

CareerBuilder Survey Identifies Generational Differences in Work Styles, Communication and Changing Jobs

- One third of U.S. workers have a younger boss; around one-in-seven workers have a boss at least ten years younger

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CHICAGO, Sept. 13, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- A new generation of professionals entering management means the correlation between seniority and leadership could be disappearing. One third (34 percent) of U.S. workers say their boss is younger than they are and 15 percent say they work for someone who is at least ten years younger, according to a new CareerBuilder survey. While most workers said it isn't difficult to work for a younger boss, differences in work styles, communication and expectations illustrate the changing nature of office life.

The national survey was conducted by Harris Interactive[©] between May 14 and June 4, 2012 among more than 3,800 full-time workers and more than 2,200 hiring managers across industries and functions.

"Age disparities in the office are perhaps more diverse now than they've ever been. It's not uncommon to see 30-year-olds managing 50-year-olds or 65-year-olds mentoring 22-year-olds," said Rosemary Haefner, Vice President of Human Resources at CareerBuilder. "While the tenants of successful management are consistent across generations, there are subtle differences in work habits and views that all workers must empathize with when working with or managing someone who's much different in age."

Looking at managers and workers ages 25-34 and managers and workers 55 and older, the survey found generational differences in several areas related to communication, work style and career advancement.

Communication Styles

While a majority of both age groups expressed a preference for face-to-face communication, evidence of a small digital divide exists. The phone, however, has fallen out of favor across the board.

How do you most like to communicate at work?

- Face-to-face: 60 percent (ages 55+); 55 percent (ages 25-34)
- E-mail/Text: 28 percent (ages 55+); 35 percent (ages 25-34)
- Phone: 12 percent (ages 55+); 10 percent (ages 25-34)

Perspectives on Career Path

Younger workers tend to view a career path with a "seize any opportunity" mindset, while older workers are more likely to place value in loyalty and putting in the years before advancement.

You should stay in a job for at least three years:

- Ages 25-34 – 53 percent
- Ages 55+ – 62 percent

You should stay in a job until you learn enough to move ahead:

- 25-34 – 47 percent
- Ages 55+ – 38 percent

Similar contrasts were found when looking at promotions:

You should be promoted every 2-3 years if you're doing a good job:

- Ages 25-34 – 61 percent
- Ages 55+ – 43 percent

Hours Working

Younger workers are more likely to log shorter hours than workers 55 and older.

Work eight hours or less per day:

- Ages 25-34 – 64 percent
- Ages 55+ – 58 percent

Older hiring managers are more likely to arrive to work earlier than younger managers but less likely to take work home with them.

Arrive earlier than 8 a.m.:

- Ages 25-34 – 43 percent
- Ages 55+ – 53 percent

Leave by 5:00 p.m.:

- Ages 25-34 – 38 percent
- Ages 55+ – 41 percent

Work after leaving the office:

- Ages 25-34 – 69 percent
- Ages 55+ – 62 percent

Younger workers are more open to flexible work schedules than their older counterparts.

Arriving on time doesn't matter as long as work gets done:

- Ages 25-34 – 29 percent
- Ages 55+ – 20 percent

Work Styles

Different generations take a much more distinct approach to workplace projects. Younger generations are more likely to want to plan rather than "dive right in" to a new initiative.

I like to skip the process and dive right into executing:

- Ages 25-34 – 52 percent
- Ages 55+ – 66 percent

I like to write out a detailed game plan before acting:

- Ages 25-34 – 48 percent
- Ages 55+ – 35 percent

However, there is one area where older and younger workers see eye-to-eye: Approximately 60 percent of both groups prefer eating alone during lunch hour, as opposed to dining with their co-workers.

Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Interactive[©] on behalf of CareerBuilder among 3,892 U.S. workers and 2,298 U.S. hiring managers (employed full-time, not self-employed, non-government) ages 18 and over between May 14 and June 4, 2012 (percentages for some questions are based on a subset, based on their responses to certain questions). With pure probability samples of 3,892 and 2,298, one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/-1.57 and +/- 2.04 percentage points, respectively. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies.

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