



Age is Just a Number

No matter who you are, eventually, Father Time catches up to you and all of us. We all get old.... There are some who age faster than others, and many who age very gracefully. I recently had the opportunity to reunite with some old co-worker friends for a golf weekend. As we were sitting around telling old stories and talking about our jobs and families, I was surprised to hear one of my former colleagues mention his age. Until this past weekend, I just assumed he was around my age, when in fact he was eight years older than me. I immediately told him how young he looked, and I would never have guessed his age. His reply to me.... "Age is just a number" along with a swift comeback..." I thought you were older than you are" Touché my friend.

It got us talking about the fact that Americans are now working and living longer than ever, and their life expectancy is increasing every year. This has been greatly influenced by advances in medicine and the public health system, as well as the quality of diet and physical activity. Because of the improvements in these lifestyle practices, more people feel just as confident now than when they were younger. Therefore, the reply, "age is just a number", is more of a "I'm still as good as I used to be" subliminal message. But what about the younger generation? Can the younger generation use the phrase "age is just a number?" Where do the millennials and the Gen Z generations fit in this scenario?

Let's face it, "millennials" do not have the best reputation going for them. Name the stereotype about millennials, and someone has used it. Not just even millennials, any generation that came before the other. Many generational stereotypes stem from expectations that one generation should act the same as its predecessors despite being influenced by vastly different environments. It is time to put aside our preconceived notions of ALL generation types and focus on working together for the common goal. Combining the fresh perspective of young workers with the practical experience and knowledge of tenured employees, an intergenerational workplace can both perfect outdated processes and pass on best practices to the next generation.

It's time to rethink how we engage with ALL age groups, how we build our culture, and how to build a strong cohesive enterprise. It is essential for employers to build on their bench strength. This involves taking chances on those who do not have the years of experience under their belt, or possibly years of experience in another field. There is only one way to get experience....to give them the experience. Give people the ability to be confident by giving them the opportunity to fail. Most everyone can think back at a time when you were in a new role where your confidence was not high, and mistakes occurred. It's important to make sure that EVERYONE understands that it's okay to make mistakes... The key is to learn from them.

Embrace the fact that age, in many situations, is just a number. Erase the preconceived ideas or stigmas related to various age groups and take full advantage of the knowledge each group brings to the table.

Remember, age is just a number, but so is weight.... I am starting to not like numbers.

Regards,

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