The New Digital Frontier: Attracting and Retaining Tech Savvy Millennials

All is online, including Millennials who navigate the digital environment like pros. Attracting and retaining the tech savvy members of this generation presents organizations with new challenges.

Despite technology, one thing never changes: People age and retire and younger generations step up and fill in. As Baby Boomers enter retirement age by the tens of thousands each day, employers are looking to Millennials as the next generation that will fill leadership roles and help their businesses continually adapt and innovate in the technology age also defined by globalization.

The complexity of doing high-tech business today was almost unimaginable when Millennials were born in the early 1980s, but they have an important characteristic that makes them perfect fits in today's business environment. They were born when the Internet was emerging and developed right along with it.

While succeeding generations take the Internet for granted, Millennials learned to discern between innovative companies that have adapted to their growing tech needs and those that have failed. Recruiting and retaining the Millennials represents the new digital frontier for many businesses because they must adapt to the cyber reality that tech savvy Millennials are motivated by tech savvy companies.

Adapting Business to Tech Savvy Talent

Millennials have been using computers and mobile devices from an early age and learned to rely on technology to meet many needs as efficiently as possible.

Baby Boomers still reminisce about typing resumes one-by-one and spending hours using correcting tape to edit documents. Computer punch cards are a mystery to Millennials, and newspaper advertisements are not far behind. Millennials have adopted technology with enthusiasm, using social media and texting for communicating with hundreds or thousands of connections, and software to make jobs simpler and more efficient.

 The result is a generation of workers that are self-directed and ready to take the initiative, if given the opportunities to do so. Restrain these workers with Baby Boomer-built silos and formal communication structures and the result is high turnover and an inability to attract the most experienced and talented members of the workforce.

The problem businesses face is learning how to quickly adapt to the tech savvy talent whether recruiting or retaining employees. Many companies are still led by Baby Boomers who are trying to successfully balance traditional management strategies with the digital environment. Baby Boomers

read print newspapers, mailed in resumes, and waited for a rejection letter or phone call requesting an interview. Post an advertisement in an expensive print newspaper or on recruitment websites that request resume mail-ins, and the results will be abundantly obvious: Millennials are generally not interested. Such old-style recruitment screams "outdated" to a Millennial.

So how can companies get into the minds of Millennials and attract the cream of the crop?

Clearly it is streamlined technology that serves as ground zero. Millennials are not going to spend a lot of time maneuvering through dinosaur websites or sites that are filled with complex links and difficult to search. They will "click on" so the first lesson is to develop recruiting sites that are easy to locate in a sea of websites and social media. Despite Google's algorithm changes, SEO is still important because it provides a common method for search processes. Generally, search results past the first three pages are only viewed by approximately 38.5 percent of job seekers.

Millennials also use online job boards where companies post available positions and make it easy to apply for open positions.

Enticing Career Seekers

Once potential candidates determine a good job is available today, the research continues. Baby Boomers had to go to the library and dig out dusty books and periodicals that listed corporate facts. Millennials can do online searches and communicate with others to quickly verify the corporate reputation, results, management style, operational strategies and other information that was once not available.

Companies that want to attract Millennials who are top talent need to be where they are going online – to social media. It is estimated that over 70 percent of Millennials will access social networks to find out if a company and a position is worth applying for. If the Millennial determines the position and company are good matches to career goals, potential applicants will easily apply online with digital applications and resumes.

HP is among the companies that have adapted. To attract talent, spread the word about the company culture and show current employee engagement in the process, HP created "Careers" social media sites on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and others. The LinkedIn page for HP in the Americas opens with this statement: "We're world's largest technology company and here at HP, career opportunities abound." It goes on to say, "Right now we have hundreds of open job opportunities."

Following this exciting statement for job seekers are postings by current HP employees. One says, "HP is a great place to work. The life-work balance, opportunity to grow, trainings available, open door policy, all of this makes me very proud of our company." There is a link on LinkedIn that entices talent titled "Search Jobs." Spreading the link around webpages gives the company more exposure.

Technology Expectations

Millennials have higher expectations in terms of communication because of the influence of technology. They expect companies to keep them informed about the status of their job applications. Once hired, they expect to use technology to communicate with coworkers, managers and even senior leaders.

Technology plays a big role in engaging Millennials and supporting career goals. For example, PricewaterhouseCoopers maintains a site called "Your Personal Brand" that is used by job searchers to develop a unique personal brand that will impress recruiters. Users can create a workbook to build a plan, get feedback from others, and learn to market themselves to prospective employers.

Gamification, career pages, collaboration through social media, and the ability to access technology at work like they do at home are some of the ways companies are engaging and retaining Millennials. The tech savvy workforce enjoys working on teams and wants regular feedback so each person knows where he or she stands at any time in terms of performance.

Millennials have taken many businesses by surprise, reflecting the impact of technology on a single generation of job candidates and employees. Companies should make it a priority to understand Millennials because they are here and ready to get to work.