

Our future driving force

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For those of us of the baby boomer generation, we are at that stage of our lives when we have to acknowledge that we are getting close to retirement. Unfortunately, this is not just something we must consider from a personal point of view but also from the point of view of our industry.

The average age of drivers in the road transport sector is well over 50, with a large proportion either at or nearing retirement age.

Using an analysis of UN population data global workforce company, ManpowerGroup has estimated that by 2020 baby boomers will make up only six percent of the global workforce.

By contrast Generation X (those born between the mid-1960s and early 1980s) will be 35 percent, Generation Y (the Millennial generation, born between 1982 and 1996) will also be 35 percent, while Generation Z (born post-1996) will make up 24 percent of the workforce.

The question for road transport companies is how to attract and keep these younger people in our industry. Rather than having one job for life, Generation Y workers, for example, think about careers in waves with changing paths, pace and regular breaks.

It is important we therefore understand what motivates this generation and how we can attract them to our industry. Generation Y Millennials globally rate learning within the job as a crucial factor that they consider when choosing a career.

One of the motivations for millennials in choosing a job is identified as the expectation that ongoing learning and qualifications are part of the role and there

are clear steps to keep achieving within a chosen career path. In other words, we need to make sure that we offer these people something more than just a job. They want career advancement, opportunities to upskill and the flexibility to consider different roles.

According to the ManpowerGroup report, “while Millennials prioritise the security of full-time employment, they also want regular change, new challenges and advancement. Growing up in a faster-paced world of sharing, rating and instant feedback, they see their careers through the same lens.

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“When asked what the ‘right’ amount of time is to stay in a single role before being promoted or moving to another, about two-thirds said less than two years and a quarter said less than 12 months.”

So, while across the industry we complain about a lack of skilled drivers, the reality is that the days where we would recruit someone and hang on to them for 20, 30 or 40 years is coming to an end. Generations Y and Z rarely aspire to



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decades of service within one company. This reality might not suit us baby boomers, but we will have to get our heads around it.

How do we adapt?

ManpowerGroup has some practical advice on how to prepare for the workforce of 2020:

Demonstrate that staying with the company can lead to career enhancement.

Satisfy an employee’s appetite for new opportunities without them having to go elsewhere.

Check in with staff regularly about their career path and development.

Offer frequent, face-to-face feedback, and, affirmation.

Anticipate breaks for personal reasons and know these go beyond traditional births, honeymoons and even caring for relatives. Be clear what flexibility you can offer and help people re-enter the workforce when they return.

Millennials tend to prefer full-time work, but many are also open to alternatives like part-time, freelance or portfolio work.

Adopt some of the attractive aspects of these models – greater flexibility in where, when and how people work and a greater variety of projects – to better engage and retain Millennial workers.

I acknowledge that some of these things may be difficult to institute in a transport and logistics environment, however they are worth thinking about when considering hiring younger members of staff. ■