Embrace the multigenerational workplace

Do you know your Gen Y from your Gen X? Your Baby Boomers from your Millennials? Generational diversity can be a tremendous strength for organisations facing a period of change and uncertainty, so how can we learn to maximise the value of our multigenerational workforce?

Our fast-paced and uncertain world is flooded with new technology, social trends and access to more data than ever before. This coupled with a multigenerational workplace each with different expectations, means now more than ever, individuals and organisations need to keep skills and knowledge up to speed and have a ‘growth mindset’ – embracing the concept that they might not be able to do it now, but with effort and support from all age groups, they will be able to do it.

Teams of today often consist of the tech-savvy generation Z and millennials, generation Xers and baby boomers working past retirement age. Diversity is essential; it brings different life experiences and perspectives which are invaluable to an organisation. But how do you harness this diversity and create a cohesive team with differences in values, communication styles and work habits to manage the challenges of our complex world of work?

Managers too often see these differences as barriers, but building a team with diverse perspectives, insights and strengths can only be positive. They can in fact lead to increased performance, helping to keep teams on top of cutting edge digital technology, growing key skills such as data literacy and also help to maintain good interpersonal relations with all team members regardless of their age and work style.

Good leaders, who deal with these challenges head on, provide each generation with access to the resources they need, allow individuals to work in the style that’s best for them, provide feedback in the most appropriate way and acknowledge the efforts of each team member. To make real progress in the multigenerational workforce, every age group must offer flexibility and openness to learn from each other. A practical way to support this is through individuals and organisations embracing mentoring solutions that work for them. For example, the younger workforce often gravitates to a mentoring approach that is more egalitarian in approach where everyone is considered equal rather than senior or junior, and for it to take place in an environment that is more casual, quite often in a virtual setting.

In September 2018, IIRSM successfully launched its ‘traditional’ member to member mentoring programme for those mentors who were seeking support from someone who has been there, done that, and for mentors seeking to help develop someone less experienced, be it someone early on in their career or an established professional seeking support with a new challenge.

We have had good take-up of the scheme, including virtual relationships across countries in which our members live and work – mentoring has no boundaries. This year, to continue to develop collaboration, knowledge and communication across all generations, we are introducing two more streams to our mentoring programme – Reverse Mentoring and Reciprocal Mentoring.

Reverse mentoring
Reverse mentoring is for you if you feel a generation Zer or millennial is a must-have mentor to help you stay on top of the changing landscape and gain insight into what drives younger people, new technology and social trends.

We are seeking young mentors enthusiastic about risk management who would like the opportunity to share their thoughts and expertise.

Reciprocal mentoring
If you are seeking to connect with an individual working at a similar level to you, but in a different function or industry, to gain an alternative perspective on how you work, then this stream is for you. It will enable you to share your own experiences to support one another through issues and challenges.

Get involved
Approaches to mentoring may be different and evolve, but ultimately it is about fostering personal and professional change. Don’t over think it, commit to it, and you will reap the reward. IIRSM expects a commitment from a pairing for an initial three-month period and the partnership can extend beyond this point if both parties are happy to do so and are benefiting from the relationship.

If you are interested in more information on participating in our mentoring scheme, please visit www.iirsm.org/mentoring-scheme or email mulvihill@iirsm.org.

Mentor of the Year Award
Do you know of an exceptional mentor, or want to say thank you to somebody who mentored you? If the answer is yes, submit an awards submission setting out why they deserve to be recognised and win the 2019 Mentor of the Year Award. Deadline for submissions is 28 February 2019.

Visit www.iirsm.org/awards2019 for more information on the awards criteria and how to submit an entry.