BUILDING THE FUTURE OF STATE LEGISLATURES

Recruiting and Retaining Millennials in State Legislatures

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What? Why? How?

Background

Findings

Recommendations
What: snapshot of recruitment and retention of state legislative staff, emphasis placed on impact on Millennial generation employees.

Why: concerns about the “graying,” and eventual retirement, of the state legislative workforce; concerns about attracting and keeping young legislative employees.

How: six states; phone interviews and questionnaire; mix of staff (positions and generations).
A LITTLE BACKGROUND - GENERATIONAL THEORY

- Generational cohorts in the workplace
  - Traditionals (1920-1945)
  - Baby Boomers (1946-1964)
  - Generation Xers (1965-1979)
  - Millennials
Meet the New Millennials
They're Young, Cool and Not Keen to Get to Work Before 10 a.m.

NEED A JOB
QUESTIONS

1. Why do people work for state legislatures? With respect to recruiting, are there generational differences?

2. Retention factors? Why do people leave? Generational differences?

3. Do staff experience a “generation gap” at work?

4. What workplace challenges do they see on the horizon? Generational differences?
DEMOGRAPHICS

Partisan/Non-partisan Breakdown

- 58% Non-partisan
- 25% Partisan - Republican
- 17% Partisan - Democrat

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DEMOGRAPHICS

Interviewees, by Gender

- Female: 33%
- Male: 67%

Level of Education

- High School: 9%
- Some College: 18%
- College Graduate: 18%
- Post Graduate: 55%
DEMOGRAPHICS

Management Responsibilities

- Little to no management responsibility: 17%
- Mid-level manager: 25%
- Executive/top manager: 58%
DEMOGRAPHICS

Years working full-time for the legislature

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DEMOGRAPHICS
1. Why work for state legislatures? With respect to recruitment, are there generational differences?

- Personal connections.
- Internships, page programs, session only experience.
- Cross generational appeal of policy, process, politics, institution.
- Importance of security to Boomers.
2. Retention factors? Why do people leave?  
Generational differences?

- Comp, benefits and promotional opportunities are standard.
- Training, professional development and education opportunities vary.
- No formal succession plans; occurring informally.
- Boomers will not leave; Millennials will “keep options open.”
FINDINGS

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- Making a difference
- Special
- Unique
- Interesting
- Challenging
- Fulfilling
- Security/stability (B)
- Learning (M)
- Flexibility (M)

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- Cynicism
- Negative and inaccurate perceptions of govt.
- Salary
- Partisan issues
- Long hours (B)
- Session length (B)
- Legislator-bosses (B)
- Limited advancement
3. Do legislative staff experience a generation gap at work?

11 of 12: “YES”

- Technology
- Feedback
- Work ethic/career philosophy
FINDINGS

- **Generation Gap and Evaluations**...

  Millennials “are thrilled to have a good job and want to make sure they’re doing it right.”

  Boomers, etc...: “it’s more about ‘how am I doing’ than ‘what do I need to be doing.’”
FINDINGS

Generation Gap and Work ethic...

Millennials “want a place to start and not necessarily a place to have a career.”

Millennials “are all trying to get as far ahead as possible, so they can get to the point of wanting stability.”

Millennials “want to perform meaningful work and make an impact... (but they also) come in wanting increased responsibility presuming they have the tools to handle it (and they often don’t).”

Millennials work to see “what's in it for me.” Boomers work for “the good of the whole.”

Millennials “want the flexibility, but I sense that everyone is starting to want that... everyone sees flexibility as part of compensation. That's not how it was when I started – the only reason you didn't come in (to work) was because you were dead.”
Said a Millennial: "I’m personally very goal-oriented and focused on my advancement, goals, and education. I’m in a place where I want to see my career do better before seeing other factors do better. I feel this will make me a better employee – and if I’m a better employee it will make for a better workplace."

Said a Boomer: "(We) lack people willing to step up to the plate in absence of the retiring staff. People hesitate because they don’t want to make a career of government work. Young people jump in and out of public service, and their level of dedication is not high. They have a different work ethic. (Millennials) say, ‘I’m committed, as long as it works for me.’"
3. Do legislative staff experience a generation gap at work?

1 of 12: “NO”

Stage of life, rather than generation, explains difference?
4. What workplace challenges do legislative staff see on the horizon? Generational differences?

- Fiscal issues and the economy.
- Replacing retirees.
- Safeguarding and preserving the legislative institution.
- Technology.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider internship programs; publicize them externally; promote them internally.

- Pursue job enrichment strategies.

- Emphasize coaching and mentoring, pay attention to generational differences.
No “silver bullet!”
Perceptions of a generation gap at work, but could be due to a variety of reasons.
No formal succession planning occurring, but a general feeling that it's important. Managers feel it happens informally, but nonmanagement Millennial staff don't see it.
Internships and personal connections are successful recruitment tools.
Looking toward the future, responses don't fall according to generational lines, but center on budgets and salaries, replacing retirees, preserving the institution and institutional memory.