Q&A With Kim Huggins, Partner, CLG

Leading A Multigenerational Workforce

Introduction

Manufacturers are facing unique labor challenges as baby boomers begin to age out of the workforce.

To help us understand the impact of this new workforce dynamic we sat down with Kim Huggins, Partner at CLG to gather her insights on the challenges of leading a multigenerational workforce.

For more than 20 years, CLG has helped organizations change by developing leadership capacity and driving performance. CLG works with companies to prepare leaders in how to select key behaviors that are linked directly to business results and then helps leaders develop and deploy change plans that use behavioral data to drive performance and measure progress. If your goals include– managing costs; increasing productivity and efficiency; improving reliability & maintenance; ensuring safety, health & environmental compliance; encouraging product or process innovation; CLG delivers a measurable solution with speed, flexibility, and control to help companies achieve lasting results.

Is it important for manufacturers to understand the different generations that make up their workforce?

Demographics of the workforce are changing significantly with many more baby boomers retiring over the next few years. These employees will take an enormous amount of skills and experience with them and leave gaps in organizations. Manufacturing is particularly at risk because the average age of their workforce tends to be higher than in other industries.

Millennials now represent 1 in 3 employees in the US and have different things that are important to them when it comes to seeking employment. For example, they like more flexibility in work hours so shift work is not as attractive. Manufacturing companies will need to figure out new ways to market employment opportunities to this generation as well as ways to make them stay once they are fully trained.

What is the cultural impact (within the organization) of a multi-generational workforce? How does this new culture differ from the traditional workforce culture?

In many manufacturing companies, cultures were created by the traditionalist and baby boomer generations. Today's younger generations, Gen X and Millennials, are looking for different types of cultures – more informal, less structure, flexibility, empowerment, and opportunities to innovate as well as grow.

Culture change will become more and more important as Gen X and Millennials comprise more of the workforce. Many of our clients are already struggling with this challenge – how to respect traditions and what the company was built on yet at the same time be open to new ideas and ways of doing things.

Companies that are able to create cultures where each generation feels recognized and valued will see positive impact on morale, engagement and ultimately business results.

What are the main challenges that Manufacturers face when managing a multi-generational workforce? How do these issues effect operations?

Main challenges include: recruitment, retention, change resilience, communication

Each generation has different preferences related to these areas. The one-size-fits-all approach that worked in the past does not work today nor will it work in the future. Leaders need to be willing and able to flex their style to meet the needs of each generation. This means getting to know employees on a more personal level, what their strengths are and how to motivate them. Leaders will need to change their own behavior and try new approaches to be effective.

Millennials are regularly looking for the next opportunity and if they don't see it or find it in their current organization, they will go someplace else. This significantly impacts operations due to the financial and time investments required to train employees. When they leave, it costs the company money and can negatively impact productivity and performance.

Are there any opportunities for Manufacturers to leverage this new multi-generational workforce?

Absolutely!!

By understanding each generations preferences and leveraging their strengths, Manufacturers can positively impact business results. Each generation is unique and has so much to offer. Baby Boomers are great relationship builders and very customer oriented. Gen X is creative and driven. Millennials have great ideas about streamlining processes and leveraging technology. When you put all of these together, great things can happen.

What opportunities does this multi-generational workforce present?

It's really about building an understanding of generational differences and strengths, educating organizations and teams, and communicating with each other. No one generation is better than the other. They are all good and when leveraged in the right ways, they can be great.

Manufacturers have a tremendous opportunity ahead of them as they face these generational shifts. To be successful, they must embrace generational diversity and be willing to change.

Join CLG at the American Manufacuring Summit!

Participate in the in-depth discussions and build your road-map to achieve innovation, maximize manufacturing profitability, optimize plant floor operations and establish standardization across multiple manufacturing facilities.

February 29th, 2016   12:10pm- 12:45pm

Leading Change to Optimize Performance in a Manufacturing Environment

Kim Huggins, Partner, CLG

Ali Soheil, Managing Director, Global Delivery & Strategy, BMO

Gain new insights into successful change practices including how to validate what is working well and how to illuminate and address areas for improvement.

Learn the 5 steps that ensures alignment, readiness, execution and sustainability.

Hear from a leader who will share critical lessons learned about successfully leading change in any industry.

March 1st, 2016   12:35pm- 1:45pm

Lunch & Learn Round-Table Discussion

Leading Change in a Multi-Generational Manufacturing Environment

American Manufacturing Summit 2016

February 29 - March 1, 2016
Chicago, IL

www.manusummit.com