

**The following Employer Resource Guide has been prepared by Community Options Society as part of the Employer-Youth Engagement Project as a means to support employers to overcome common workplace challenges experienced with youth.**

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Please visit [www.coscowichan.ca](http://www.coscowichan.ca) for more information about this project.



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## **EMPLOYER RESOURCE GUIDE**

Employees are the backbone of a company, and young employees can be especially valuable to your business as they bring with them a refreshing sense of optimism, energy and innovation.

When hiring and working with youth employees, it is important to understand that youth may have unique characteristics in the workplace. This resource guide has been developed to inform you about these characteristics and enhance your existing human resource practices.

### **Generational Differences**

Have you ever thought you and your young staff come from two different worlds? Well, the truth is that you do! Generational differences can cause misunderstandings at work and be a source of workplace conflict. Often when in conflict we like to point our finger at others and say that it is their fault. However, it is important to consider that the generation you are born into may affect how you view the world.

So, before you think “Wow, these younger folks sure don’t have a work ethic”, consider that perhaps they do, it may just be that it looks a little different from yours. This isn’t necessarily an individual problem but rather a result of the era in which the individual was born. If we intend to overcome generational differences, it is important all parties understand how they play out in the workplace.

The table on following page outlines four different generations and the workplace characteristics they possess.

### Generational Workplace Characteristics

	Veterans (born 1922-1945)	Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964)	Generation X (born 1965-1980)	Generation Y (born 1981-2000)
<b>Work Ethic &amp; Values</b>	Hard working Loyal Disciplined Respects authority Sacrifice Duty before fun Adheres to rules	Workaholics Work efficiently Personal fulfillment Desire quality Question authority Competitive	Independent Self-reliant Want structure & direction Skeptical of authority Resourceful	What's next Multitasking Tenacity Entrepreneurial Tolerant Goal oriented Lifestyle over salary Realistic
<b>Work is....</b>	An obligation	An exciting adventure	A difficult challenge A contract	A means to an end Fulfillment
<b>Leadership Style</b>	Directive Command-and-control	Consensual Reciprocal	Everyone is the same Challenge others Ask why	Collaboration Let's work together
<b>Communication Preference</b>	Formal	In person	Telephone or face-to-face	E-mail Voice mail Texting Social media
<b>Feedback</b>	No news is good news	Don't appreciate it Once a year is good enough	Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing?	Frequently, let me know how I am doing Tell me what I am doing well
<b>Rewards</b>	Satisfaction in a job well done	Title recognition Motivated by money	Freedom is the best reward	Meaningful work Motivated by personal growth or passion
<b>View on Work-Life Balance</b>	Work then live	Work to live	I need a balance of both	I live, then I work

Elements of the above table were retrieved from:  
<http://www.fdu.edu/newspubs/magazine/05ws/generations.htm>

## Benefits from Generation Y...

Youth from Generation Y have many skills and strengths they bring to the workforce. Here is a partial list of skills worth mentioning:

- ✓ This generation is very technologically savvy and can adapt quickly to change
- ✓ They are confident, ambitious and achievement oriented
- ✓ They work exceptionally well in a team environment and like to seek out new challenges that will give them a sense of purpose
- ✓ They are creative thinkers and can offer innovative 'out-of-the box' solutions

You can use these strengths to benefit your organization. Be sure to ask for youth input in new projects you are considering or to generate ideas around increasing productivity or marketing in your business. You will be amazed at what they have to offer!

Above all, remember that good news travels fast. When younger employees feel valued and connected to your workplace, they will share their experience with friends and family and the community will soon discover your stellar reputation!

## Be explicit in your job postings

When posting an opening in your organization it is best to include as many details as possible about the position. Youth are intrinsically motivated and are likely to stay at a job, and perform it well, when it offers them the interest and motivation they are seeking. The last thing you want is someone in a position who is not happy because they assumed the job would be quite different!

Eliminate as much 'assuming' as possible and be explicit about what the position has to offer (e.g., skills, required hours, expectations). This, coupled with asking direct interview questions, likely will reduce the possibility of someone wasting your time by applying for and obtaining a position in which they were really not interested.

## Ask direct questions in the interview

It is important you get a feeling for what the interviewee is looking for in a job. Don't assume that the job seeker will be satisfied in that position simply because they are getting a paycheck; this isn't always a motivator for the younger generation. Instead, ask direct questions to gauge what the interviewee hopes to get out of the position. Ask variations of the following questions to determine their needs and to see if they match yours.

1. What motivates you to work hard?
2. How important is having a flexible schedule?
3. Do you have any commitments outside work that may conflict with availability (e.g. school)?
4. What is likely to keep you happy at work?

## Be clear about your expectations

Youth need to know what is expected of them at work. Although some of your employees may have prior experience in the workforce, it may be the first job for a young employee. As a result, your youth employees may need to acquire some of the basic workplace skills that many of us take for granted. In addition to the training you offer through your organization, we recommend that you explain the following to your new employee:

- ✓ Expectations around what they should be doing if they are not busy with work
- ✓ Rules around the use of technology at work (e.g., texting, games, social media)
- ✓ Workplace etiquette (e.g., what is and is not okay to talk about at work in front of customers)
- ✓ Expectations around attendance (e.g., rules about calling in, available sick time, not having any tolerance for lateness)
- ✓ Consequences if they don't abide by the rules
- ✓ Any benefits or incentives you may offer
- ✓ Above all, be patient and explain to youth staff what you need

## Motivators

As you probably noted in the generational chart, most youth are not motivated by a paycheque, but instead are looking for meaningful work. You may be asking yourself “What exactly does meaningful work look like?” and the truth is that it will look a little different for each person depending on their passion and personality. With that being said, however, the most important element for youth when seeking meaningful work is finding a place where they feel valued.

Youth need to feel valued, that they are part of a collective and that what they are doing has a purpose and positive effect. Understanding your staff and asking them what motivates them is an important consideration to not only meet their needs but to increase productivity at work.

There are two general types of motivators; one is intrinsic and the other is extrinsic.

**Intrinsic Motivators** - stem from a person's internal desire for self-satisfaction, or pleasure in performing a task. A personal sense of accomplishment is one of the greatest motivators for an employee.

**Extrinsic Motivators** - come from outside the individual. These are external rewards that provide satisfaction the task itself may not.

Here are some examples of the two different types of motivators:

Intrinsic Motivators	Extrinsic Motivators
Trust – Allow employees to work independently	Bonuses
Feeling valued - Let them know their opinions and comments count; incorporate their ideas whenever possible	Perks – discounts on products, parking passes, etc.
Passion – If you are excited about the company & product then your youth employee will be too	Benefits – health, dental, optical, etc.
Choice – The ability to choose projects that align with their skills and passions	Incremental pay raises
Meaningfulness – Is their work contributing to the greater whole or are they just another cog in the wheel?	Recognition – eg., ‘Employee of the Month’

Although many youth are intrinsically motivated, this doesn't mean that extrinsic motivators are not useful; rather that extrinsic motivation may not be the primary source of motivation for this generation.

Remember, many work motivators can come at no financial cost to you and there are creative ways you can keep your staff engaged.

## **Feedback**

Feedback is an important topic and each generation has a different perception of what the word means. Feedback involves informing your employees about their performance by letting them know what they are doing well, in addition to areas needing improvement.

Many employers are under the impression that feedback is necessary only when someone is not meeting expectations; in other words, feedback is negative.

In fact, if you have youth staff employed at your organization, it is important that you give them *positive* feedback, as this is an important intrinsic motivator for them. This doesn't mean that you cannot give negative feedback, although this should be delivered constructively. However, giving youth frequent, positive feedback will not only make them feel valued and that they are contributing to the workplace, but will likely increase their productivity.

Here is a list of basic strategies to follow when giving feedback:

- ✓ If you want to give someone negative constructive feedback it is good practice to ask them if they are open to receiving it. There is nothing worse than someone giving you feedback and you aren't in a place to be able to hear it as you may be angry or upset.
- ✓ When giving someone negative feedback, try to give them examples. For example, instead of saying: "Bob, you are very unreliable", you might say: "Bob, you were late on Monday and Wednesday this week and I'm really worried about your reliability".
- ✓ When you are giving negative feedback it is important to let staff know what you expect of them in order to correct the behaviour as well as what will be the consequence if they don't. For example, in the above scenario you would follow it up by saying " Bob, I really need you to call me to let me know that you are going to be late for work, otherwise I may have to 'write you up' or worse, let you go".

- ✓ When giving someone negative feedback it is good practice to use the 'sandwich effect'. Which is to tell them something that they are doing well; tell them what they aren't doing well or what they could improve; and follow this with something positive.
- ✓ Negative feedback aimed at a specific person should not be given in a group setting, as it will likely shame that person.
- ✓ Positive feedback is okay to give individually as well as in a group setting, as the recognition will likely boost esteem.
- ✓ Positive feedback doesn't have to be complex, it can be as simple as saying "Bob, you did a really good job cleaning up the office last week; I appreciate all your hard work"

Remember, the key to maintaining youth employees is to focus on what they are doing well and to let them know they are appreciated!

**Good Luck!**