

Next Generation Leaders

Your company's next wave of leadership is fast approaching. If you're not careful, you may find yourself bowled over by the challenge of preparing these young people for the new way of doing business that lies ahead.

Their mastery of text messaging is unsurpassed, and surely if there were an award for doing the most for the longest time while listening to an iPod, your Generation Yers easily would win. These tech-savvy employees happen to be your company's next generation of leaders — quirks and all. Transforming and even using those "quirks" to your organization's best advantage should be on your to-do list. They'll need primers on tried-and-true leadership skills such as communication and decision-making, plus a handful of classes tailored to the collaborative Web 2.0 work world they promise to lead.

• Experiential Teamwork

Much has been said about Generation Y's expectations to have what they want when they want it, rather than "waiting their turn," as their corporate elders were taught to do. But with the economy in a nearly unprecedented slump, those expectations are changing for the better, says Mary Jo Dolasinski, vice president of learning services for White Lodging Services, Inc. "In the hotel business, for example, they're going to have to clean rooms and check in guests, they're going to have to do things they might not have otherwise had to do, which I think may help them long-term have a better understanding of the business." Along with having them chip in more on the front lines.

Dolasinski says White Lodging is training its young people with an increasingly collaborative workplace in mind. "We're trying to design all of our classes so they're learning from each other, and it's much more experiential," she explains. Onboarding at White Lodging, for example, incorporates the sharing of best practices from different hotels managed by the company, rather than an all-lecture format. "That networking is much more powerful than what's happening in the formal part of the class," Dolasinski notes.

Off-line simulations also have proven a successful learning strategy for the company's youngest future leaders. Teams of these Gen Y employees are presented with a hypothetical White Lodging business challenge, including analytical materials such as profit-and-loss statements, and asked to race against each other to come up with viable solutions, including the short- and long-term impact of those solutions. "They present it to each other," says Dolasinski, "but then they also present it to senior leaders."

White Lodging also is teaching Gen Yers to keep pace with its ever-changing clientele by encouraging them to have a mind-set of intellectual curiosity. "The only constant in today's workplace is change and being constantly aware and learning to evolve," says Dolasinski. "As a result, White Lodging talks a lot about how what you know today is only 1 percent of what you're going to need to know in 50 years." ➤

QUICK TIPS

Be gen savvy, leadership specialists from Personnel Decisions International recommends. "The next generation of leaders needs to build awareness and to understand what motivates each generation," say leadership development consultant Debra S. Magnuson and Lora S. Alexander, director of research.



But don't forget universal leadership principles, experts from The Learning Key point out. "Each decade brings a different perspective, but ultimately, a leader must motivate followers to achieve goals and produce results," say CEO/President Dr. Elizabeth Treher and Managing Partner David Piltz.



Acquire skills, commitment, and discipline to communicate effectively, advise Magnuson and Alexander. "The next generation of leaders needs to have the tough conversations when things happen rather than waiting until a massive problem develops."



Take a multi-prong approach to global leadership learning, say Treher and Piltz, including "exchanges where employees move and work in a site across the globe."



"The next generation needs to see value in their work, and realize that small tasks lead to greater projects."

Marchesini, Manson, and Fullowan

• Old Standbys With A Twist...

Aspect, which provides unified communications for contact centers, also focuses on the capacity to adapt over strict do's and don'ts for its youngest leaders. Instructional design at the company is changing to meet Gen Y needs, becoming "more modular, condensed, and electronically distributed," but the old leadership standbys remain the same, says Senior Director, Education Services Delivery David Pennell. "Our programs concentrate on the skills required to be an effective and successful leader," he says. Motivation and attitude coaching, in which burgeoning Gen Y leaders are shown a healthy attitude to adopt is delivered at Aspect through mentoring programs.

The guidance its young leaders are given by older peers, and the formal curriculum they are presented with, touches on topics such as "cross-cultural communications," but Pennell says that in the years ahead these old-fashioned diversity and cultural acceptance courses will have to be tweaked to stay relevant.

"These programs still will be required, but I can foresee a very different slant," he says. "In this new era of electronic communication, leadership development programs must include an element of how to communicate action, direction, and philosophy through electronic communication such as e-mail, text, and Twitter."

Part of this communication training with a twist will explore how to manage a multigenerational workforce—important given the preference of many Baby Boomers to continue working past the traditional retirement age, observes Pennell. "Management training will need to incorporate training for the various generations at work," he says, "and show the value of leveraging the get-it-done methodology of the younger generations with the attention to details and get-it-right methodology of the older generations."

At Golden 1 Credit Union, teaching young, emerging leaders how to communicate effectively will only gain in importance in the coming years, says Manager, Training and Development Joan M. Bunge. "The ability to be concise and logical will never be out of date, and will become perhaps even more important as individuals select what they'll spend time on and what they'll simply pass over or delete," she points out. "Skills such as quickly grabbing attention, and demonstrating you value everyone's time, will be increasingly valued."

Young leaders at Carmax, Inc., also are taught the age-old principles of leadership, says Assistant Vice President, Training and

Development Tom Wulf. "Our leaders are expected to continuously improve to get to the next idea that will move our retail concept to the next level," he says. "Yes, the next generation of leaders is technically savvy, but more importantly, they'll need to think outside the box and stay on top of change."

• The Bottom Line, Please

They'll also need to cultivate patience. "They come into the organization expecting to rapidly ascend to the top of the corporate ladder of success sometimes in as few as two to four years," say inventiv Health Inc. Chief Learning Officer Peter Marchesini; Vice President, Diversity and Inclusion Eric Manson; and Senior Director, Client Training and Development Dee Fullowan. "The Next generation is focused more on results than on process and feedback. They want to know what is in it for them, how they can achieve it, and how they will be rewarded."

Leadership programs for inventiv's youngest workers take a holistic approach that incorporates both hard and soft skills. "They need influence, teambuilding, organizational awareness, self-confidence, and awareness of emotional intelligence—people skills," Marchesini, Manson, and Fullowan explain. These needed competencies translate at inventiv into a leadership curriculum that makes it easy for Gen Yers to reach out and receive feedback from others in the company. Rolled out coursework targeting next generation leadership includes a mentoring program, talent management and diversity/emotional intelligence workshops, a Women's Affinity Group, and 360-degree feedback.

Nationwide Insurance also has a specialized curriculum for its youngest budding leaders, says Associate Vice President, Learning and Performance Dawn Plimmer. "We have an Emerging Leaders program and a program for others looking to position themselves for success," she says citing course offerings on topics such as building relationships, giving and receiving feedback, personal influence, setting priorities, and adapting one's leadership style. "We include an emphasis on community involvement, which we find to be a critical element for Gen Y and Gen X."

Marchesini, Manson, and Fullowan add that leadership development should emphasize the importance of cultivating longstanding relationships with internal team members and clients. "The next generation needs to see value in their work, and realize that small tasks lead to greater projects." ■

