

Recruiting and Retaining the Next Generation

By: Julie Braley

With baby boomers retiring and a stubborn national labor shortage in full force, recruiting and retaining the next generation of insurance professionals may have never been more crucial than it is now.

In recent decades, industry leaders have opined on what might happen when the baby boomers, whose numbers make up much of the workforce, retire. Now, with those individuals expected to retire within the next decade, combined with an already tight labor market, the insurance industry is faced with a potential talent shortage. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts that nearly 400,000 insurance industry employees will retire in the coming years.

To contrast, millennials and Gen Z now make up more than half of the U.S. population, according to data from Statista. They have grown up in a world of rapidly changing technology, diverse perspectives, increased global awareness and value experiences that are efficient, convenient and user-friendly. Millennials and Gen Z also have different career and workplace expectations

than previous generations and expect a different hiring and employment experience that is tailored to their needs and expectations.

The Perception Problem

Insurance is often seen as an old-fashioned, slow-paced industry that doesn't offer the same level of excitement, dynamism and potential for growth that many millennials and Gen Zers are looking for in a career. Additionally, the industry has been slow to embrace new technologies and digital tools, making it less appealing to a generation that is accustomed to using modern technology in their everyday lives.

One way the insurance industry can improve this negative perception is by investing in and utilizing more technology. Social media can and should be used to engage with these younger generations of potential candidates, showcasing employee success stories across job functions. Digital campaigns that highlight the exciting elements of insurance, such as the potential to make a difference in people's lives and the ability to take on challenges and

solve complex problems, capitalize on the power of storytelling to make a connection.

New Generations, New Methods

The insurance industry must invest in developing a recruiting strategy targeted specifically to these demographic groups. When it comes to attracting and retaining this generation, employers should think beyond traditional recruitment methods and instead focus on offering meaningful experiences and opportunities. And, in the current hyper-competitive and fast-paced employment market, it is imperative to source talent and make hiring decisions quickly.

Millennials and Gen Z are not only the most tech-savvy of all generations, they also have different values, expectations and goals than their predecessors. As such, employers must be aware of the changing dynamics of the workplace and adjust their recruitment strategies accordingly. For example, the insurance industry should be mindful of the growing focus on work-life balance, diversity and inclusion among this demograph-

ic. It should focus on creating the type of work environment that appeals to these generations, such as adopting flexible schedules, remote work options and career development programs.

Employers should look for ways to make the recruitment process more appealing by leveraging the various digital tools and platforms available to reach and connect with younger candidates. Technology has been omnipresent for these digital natives, and they have certain expectations surrounding its use in the workplace.

Foster Retention

The millennial and Gen Z generations want to be a part of something bigger than themselves and contribute to a greater good. To them, work is not just about the bottom line but also about the businesses' overall impact on the world.

They are seeking a career path and professional development, not simply the

completion of tasks. Millennial and Gen Z employees have an expectation that their jobs will provide growth opportunities, incorporate learning and deliver a sense of accomplishment. They want an employer who is invested in their future and wants them to continue to learn and grow once in the role.

They also want their employers to embrace flexibility both in terms of how productivity is measured and in how their day and time are structured. A large segment of insurance roles can be done remotely, and any effort to deal with the industry's talent crisis needs to lean into an employee's desire for flexible work schedules.

Many businesses are using employee feedback to create a culture of open communication, trust and appreciation, which allows employees to feel comfortable in expressing their opinions and concerns. They are then using that feedback to identify areas of improvement and create policies and procedures that

are more effective at retention

SIAA recently completed its first company-wide employee engagement survey, the results of which will be used to foster an open dialogue between employees and senior management and ensure there is alignment. Going forward, the survey will be a staple mechanism for both gaining actionable feedback and demonstrating to employees that the company cares about their needs.

Understanding the needs and expectations of millennial and Gen Z employees, improving the industry's perception, leveraging technology, and offering meaningful employment experiences can all prove beneficial in driving much-needed top talent toward the industry. In fact, the future of the insurance industry will depend on it. ■

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