

Bridging the Gap

An employees guide to understanding & communicating with your boss





about this publication

People in different age groups often see life differently. Today's employers not only went through a different apprenticeship system to the one in operation today — but they have a longer experience of the workplace and with that comes a different perspective. Therefore it is critical that today's apprentices and trainees understand the background of their boss and so are equipped to bridge the generation gaps.

It is provided to you by McCrindle Research to help apprentices and younger workers better relate to their boss.

We have also produced an accompanying Employers Guide. You'll find it and more resources at www.leadership.org.au



it's your career - and it's your call

It is true that we can't change others — but that doesn't mean that we can't change a workplace situation. The relationship you have with your boss results from how both of you interact and communicate. You may not be in charge but you can certainly influence the relationship. Rather than blaming them we are better off trying harder to understand them — where they're coming from and what they're wanting.





the generation gap



What some apprentices are saying:

“I’ve got a qualification — yet they just use me to do the clean up jobs”

“I’m sick of being micro managed — why can’t they just trust me”

“I only get feedback if I make a mistake”

“A bit of recognition can’t be that difficult”

“They don’t keep up with the times”

“They’ve got to understand that there’s more to my life than just work!”

What some employers are saying:

“Because I said so - that’s why!”

“We tried that in 1982”

“Thankyou?! - your wage is your thankyou!”

“You’ve got to learn to pay your dues...”

“I don’t have time to be polite!”

“A pay rise?! At his age I was just grateful to have a job!”



Clearly there is a generation gap in many workplaces. While it is not anyone's fault and blaming "them" is pointless, we do have to make an effort to see the employer's viewpoint. They have taken on the risk of employing others, paying the wages, and managing the business so they deserve some credit and appreciation for this.

The reality is that the boss has the authority and the final say. While today's apprentices bring 21st Century education and views to the job, the employers bring with them greater experience and knowledge which needs to be listened to. The only way to be successful in the long run is to get advice and mentoring from the more experienced hands. This requires good listening and a positive attitude.



keys to good communication

Typical Apprentices

Do what they're told

Just get on with the job

Are independent: solo-operators

Focus on technical skills

Are good talkers

Hide their frustrations

Keep their head down

Leave ideas to the boss

Let the leaders lead

Let unresolved problems glowß

Blame circumstances or others

See this as a job for now

Outstanding Apprentices

Ask questions & grow their skills

Are interested and enthusiastic

Are interdependent: team-players

Work on technical & people skills

Are excellent listeners

Try to resolve conflicts & concerns

Take the lead in looking out for others

Share ideas and solutions

Coach and help others

Confront problems & discuss irritations

Take ownership & responsibility

View it as the start of their career

→ the facts

1 in 3 apprenticeships are cancelled due to conflict in the workplace.

1 in 4 people left their last job because they couldn't relate to their boss.

Almost half of all resignations occur within 90 days of starting work.

The biggest source of miscommunication is not due to cultural gaps or gender diversity but generational gaps.

Sources: BCTIF, McCrindle Research





what employers want

Competence

This is a measure of how skilled and effective a worker is. Most of the employment decision comes down to the competence of the jobseeker. However for those just starting an apprenticeship or traineeship their work skills are just being developed and their level of competence is unknown. Employers therefore, look beyond competence to two other essential qualities — your willingness to cooperate with others, and your personal character.

Cooperation

It is not just your technical skills that matter in the job — it is your people skills. While these will be developed as your education and experience grows, the critical factor is a commitment to relate well with your boss and your workmates. Today's workforce combines people of different age groups, cultures and genders, so understanding individuals and dealing with differences is a key requirement. It's about cooperation with the boss and with the peers. It's about being a team player and not just an individual. One of the biggest boosts to your career is being regarded as someone who “gets on well with others”.





what employers want

Communication

Your success in your job is directly related to your ability to effectively communicate with your workmates and your boss. All industries today depend more on people than tools and supplies. Ultimately it all relies on effectively functioning teams. What matters therefore, is not just what you know or what you can do — but how well you can communicate with others. By working on your people and communication skills you will improve your performance and shape your leadership skills.

Character

Finally it's about the values that you bring to work. Apprentices and trainees that are clear on what they stand for and are prepared to live by solid characteristics are in great demand. It is those who demonstrate a work ethic, a respect for the boss, a commitment to the task and an enthusiasm to learn and grow that are singled out as leaders and who wind up on the fast track to success. It's your career — and it's your choice.





VITAL characteristics to make you stand out from the pack

Vision

Employers want an employee with an eye on their future and a hunger to grow. It's about working more than just day-to-day, rather having the spark to make something of yourself.

Initiative

Most industries are growing, yet at the same time there are skills shortages. This means that business owners are very busy- and often understaffed. So it is critical that employees take charge of their job roles, get on with the job and are able to work independently. Those that don't always have to wait for instructions but can take charge and make things happen will excel in their workplace.

Teamwork

In a world of individuality people are looking for community. It is important therefore to not just get on with the task but to get on with the team. Being a team player, being able to follow, and being able to take orders is an essential part of every apprenticeship and traineeship.





VITAL characteristics to make you stand out from the pack

Attitude

Someone with a positive perspective, an openness to learn, and a willingness to change will be a great success in whatever they do. It's not about your personality — it's about your attitude and if you so choose, this can be changed.

Leadership

Those who can work well with others and bring the best out of others will move quickly from being a worker to being a manager. The starting point is to lead yourself and from there to lead others — but ultimately it's about developing others, and this is what leadership is all about.





over to you

1. List two ways in which the Baby Boomer generation of managers is different to your generation of apprentices/trainees:

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-

2. Briefly write down an experience that you have had of conflict or misunderstanding due to a generation gap at work:

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3. Write down two characteristics that make excellent apprentices stand out from the rest:

-
-

4. What are the 4 C's that employers look for and what do they mean?

- C _____
- C _____
- C _____
- C _____

5. Choose one of the VITAL characteristics of success and write down how you could apply it in your workplace:

- _____



about the author

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Mark McCrindle trained as a Psychologist and he helps organisations better understand the different segments in society and so better relate with each other. Mark holds a BSc (Psychology) from the University of NSW, a Masters degree majoring in Social Trends and is Director of The Australian Leadership Foundation and McCrindle Research which specialises in analysing emerging trends across the Asia Pacific.

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