TOP 3 MOTIVATORS THAT RETAIN A
MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

hangontoyourstars.com  Doreen A. Lang
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I am undeniably excited about my new book *Putting Differences to Work: Secrets from a Multi-Generational Workforce* coming out next month. It’s a compilation of interviews from employees of five generations. There is no other book on the market that has captured such intimate information necessary to understand the different generational motivators.

In *Putting Differences to Work*, I set out to learn what motivates working people who represent these five generations. I felt the only way I could obtain accurate data was to ask employees directly, and so my journey began. I met with 25 employed individuals, ages 15 to 81, and asked them the same questions about what makes them tick in the workplace. I also let them know I would be changing their names, thereby encouraging them to be brutally honest with their responses.

From *Putting Differences to Work*, we extracted the top motivators vital to the oldest and youngest employees in the workplace today. We are excited to share this information with you in this e-book.

You will be as surprised as I was at what we were told.
Motivation varies from generation to generation, and yet they all have basic needs and desires for happiness and fulfillment in the workplace.

So, what factors do the generations share that motivate them to come to work every day? We wanted to know, so we asked them.

1. Money

I know you are probably saying to yourself, “No big surprise. I could have told you that.” Okay, you are correct, but here’s what’s interesting and what totally surprised me. The people who responded that money was their primary motivator were not motivated by it for its own sake. It is to them a motivator because it is a vehicle to something else of value or need.

None of them told me that it was why they flew out of bed in the morning. They also didn’t complete their response with, “I make so much money that it thrills and excites me.” The people who told me money was their motivation felt underpaid, and that frustrated them.

Essentially, they were saying, “I only come to work for the paycheck because I could take or leave my job.” Money as a motivator is a huge misconception. It does not cause them to leap out of bed with a skip in their step.

These people, who I went on to learn more about, are the same people who are either unhappy, apathetic, or lack other motivators. This is important because money is a basic need and a means to an end, not a motivator. Money is not a heart-banging thrill or personally rewarding factor that induces any of the interviewees to jump out of bed each morning and go to work.

These employees are just showing up and doing what is expected of them—and not much more. In turn, they expect that their organization will pay them every two weeks, and that is good enough for them. These employees are the least engaged.
As one Millennial told us,

“Mostly the paycheck gets me up in the morning and my hope is that one of the many people I meet each day might offer me a new work opportunity.”

The common factor among these employees who cite money as a motivational factor is either they don’t like their boss, or their job doesn’t challenge them or give them a sense of purpose. This leaves them with no other reasons to enjoy the workplace, and the only thing they look forward to is their paycheck. They are otherwise disengaged.

For these people, money does not make them happy; it is more like oxygen. They need it to survive and cannot think of any other reason to come to work each day. That is a reason—not a motivation—to come
work. It is a basic need that lies in the land of necessity, not in the sky of possibilities and opportunities. Workplace motivations lie beyond the basic human needs.

For the most part, the older employees who responded that money is their motivational factor have another means of income, and their jobs provide them with additional income to on fun extras.

“I love spending money (laughs), and I enjoy what I am doing. This job gives me spending money, and I like making my own money. I always have. I also like working in the backroom and being away from customers. I don’t like working with the public at all. I like doing what I need to do in the backroom. The public is not for me.”

When an employee is working only for a paycheck and nothing else engages him, turnover rate is high and inevitable. Employees who are exclusively motivated by their paychecks are not invested in the organization as others are who have a personal and or professional motivation to go the extra mile. They are a flight risk. You can expect this employee to bolt, perhaps without the customary two-week notice. The reason is simple: If employees are not engaged, they aren’t as likely to provide extra care in transitioning out when exiting their positions.

Leaders and managers need to ask themselves why they would do this. If no one in the organization has taken the time to help them or learn what makes them tick, these employees will feel insignificant and unappreciated.
One employee from the traditional generation responded:

“First of all, I work because I need money to live, food, etc., but what keeps me there are the people I am responsible for. I have a good number of clients, and I have been with 15 of them for nine or 10 years.”

This employee groups money with helping others as what keeps her there, but when I asked her what motivates her, she answered, “I need money.” This is the first thing that came to her mind. Again, it is a vehicle to her needs, not a professional motivator. Helping her clients checks the motivation box.

Generation Z is totally different. Money is their motivator. They are motivated by money because their need is so strong and basic. They require money to help with their growing financial needs and have not developed their personal and professional desires and visions for the work they want to do—yet. Money is a major factor for the youngest generation because they are just starting out on their long journey of independent living, college education, and personal expenses. Therefore, the more money they can make, the better. They will leave a job and go down the street to work for an additional 50 cents. This is not something any other generation is willing to do. However, the bonus for employers is that, for the most part, this generation is willing to work as long as they get paid at the highest level possible and they get paid on time.

The other half of the people we interviewed who did not mention money as a motivator didn’t mention money at all. Money never even came up at any point during their interviews.
Note: The next time you perceive an employee is only coming to work to pick up his or her paycheck, stop and take a closer look. Ask yourself, “Is this worker engaged with coworkers? Are they friendly with their coworkers? Does he or she show a sense of pride in a job well done or take pleasure in helping others?” Managers and leaders must ask themselves, “What can I do to re-engage this employee? Can I afford to lose him or her? Do I want to?” If you are not pulling out all the stops, you will be pushing your luck.

These are important questions facing leaders and managers today. The cost of employee turnover is in the trillions of dollars annually—mostly wasted dollars. If your employee is not in it to win it, find out why. Find out what is not happening for them. Find out what makes them tick and what they bring to the table.

Gen X

“I don’t know. I guess I just have to go to work. I am not a morning person. I just get up; it’s just a routine. I have bills to pay.”

You must work to re-engage this employee if you want to keep her happy. Remember, you and/or the organization’s silence is deadly when it comes to inquiring into an employee’s current attitude toward the job. Seek to understand her and find out what makes her different, and then put those differences to work. This is the first step to retention.
1. Personal Satisfaction

Yes, you do, and that makes you a highly engaged worker.

The challenge and result of a personal achievement is a powerful and a significant motivator for the majority of our interviewees. Personal satisfaction has deep personal and professional meaning and speaks to an employee’s innate feelings of genuine passion toward goals. This motivator was hugely important to most generations. Sitting at the top of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, personal satisfaction serves as the ultimate motivator. Even Generation Z, whose primary motivator is money, felt that doing a good job matters to them. They want to feel accomplished. As young as they are, they still want work that speaks to their personal interests.
Gen Z

“I think teaching children music and getting to play music at my job gets me up in the morning. It’s nice knowing I’m doing something beneficial for young kids that is also allowing me to grow as a musician. I am seeing the kids’ gradual improvement, even in as short as two months. Several kids who have graduated from the center go to prestigious schools.”

This sense of personal satisfaction is prevalent in the older generations, giving them a feeling of deep connection to the work and their organization. Millennials are seeking a position that touches their soul and their profound innate interests as well.

“I get up in the morning to go to work because my job and my boss give me the freedom to figure out how to finish projects. That freedom turns my work into a creative expression even though it’s a very logical, data-based environment.”

“First, the job usually involves building a tool or system that manipulates data. That excites me intellectually and keeps me motivated. Second, my industry has a clear path to promotion through the actuarial exam process.”
“I love what I do. Everything we do is interesting to me. Every day is filled with puzzles like these. Additionally, always learning is exciting. There’s always something new around the corner. And it’s okay if you don’t always have the answer because you can collaborate.”

“I’m motivated by the challenge each day brings. With callouts, high demand, and environmental impacts, I know I have what it takes to run a successful shift. What motivates me each day is the ability to make a positive change at work. I know that one small decision is all it takes to positively impact a team member.”

Leaders and managers who can identify what will personally satisfy their employees are engaging with their employees. The employees, in turn, will feel the interest as an investment into their professional growth and personal interests. Identify what those personal goals and challenges are for your employees and encourage their unique interests to the benefit of the organization. Find out what those differences are and put them to work.

2. Enjoying Coworkers

People want to make a difference and be a part of others’ lives. Connecting with and enjoying coworkers and the relationships created from those connections is a strong factor for motivating and retaining employees. For some people, they felt their work was uninteresting, and they didn’t care much about their boss, but the relationships they have with their coworkers is nothing less than invisible Velcro connecting the employees to one
another. Even if the connection is by phone for the employees who are on the road or work from home, the result is the same. Having friends at work is a powerful motivator.

This is probably not shocking information to any of you, but personal connection is a powerful retention tool. How would you connect valued employees to one another? How do you create a culture where friendships and personal connections are encouraged, formed, and valued?

“I come to work because of my coworkers. There is such a diverse bunch of people. It is the most wonderful variety of personalities; which I don’t think I could find anywhere else—such a parade of humanity.”

“The people. I love what I do, but it is so nice to come to work and be with people you respect and like.”

“My staff. We listen to music, and I like the atmosphere. It’s different than the feeling you get in the rest of the place. In other departments, there are some workers where there are wars going on among them. My staff and I stay out of it.”
“The hostess, bussers, food runners, and waitresses are all pretty close and friendly. They always crack jokes together about work, and they make the time go by faster.”

The next response is from an extremely disengaged employee, who shared with me that she is quite unhappy.

“I get up in the morning because of my coworkers, I guess. There are two of us who have been there a while, and we talk about this all the time.”

The interesting thing about this motivational factor is that I am not sure this alone is of value to an organization. If your employees are strictly coming to work just for the social component, are they taking care of business with the passion, attention, and diligence the job requires? This is an important question leaders and managers must ask themselves.
Communication, connecting, and caring about one another is a powerful motivator.

This photograph is of a group of employees at work enjoying lunch together, but can it not be mistaken for a well-functioning family? Enjoying coworkers is a highly powerful motivator as it is a human component that speaks to us all. Sense of belonging is the first level of need after the physical and security needs are met, according to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. This desire for friendships at work is a basic need, and these connections are vital for employees to feel a part of a community and a sense of belonging.
Conclusion

“Inclusion will be an illusion unless your mission is ‘Putting Differences to Work.’”

~DLang

Clearly there are similarities that motivate the generations. Equipped with the knowledge of what are their common needs and desires, you can better motivate and retain these generations. However, the common denominator behind the scene is to get to the heart of who they are to get a better handle on what makes them different. It is critical in these vastly different generations of workers to identify and focus on what makes them unique if you want the best from everyone and a sense of camaraderie among the team members.

If an organization wants to create a community of workers that is proud of their organization and who individually appreciate their jobs, it is essential to promote diversity to gather unique skills and experiences from all generations of workers. Then, work at feeding their motivations at every level. This is the art and science of employee retention that results in a better whole.

Regardless of what generation we spoke with, they all shared one more factor that you can read more about this in my new book, Putting Differences to Work. Great leaders and managers create a culture of inclusion and enjoyment. These leaders and managers make every effort to get to know what makes their employees tick and then regularly recharge their employees’ batteries with the motivation juices that speak to them.

Employees want to work with and for people who care about them and for an organization that realizes and encourages their differences as well as the
similarities that bind them. They also want opportunities where they can actualize their unique potential.

Sweet sounding harmony comes from a collaboration of different notes. Look for and look to individual differences. Listen to what they bring to the orchestra.

You can have harmony in diversity to create a workforce that hits the perfect notes every day. You only need to work at Putting Differences to Work.

So, you are asking,

__________________________
“Who has time to learn about each employee?”

__________________________
Make the time. Or,

__________________________
“Do what you do best and hire out the rest.”

If you cannot make the time, then STOP what you are doing and make a decision. Decide to start a new company-wide initiative, and hire an outside professional experienced in communication with the ability to draw out the employees’ unique differences. I can help you with that. It is important
work, and I have rich experience in reading cues on a cellular level. You will be astounded with the results. I have created a one of a kind workshop that is fun, engaging, and helps employees learn about each other and value those differences. This creates strong bonds and a kinship like no other workshop you have experienced.

**Testimonial** (from actual Gen-Blend Workshop)

“**The techs loved your presentation. Although the workshop ended at 10:00 am, they were still discussing it at dinner. Looks like you made a great impact on them! Thanks again.”**

*National Sales Director, Hanover MA*

If seeking assistance with this initiative outside your organization may sound counterintuitive, ask yourself, “Who will be more objective than an impartial observer who will get this done and see it through with feedback and recommendations?” Make the time. Call me. Let’s get this done.

The competition for hiring workers on every level, especially laborers and front-line personnel, is wide and deep. Create a culture where great resumes arrive each day without posting an advertisement. Then you’ll know you have succeeded. This happened for me in my organization, and I can do this for you.

Check out [closethegenerationgap.com](http://closethegenerationgap.com) or [hangontoyourstars.com](http://hangontoyourstars.com). I hope to hear from you!
New book, *Putting Differences to Work* sneak preview—coming this summer!

*Putting Differences to Work: Secrets from a Multi-Generational Workforce* is a compilation of information taken directly from employees that will equip you with what it takes to combat the war on talent retention.

In *Putting Differences to Work*, you will learn what motivates employees, what keeps them working for you, and what makes the best and worst boss they have ever had. You will also learn about their effective and ineffective onboarding and training experiences. There is a huge benefit to reading this book because we are sharing knowledge that leads to employee retention with you. You will learn from each person’s story how to create a highly motivated, inclusive workforce. Grab the book *Putting Differences to Work* and read the secrets for yourself.

Call me to help you put those differences to work and save a fortune in employee turnover.

Doreen Lang is the principal of Hang on to Your Stars LLC, an exciting training and consulting company specializing in developing engaging leaders and creating inclusive, harmonious, and productive cultures since 2002.

Doreen is a consultant, trainer, and workshop facilitator, with guest appearances on TV and radio as well as a frequent conference presenter. She has written two other highly acclaimed books on employee retention. *Putting Differences to Work* is her third book.

Organizations hire Doreen Lang because they want to fully experience the joy and vitality they can realize through an inclusive workplace culture where employee engagement leads to retention, saving organizations a fortune in turnover costs.
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