RECRUITING

GENERATION Z

INTO THE FIELD OF FACILITY MANAGEMENT

BY SCOTT SHERMAN AND DIANE LEVINE
There is a new generation of talent emerging in the workforce today referred to as Generation Z and this is good news for the field of facility management.

Generation Z includes those individuals who are born after 1994 and they will account for 20 percent of the workforce by 2020. Facility industry leaders predict a significant talent shortage as more than half of FM leaders will be retiring by 2031. Companies who are taking proactive and strategic action to recruit early talent from Generation Z will be poised to win in the challenge of hiring FM talent.

There are many exciting characteristics and trends regarding Generation Z that make facility management an attractive career option. Industry leaders must help make those connections and recruit this generation into the field. To do that, it’s important to know Generation Z’s thought processes.

**ORGANIZATIONAL LOYALTY**  
Generation Z is indicating that they expect to stay with companies for longer tenures than their millennial predecessors. Research indicates that 60% of Gen Z is willing to stay with a company for more than 10 years.

**FULFILLING WORK AND A COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**  
Original research by Sodexo surveyed members of Gen Z about their specific expectations for the workplace to better understand the most critical drivers of engagement. At 43%, respondents overwhelmingly identified having a fulfilling role as their number one priority. This was followed closely (at 33%) by a desire to work for organizations with a strong commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR).

**DIVERSITY**  
Generation Z represents the largest group of multi-racial/multi-ethnic individuals to come of working age in the United States.

**THEY LIVE TECHNOLOGY**  
Generation Z is highly savvy in digital technology and they expect it in the work environment. Research carried out by leading generational demographer Claire Madden with Australian Gen Zers mirrors a demand that is echoed globally among their peers. They will not accept anything less than a fast network and a functional workplace. One of the top downers for Gen Z is slow wifi.

Clearly Generation Z will be an incredible addition to the field of FM and the industry is excited for the advancements this generation will contribute. However, what strategies and tactics should facilities leaders deploy to engage and recruit this generation into the facilities career path?

1. **Illustrate career growth opportunity and commitment to employees.**
   
   Facility leaders need to showcase the career paths within their companies and the longevity available. Additionally, longevity cannot mean stagnation, but continual learning and development. Career growth and training is one of the top motivators for any generation. When combined with the long-term opportunities available within FM, that is a clear attrator for Generation Z.

2. **Showcase meaningful work and examples of social responsibility.**
   
   FM work is meaningful and has a tremendous impact on individuals and communities. Companies who make a connection of FM work to it impact to consumers within the built environment will be at an advantage with Generation Z.
   
   - In a corporate or business and industry environment, showcase how FMs help increase productivity and improve the quality of life and wellness in the work environment.
   - In a school environment, tell the story of how the FM work is helping to provide a clean, safe and enhanced learning environment for students. Demonstrate how savings realized through strong facility management is money that can be reinvested into education.
   - In a healthcare setting, show examples of how FMs are impacting patients, improving the environment of care and contributing to healing patients.

3. **Diversity and inclusion must be integral to who FM companies are.**
   
   First, FM companies need to greatly expand their diversity outreach to attract a more diverse talent pool. According to IFMA research, the average facility manager is a 49-year-old Caucasian male. When you compare to Generation Z, as one researcher put it: “Nearly half of Gen Z is non-Caucasian and 81 percent of Gen Zers said they have friends of a different race. Noting this new generation’s multicultural demographic allows companies to understand that valuing diversity is not simply a cause Gen Zers advocate, but rather, multiculturalism is a criterion of who they..."
are.” Additionally, according to Sodexo research, “Racism and ethnicity, however, are not the only triggers for developing social groups. Gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity, disability and other factors are equally important when analyzing group identity and its interplay with quality of life in the workplace.”

Second - The outreach is important, but day to day operating principles are even more critical. Generation Z is multi-cultural and racially diverse as part of who they are. Companies need to reflect that in who they are in terms of diversity of the workforce, but as important is the inclusive cultures they build and instill within their corporate DNA.

Showcase technology as central to the future of FM.

FM is competing with multiple fields for Generation Z’s attention. Facility Management is subject to being upstaged in the developing talent pool by more visible careers in Information Technology and Engineering. However, the built environment is becoming highly digitalized. With innovations in digital technology, IoT and big data, the built environment needs digitally smart talent to effectively manage assets but also to effectively communicate and influence stakeholders.

FMs need to showcase how technology is regularly used and how it is advancing in the field of FM. They also need to demonstrate how FMs engage, utilize and advance technology in the built environment and how that will impact consumers, tenants and those passing through our facilities every day.

Organizations such as the IFMA Foundation are doing some amazing and ground-breaking approaches to make FM a career of choice. Through the Global Workforce Initiative, the IFMA Foundation is working to fill the talent gap by connecting, educating and investing in the future.

This initiative connects with communities to inform students, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, community organizations, economic development and government agencies about existing and prosperous career opportunities in FM. The Foundation educates students and incumbent workers through programs offering IFMA courses, academic certificates, and the FM accredited degree programs at higher education institutions. And, working with Sodexo, the Foundation invests in the future by providing new career opportunities through scholarships, internship programs, job shadowing and IgniteFM! student competitions.

The Foundation is able to attract Gen Zers to community college and four-year programs in facility management by showing how this field can make a difference in the daily lives of people and the strategy and sustainability of an organization. The “Save the Planet, Become an FM” campaign demonstrates how Gen Zers can impact the planet and the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The Foundation found that Gen Zers are more apt to enroll in a college FM program once they understand the societal impacts they can make as a facility manager.

Gen Zers particularly enjoy the diversity of the IFMA Foundation IgniteFM! competitions. Through these competitions, which can be watched at IFMA conferences, students are paired in teams with their peers from different cultures and countries to solve complex FM problems. During IgniteFM! competitions, Gen Zers demonstrated that they are not only able to quickly engage with strangers but can also develop and present viable solutions in short timeframes. These competitions show how rapidly Gen Zers can connect, work in diverse teams, collaborate, and create innovative answers to difficult built environment problems.

The FM field aligns extremely well with the key factors important to Generation Z when selecting a career. As an industry that has a workforce trend of its talent exiting the field at a much higher pace than it is entering the field, FMs must take the lead in attracting and recruiting Generation Z into Facility Management. They must align what the field has to offer Generation Z, expose early talent to these opportunities and tell the FM story through effective media, communication strategies and forums that will connect with and inspire them to choose FM as a career.

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