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## ***Meet Corporate Goals and Feed Our Souls***

### Managerial art in Chicago sports

I find this time of the year interesting when reviewing the results of our fine Chicago sports teams. For example, how could the White Sox deteriorate so much in two seasons? What about the less than promising beginning of the Bears? In both cases, the teams have the same managers, yet (so far for the Bears, anyway) almost the opposite performance of a year prior.

On the Cubs, the manager tinkered and experimented with all sorts of combinations during the first few months until the right blend (and a tirade or two!) aligned and a division title resulted.

These results state that it's the players that make up the majority of team performance (I think the adage is that a manager can affect the outcome of maybe 5% of the games in baseball). So, it's main job of a manager to bring out the absolute best in his personnel and assemble (through a combination of luck and design) the right mix of employees. Good results are the by-product of this.

This, of course, is the managerial art. And like all art, understanding and doing it can be elusive but when done right the results can be magnificent.

### Understanding the generations:

According to the book, ***Generation Me*** (referring to the population under 35 years old) by Jean Twenge, about 60% of employers indicate tensions exist between generations in the workplace. 60%!!! How can the enlightened manager help ease these tensions?

- Understand that younger employees may have a different (not wrong) outlook on life. Try to understand life from their perspective. For example:
  - How many of this generation have a good understanding of World War II?
  - Do any of them know who Johnny Carson was?
  - Many of these workers have experienced only a Clinton or a Bush in the White House.

(When I talk to employees from this generation, I really try to be conscious that some of my baby boomer references may be completely foreign to them- Twiggy, Petula Clark, The Graduate and black and white TV being but a few).

- This is the short attention span generation. This means that boring lectures and unbroken seminars may fall flat. Consider spicing up presentations with video clips and active graphics.

- This generation deals with diversity well. This may make them ideal for meeting with clients from other cultures.
- This group really appreciates and responds to flexible schedules and as much independence as they can get. Micro-management and rigid schedules will not bring out the best in this generation.
- Used to being praised and having their self esteem fed from an early age, Gen Me'rs may struggle to accept criticism and become defensive quickly. It may be best to dispense constructive comments thoughtfully and with a good dose of positive reasoning.
- Salary is very important to this generation. Rising housing and healthcare costs along with student loan debt has them very conscious of money. (For example, when I talk to my daughter and her husband, a nurse and restaurant manager respectively, they almost are despaired of ever being able to afford a house.)

#### Supervisors and this generation

Another book called *The Next Revolution* by Charlotte Shelton and Laura Shelton, had some interesting insights on this same generation in the workplace. For example, they suggested that top four cultural aspects in the workplace to Gen Xers are:

- Positive relationships with their supervisor
- Positive relationships with their co-workers
- Opportunities for learning
- Interesting work

The book suggests that Xers join companies but leave supervisors. The ability of a manager to be empathetic, caring, respectful, courteous and competent is a necessity for retaining the best and brightest of these employees.

In fact, for all generations this book, makes the astounding claim that inadequate people management costs employers an astronomical \$105 billion per year. Can you imagine that? This study tracked employee commitment with financial performance. Organizations with good margins and net profit had strong employee commitment and vice versa.

Really though, no matter what the generation, dysfunctional workplaces are wearing us all out financially and internally.

As the Shelton's suggest- "It's time to build workplaces that meet corporate goals and feed all of our souls...."

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