

teaching note

Effective Management Strategies: Millennial Leaders Managing a Multigenerational Workplace

Summary

This case study provides a scenario about Mr. Christopher Payne who is having difficulty leading a team of multigenerational employees. The case study intends to generate discussions about the effective management strategies for multigenerational employees and identifying best practices and opportunities while working with Generation Y (Millennials). The discussions surrounding this case study can put forth a greater understanding of leadership challenges, especially those surrounding multigenerational employees.

Target Audiences

The content of this case study is geared toward senior undergraduate and graduate students who are preparing to enter entry-level management positions.

Learning Outcomes

Instructors have a unique opportunity to discuss the realistic leadership challenges for young leaders within the hospitality industry. As these recent graduates prepare to lead front-line hospitality establishments, strategies for effective management with multigenerational employees become important. Hiring leaders within hospitality want to know that their front-line managers are willing to adapt and handle the attitudes and work ethics of a multiethnic and multigenerational team. The discussion topics regarding different generational work values for employees promote critical thinking of management strategies for these up and coming Millennial leaders.

Upon the completion of studying this case study, learners should be able to:

- Define and understand the different generations that are working in the industry
- Discuss how different attitudes, beliefs, and work-values vary depending on the specific, respected generation
- Analyze how Millennials are now leading multigenerational teams
- Understand the attitudes of Millennials and how leadership styles need to adapt and change to specific employee teams
- Construct an action plan for leading and managing each, respected generation

Prior to Class

Prior to class, students will be asked to read the case study and related materials to leading multigenerational teams. Students will be provided the following video link (or similar ones) to watch and be prepared to discuss: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGNiXMLzO8>. They will be asked to discuss and answer the following discussion topics and questions:

Multigenerational Background:

- **Should hospitality universities and/or industry organizations have courses related to leading multigenerational employees?**
Yes, these courses could be structured around case studies that allow for further discussion on how to handle difficult, management situations, or structured as recent graduates providing an open-floor forum where students are invited to hear from current Millennial leaders.
- **By understanding the ideals and values of generations, how can leaders effectively learn to manage each generation?**
Look for yes, but also focus on the “it depends” or “maybe” answers. Does it start with studying the pros and cons of each generation, or does it depend on what section of hospitality we are working in?
- **Should there be different management styles for each generation? What would these look like?**
Yes, but again, these might look different for the various sections of hospitality management. Have students create a quick chart for each of these styles based upon Table 1. Look for transactional or transformational leadership, laissez faire, etc.

Questions related to the Case Study:

- **What should Christopher do to improve his relationship with his immediate leader (Generation X) RGM?**
Have an open field of discussion... Even if that means Christopher has to tell his leader that they need to improve their lines of communication. Christopher could suggest weekly 1:1 meetings, more emails, phone calls, text messages, etc. but keep in mind that many people do not want to be micro managed, while others need more direction and look for that micro management.
- **Should Christopher use the younger employees as “leverage” to influence the older generation of employees?**
This could be a great starting point, especially if Millennial leaders can better relate to the younger employees. There always should be a separation of manager and employee that does not translate into friend and employee, but the younger employees could help convince the older generations that the changes made are only going to make them more money.
- **Can Christopher continue to use one, specific leadership style while leading his team or should he use a mixture of leadership styles to breakthrough to his team?**

At this point, all students should know that there has to be a mixture of leadership styles. Be sure that students know that adapting leadership styles does not mean playing favorites, but does include being a consistent and fair leader.

- **What could hospitality organizations do to better prepare their younger managers for leading multigenerational teams?**

Be upfront and honest. During interviews, ask questions regarding these situations. Provide situational questions and see how they respond. Make sure they are up for the task. Understand and know your operation and what type of manager will be overseeing your establishment.

- **What could university hospitality management programs do to better prepare their younger managers for leading multigenerational teams?**

See question 1, under Multigenerational Background.

- **Table 1 provides a generational matrix with a closer look at respected views on leadership style. In the following example, Generation Y is a manager/leader within a hospitality organization that in changing all employee shift start and end times to save labor costs. Based upon the respected views of leadership style for the Baby Boomers and Generation X, compare and contrast how this Generation Y leader will need to enforce this new policy without losing trust in their employees.**

The answer to this situation can go many different directions. The leader, overall, has to first understand the situation that they are presented with. They have no choice but to change the start and end times in order to reduce labor costs. This will drastically change employee side work, and possibly their paycheck. Have students present this change to the class as the employees as their audience. Make sure they explain the “why” behind this change but what they are going to do to make sure they are still appreciated and taken care of as an individual by the company. Be fair and consistent.

- **At what point do we stop viewing the Millennial Generation as joining hospitality organizations and accept the reality that hospitality organizations have become “their” organizations?**

Most of the answer to this question can be provided directly below – see: *How Did We Get Here?* Have students find current topics online related to this question.

Class Instruction

How Did We Get Here?

(This topic can be discussed and assigned prior to the below Phases, or presented as an additional assignment/research proposal).

It is important to provide and discuss the theoretical foundation that this case study introduces. Multigenerational differences in the workplace is an important topic that has been researched for many

years. However, small research has been conducted that discusses the topic of newly graduated, Millennials that are entering hospitality organizations as managers and leaders. One could argue that this phenomenon is based solely on the fact that older generations are retiring. However, another argument could suggest that Millennial leaders are able to better understand how to enhance the guest experience that is continually evolving with technological advances within hospitality. A rebuttal could argue that experience within hospitality management can never be replaced with a newly promoted Millennial leader. Yet again, however, can you compare and contrast experience versus a college education?

These topics of interest are an excellent starting point for class instruction. Furthermore, have students discuss the myths and truths of these theoretical generation topics. For Graduate students or Senior students in capstone classes, have students use these discussion points to create their own research proposal:

- Include: abstract, introduction, literature review, probable outcomes & discussion, limitation and implications, and references sections.
- Look for: Investigate why Millennial leaders are leading hospitality organizations, find a theory that could account for/explain the reason WHY these leaders are being trusted/hired/established within the hospitality industry.
 - It is more than okay for students to substitute a different, but relatable topic
- Look for: one, specific purpose that explores the selected topic, what the problem is (why have we not seen industry research that explains this phenomenon?), one claim or theory that might be expected and why, the methods that the student would use in order to perform the study, and finally, a research question that is presented

PHASE I - (30 to 40 minutes)

- Start the class by identifying students who have worked with a team of multigenerational employees. You may also follow-up with questions regarding the strengths or opportunities while working with a diverse team of individuals (10 minutes).
- Allow students to watch the following video that provides an overview Millennials moving ahead in the workplace: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCDeGAw0eBY>. This may be an inspirational start about looking differently at changing views on workplace attitudes (5 to 10 minutes).
- Divide the students into groups. Have students discuss each of the three generations and have students create heard of “myths” of the work-styles for each generation (10 to 15 minutes).
- Have students discuss their answers and provide emotional ties to how generations would feel about the “myths” that were provided (10 to 15 minutes).

Phase II – (60-80 minutes)

- Open discussion about the case study. Facilitate the discussion by creating a beginning, middle, and end for Christopher's situation (10 minutes).
- Ask each group to debrief on the case study by answering the following questions (10 minutes):
 - What did Christopher do wrong? What did he do right?
 - Made too much change at one time, did not explain the "why behind the changes, he was not upfront about the open communication that he needed with his leader
 - He understood there was a problem, he wanted to make changes, he believed in himself even though feelings changed at the end of the case, he made the restaurant more money with the beverage changes, he could relate to most of his employees, he was not easily defeated
 - Can we blame the RGM? Can we blame the university? Can we blame the resort?
 - Yes, yes, and yes. Look again for the "it depends" answer. This answer can be related and directed to the theoretical foundation for lack of research or a starting point for the research proposal.
 - Should Christopher change? How so?
 - Yes and no. He needs to first understand the environment he entered. Moving forward, he needs to have an open line of discussion with his leader. He needs to have performance evaluation guidelines so he knows what is expected of him. He needs to create relationships with his employees. A great starting point: what can he learn from them?
- Have students share their answers to the above questions (10-15 minutes).
- Ask each group to debrief on the case study discussion questions (15 minutes) suggestive answers previously provided:
 1. What should Christopher do to improve his relationship with his immediate leader (Generation X) RGM?
 2. Should Christopher use the younger employees as "leverage" to influence the older generation of employees?
 3. Can Christopher continue to use one, specific leadership style while leading his team or should he use a mixture of leadership styles to breakthrough to his team?
 4. What could hospitality organizations do to better prepare their younger managers for leading multigenerational teams?
 5. What could university hospitality management programs do to better prepare their younger managers for leading

multigenerational teams?

6. Table 1 provides a generational matrix with a closer look at respected views on leadership style. In the following example, Generation Y is a manager/leader within a hospitality organization that in changing all employee shift start and end times to save labor costs. Based upon the respected views of leadership style for the Baby Boomers and Generation X, compare and contrast how this Generation Y leader will need to enforce this new policy without losing trust in their employees.
7. At what point do we stop viewing the Millennial Generation as joining hospitality organizations and accept the reality that hospitality organizations have become "their" organizations?
 - Have students share their answers to the above questions (10-15 minutes).

Phase III (10 to 15 minutes)

- Check for understanding. Review concepts and allow for critical thinking. Allow students to move past traditional leadership styles and move into deeper discussions for leadership techniques.
- Allow students to share their own discussion and stories related to the topic.

Assessment/Assignment

- Ask students to write the conclusion to the case study. Hint at having the students focus on Christopher's leadership style and how he was able to breakthrough to the team of older employees while still keeping the respect of the younger generation.
- Have students write a short report about their own workplace. Have students relate their own generational experiences when they are at work in their report. Do they have a different outlook on their team? Their organization? Their own leadership skills? Do they feel better prepared to lead multigenerational teams?