Survey Shows One Size Does Not Fit All When It Comes to Employees’ Workplace Needs

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Staples Business Advantage 2016 Workplace Index Reveals Generational Preferences in the Office and how Employers can Improve Happiness and Productivity

FRAMINGHAM, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--One generation stands out as being more motivated at work by a sense of purpose, and it’s not who you might think. Surprisingly, Baby Boomers (46 percent) and Generation X (32 percent) are more motivated by having a sense of purpose at work than their younger Millennial counterparts (24 percent), according to the Staples Business Advantage 2016 Workplace Index.

For the first time, employers are faced with managing five generations in the workplace – Generation Z (under 18 years old), Generation Y/Millennials (18-33 years old), Generation X (34-50 years old), Baby Boomers (51-70 years old), and in some cases even the Greatest Generation (over 70 years old). Each age group is inspired and motivated by different things, so it’s critical for employers to avoid stereotypes and understand what their employees are looking for at work.

“"The second annual Staples Business Advantage Workplace Index uncovers different challenges companies need to consider when managing the growing multi-generational workplace," said Neil Ringel, executive vice president, Staples Business Advantage, North America. "To attract and retain top talent, organizations must be aware of what each generation uniquely needs to be happy and productive."

It’s particularly important for employers to be in tune with workers’ needs as the three most prevalent generations in the workplace today - Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers - feel overworked and burned out. Fifty percent of Millennials, 47 percent of Gen X, and 35 percent of Boomers say burnout is motivating them to look for another job. To improve burnout, Boomers would like their employer to decrease their workload and provide more time to complete tasks, while Gen X and Millennials are aligned and looking for a more flexible schedule and work-life blend.

Motivation and Inspiration
While Boomers are most motivated by having a sense of purpose at work, followed by salary, Gen X and Millennials both rank salary as their top motivator. Up next for Gen X was a sense of purpose, while Millennials listed passion as number two.

The ability to work from home is crucial for Millennials, as they’re most inspired to work in the comforts of their home. However, Millennials are outliers in this aspect, as Gen X and Boomers prefer a traditional workplace and are most inspired at their desk in the office.

Physical Office Space and Design
Aesthetics in the office are key to workers regardless of age, as 51 percent of Millennials, 44 percent of Gen X, and 33 percent of Boomers would like to see more attention paid to office design in their workplace.

All three generations agree that they’re most interested in natural light in the office. Other top design features that interest Boomers and Gen X are private spaces and ergonomic furniture, while Millennials are particularly interested in standing desks and lounge areas.

Additionally, Boomers and Gen X prefer fully enclosed office spaces or cubicles, while Millennials prefer open floor plans. Employers should factor this into office design plans so the workplace caters to everyone’s needs and promotes productivity. Flexible spaces appear to be key to meeting all expectations.

Wellness and Productivity
Seventy percent of Millennials, 62 percent of Gen X, and 51 percent of Boomers say the availability of a wellness program is a selling point when looking for a new job.

In a wellness program, Boomers are first looking for ergonomic furniture and supplies, followed by fresh food and an on-site gym. Gen X and Millennials prioritize fresh foods, then on-site gyms and fitness tracking wearable devices.

Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers all agree they can’t get up from their desks to take a break because they have too much...
work to do. However, nearly 80 percent of each generation agrees that taking a break makes them feel more productive throughout the day. Employers can encourage workers to take breaks by providing comfortable breakrooms fully stocked with snacks and drinks so employees can relax and recharge.

“It’s promising that all generations said they think working in a five generation workplace is more fun, creative, inspiring, trusting, and fosters an environment of learning,” said Jacob Morgan, best-selling author of The Future of Work, Futurist, and Co-founder of the Future of Work Community. “Managing five generations poses a challenge for employers, and as Gen Z continues to enter the workplace in larger numbers, it’s critical for organizations to ensure they understand their workforce’s needs.”

**Methodology**
The Staples Business Advantage 2016 Workplace Index was conducted online among 3,105 employees in the U.S. (936 were classified as general officer workers and 1,059 as business decision makers) and Canada (468 general office workers and 642 decision makers) by Morar Consulting in March 2016. This survey has a margin of error of +/- 1.8 percent at 95 percent confidence limits.

For additional resources, including an executive summary and shareable infographics and slideshare, please visit: staplesadvantage.com/sites/workplace-index and hub.staplesadvantage.com.

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