

Managing Recent Grads: A Foundation for Success

By Stacey Berk, Expand HR Consulting

Congratulations on your recent college grad hire!

As a manager, you've worked hard to search for and select an emerging professional. Now the real work comes into play. Transitioning academic skills into real world success can be a challenge for "Generation Z" (approximately 61 million strong and the workforce of the future).

Generation Z employees are looking for personal growth, job stability and a career path. The time you spend training and coaching them for success at work will be rewarded with higher performance and loyalty. As a manager and mentor, you play a key role in retention and job development. Here are some tips to managing Generation Z workers for success.

Set Expectations

Setting expectations begins on the first day of employment. Provide new hires a solid foundation with a custom orientation. Strong managers outline a comprehensive organization and department overview, review job responsibilities and set performance goals. Teach Generation Z that no one starts as a CEO; help them include and prioritize opportunities for learning and networking within the organization.

Setting expectations involves more than just short- and long-term job goals; this is also an opportunity to share organizational and department-specific culture. Coordinate a group lunch for the team and provide opportunities for new hires to learn about the company's diversity initiatives, wellness offerings, volunteer opportunities and other programs that are unique to your organization. Create an environment where grads are excited to learn and grow and can see how their work contributes to the overall mission of your organization.

Networking & Mentorship

Recent grads want to feel engaged in their work and see how it helps them build a career. Help them build their professional networks; open doors for them and identify a high-quality diverse mentor outside your department. Introduce them to people of influence and successful managers in the industry. It's important to match Generation Z employees with colleagues and mentors who compliment their strengths and develop their skills.

A mentor can provide feedback in areas such as leadership skills, time management and interpersonal relationships over time. Sharing this knowledge helps the mentee grow professionally. Mentors also help open the door to contacts who can provide opportunities for learning new skills.

Business Etiquette

Professional situations are not always the easiest to navigate, and for a generation who grew up on smart phones, learning basic business etiquette may be necessary.

Coach recent grads on the best way to use technology and social media to promote business, branding, and the organization. Share the organization's guidelines for personal social media postings. Help the new employee set appropriate boundaries between professional and personal communications. Knowing how to approach meetings, write emails and interact with other staff helps establish a professional presence and polish.

Generation Z and new grads have a lot to offer your organization now and they will be 40% of the workforce by 2020. As their manager or mentor, you provide a critical bridge between their academic training and their career success, helping them apply their knowledge while developing the soft skills for effective collaboration and making strong contributions as professionals.

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