

Making “Them” Work
Essential Skills for Youth – Experiences, Challenges and Solutions – February 24, 2009

The following chart contains input received during the brainstorming activity around experiences, challenges and solutions concerning Essential Skills and youth in the workplace. The committee wishes to thank all of the participants for their input. Our hope is that this is just the beginning of a dialogue centred on understanding and working with each of the four generations.

Challenges	Solutions
1. Oral Communications (Using speech to share thoughts, ideas and information. The ability to listen understand and respond)	
Language/Cultural Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural sensitivity training
Talk the Talk – Lack of follow-through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team coordination – set up communication vehicles • Set expectations, discuss and coach
Technical Competence but not able to convey that verbally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different modes of communication, Communications training
Misunderstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging differences • Open communications, Set clear expectations • Maximizing resources and strengths
Want more information – why, what, big picture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and use multiple forms of communication – face to face and electronic • Be open – give them as much information as you can
Electronic Communication vs Lack of Experience with Face to Face Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find common interests to initiate conversations. Use that interest to build confidence and encourage dialogue.

Varies with Youth – experience and individuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities to build relationships – food, beer, social functions • Don't treat everyone the same way - respect personalities
An abundance of “turn off” phrases – ie: all-right, you know, etc (hear them every 10 seconds)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular coaching sessions • Determine acceptable (professional) language
People only come to me with problems, never solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear as to expectations • Regular coaching sessions • Do a tool box talk (Health & Safety)
Often do not seek clarification if unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidelines (SOPs – Standard Operating Procedures) and SOGs (Standard Operating Guidelines) • Follow-up
2. Working with Others (Interacting with others to complete tasks. Effective self management when working in teams. Teamwork)	
Friendship vs Work Ethic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create relationships – ie: lunch, drinks
Response to Authority – Respect - Casual? Want Face Time with Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the person - Seminars – True Colours, Team Building • Plan meetings with time to answer “why” = engagement • Mentorship and training to overcome challenges – through training, share in the learning process
Things can't always have consensus – manager must decide sometimes and team is shocked	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give ownership/responsibilities for projects – requires them to work through their differences
Requires engagement or buy-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan meetings with time to answer “why” = engagement • Open communication

<p>Team is overprotective – resistance from outside pressures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide positive feedback, Reinforce good decisions with praise • Peer recognition – provide in public
<p>Unrealistic ambition – “hierarchy” in career growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotate responsibility for projects = leadership opportunities for everyone
<p>Taking responsibility, being accountable for their actions – ie: you are accountable even when you are working within a group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasks need to be delegated to each group member to ensure people are responsible not only as a group but also as individuals
<p>Different expectations between employer and employee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility of hours • Communication between employer and employee (both should be involved in the solution) • Make expectations clear and ask about the process taken to achieve such results so that both parties are aware • Having a set of values according to the organization’s values/goals that are communicated to the employees thus ensuring that successful performance in “your role” is achieved by meeting such values and goals • Find a balance between what the Company needs and what the Employee needs
<p>Realizing that there isn’t just “one stream of thought”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be open to different ways of looking at things and approaching things/tasks • Embrace the ideas of youth – learning is a two way street
<p>Society and institutions establish NORMS that enable the “It’s not my responsibility” attitude – ie: no absolute deadlines for high school projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reinforcement to encourage and enable desired behaviour from employee • Spending time discussing company’s policies, code of conduct, etc.
<p>Worker looks more at what is beneficial to them vs that which is beneficial to the collective</p> <p>Constructive criticism is no longer geared to the individual but is personally “accepted” by the collective as a criticism on all members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socializing/networking as a means to establish rapport so that a team works collaboratively with more ease

Youth inexperienced at diplomacy and tact when interfacing with each other and their issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skills training • Communication standards
Less tolerant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring, coaching/orientation/job shadowing • Simulated exercises/clear expectations • One to one debrief
Balance and understanding of the expectations of the work place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering flexible working hours within collective agreements
Customer service priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines/Policy & Procedures • Training • Customer Service standards
Etiquette with technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting parameters • Orientation • Lead by example
3. Thinking Skills (Reviewing information to make decisions. Making independent decisions. Displaying problem solving skills)	
Prescriptive – set parameters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prescriptive • Orientation re: expectations of organization • Or – Give responsibility for entire projects with clear expectations (rubrics) • Teach how to manage projects – leads to management skills and learning fine points of face to face interactions
Problems with inappropriate informality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross mentoring respect
Expect immediate action on suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach restraint

Take action style – accomplish a lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow opportunities to take chances in a controlled setting • Provide broader context for activity, Allow multi-tasking
Large organization – hierarchical structure of positions – youth have to “fit” into hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage decision makers to solicit input from all team members and explain the reasoning behind decisions
Certain positions do require youth to make independent decisions and solve problems, not able to organize – ie: playlot leaders, lifeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set boundaries/expectations • Train on decision making and problem solving • Monitor to seek opportunities to reinforce
Large, diverse, multi-generational workforce – many long service employees – “set” mentality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for managers/supervisors on communication and multi-generational workplaces
Heavily unionized environment – seniority is a big factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education for new employees re: working in a hierarchical unionized environment
Flexibility depends on position – limited scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a balance between employers and employee needs
If something new, not able to problem-solve – not a software solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations need to be clear
Lack of confidence – comfort with working with older/more experienced employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to define roles and responsibilities
Tending to “hide behind” Not able to move away from technology to social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough orientation and training – it’s an investment • Opportunities to “practice” in a safe environment
How accountable are they going to be – not longevity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on quality of time, building relationships, meeting their needs and they may stay

4. Computer Use
(Using computers and other technical tools effectively and appropriately)

Context, Productive use (what is appropriate?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Block inappropriate • Identify applications that are inappropriate • Explain copyright and workplace protocol
Balance? – “Personal Use”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication, Identification between personal and productive time
Communicating expectations – around use of, around what needs to be done “completed”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include and engage young employees in problem-solving and critical thinking without using computer to help them become informed users of technology
<p>Older workers resistant to using technology – ie: won’t use their e-mail, won’t look at documents</p> <p>Relevant software and applications (using Word, Excel or other applications)</p> <p>Lack of expertise with applications (software)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group or mentor those who know with those who don’t • Make training available • Make it a job performance requirement • Training opportunities for staff

Resources:

For further information including brochures and assessments on essential skills;

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