

Go Ahead and Fire Me!: The Top Three Things Generation Y Does Not Like About Working @ Your Medical Practice



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The face of healthcare is changing. Generation Y is the 70 million people that will not only be assisting with the transformation of healthcare, but leading the charge when it comes to medical equipment innovations, life-saving drugs, and quality patient care. The pressure will be focused on medical facilities to not only hire the brightest Gen Yers but also to engage them, keep them motivated, and keep them enthusiastic about their jobs. Here are the top three things Generation Y does not like about working in your medical facility and what you can do about them!

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The face of healthcare is changing. From healthcare reform to patient-focused care, the experiences patients have at a medical facility are drastically different than what Baby Boomers saw on “Marcus Welby M.D.,” Gen Xers watched on “E.R.,” or Gen Yers TiVo on “Grey’s Anatomy.”

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Generation Y is the 70 million people that will not only be assisting with the transformation of healthcare, but leading the charge when it comes to new technologies, cost savings, medical equipment innovations, life-saving drugs, and quality patient care. They are the new group of doctors, nurses, medical salespeople, volunteer coordinators, administrative assistants, certified nursing assistants, and healthcare professionals that are entering the healthcare field in record numbers. According to a Health Affairs report, over the past 12 years the number of nurses under the age of 30 entering the workplace has increased over 60%,¹ and it is predicted that Generation Y will comprise over 70% of the entire workforce by year 2025.²

As healthcare continues to be a recession-resistant field, it will attract Generation Y talent. However, as patients

become more sensitive to personalized care, their concerns for privacy issues magnify and they demand to be kept more informed about their healthcare and healthcare choices. There will be a surge of pressure on medical facilities to not only hire the brightest Gen Yers but also to engage them, keep them motivated, and keep them enthusiastic about their jobs.

Here are the top three things Generation Y does not like about working at your medical offices and what you can do about them.

YOU DO NOT TRUST ME

Members of Generation Y have not only grown up with technology, they are the in-house experts. We ask them their advice when it comes to smart phones, tablets, and computers. Gen Yers are the first people we call in the office when the printer is down, when e-mail isn’t working, or when the computer is not behaving. We have also relied on them to hold our hand as we ride the social media wave. Ironically, we do not understand or we are frustrated by Gen Yers’ dependence on technology. We scoff at all their texting and criticize when they take their cell phones to bed with them. We want Generation Y’s expertise when it comes to technology, but we do not want its passion for technology to interfere with our lives. Our reaction to this is to forbid the use of anything technological outside of our understanding.

After a recent presentation I made to a group of optometrists, one of the attendees told me, “I have solved the problem of my younger staff using technology to do anything that does not pertain to the practice. We blocked Facebook at our office, and I am looking for a way to block Twitter, too.”

This doctor may have found a short-term solution, but she also found herself a new problem. When medical practices create blanket policies that forbid Generation Y's use of technology, the translation in Gen Yers' minds is that you do not trust them. No Facebook, no texting, no Twitter translation = no smiling, no engagement, and no trust. Next we will be asking Gen Yers to raise their hands before going to the bathroom!

We trust Gen Yers with the care of patients, trust them to handle sensitive information, and trust them to administer the funds in the office, but we can't trust them to self-monitor their technology activities. This is a disconnect for Generation Y. Forbidding the use of social media and cell phones is like forbidding the use of the land line telephone because someone made a personal call.

What can you do? Make your expectations clear. Generation Y will not have a problem following office rules if they make sense and are consistent. Following are some examples of rules pertaining to the use of technology and social media in the office:

- Determine where it is acceptable to use technology for personal use. It may be the break room, the corridor, or other location as long as not in view of the patients.
- If possible, eliminate scheduled break times. Allow Gen Yers to schedule their own breaks when they need them with other members of the office staff. This gives Gen Yers flexibility to socialize via technology when they want to (during their breaks) and communicates to them that you trust their judgment.
- Be clear that while accessing and checking their phone and texting friends are OK, the employees will be held to the same standards as everyone else, and their work must be of high quality and completed on time.
- Patient privacy is a paramount concern. Stress that posting photos of patients or coworkers without explicit permission is forbidden.
- Remind employees that they may not publish or comment about other doctors or practices.
- If an employee is using his or her phone or tablet for professional reasons in front of a patient, the employee should explain to the patient what is being done and how the technology pertains to the employee's job.

YOU DO NOT RESPECT MY EXPERIENCE

Shea (Generation Y) is a coding manager for a group health cooperative. She says, “I started out as an intern, was hired as a coder, and a year later was promoted to supervisor. I went from being a student, to a peer, to a manager in less than two years. I heard comments like ‘she does not have enough experience’ to more offensive remarks like ‘people have underwear older than her.’ I was promoted because

I have a Masters Degree, and I am a good coder. I am fast and accurate, and I understand the role of coding and the impact coding has on the organization.”



The digital revolution has birthed a new way for healthcare professionals to work and get their jobs done.

We want Gen Yers to pay their dues like we did when we were their age. One of the biggest generational mistakes we make is assuming the younger generation will behave the same way we did at that age. The digital revolution has birthed a new way for healthcare professionals to work and get their jobs done. From electronic health records, to online scheduling, to texting appointment reminders, people are using technology to work faster and smarter. Generation Y in many cases knows more than we do about this science and has a natural affinity to work with technology. (Many Gen Yers have college degrees in specific technologies.) These star performers are valuable commodities to the practice, and they will rise in the ranks even if they do not have the years of experience. Their technical know-how makes them qualified candidates for that promotion.

A smart Gen Y manager will ask for advice from his or her more seasoned team members and respect what they have accomplished while he or she was still in school. An even smarter Gen Y supervisor will give his or her mature staff members credit for their ideas and will continue to invest in his or her veteran employees.

However, if you find yourself on the other side of the coin, being managed by a Gen Yer, here is what you can do to show respect for the Gen Yer's experience:

- Keep current with technology. You do not have to know everything that is trending on Twitter, but you need to

know what your peers and competitors are using and how they are using it.

- Gen Y bosses often come up with new ideas. Rather than throwing up roadblocks, meet with your younger manager and discuss ways to work more effectively. For example: Do you expect to meet face-to-face daily to discuss decisions, or are both of you comfortable with meeting once a week?
- What motivates your Gen Y boss may be different than what motivates you. Since your Gen Y boss is younger, he or she is at a different stage in his or her career. Chances are, he or she is looking for advancement and an upwardly mobile career path. If you have been working in your career for some time, you may be motivated by contributing to the team or by a sense of security. Look for ways to help your Gen Y boss achieve the level of success he or she is seeking.
- Avoid diminutive statements about the Gen Yers' young age. It may seem like you are looking into the face of one of your grandkids, but comments like "I have underwear older than you" not only makes the speaker sound out of touch but can put the Gen Yer on the defensive.
- Stop talking about the "good old days." As stated earlier, a good Gen Y manager will ask the opinions of his or her seasoned employees, but there will come a time to make a change. If you are still waxing nostalgic about how good the practice was before the buy-out, when it was just you and a few physicians, you will be perceived as a roadblock. Express what has worked in the past, and look for ways you can help with transitions.

YOU DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE MY WORK

Generation Y does not expect a trophy for just showing up to work. Gen Y does seek affirmation following a job done correctly or a job well done with greater frequency than people from older generations. Generation Y has grown up in a culture in which people have to wait for little—information was instantly available via the Internet, products could be delivered overnight, and pictures could be viewed immediately on a smart phone.

It only makes sense that Generation Y expects acknowledgment and feedback straight away, particularly when Gen Yers believe they have gone above and beyond normal day-to-day activities.

Generation Y finds annual reviews outdated and archaic.

Kristofer (Generation Y) is the supervisor of registration for a large hospital. He says, "The patient registration system is Internet based. Last week, the entire system went down for 10 hours; we had to admit patients, take notes, update information, and everything had to be done by hand on paper. At 1:00 a.m., the system was finally back up. I returned to the hospital at 1:00 a.m.; and with my team, we entered all

the handwritten information, for more than 1000 patients, into the computer. Meanwhile, I still had several meetings with my supervisor concerning the typical day-to-day activities. I was terrified I was not going to get home for at least one hour of sleep before returning to the hospital.



"There was nothing the hospital could have done during the crisis; it just was what it was. Once the catastrophe was over, and everything was operational, our team was awarded the GOOD CATCH award. It is a statue of a catcher's glove; the statue stays in your department for a week. There is a high level of pride to be awarded the GOOD CATCH, and since I had been there for only a month, it was an exceptional honor to receive such acknowledgment!"

People from all generations like to be rewarded and praised for a job well done; this is especially true for Generation Y. Here are some things you can do to give Gen Yers the recognition they deserve:

- Recognition should be given when deserved, but it should be given often. If it has been longer than seven days, it is time to recognize your Gen Yers. Do not wait for the annual review to praise the Gen Yer. Generation Y finds annual reviews outdated and archaic. When yesterday's news is old news, Gen Yers' performance over nine months ago is prehistoric!
- Show enthusiasm and support for their contribution. Hannah (Gen Yer) is a fund development specialist for a long-term-care facility. She says, "Fundraising is my job, it is an honor making a difference at the end of someone's life. It is frustrating when the other staff members, nurses, and orderlies show no interest and do not participate in the smallest activities. The funds I help raise contribute to a better quality of life for our residents and nicer facilities for us all to work." In a study by Towers Watson it was reported almost 80% of people indicate that "lack of appreciation" was a contributing factor for leaving their jobs.³
- Make it public. Unless you know the Gen Yer shies away

from public appreciation, let everyone know. (Do not assume that because you would not like to be recognized in public other people feel the same.) An allergy specialist created a board in the waiting room called YOU CAUGHT ME! Attached to the board are a stack of sticky notes and a pen. Patients can write down the employee's name with a comment and post it on the board. "We felt comment cards were too confidential, with the CAUGHT ME board everyone can read the compliment," says the specialist.

- Create rewards that increase engagement. When someone does something worthy of a little "extra," they are often given consumables like gift cards, cash, or food. These are wonderful bumps in someone's day, but once the receiver uses the item, the good feeling tends to dissipate. Landshark's, a clothing store in Michigan, treats the employee that demonstrates exceptional customer service to dinner at the restaurant of his or her choice. During dinner, the employee must come up with at least one idea to help improve the store and present the idea at the staff meeting.
- It is your job! Acknowledgment is everyone's responsibility. It does not matter if you are in management or working peer-to-peer, feedback goes further when expressed openly.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the years, Generation Y has gotten a bad rap. We call Gen Yers spoiled, lazy, and unappreciative. There may be a few that are just that, but they are also imaginative, enthusiastic, and our future. Generation Y wants to make a difference in healthcare. According to the Kelly Global Workforce Index, over 50% of Gen Yers will take less money or a diminutive title if their work is relevant or serves a greater good.⁴

Gen Yers will not be able to spark the changes necessary in healthcare unless we listen to what they have to say and give them room at the (exam) table.*

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