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TALENT DRAIN AND BATTLE OF THE GENERATIONS

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ARTICLES



Vuyo Lekhelebane, executive consulting psychologist and regional head of Work Dynamics Eastern Cape, shares some relevant HR insight into key areas such as South Africa's talent drain, staff churn and the relationship between Generation Y and Generation X in the workplace.

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With the lure of the Dollar and Pound, is it becoming a struggle to retain young talent in South Africa?

Not sure if this can be entirely attributed to the appeal of the pound and dollar, but this could be a contributing factor. I think South Africa's economy and unemployment rate may also negatively affect upward mobility of young talent as older and experienced people hold on to their jobs longer, thus contribute to the struggle of retaining talent. SA faces

another challenge of graduates without experience who find themselves unemployed. This is a talent pool on its own as these graduates may have a lot to offer but they get turned down for job opportunities due to lack of experience. So inevitably, if there are better opportunities abroad, young talent will seek those out.

Should one have a game plan to ensure the inflow and development of new talent?

A game plan for attracting, retaining and developing young talent is a necessity for any business. The youth of today represents the workforce of the future. While some employers may prefer not to invest in youth as they are perceived to be higher risk for staff turnover than their older counterparts, what is important is to look at the reasons they change jobs. If I can draw from my own experience earlier in the workplace, the first few positions I held were tedious and lacked stimulation. I think there is a tendency to give young people less challenging work, therefore they get bored and seek new opportunities elsewhere. There is a need to maintain a balance between the tedious and boring tasks with meaningful, exciting /challenging work for young people.

But staff churn, if managed correctly, is not always a bad thing is it?

Before deciding on whether staff churn is a good or a bad thing, it is important to consider the person's reasons for leaving an organisation as well as the impact of their departure on business. If for example people are leaving the organisation because of lack of support or misfit with organisational culture, then there is reason to be concerned. However, if people are leaving because of performance issues, then that is a good thing. On the flip side, you could end up with non performing employees who are holding on to their jobs because of the economic climate and high levels of unemployment. So if you consider staff turnover in terms of quantity and disregard quality, you may find that the organisation's view is flawed.

Looking at workplace culture, the Baby Boomers are retiring, leaving us with Generation X and Generation Y or Millennials under one roof. Generation X worked 24/7 and were fiercely competitive in a corporate environment. The Millennials are collaborative and co-operative, placing a value on their personal time. Is it possible to have a common organisational culture?

I believe both generations can coexist effectively in the workplace despite their differing perceptions about the world of work. We need to have a balance between mature and young employees in organisations. The issue is not to treat one generation as inferior but to see the value in having both generations within the organisation. Both generations could learn from each other in their endeavour to improve company performance. Generation Y can benefit from being mentored by their more experienced colleagues. While Generation X could benefit from the out of the box, innovative thinking that the younger generation brings to the fore.

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Will the Millennials get their way and go to the beach if they finish their tasks by say 10 in the morning? Or, will Generation Y, in leadership positions, squeeze another 10 hours out of them for the day?

Well there needs to be some flexibility and a happy medium for both generations or we could see an unhealthy tug of war.

A strong trait of Generation Y is their value system. Are we seeing the emergence of stronger moral leadership?

Generation Y tend to question things, celebrate and appreciate diversity so they learn through introspection and are critical of their and others' ideas. These are the emerging leaders so it is without a doubt that we are seeing the emergence of stronger moral leadership.

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Vuyo Lekhelebana is the executive consulting psychologist and regional head of Work Dynamics Eastern Cape. She studied a Masters of Arts (Counselling Psychology) and MBA at NMMU and has picked up extensive experience in both the private and public sectors before joining Work Dynamics, where she also sits on Work Dynamic's national Executive Management Committee.

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