PRODUCTIVITY IN THE WORKPLACE: THE "AGE ISSUE" ISN'T WHAT YOU THINK

Mt. Laurel, NJ - (January, 2020) – Whether you're a Millennial or a Boomer, chances are you have some thoughts about the other generation's working style and the impact it has on efficiency and job satisfaction. The National Association of Productivity & Organizing Professionals (NAPO), recently conducted a survey of more than 1,200 individuals to probe some generational workplace challenges. They discovered 22% of younger workers aged 18-34 believe that their supervisors feel their organizational and productivity skills need improvement, compared to only 13% of older workers. Younger workers also worry about being judged for how organized they appear to others, with 36% of younger workers citing the concern, vs. only 26% of older workers.

While it is easy to attribute this to a normal "settling in" process typical of newer employees, there may be more at the root of these feelings than new-job nerves, according to productivity expert Jan Lehman of Minneapolis, Minn.

"For more than a decade, I have helped both Fortune 500 companies and small, boutique businesses address productivity in the workplace, and I have found that there is a huge gap in our educational system, particularly when it comes to preparing younger employees for an office environment," Lehman observed. "For example, older workers simply assume that new-to-the-workforce employees graduate school tech-savvy, and while by and large, this is true, they may not be knowledgeable about office-specific technology and how to use it in a manner that aligns with team productivity goals."

Older workers, she asserts, came to age in an era of emails, To Do lists, and face-to-face meetings. Many of this may seem "business as usual" for older employees, but for younger workers, it is very different from the "instant response" technologies that they've grown up with, where everything has a sense of urgency about it, and requires instant reaction.

"There's a sense that the younger generation is unproductive, but they have lived their lives in a reactionary environment, with an ASAP mentality to all communications," said Lehman. "I suggest productivity training to help younger workers understand how to think through response time, identifying what is a true emergency vs something that requires greater thought, or which can be responded to at a later time."

And for older workers, she said that productivity training can help them master newer project management tools and teach them how to work more effectively with their younger teammates.

Younger individuals appear to be on board with this thinking, saying they believe it would advance their career if they were more skilled at prioritizing their workload, with 38.2% agreeing, compared to older counterparts at 20.8%.

<u>Simple Steps to Greater Efficiency Are at Our Fingertips</u>
Jan explained how she'd worked with a young Senior Financial Analyst with almost five years of experience at a Minneapolis environmental services that was growing rapidly. Management brought her on board to address productivity among their 250 employees. In one session Jan introduced two simple email practices that immediately changed the dynamic among the workers. Jan suggested every email subject line be identified as "critical" vs. "urgent" vs. "FYI." This simple change made it easy for anyone to look at their inbox and know what needed immediate response and what could wait.

She also reviewed how to use the inbox with its task manager function to keep the top 20 items visible; the rest were to be sorted and color-coded by urgency in folders and creating a catch-all folder for informational emails that didn't require immediate action. The cues prioritized the most urgent work, and at the same time, people who were used to 1,000s of inbox messages, learned how to better use color-coding and folders to be more responsive and organized. In only a few weeks Jan heard from management and the analyst about the huge difference just by implementing universal subject headings and these basic tools.

According to Lehman, the first step in increasing productivity that a company can undertake is to evaluate the workflow and assess priorities. "So often I found that we don't create a culture that communicates priorities so people are busy, yet not necessarily productive. With back-to-back meetings and no time for uninterrupted work, productivity actually declines."

By communicating priorities, providing staff with the tools and training needed to be successful, she feels any company can improve productivity and build a culture that maximizes time and technology, leading to greater job satisfaction and talent engagement.

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About NAPO
The National Association of Productivity & Organizing Professionals (NAPO) was founded in 1985 as a nonprofit professional educational association for professional organizers. Today, NAPO has approximately 3,500 members worldwide, representing the full spectrum of the global industry: professional organizers, productivity consultants, authors, educators, trainers, manufacturers, service providers and more. NAPO's mission is to be the leading source for organizing and productivity professionals by providing exceptional education, enhancing business connections, advancing industry research, and increasing public awareness. NAPO is headquartered in Mt. Laurel, New Jersey, and is on the web at www.NAPO.net and subscribe to the [Stand Out podcast](#) and [Blog](#). Be social: https://www.facebook.com/NAPONatl/, https://twitter.com/NAPOnatl, https://www.instagram.com/napo_natl/, https://www.youtube.com/user/NAPOHQ, https://www.pinterest.com/NapoNatl/
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Survey Methodology Details
This survey was conducted by Survata, an independent research firm in San Francisco. Survata interviewed 1213 online respondents between October 08, 2019 and October 25, 2019. Respondents were reached across the Survata publisher network, where they take a survey to unlock premium content, like articles and ebooks. Respondents received no cash compensation for their participation. More information on Survata's methodology can be found at survata.com/methodology.