By Robert Jones  
The Village Business Institute

To quote Bob Dylan, “The times they are a-changing.” This line, written in 1964, is a good description of the workplace right now. According to the American Association of Retired Persons, approximately 10,000 baby boomers reach the retirement age of 65 every day. Consider this statistic, and compare it with the estimation that the millennial generation will be 47% of the workforce by the year 2020. There is clearly a dramatic change coming to the workplace. In order to adjust for this dynamic, companies are going to have to make changes, beginning with how they recruit millennials.

In a recent study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 53% of human resource professionals acknowledge they have difficulties recruiting and hiring millennials.

The first thing that companies are going to have to understand is who millennials actually are, from a societal perspective. There are some perceptions that millennials are lazy, entitled, or anti-social, just to name a few. These perceptions are interesting when you consider what studies have shown are the various criteria millennials consider when accepting a position. For example, a PricewaterhouseCoopers International survey shows that the number one thing that millennials are looking for in an organization is the opportunity for personal development (65%), with starting pay ranked fourth at about 21%. The opportunity for development is related to the individual desire to learn and grow in the position with the hope of obtaining promotions either within the organization or in another. The millennial generation wants to create a future, and they are willing to work and move around to achieve their goals.

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As millennials are entering the workforce, one of their biggest concerns is whether the organization has shared values. In order to determine this, millennials look to see if an organization is collaborative and engaging, if training opportunities are available, if there is a level of flexibility, and if there is a culture of open communication. They examine both the internal and external culture. The big question is, how does a company portray this to a potential employee?

There are five ways to increase visibility and entice millennials to your company. First, personalize your company’s brand. According to LinkedIn, 72% of millennials search online job boards for positions. Through the job boards, it is easy for them to review the organizational website to gain a better understanding of your organization. Millennials are trying to get an idea of the culture. This can be accomplished by posting pictures of teams actually working, offering glimpses into the day-to-day life of an employee. It is important to remember that millennials are attracted to digital maturity, so incorporating video interviews can be a powerful recruiting tool.

Second, make sure the image you portray is an accurate one. In other words, do people in the organization live by the mission, values, and expectations the organization is describing online? Millennials entering the job market may buy into the situation temporarily, but they will learn quickly what the actual culture is and then leave. So make sure that the portrayal of your organization is truthful because the millennials will be checking.

The third way to recruit is to use social media. Millennials are consumers of information and are willing to research organizations. Social media can make it easier for millennials to make an informed decision as long as the representation of the organization is true and accurate. Another advantage of employing social media is that it allows companies to get creative in their recruiting. For example, it might be effective to post videos of an intern’s experience working for the organization on YouTube or to document an employee’s first day on Instagram. These examples allow your organization to present the culture of the company to a specific generational group.

The fourth way to recruit millennials happens in the interview. Millennials want more than a one-on-one interaction in a boardroom. When a potential employee comes in for an interview, allow them the opportunity to meet with other members of the millennial generation and give them a tour of their potential workspace. In essence, let them make some connections within the organization. Another important factor in the interview phase is to make sure that all of their questions are answered during the process. This generation believes in the notion that they are interviewing the organization at the same time the organization is interviewing them. As previously stated, this generation seeks information and they will use this information to build a connection on a greater level.

Finally, there is a need to present the potential candidate with options for development. Of course, the compensation package is important because people need to have money and healthcare to survive. However, millennials are looking for opportunities to advance. They understand that to advance in their field they are going to need to develop their strengths by seeking certifications and attending conferences. Presenting them with these opportunities and informing them about how these opportunities would benefit their career growth can be enticing.

The workforce is changing because the young people that are entering it are changing it. There is concern and apprehension when it comes to millennials entering the workforce and making those changes. However, millennials are not afraid of work, they embrace technology, and they want collaboration. More importantly, they have expectations on how they want to live, and it is time that we prepare for them.
There is a reservoir of untapped energy in every person that represents unrealized and unfulfilled dreams, goals, and aspirations. These are the desires each person has that are connected to their passion and purpose in life. The challenge for each one of us is to explore the answers to the questions, “Who am I?” and “What am I doing here?” When asked what it is that motivates you, and you struggle to come up with an answer, consider what energizes you the most and then dig down under that to ask yourself why that is so fulfilling. Then ask yourself why again and again and again until you get to the root of it. I believe that’s where you begin to discover and uncover your Purpose.

Regarding the work we do, the reasons an individual takes a particular job are both common and unique. For some, the job is simply a means to an end; as simple as doing something to get a paycheck to pay the bills to meet the basic needs of life. For others, the job is more than the steps involved in doing the task. It’s more akin to taking the steps necessary to fulfilling a lifelong dream or ambition; part of the journey of doing something on the road to “becoming” something. Still for others, perhaps the job represents the achievement of an earlier goal, and the work is the reward for the effort expended in climbing the mountain.

I believe when a person is able to connect their dream, their passion, and their purpose with the work they do, that’s when the magic happens. I also believe the fulfillment of one dream may unlock another, hidden dream, and that one person’s vision for themselves (and perhaps those around them) expands with each new step in the journey.

If you are a supervisor, manager, team leader, or in some way responsible for overseeing the work of others, one of your great responsibilities is to develop the skills, talents, and abilities of those people for whom you are responsible. In fact, you owe it to them and to the organization. Granted, there will always be a certain segment of the workforce that is comfortable with doing what they are currently doing and have no desire to go beyond that point. For them, a kind of death has already taken place; they just haven’t made it official yet. If you are comfortable with that, you also need to be prepared to do the cleanup work that goes with it. But for those who are alive and kicking, and who want to grow and expand their knowledge, capability, and capacity, you have some exciting work to do!

Understanding and tapping into a person’s “dream,” or what some people refer to as a person’s “why,” is powerful for you and me as individuals, but also as a supervisor or manager. Knowing what motivates our direct reports and then working with them to help them achieve their personal goals while simultaneously achieving organizational goals is both invigorating and rewarding. There is no good reason I can think of which would suggest that working to achieve that synergy is not a positive and productive goal for you and me as supervisors.

But it doesn’t always come naturally or easily. It takes time and intentional effort to build a positive, healthy, professional relationship, especially with people whose goals and aspirations may be very different from your own. The cornerstones of a healthy, professional relationship are mutual trust and respect. Please keep in mind that if you don’t really, honestly care about the people who report to you, if you don’t really have an interest in their wellbeing and personal growth, and if your real interest is actually yourself, people will soon feel taken advantage of and manipulated. And that scenario doesn’t end well for anyone.

So, I encourage you to make it your mission to get to know your direct reports’ goals and ambitions, and whenever possible, help them to connect those aspirations with the work they do in meeting the needs of your customers and clients. Then stand back and watch the magic happen.
Finding and Developing Young Leaders

By J. Shane Mercer
The Village Family Service Center

As a supervisor, you want to prepare your organization for the future. Part of that process is developing the young employees of today so they’re ready to be leaders in your organization tomorrow. John Trombley, Consulting and Training Manager at The Village Business Institute, offered some tips for identifying and preparing young, future leaders.

Identifying Potential Leaders

Developing young leaders begins with identifying individuals with leadership potential, Trombley says.

“There are some people who naturally do things that leaders do. They take responsibility; they step out front; they make things happen,” Trombley says.

You’re looking for a person with an inner drive to make an impact and to accomplish – but for the right reasons.

“They don’t do it for the intent of building their own ego or fulfilling a personal agenda,” Trombley says. “But they’re doing it because it’s needed, it’s the right thing for the organization, and it’s helpful to other people.”

People skills are also important, Trombley says. “Leadership is about people.”

You can have a great deal of technical skill and education, but if you have lousy people skills, it’s tough to get people to follow you, Trombley says.

And it’s important to remember that you’re looking for a leader – not just a boss.

“Being a leader is about caring about other people; it’s about helping other folks be successful,” Trombley says. “Somebody who wants to be the boss is somebody who wants to be in control for their own purposes.”

Of course, good leaders want and need some degree of control to get things done. But it’s about impact, not ego.

Other things to look for in a future leader are a willingness to be taught, a capacity to accept criticism, and an ability to strive for self-improvement.

Time for a Chat

Identifying prospects is important, but it’s only the beginning. Once you’ve identified a potential leader, Trombley advises having a frank discussion with the person to get a feel for their interests, goals, etc. Do they want to be mentored? Are they interested in being in leadership? Also look for signs that they are or aren’t teachable. It’s hard to teach people who aren’t teachable.

Would-be Leaders Need Training

Trombley says organizations should have a planned process to help individuals grow into leadership. If your organization offers that, you’ll want to get the person involved. If not, consider contacting VBI at 800-627-8220 for information about our seven-part leadership development training. Proper training can make the difference between success and failure as a leader. Simply being good at one’s job isn’t enough, Trombley says.

“You can take your best widget makers and put them in charge of widget-making and they’re going to fail,” Trombley says. That’s because making widgets and leading widget makers are “two different skill sets.”

Point the individual to books or other resources that have been helpful to you. You may also want to have the person work with you on some projects so they can learn as an apprentice of sorts. Find seminars, classes, or workshops that can help them grow.

Delegating responsibilities is a positive for you in that it allows you to focus on higher-level tasks. But, more to the point, it also allows the future leader to take on additional responsibilities and lower-level leadership roles, thus developing a range of skills they’ll need down the road.

Developing leaders takes time and energy, and it can get messy. New leaders make mistakes that you’ll have to fix. But, in the end, you get more capable people and an organization that is better-positioned for the future.