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# Are There Any Best Practices for Developing Gen Y/Young Professionals?

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**Abstract**

According to U.S. Census Data, each year 1 million Millennials enter the workforce; nearly 40 percent of the U.S. workforce will be Millennials by 2020. Characterized as remarkably different from Baby Boomers, Gen Y is facing many challenges when it comes to leadership roles. Gen Y leaders are expected to refocus organizations as global forces, develop cultural intelligence, develop strategic thinking and decision-making intelligence, and nurture long-term collaboration.2 Development programs specifically designed for Millennials are necessary to fill the gaps, and are powerful tools for attracting and retaining top young professionals.

**Keywords**

human resources, generation Y, millenials, onboarding

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

| FINAL QUESTION |
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Are there any best practices for developing Gen Y/young professionals? In addition, any best practices for onboarding programs would be helpful.

| INTRODUCTION |
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According to U.S. Census Data, each year 1 million Millennials enter the workforce; nearly 40 percent of the U.S. workforce will be Millennials by 2020.[1] Characterized as remarkably different from Baby Boomers, Gen Y is facing many challenges when it comes to leadership roles. Gen Y leaders are expected to refocus organizations as global forces, develop cultural intelligence, develop strategic thinking and decision-making intelligence, and nurture long-term collaboration.[2] Development programs specifically designed for Millennials are necessary to fill the gaps, and are powerful tools for attracting and retaining top young professionals.

| BEST PRACTICES FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM |
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Below we highlight three best practices for fostering a successful development program for young professionals.

### *1. On-the-job training, specifically, through rotational & mentoring programs.*

Companies like GE, P&G, Citigroup, and Johnson & Johnson, are providing fast-track programs for talented new graduates who are expected to become their company's next leaders. These programs enable employees to move around the company both functionally and geographically. At Procter & Gamble, there is a strong emphasis placed on leadership development. On its company website, P&G prides itself on senior executives who "act as mentors and coaches for younger managers, helping them develop the skills necessary to lead large businesses and organizations."[3] This is an excellent strategy for developing younger employees, while at the same time incentivizing them to remain with the organization. Johnson & Johnson is another company that places a strong emphasis on developing young leaders. J&J has an extensive development program that targets individuals who have just completed a degree. By having a variety of programs that vary in length and job function, they are able to cater to each prospect employees' individual needs/wants. The leadership programs "are designed to provide individuals with in-depth experiences, ongoing mentorship, and targeted classroom training across a range of businesses, helping individuals build many of the strengths J&J relies on from leaders in the organization." [3] This program both attracts and develops younger employees, with the final objective of retaining them into leadership roles.

### *2. Creating strong developmental relationships*

Bruce Tulgan of RainmakerThinking, Inc. has been conducting ongoing in-depth research on the attitudes and experiences of young people in the workplace since 1993.[4] The research has looked at the early stages of Gen Y careers as well as their recent move into leadership and managerial roles.[4] According to the research, the key is to surround the highest-potential young talent with four types of developmental relationships[4]:

1. **Teaching-style managers:** Superstar Gen Y'ers want managers who know and care enough to teach them the tricks and the shortcuts, warn them of pitfalls, and help them solve problems.
2. **Career-advisers:** Provides Gen Y'ers the opportunity to receive career advice from someone familiar with the organization, rather than outsiders.
3. **Organizational supporters:** Act as high-level career advisers with influence in the organization, ensuring that high-performing Gen Y'ers are receiving the best possible training and assignments.
4. **Mentors:** Older employees should be trained on the techniques of mentoring, while younger employees should be encouraged to seek out mentors.

### *3. Short, one-to-two day training programs*
Alexandra Levit, a consultant on generations in the workforce, and author of *Success for Hire: Simple Strategies to Find and Keep Outstanding Employees,* discusses an affordable option for organizations that are looking to begin the process of young talent development. She highlights that organizations should offer recent college graduates a one-to-two day training session. The training is on: 1) becoming mature professionals; 2) establishing profitable relationships in the organization; 3) exploring talents and how they intersect with the organization; 4) mastering career skills such as effective communication and time management techniques; and 5) identifying career goals and long-term career plans.[1]

## BEST PRACTICES FOR ONBOARDING PROGRAMS
Research shows that organizations that engage in formal onboarding by implementing step-by-step programs for new employees to teach them what their roles are and what the norms of the company are experience more effective results than those that do not.[5] According to a Society for Human Resource Management Onboarding publication, there are "four C's" to consider when onboarding employees: compliance, clarification, culture, and connection (Appendix A).[5] It is essential that companies take a "proactive" approach during the onboarding process, by encompassing all aspects of the "Four C's" (Appendix B).[5] IBM's "Assimilation Process" is an example of proactive onboarding. The assimilation process has three phases; it begins prior to a new employee's start date and ends upon completion of their first year on the job. During the "affirming" phase, IBM welcomes the new employee, and prepares a workstation and assigns a coach. The second phase is the "beginning" phase, which allows the new employee to understand company technologies and assimilate into their working duties. The third and final "connecting" phase is set up to encourage involvement with other members of the organization.[5] IBM's program highlights the importance of the "four C's" and steps that should be taken to achieve a successful onboarding.

## CONCLUSION
The landscape of our workforce is constantly changing, and in order to remain competitive, it is essential that organizations effectively attract and retain top talent. With the apparent shift from Baby Boomers to Gen Y employees, development is crucial. Top Gen Y individuals are well aware that they are highly sought after, and are constantly evaluating their career options. Through effective development rotation and mentoring programs, as well as effective onboarding strategies, a company can ensure that it will be ready in 2020 when its workforce shifts to Gen Y.

**THE FOUR C'S**

1. **Compliance:** is the lowest level and includes teaching employees basic legal and policy-related rules and regulations.
2. **Clarification:** refers to ensuring that employees understand their new jobs and all related expectations.
3. **Culture:** is a broad category that includes providing employees with a sense of organizational norms—both formal and informal.
4. **Connection:** refers to the vital interpersonal relationships and information networks that new employees must establish.

**APPENDIX B**

The chart below indicates which of the four C's have been achieved through different onboarding strategies. The most intricate and successful strategy is the proactive strategy.[5]

| Onboarding Strategy Level | Compliance | Clarification | Culture | Connection |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) Passive | YES | SOME | LITTLE/NONE | LITTLE/NONE |
| 2) High Potential | YES | YES | SOME | SOME |
| 3) Proactive | YES | YES | YES | YES |

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