Leading and Preparing the Next Generation for Future Leadership Roles in Criminal Justice Agencies.

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Abstract

This paper addresses challenges and barriers current leaders may face and must overcome in order to successfully prepare the next generation for future leadership roles within their organizations. By way of information gathering through surveys conducted, this paper highlights the importance of communication between supervisors and the younger generation of employees. Members of the newer generation require constant feedback from their leaders and want to feel as they are a contributing part of the team. Supervisors should to be flexible and learn to blend the many different styles of leadership to ensure their success in mentoring them for future leadership roles.

Introduction

Most agencies in operation today employ members from four different age generations. Those generations are mostly referred to as the "Matures" or the "Greatest Generation" (born before 1946), the "Baby Boomers" (1947 – 1964), "Generation X" (1965 – 1979) and "Generation Y" or the "Millennials" (1980 – mid 1990s) (Sanchez, 2011). The vast majority of agencies or organizations within the Criminal Justice workplace are currently being lead by the Baby Boomers and Generation Xers. The number of Baby Boomers in the workplace is declining at a rapid pace, mostly due to retirement. This imminent exodus of a single generation from the workforce creates a predicament for current leaders of these organizations. They may be left wondering who will be the future leaders of their agencies; and are they really prepared to lead?

In the past decade, more and more Generation Yers or Millennials have entered our workforce. It should come as no surprise that this unique generation is destined to become the new leaders and heads of organizations in the near future. It is our responsibility to properly prepare this generation for those future roles to ensure the continued success of our agencies. This research paper is intended to provide the necessary information that is needed in hopes of making certain that the next generation is prepared and motivated effectively for future leadership roles. The data collected is expected to provide some useful methods to better understand and truly appreciate the things that drive and motivate the next generation towards success. This younger generation has many positive attributes that we must take notice of and utilize in an effort at ensuring their success, and that of our agencies' as a whole. Stephen Covey (1989) proposed, "Next to physical survival, the greatest need of a human being is psychological survival – to be understood, to be affirmed, to be validated, to be appreciated" (p.241).

There have been many studies conducted to identify the behavioral composition of several generations, explaining why they are the way they are. This paper will examine some of those studies and focus on some strategies, methods, and philosophies that are useful for motivating the next generation. The research for this paper will be based upon studies, existing publications and surveys presented to several Criminal Justice agencies. All the data obtained will then be analyzed to indentify what information can be used to further develop and enhance their leadership skills.

Literature Review

Communication plays an essential and vital role in bridging the generational gap within the public-sector workforce. More than 60 percent of employers have reported that they are experiencing tension between employees from different generations according to a survey conducted by the Lee Hecht Harrison Career Management Company. Better flexibility among the different generations in an organization can lead to a more cohesive work setting when leaders create an environment where communication is open and goals are clear. Leaders, managers and supervisors need to essentially learn and understand that they are the key facilitators in bridging the generational gap. There is a belief that through effective communication and the flexibility of understanding the needs of the older and younger generations, leaders can better equip the organization to meet its mission in the most efficient and effective manner. (Derrick & Walker, 2006)

Understanding the differences and finding solutions that address the concerns of the next generation is crucial to getting that generation on track and in line with the organization's mission. Leaders should recognize that today's younger employees are eager to work in an environment where their views and ideas are heard and valued. The younger generation is easily motivated when they are made to feel that their efforts are recognized within an organization. The recognition drives their enthusiasm and makes them feel a part of the team. (Derrick & Walker, 2006)

Dr. Jean Twenge describes and brands this current young age generation (from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s) as "Generation Me". She expresses the significant value in employers taking the first step in understanding that this generation has a unique perspective on life. They were brought up differently and they shouldn't be blamed for how they have adapted to the society around them. This young generation will soon be the greater part of the workforce within the next ten years. She gathered data and research from the past six decades. That data supports her belief that an employer that takes the time to get to understand and appreciate their younger employees will be better prepared to lead them in the future. (Twenge, 2006)

It is important for leaders to understand that the next generation of employees were more than likely not raised or brought up like they were. They might have had to face different social norms and generally not have had many opportunities to effectively deal with conflict as older generations had. Where the older generation might have had more structure in their homes by way of two parents and discipline, the younger generation may have been raised by their parents under a phase where psychological awareness for children occurred. This phase changed many social norms that older

generations may have been accustomed to when they were growing up. It is no longer necessary to keep score, administer corporal punishment and the notion of being held accountable is now becoming nearly nonexistent. Ironically, the older generation is generally to blame for these changes as they are now the parents and grandparents to this younger generation. (Booher, 2007)

Dr. Jeff Green (FBI's Leadership Development Institute) writes that today's leaders must shift from the role of judging and evaluating to a role of ensuring accountability through supporting, coaching, and cheerleading (Blachard, 2001). This form of situational leadership perfectly ties into and addresses how leaders can effectively lead the next generation by being flexible and understanding both the needs of the organization and that of the next generation's. Leaders should still recognize that directive leadership and control are still vital aspects of leadership. As a leader, you'll still have to at times instruct people "what to do, how to do it, when to do it, where to do it, and who's to do it" (Hersey, 1988).

Dr. Green further discusses that situational leadership is simply based on the relationship between the subordinate's development level and that of the leadership style that the leader provides. Not everyone requires the same level of supervision and guidance. The key is, understanding what level of leadership each individual requires to successfully accomplish his or her task. When used correctly, situational leadership increases motivation, job satisfaction, productivity, and the overall development of subordinates. This form of leadership can open lines of communication and increase the quality of performance and development. (Green, 2005)

Method

The survey for this research focused on the "first line" members (sworn and non-sworn) of several criminal justice agencies in south Florida. In an effort to gather relevant data for this research, the questions were designed to target employees that were between the ages of 18 and 32. The targeted employees were not currently holding supervisory positions in their respective agencies. Fifty surveys were distributed to several local law enforcement agencies in Miami-Dade County in June of 2012. Forty-two (84%) were returned in time to collect and analyze the data for this research. Of the forty-two returned, two were incomplete and had to be discarded. This in turn reduced the overall return rate to 80%.

The survey consisted of sixteen questions. Fifteen questions were multiple choice questions and one was a yes or no question. The questions in the survey primarily focused on retrieving and obtaining data that would enlighten readers on what the younger generations in our workforce expect from their leaders and supervisors. Some questions addressed matters pertaining to technology, job security, and the level of satisfaction with their current chosen profession.

Participating members were afforded the opportunity to complete the surveys anonymously. A greater number of surveys distributed, completed, and analyzed would have ideally been more beneficial in collecting the data for this research paper. Additionally, a broader geographical area and an increase in the number of questions on the survey would also have been ideal.

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Results

The data collected from the forty surveys was analyzed. The answer to each question was divided by the number of participants that answered the question and later given a percentage value. Every answer given by the participants to each question on the survey was awarded a percentage value of 2.5%. The percentage for each answer of every question was then compared to one another to accurately analyze the data collected. The following are some of the specific questions and the results of each:

Q3: How important it was for them to be challenged in their job. Their responses were: 30% felt it was extremely important; 22.5% felt it was very important; 30% felt it was moderately important; and 17.5% felt it was only slightly important.

Q4: How often they would prefer to receive feedback from your supervisor. Their responses were: 17.5% felt they preferred feedback extremely often; 42.5% preferred it very often; 30% preferred it moderately often and 10% only preferred it slightly often.

Q5: How important was it to them to be acknowledged for their good work. Their responses were: 37.5% felt it was extremely important; 20% felt it was very important; 30% felt it was moderately important; and 12.5% felt it was only slightly important.

Q6: How often their supervisor listens to employees' opinions when making decisions. Their responses were: 10% felt their supervisor listened to employees' opinions when making decisions extremely often; 30% felt it was very often; 37.5% felt it was moderately often; 20% felt it was only slightly often; and 2.5% felt it was not at all often.

Q7: How often they'd preferred their supervisor listen to their opinions when making decisions. Their responses were: 12.5% preferred it was extremely often; 60% preferred it was very often; 20% preferred it was moderately often; 5% preferred it was only slightly often; and 2.5% preferred it was not at all often.

Q8: How important it was for them to be able to discuss with their supervisor a disagreement on a decision s/he made. Their responses were: 2.5% felt it was extremely important; 22.5% felt it was very important; 62.5% felt it was moderately important; 7.5% felt it was only slightly important; and 5% felt it was not at all important.

Q9: How important it was for them to have their agency supply the latest technologically advanced tools (computers, gps, weapons, etc…). Their responses were: 40% felt it was extremely important; 40% felt it was very important; 10% felt it was moderately important; and 10% felt it was only slightly important.

Q10: How many years of service they felt employees should have before becoming eligible for their first promotion. Responses were: 27.5% felt they should be eligible for their first promotion at 0 – 2 years; 65% felt they should be eligible at 3 – 5 years; and 7.5% felt they should be eligible at 6 – 7 years.

Q11: Which age category they felt they best worked with. Their responses were: 37.5% felt they worked best with co-workers born from 1980 – 1993; 55% felt they worked best with co-workers born from 1965 – 1979; and 7.5% felt they worked best with co-workers born from 1947 – 1964.

Q12: How often they felt their opinions about work mattered to coworkers. Their responses were: 5% felt it was extremely often; 17.5% felt it was very often; 50% felt it was moderately often; 10% felt it was only slightly often; and 17.5% felt it was not at all often.

Q13: How satisfied they were with their profession. Their responses were: 17.5% felt they were extremely satisfied; 35% felt they were very satisfied; 30% felt they were moderately satisfied; 15% felt they were only slightly satisfied; and 2.5% felt they were not at all satisfied.

Q14: How important job security was to them. Their responses were: 75% felt it was extremely important; 17.5% felt it was very important; and 7.5% felt it was moderately important.

Q15: How important was a pension to them. Their responses were: 87.5% felt it was extremely important; 7.5% felt it was very important; and 5% felt it was moderately important.

Q16: How likely they were to look for another job outside their current profession. Their responses were: 12.5% felt it was extremely likely; 10% felt it was very likely; 20% felt it was likely; 30% felt it was only slightly likely; and 22.5% felt it was not at all likely.

Discussion

The results for the survey contained within this research paper presented some indicators on the importance the role of communication plays between an organization's leadership and that of its employees of the younger generation. The younger generation is eager to learn and try new things. They want to be challenged. Over 80% of the participants of the survey indicated that it was important for them to be challenged in their job.   The younger generation is also looking for feedback and wants to be recognized and acknowledged for their work. At least 90% reported that they preferred often feedback from their supervisor and over 85% felt it was important to them to be acknowledged for their good work.

The younger generation in our workforce wants to be a part of the team. They want to be able to contribute in decision making when it relates to them and they appreciate having their opinions being heard. Over 90% stated they wished their supervisor listened to their opinion when making decisions. A good sign was that over 75% of them also stated that their supervisor does take the time to listen to their opinions within their agency. There are several studies and literature that suggest that the younger generation has a difficulty in dealing with conflict. Over 60% of the

participants of the survey responded neutral to a question regarding confronting a disagreement.

Technology is very important to the younger generation. They are very interested in the latest devices and advanced tools. They were raised with video games and computers. 90% of the participants indicated that it was important for them to be supplied with the latest technologically advanced equipment and tools. Their knowledge, comprehension and skill set of these devices are a great asset for their organizations.

The younger generation in our workforce seems to want and seek advancement at a rapid pace. Over 25% indicated they should be eligible for promotion within 0 – 2 years of service and 65% indicated 3 – 5 years of service was sufficient time for a promotion. This data is a great indicator as to how important it is for leaders to initiate mentorship programs within their agencies.

Pensions and job security are extremely important to the younger generation. They were raised during a time where a lot of their parents lost good jobs with great companies. With the loss of those jobs, their parents' retirements and pensions were placed in jeopardy. This may be a factor in why some of the younger generation employees are cautious of complete loyalty to an organization. In two questions pertaining to how important job security and a pension was to them, the participants indicated that they were both 100% important. Over 40% indicated that it was likely they would look for another job outside of their current profession. This may be an indicator of the current uncertainty of looming layoffs, downsizing and pension modifications due to the struggling economies of many organizations.

Recommendations

These recommendations are based upon the totality of data and information collected throughout this research. They discuss several useful strategies and approaches that would enable leaders to successfully prepare the next generation for future leadership roles within their organizations. The first and most important strategy is getting to really know each individual employee as much as possible. It's important to take the time to understand their social make up and the realization that this generation was brought up differently.

The younger generation can be effectively motivated by encouraging their participation when implementing new operational plans or programs within the organization. Taking the time in listening to their opinions and valuing those opinions can also be effective. Constant feedback and direction is important. Open the lines of communication to clearly establish what is expected of them and in turn be receptive to their expectations of their leaders.

Finding creative ways to utilize their skills in this age of new technology is beneficial to both the organization and the member. Providing training opportunities that will further enhance those skills can also lead to success. Try to keep your organizations up to speed on technology. These tools energize and motivate them in the workplace.

Changes in current leadership styles are important, so long as the standards and the mission of the organization are not at all compromised. The old system of "my way or the highway" isn't effective in dealing with the younger generation. To effectively lead the next generation towards becoming future leaders, supervisors should learn to be flexible in their leadership styles and adopt a new form of leadership that blends the many styles together. The leader's ability to effectively communicate, mentor and demonstrate their level of commitment to the next generation will be crucial to their success as future leaders.

Jason Younes has been in law enforcement for 12 years. He started his law enforcement career with the City of Hialeah Police Department in 2000. In 2004, Jason left the Hialeah Police Department and was hired by the Village of Key Biscayne Police Department as a patrol officer. He has moved up through the ranks and is presently a Lieutenant, overseeing the night shift.

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Appendix

The only appendix to this research paper is the below sample of the survey that was distributed, completed, and returned by sworn and non-sworn members of several criminal justice agencies in south Florida.

SLP 15 Research Survey

1. Please select what age category you belong to?
   - 1980 – 1993
   - 1979 – 1965
   - 1964 – 1947
   - 1946 or Earlier

2. Do you currently hold a supervisory position in your agency?
   - Yes
   - No

3. How important it to you to be challenged in your job?
   - o Extremely Important
   - o Very Important
   - o Moderately Important
   - o Slightly Important
   - o Not at all Important

4. How often would you prefer to receive feedback from your supervisor?
   - o Extremely Often
   - o Very Often
   - o Moderately Often
   - o Slightly Often
   - o Not at all Often

5. How important is it to you to be acknowledged for your good work?
   - o Extremely Important
   - o Very Important
   - o Moderately Important
   - o Slightly Important
   - o Not at all Important

6. How often does your supervisor listen to employees' opinions when making decisions?
   - o Extremely Often
   - o Very Often
   - o Moderately Often
   - o Slightly Often
   - o Not at all Often

7. How often would you prefer your supervisor listen to your opinions when making decisions?
   - o Extremely Often
   - o Very Often
   - o Moderately Often
   - o Slightly Often
   - o Not at all Often

8. How important is it for you to be able to discuss with your supervisor a disagreement on a decision s/he made?
   - o Extremely Important
   - o Very Important
   - o Moderately Important
   - o Slightly Important
   - o Not at all Important

9. How important is it for your agency to supply the latest technologically advanced tools (computers, gps, weapons, etc…)?
    - o Extremely Important
    - o Very Important
    - o Moderately Important
    - o Slightly Important
    - o Not at all Important

10. Please select how many years of service you believe employees should have before becoming eligible for their first promotion?
    - o 0 – 2
    - o 3 – 5
    - o 6 – 7
    - o 7 – 10
    - o 11 or More

11. What age category do you feel you best work with?
    - o 1980 – 1993
    - o 1979 – 1965
    - o 1964 – 1947
    - o 1946 – before

12. How often do your opinions about work matter to your coworkers?
    - o Extremely Often
    - o Very Often
    - o Moderately Often
    - o Slightly Often
    - o Not at all Often

13. How satisfied are you with your profession?
    - o Extremely Satisfied
    - o Very Satisfied
    - o Moderately Satisfied
    - o Slightly Satisfied
    - o Not at all Satisfied

14. How important is job security?
    - o Extremely Important
    - o Very Important
    - o Moderately Important
    - o Slightly Important
    - o Not at all Important

15. How important is a pension to you?
    - o Extremely Important
    - o Very Important
    - o Moderately Important
    - o Slightly Important
    - o Not at all Important

16. How likely are you to look for another job outside your current profession?
    - o Extremely Likely
    - o Very Likely
    - o Likely
    - o Slightly Likely
    - o Not at all Likely