

Millennials Prompt Changes in Workplace

The “one-leader-at-the-top” leadership style of the past is evolving, says Nick Petrie of the Center for Creative Leadership in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Quoted in an issue of *Entrepreneur* magazine, Petrie says, “There is a transition occurring from the old paradigm in which leadership resided in a person or role, to a new one in which leadership is a collective process that is spread throughout networks of people.”

He adds, “The question is changing from, ‘Who are the leaders?’ to ‘What conditions do we need for leadership to flourish in the network?’”

To “seasoned” owners and employees — aka Baby Boomers — this concept may sound a bit too “warm and fuzzy.” But it is a move being prompted by the Millennial generation (individuals ages 15 to 36), who now represent the largest sector of the population — 80 million strong compared to 76 million Boomers.

Why are Millennials changing the leadership model of the past? Because the Millennial generation is less interested in — and accepting of — taking orders from a boss and more interested in solving problems as a team. This means many managers need to reconsider what it takes to be an effective leader for this up-and-coming generation.

Being accessible, creating learning opportunities, explaining why and involving Millennials in decision making are emerging as crucial to working harmoniously with this generation, leadership experts say.

‘20% time’

As well, employers are finding that giving employees a little longer leash — as in free time to work on their own ideas or projects related to the business — will actually result in a workplace

that is happier and more productive. This kind of workplace ultimately leads to a winning formula — happier employees translate to a more innovative and successful business.

Are you wondering if it really works? Google seems to think so. It was voted among the “best places to work” in 2013, and it boasts sales of more than \$35 billion. Google

“There is a transition occurring from the old paradigm in which leadership resided in a person or role, to a new one in which leadership is a collective process that is spread throughout networks of people.”

— Nick Petrie

encourages creativity — the company even put rock-climbing walls and giant slides in some of its corporate office complexes. In addition, Google offers “20% time,” when employees get to spend 20% of their workday working on projects they are passionate about. In fact, that’s how Gmail and Google News both got started.

Similarly, 3M has a policy called the 15% rule — where staff devote 15% of work hours to their own projects.

What might your employees come up with for “new” ideas to improve and innovate your business, company or organization if they were given some time to devote to it? And if they were actually asked to share their input?

Given that Americans on average spend more than 2,000 hours/year at work, infusing a little fun into the process certainly can’t hurt — and it just might build a stronger, more resilient team.

Companies like LinkedIn, Zappos and Google also promote game time on the job when employees can play games like ping-pong or foosball. While these activities may seem completely unrelated to work, they are very powerful at building working relationships. Many company executives agree that employees who play together, stay together and work hard together.

You might consider having your employees be part of a summer softball league to build camaraderie with one another or hosting a family potluck for special events like St. Patrick’s Day or the Super Bowl. Encouraging these types of activities can also show appreciation for the employees’ efforts and dedication.

Good for the boss, too

All this talk about free time and fun time isn’t just for the employees. If you are a manager or boss who is working ’round the clock, a Harvard business school professor has some advice for you. Take a night — or day — off.

That’s right. Leslie Perlow, author of “Sleeping With Your Smartphone,” conducted research with executives who worked more than 65 hours a week (not counting some 20 hours spent monitoring their smartphones.) She wanted to see what would happen if they took a full night off per week.

The result: Productivity did not drop; instead it increased! Perlow attributes this increase to the fact that the executives were forced to plan, prioritize and coordinate better in the work time they did have — and they had some personal downtime for themselves, which allowed them to recharge and to return to work focused. **HW**