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Labor and the Green Industry: From Recruiting to Retaining
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What is causing the labor shortage?

- Aging population and declining workforce participation rate, combined with record government spending on entitlement programs.
- Population continues to increase but the percentage of people not working is at record levels and will most likely increase. By 2030, over 20% of the U.S. population will be over 65 years old.
- Exacerbating the labor shortage is a growing economy with high demand for workers, creating a labor environment with very low unemployment, rising wages, and competition for workers.

What is being done to address the labor situation?

- Green industry professionals are supporting industry-wide initiatives such as the Industry Growth Initiative (IGI) www.landscapeprofessionals.org/foundation, which is promoting green industry careers through wide-ranging channels including www.landscapeindustrycareers.org.
- Green industry companies are embarking on new approaches to recruiting and retention. More investment is being made in these areas than ever before in most companies.
- Green industry leaders, managers, and supervisors are changing the way they interact with a new generation of workers, as they respond to six major emerging expectations of the Millennial Generation.

The Ultimate Question

- “On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest, how likely are you to refer us to a friend or relative?”
- Applying the ultimate question to an employee referral situation, here are the ratings:
- If a 9 or 10, your employee is highly likely to refer your company. They are a promoter of your company.
- If a 7 or 8, your employee may refer your company but passively.
- If a 6 or lower, your employee is neutral or not likely to refer your company.
- The ultimate solution to the labor shortage is to move your employees to a 9 or 10. Your retention rate will climb to the highest possible heights (there will always be some attrition). Because of this, your recruiting needs will be fewer. And, best of all, your employees will recruit for you.
- Are your employees so in love with your company that they are telling everyone they know about how great it is to work at your company? If so, congrats. If not, what steps might you take to improve?

Millennials

- Born between 1980 – 1996. Preceded by GenX born between 1965 – 1979, Baby Boomers born between 1946 – 1964, and Traditionalists born between 1900 – 1945. Becoming the largest % of workforce.
- Millennials are the least engaged generation, according to extensive Gallup research. 21% have changed jobs in the last year, 60% are open to new job opportunities, and only 50% plan to be with their current employer a year from now. Millennials are unattached, unconstrained, idealistic, and connected.



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Emerging Workplace Expectations: Six Big Shifts

#1 My Paycheck → My Purpose

The first big shift is from a focus on compensation to a focus on purpose. Previous generations would endure a job for decades simply to earn a paycheck. Those days are over. The next generation wants to know that their work has meaning. The mission matters. Compensation needs to be fair but it's not the driving factor that it once was.

#2 My Satisfaction → My Development

The second big shift is from a focus on personal satisfaction to a focus on personal development. Despite what you read in some articles, Millennials do not want to be coddled. In fact, attempts to do so will only backfire. Instead, they want to be developed. They want to grow, learn, and improve. They expect to be invested in and provided a road map for development – or an open door – and support along the way.

#3 My Boss → My Coach

The third big shift is from a “boss” mentality to a “coach” mentality. Previous generations had bosses that would appear periodically, bark orders, and then leave. That was normal. Today's leader is expected to be more of a coach who takes time to invest personally in each relationship. Despite what you hear about Millennials, they do not want to be handled softly in some condescending way. They expect a coach who is tough, demanding, and who will drive them to be the best versions of themselves.

#4 My Annual Review → My Ongoing Conversations

The fourth big shift is from an annual review to an ongoing conversation. Previous generations accepted what has become a poster child for bad management practices – the dreaded annual review. A much better replacement is regular, ongoing feedback between a manager and his or her subordinates, which allows for minor corrections in real time and opportunities to acknowledge what is going well.

#5 My Weaknesses → My Strengths

The fifth big shift is from a focus on fixing a person's weaknesses to a focus on leveraging a person's strengths. Strengths-based leadership has replaced an outdated remedial approach that never made any sense. We all have natural talents. Why not take this natural talent and develop it into something amazing? This is what the next generation is expecting from their employers.

#6 My Job → My Life

The sixth big shift is from a mindset of a job being just a job to a mindset of my job being my life. The next generation does not approach the world in the compartmentalized way that my generation did. Work, family, and personal lives are all intertwined. This is why a bad job is not tolerable for a Millennial where it was for my generation.

Phil Harwood is a Managing Partner of GrowTheBench.com. GrowTheBench.com provides online education, professional development, and peer groups for the professional landscape and snow industries. Comments are welcome at Phil@GrowTheBench.com.