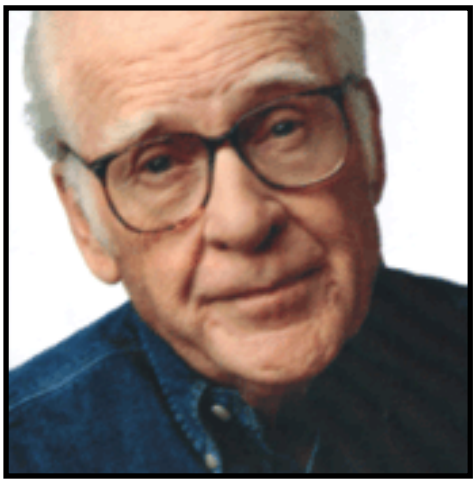


EVERYONE

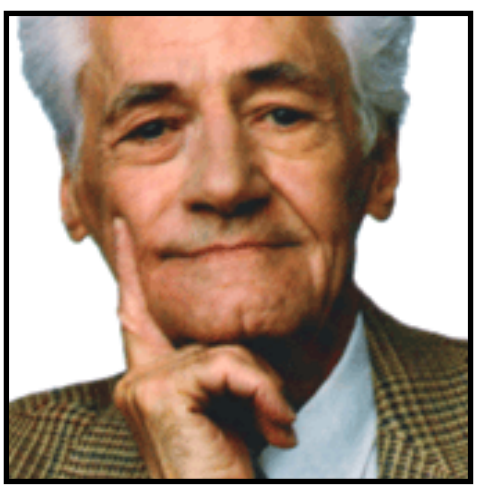
It takes different incentives to motivate people from different generations. *CMI* columnist and author of *1,001 Ways to Reward Employees* Bob Nelson has ideas for every age group. BY BOB NELSON, PHD

WINS

THERE'S NO SINGLE WAY to motivate a 23-year-old who views work as a hobby and a 45-year-old Type A personality who wants everyone in the company to know about his every accomplishment. These two age groups live in separate worlds.

Yet today's workplace finds the Silent Generation, baby boomers, and Generation X and Y'ers working side by side. Never before has there been such a diverse group in the corporate population — a work force that, at times, spans more than 50 years.

Abbott Laboratories, Chicago, is a regular on the lists of best companies to work for, in part because of its focus on the different generations that comprise its work force — 50,000 employees worldwide. For the youngest, Abbott offers flex-time, telecommuting, full tuition reimbursement, and an online mentoring tool. For employees with young children, there's on-site child care at headquarters (and a discount for child care elsewhere), and employees are allowed to take "sick days" to care for an ill child. For employees with older children, there's a Summer Camp Fair and a 'tweens program called



"Summer of Service." The company's oldest employees (more than 2,000 of which have more than 25 years with the company) can take part in free "Lunch & Learns" on financial planning and retirement issues.

There's no question that the programs are having an impact: The company's turnover is less than 7 percent a year, which is unusually low for the pharmaceutical industry.

Following are many other generation-focused rewards I've uncovered through my research and experience with companies around the world.

The Silent Generation (Born 1920-1945)

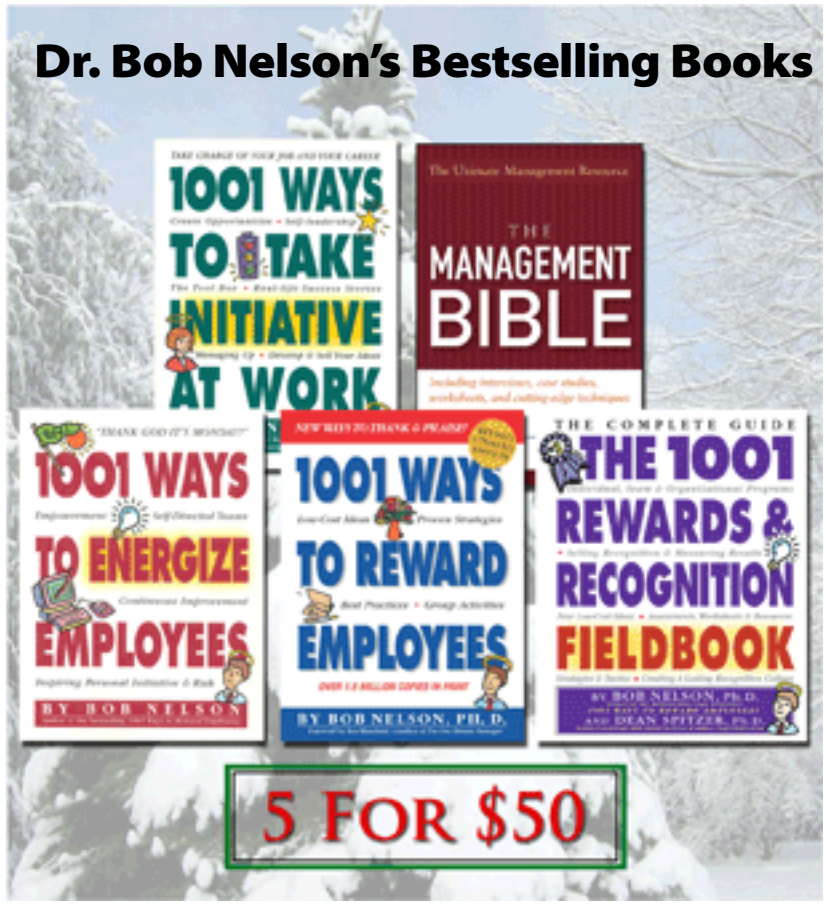
Nearly 16 million Americans age 55 and over are either working or seeking work, representing about 21 percent of the work force. In one AARP study of mature workers, 40 percent to 50 percent of those polled said that they would work past retirement age if they were offered flexible schedules, part-time, and temporary employment. They like the idea of re-entering the job market or keeping a foot in the labor pool.

Employees who fall into this group have generally had predictable career paths, working hard for one or two companies and moving up the ladder of success. They are characterized by their dedication to their employer, and as a group are considered to be non-risk takers and conformers.

WHAT DRIVES THIS GROUP? For the Silent Generation, the more formal and public the recognition is, the better. For example, Ceramics Process Systems Corp., a technical ceramics manufacturer in Milford, Mass., gives out an Extra Mile Award each year to several people who have gone above and beyond the call of duty. The winners' names are announced at a company meeting and then are engraved on a plaque that hangs in the lobby. The chosen employees also receive either cash or equity in the company.

Other ways to publicly recognize and motivate this group might be to take photographs of top performers as they are being congratulated by the company president and then hang the pictures in the lobby, or to write articles about their achievements to print in the employee newsletter. Some companies engrave a plaque with the names of employees who have reached 10, 15, 20, or more years of service and display it prominently.

Workers of the Silent Generation are pioneers of the team approach, and they value programs that recognize the contributions and successes of teams. At First Chicago Bank, the Service Products Group Performance Award recognizes high-performing groups of employees each month. The award includes a group.



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outing to the theater, including dinner, as well as a plaque for the group. All winning team members then attend the annual SPG Performance Banquet, at which additional awards are given. It's a program geared to the company's older demographic.

More than any other group, Silent Generation workers value incentives that help them to plan for the future. At Mary Kay Cosmetics, Dallas, employees receive stock contributions in celebration of service anniversaries. On their fifth anniversary, they receive 20 shares of stock; on their 10th, 80 shares; and, on their 15th, 120 shares.

Baby Boomers
(Born 1946-1963)

Baby boomers make up the largest population of today's workers — 76 million strong, accounting for 52 percent of the work force and most mid- and upper-management positions. »

THE DIFFERENT GENERATIONS:
Who Are They?

SILENT GENERATION
- traditional
- conforming, not risk-takers
- used to "doing without"
- team-oriented
- at retirement age

BABY BOOMERS
- "me"-focused, individualistic
- ideological, yet hypocritical
- many have workaholic tendencies
- seeking work/family balance
- nearing retirement age

GENERATION X
- resourceful
- tech-savvy
- enjoy working with friends
- expect work to be purposeful
- skeptical of institutions

GENERATION Y
- are not interested in "paying their dues"
- prefer to work from home
- need to be excited about what they do every day

©Bob Nelson, Ph.D., president of Nelson Motivation Inc. and best-selling author of *1501 Ways to Reward Employees*, *1001 Ways to Energize Employees*, and *The 1001 Rewards & Recognition Fieldbook*. Contact: 1(858)673-0690 bob@drbobnelson.com or visit at www.linkedin.com/in/drbobnelson
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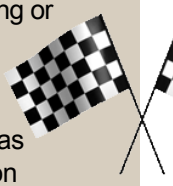
THE DIFFERENT GENERATIONS: What Turns Them On?

SILENTS

- formal awards, publicly presented
- honors from peers or employees
- stock, 401K contributions
- being valued for their experience (e.g., the opportunity to teach or mentor)
- long-term service awards

BOOMERS

- self-indulgent treats, such as massages or facials for the women and tools or high-tech gadgets for the men
- adrenaline-pumping experiences such as race-car driving or parasailing
- time off to spend with their children
- nostalgic items, such as a Beatles CD collection
- the chance to attend a conference of their choice



GEN X'ERS

- trendy, name-brand merchandise
- the chance to socialize with their friends and participate in a fun activity, such as laser tag or virtual 3-D games
- time with the boss to discuss learning opportunities or career advancement
- time off to participate in volunteer activities of choice
- opportunities to be a high-tech problem solver

GEN Y'ERS

- an informal, fun workplace
- immediate feedback
- experiential incentives, geared to what they like to do

This group came of age at a time of economic prosperity in the United States. It is a generation that likes to win, to be in charge, and to make an impact. Having grown up in post-war prosperity, boomers were the focus of society — and, as a result, they can be extremely self-indulgent.

"This is the first generation that hasn't had to live with the notion that what you're trained to do, you do for the rest of you life," says Marc J. Wallace, founding partner of the Center for Workforce Effectiveness in Northbrook, Il. They move easily from one career to the next, and from one company to another — which makes retaining them more of a challenge.

WHAT DRIVES THE BOOMERS? Many in this group are well-traveled and have seen and done far more than their parents. They live for new experiences and adventures. With that in mind, Valvoline Oil Co., Lexington, Ky., chose to reward six buyers from distributorships around the country with a trip to Road Atlanta, a racing school. There, instructed by professional drivers on racing techniques, guests enjoyed a day racing around the 2.5-mile Grand Prix track.

Boomers also like to be pampered. Realizing this, Nordstrom Inc., a Seattle-based department store chain with many long-term employees in this age group, created the Pacesetter Award for top sales among employees. As a Pacesetter, an employee enjoys a lavish evening of dinner, dancing, and entertainment to share with a guest. Then, for the following year, the Pacesetter enjoys a 33 percent discount on all Nordstrom merchandise — 13 percent greater than the standard employee discount.

As many boomers choose to remain in the work force beyond the traditional retirement age of 65, incentives that give them more free time are highly valued. Patagonia, an outdoor-clothing maker in Ventura, Calif., has a flexible policy that encourages employees to take time away from the office for outside activities. (Founder Yvon Chouinard has defined "time" as "anything from two hours or two weeks, as long as your work gets done.") This flex time can be spent with children and family, attending a conference of choice, or working on a hobby.

Generation X (Born 1964-1981)

There are 40 million-plus Gen-X employees, accounting for 26 percent of the work force. This group is fiercely independent, self-directed, and resourceful. They entered the working world in a time of downsizing and cutbacks, and are skeptical of authority and institutions. As a result, their first loyalty is to themselves.

This group seeks a work environment that is exciting, challenging, and meaningful. In the right setting, they can be loyal, committed, focused, and energized, and will give 110 percent to their job.

WHAT WORKS FOR THIS GROUP?

Opportunities that let these young employees interact with their managers are very motivating to Gen X'ers. For example, computer superpower Siemens Nixdorf Information Systems, in Paderborn, Germany, formed a team of 23 young, talented employees — all under age 40 — to advise the company's management on breakthrough technologies, competitive forces, and demographic trends. Being named to this team is a highly valued honor.

Gen X'ers are a group that is used to having fun. They are motivated by a free-spirited workplace, whether that's through company sporting activities or fun office events and competitions. For example, Aerospatiale, a manufacturer of airplanes, satellites, and missiles in Paris, uses a fantasy trip at Space Camp in France as an incentive. There, employees train much the same way as astronauts do, culminating in a simulated space flight.

Training is also an effective reward for Gen X'ers, who have an endless desire for information and to add to their skills, especially technology skills. Rosenbluth International, a travel agency headquartered in Philadelphia,

sponsors monthly seminars to enrich its employees' personal and professional lives. Topics include handling difficult situations, goal setting, food, fitness, recycling, and more.

Generation Y (Born 1981-1995)

Generation Y, also known as the Echo Boomers and the Millennials, is more than 57 million strong — the largest consumer group in the history of the United States. This is a group that wants it all — now. That's the Gen Y mantra — but is it really that different from previous generations?

Yes and no. This group prefers meaningful work starting from Day One of their careers — not after 10 years of working their way up the ladder. Many in this group prefer to work from home. ("What's the use of having technology if you don't take advantage of it?") They are willing to take on new challenges and responsibilities, but not at the cost of enjoying life and the relationships they value with friends and family. And if you get them excited about work opportunities to learn, grow, and make a difference, they're going to work longer and harder because they want to, not because they have to.

"Generation Y prefers meaningful work starting from Day One of their careers—not after 10 years of working their way up the ladder."

WHAT MOTIVATES MILLENNIALS?

One constant remains: Make them feel valued and appreciated. Do so through feedback, thanks, inclusion, trust, and respect. And don't forget to have fun.

For example, the Scooter Store in San Antonio lets its youthful employees play table tennis in a game room off the front lobby whenever they want to relax and have some fun. American Express, New York, provides personal development training to appeal to what their employees crave.

"Gen Y is very important," says Joe Hammill, director of talent acquisition at Xerox Corp., Stamford, Conn. "Xerox and other Fortune-type companies view this emerging work force as the future of our organization." ■