

# Of workers and culture

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COOL TIPS

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COOL

*Today's workers are lazy.*

*With very poor work ethic.*

*Always clicking, clicking, clicking on their phones and devices.*

*When will they ever learn how to work?*

That's an interesting question and a sentiment we often hear when conducting employee training and professional development. It appears people have forgotten their own developmental journey. After all, we all left the womb fully equipped to communicate clearly and effectively with the ability to set expectations, learn a skill and implement it effortlessly. All the attorneys had inherent knowledge of the law, while the bankers could easily calculate spreads and margins while in their diapers, right?

Each one of us was developed. Mentored. Coached. Resulting in this point in our profession where we wield knowledge and expertise from years of practicing. Years of practicing. How did you get that opportunity to practice? Your first job. Some poor unsuspecting, kind-hearted soul hired your inexperienced, fumbling, green, unpolished self. And developed you. Cleaned you up a bit. Or a lot. Taught you how to dress. When to show up. How to eat French onion soup. When to negotiate. When and how to speak up. When to tough it out and bide your time.

Yet the workforce of today, our young people, are sadly lacking. No experience or polish. No opportunity to get that polish. They struggle throughout the interview process and if they are lucky to be "the best of the worst candidates" they get hired for an entry-level position where they continue to struggle, navigating a foreign culture. And, no, I'm not referring to the perspective of an Hispanic, Asian or any foreigner to the U.S. I'm referring to the culture of an organization.

Remember that today's youth is growing up with very unique challenges our generation didn't grapple with — broken homes, single parents, ineffective educational system, little to no positive reinforcement or modeling, drugs and violence.

*How will they ever fit in our world?*

Cue the solutions:

Internships. Apprenticeships. Workforce development.

Seriously.

As the leaders that we are (and remember that you are the leader in your network and your sphere of influence regardless of the printed title on your business card), we can create these opportunities for our youth.

And, selfishly speaking, I expect a phenomenal doctor to handle my health issues as I age. I expect talented innovators to invent the next big thing. (When can I teleport?) Our future is in the hands of these youngsters, whom we are failing.

So, let's change the outcomes. Now.

Baltimore City Youthworks program has hundreds of high school students ready for summer internships. HIRE ONE OF THEM.

Casa of Maryland is seeking internship placements for students in Owings Mills, bilingual kids with tremendous willingness to learn. HIRE ONE OF THEM.

Johns Hopkins Centro Sol summer program received 45 applications for 6 seats. What happens to the rest of these kids? HIRE ONE OF THEM.

Now I have you all raring to go — ready to hire one of these youngsters, right?

*Well, what do you do with them when they show up?*

You invest time, energy and funding. You train them. Polish them up. Guide them in navigating your culture. These are soft skills that require patience and practice to develop, especially the skill of building social capital. These kids need every tool, resource and opportunity available to carve out a productive and sustainable life.

And what of your own newly hired employees — not the interns but the entry-level permanent placements? How do you build a culture of engagement and accountability? A culture where everyone is moving forward focused on the same goals?

You invest time, energy and funding. Ensure that you have an effective onboarding process that clearly sets out expectations, benefits and very quickly ties the employee to the organization. It is paramount that each one of your team members understands their value and contribution to the success of your organization. How many entry-level folks leave for \$1 more per hour? Even \$0.25! Only to discover that they had better benefits, growth potential, job stability with the employer they abandoned. In these situations, the employee

never connected or bonded with the organization, nor did she/he understand the full benefit and compensation structure.

Secondly, career pathing or development should exist formally. What are the steps to get promoted? What skills must be developed? Where is the constructive feedback? The only way you garnered your own success was through opportunity and development. Remember that and mentor or coach your folks!

Now, go forth and HIRE, DEVELOP and CHANGE the outcomes. The greatest driver to changing a life is economic stability — having a job. Ideally, a job that develops into a career, wherein we empower these kids to be the change we wish to see in this world. Friends, reach out to me directly if you have internship opportunities. I will be happy to connect you to the programs mentioned along with other resources.

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