

GENERATION WORK

Young Adult Critiques of Workplace Practices



BRIEFING PAPER 1

PURPOSE

Port Jobs is excited to share a few excerpts from interviews conducted with 58 young adults who were previously engaged in Generation Work partner training, college, and job search and re-engagement programs and had entered employment. A more comprehensive report will be issued in the fall of 2019.

The purpose of the interviews was to learn about the post program employment experiences of young adults, and gain insight into how they would improve workplace culture and practices. The information will be shared with employers, workforce and college partners and others who are striving to develop strong, equitable and inclusive talent pipelines that meet the needs of companies and build a thriving and increasingly competitive workforce.

APPROACH

The information in this briefing paper presents a few highlights emerging from the interviews. Discussions often focused on workplace inclusion, advancement and quality. Business Government Community Connections conducted the interviews by phone or in person. Interviewees (called Young Adult Advisors) were compensated for sharing their experiences. All were invited to include this work experience on their resumes. Each Young Adult Advisor had participated in a first interview during 2017 or 2018 and subsequently entered employment in one or more companies between the first and second interview. Most were employed in entry level jobs in such sectors as manufacturing, construction, trades, hospitality, retail, and security. Seventy-eight percent were still employed at the time of the interview, and almost 20% had worked in two different companies. The majority (85%) were persons of color. Over half (55%) were male and 45% female. Initial summaries of the data suggest that the perceptions and recommendations of Generation Z (post-millennials), ages 18-22, and millennials, ages 23-29 may be important to consider separately as well as together in order to retain and advance workers, and avoid high turnover costs.

“I wish meetings at the machine shop where I work were more positive and not just based on problems. Recognition is usually reserved for negative stuff.”

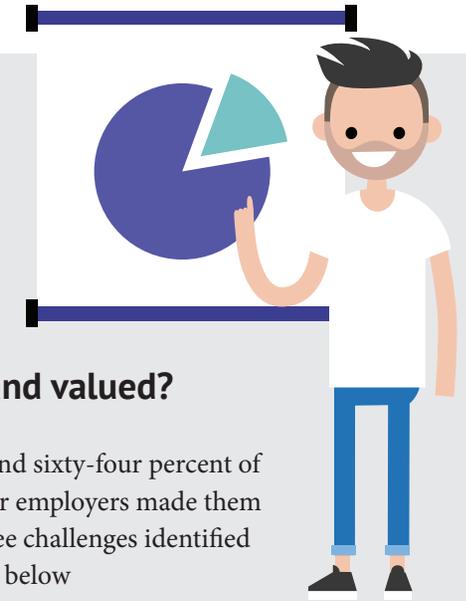
Young Adult Advisor



SELECTED FINDINGS

In your opinion did your employer help their employees feel welcome and valued?

Forty-nine percent of Generation Z and sixty-four percent of millennial advisors reported that their employers made them feel welcome and valued. The top three challenges identified by each of these groups are presented below



GENERATION Z	MILLENNIALS
1. The lack of effort by employers when a person gets hired to find out more about their interests or areas where they want to build their skills was discouraging.	1. Worker opportunities to be positively recognized were limited, and were often focused on workers who followed rules, rather than those who suggested new ways of doing work.
2. The lack of mentoring support for new workers to develop a career plan, build new skills, or access professional development led some to believe that the company was not that interested in their staying employed.	2. Not having enough time to do tasks because of staff shortages or unrealistic work demands made workers feel stressed and unappreciated.
3. The general lack of recognition or feedback for work well done, or skill-building incentives led workers to feel less engaged.	3. Not having built-in opportunities to have meaningful conversations with supervisors about promotional opportunities was seen as a sign that workers were not likely to advance.

In your opinion was your workplace inclusive?

Forty-three percent of Generation Z and sixty-two percent of millennials reported that their employers made them feel welcome and valued. The top three challenges made by each of these groups are presented below

GENERATION Z	MILLENNIALS
1. There were too few opportunities for new workers to get their questions answered about career advancement opportunities.	1. Only certain workers got the job promotion information and resources they needed to succeed. Usually these workers were longer term employees or personally connected to upper level managers.
2. New hires, and people who worked less than full-time were seldom expected or called upon to make suggestions.	2. Sometimes it seemed like performance appraisals were made based on perceptions of a unit or a department, rather than on the performance of an individual. If you were not seen as being on a “winning team” you could unfairly run the risk of being overlooked as an individual who was seeking advancement opportunities.
3. Once workers learned certain tasks and did them well they were largely left alone, and not particularly encouraged to get cross training.	3. Even though you may have good ideas or technical skills, limited English Speaking persons are not usually asked to lead or verbally contribute to staff meetings.

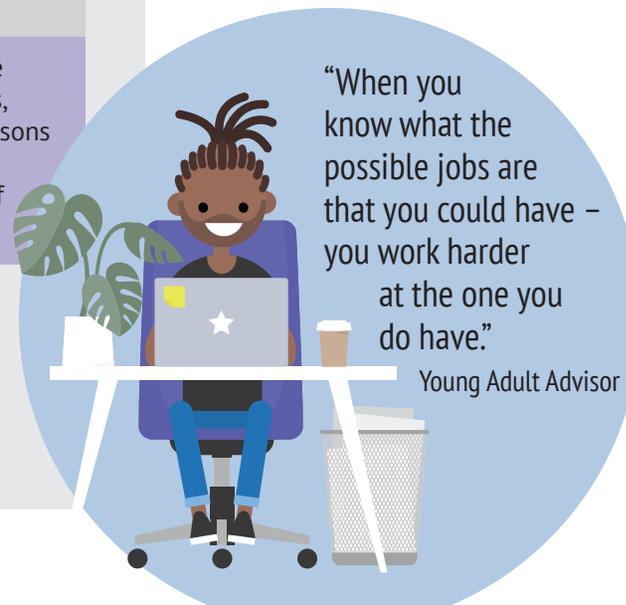
ADVISOR TRAINING AND ADVANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

When asked what kinds of training and advancement strategies would be helpful Generation Z Advisors suggested that they were interested in technology, frequent encouragement, growth building opportunities, and trying out new equipment or products. Their top three suggestions were that: (1) companies need to utilize technology better for training; (2) workplace relationships with supervisors need to allow for frequent feedback about areas where they can build their skills; and (3) training should include opportunities for workers to take risks, and grow new skills. Generation Z Advisors were wary of “being stuck”, “being bored”, “being overlooked” and “not being interested.”

Millennial Advisors suggested that: (1) companies need to make a commitment through tools, routine attention and reinforcement to build the skills of employees; (2) mentoring is needed to support their development; and (3) everyone in companies should have information about growth opportunities; to do so a real system to communicate these opportunities needs to be put in place. Millennial Advisors were interested in “not wasting their time,” and “being offered the information and chance to advance.”

NEXT STEPS

Attracting talent in the workplace is critical, as is fostering a transparent system for training and advancement and for providing opportunities where all employees can grow their skills. These issues will be explored in more depth in the final report. The best practices used by companies will be described in more depth, as will young adult recommendations for improvements. The input of the Young Adult Advisors will contribute to the understanding of quality jobs.



Prepared by:

Business Government Community Connections

PORT JOBS



“Even though I know people don’t stay in jobs long like they used to, they still shouldn’t be seen as expendable. They need opportunities to grow. Companies who offer that will always be able to attract new workers, because the people who worked there will tell others that they give you a start.”

Young Adult Advisor

Port Jobs is supporting local efforts which connect young adults to good jobs and career pathways in King County. Port Jobs is the local lead for the Seattle Generation Work partnership. The Annie E. Casey Foundation launched Generation Work in 2016 to explore new ways of connecting young Americans with the knowledge and experience they need to succeed in the job market. The initiative includes partnerships in Cleveland, Hartford, Indianapolis, Philadelphia and Seattle. All are dedicated to weaving together best practices from the adult education and training field. The particular focus is on demand-driven workforce development strategies which integrate and are driven by positive youth development practices, such as mentoring and work-based learning, to better prepare young people ages 18-29 for work.

Port Jobs regularly convenes Seattle Generation Work partners to share what they are learning and brainstorm ways to align, coordinate and leverage resources. In support of these efforts, Port Jobs engaged Business Government Community Connections (BGCC) to interview young adults served by Seattle Generation Work partners. The interviews garner young adult feedback about their experiences prior, during and after receiving services into Generation Work learning community meetings and planning. Results are shared to ensure young adult voice informs the work of all partners.

Port Jobs would like to thank the young adults who shared their experiences and offered their feedback. Your valuable input will help our partnerships and programs more effectively support the career and educational goals of young people living in the King County region.

For more information about Generation Work please visit <http://portjobs.org/index.php>