Attracting And Retaining Generation Y

Last month, we defined the characteristics of Generation Y workers. We now know that these “millennials” tend to be high maintenance, impatient and skeptical. But we also recognize that Gen Yers are ambitious, hard-working and communicative.

With that in mind, there are some strategies that you can use to stand out among your competition to attract the very best Gen Y workers and make them want to stick around.

To reach Gen Y it takes technology and advertising. These prospective employees rely on online job boards and company career sites to research and find jobs. Use key words and phrases in job postings such as “fast-paced,” “work/life balance,” “flexible,” and “opportunity for growth.”

Gen Y doesn’t have patience for “snail mail” and appreciates the option to apply immediately by submitting their resumes electronically. These candidates need to feel valued during the recruitment process and expect contact, respect, consideration and prompt responses.

Gen Y will comprise a large percentage of the work force so you will not have the luxury of refusing to address their unique needs. Employers that are sensitive to the following Gen Y needs will have a distinct advantage at retaining young workers and the opportunity to reap the benefits of A-level talent in the increasingly competitive marketplace:

• **Flexibility**: Work/life balance is no longer a buzzword among Gen Y workers. Happy to be held accountable to results, this generation wants to have control over when and how they go about their work. They desire true balance in their lives and seek flexible work schedules. They relish the option of being able to telecommute or work from a home office.

• **Career-pathing**: Millennials seek upward mobility. They want to not only know what is expected of them in their current job, but more importantly, what skills they need to develop to move onto the next position.

• **Feedback**: The annual review is no longer enough for millennials. This generation expects feedback and validation more often. Gen Yers want employers to notice and react to their performance. Show them how they are making an impact and how their work contributes to the bottom line.

• **Training**: If you want a job well done, employers need to tell these workers how to do it. But don’t just give orders, give the reasoning behind them. Besides offering complete training programs provide a mentor to help bridge gaps.

• **Access to technology**: Many Gen Yers are used to having the newest and best technology at their fingertips. E-mail and Internet access are musts. They also might expect to be allowed use of iPods and PDAs on the job.

• **Open communication**: Showing these workers appreciation for individuality and letting them be expressive will keep them around. Allow them to have input in the decision-making process — they want to be heard and involved in all aspects of the organization. While they are skeptical, Gen Yers value fairness and ethical behavior.