every employee to maintain:

- An ongoing assessment of learning needs.
- An up-to-date personal inventory of marketable knowledge and skills.
- A plan to apply the skills and knowledge to every task and responsibility in order to add more value.
- A plan to learn new skills and knowledge by performing new tasks and responsibilities.

Create a learning plan, including specific goals, deadlines, and clearly spelled-out guidelines and parameters whenever an employee must demonstrate specific skills or knowledge as a requirement for assuming a certain responsibility, authority, or status.

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