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Overcoming diversity and bridging the generation gap

HR professionals come together for a seminar and discussion on managing a generationally diverse workforce



From left to right: Mr Roger Collantes, Ms Helen Ko and Mr Frank Kuijsters

A recent GMP-sponsored event, *Managing a Multigenerational Workforce*, which was organised by *Human Resources*, saw HR professionals from across industries coming together to share their views and challenges in managing an age diverse workforce. Mr Frank Kuijsters, managing director of Digne Consult; Mr Roger Collantes, author and international learning leader; and Ms Helen Ko, executive director of Beyond Age, were invited to speak and lead discussions on related organisational issues many companies face.

Frank Kuijsters kicked off with his research findings of how each generation viewed one another as well as the differences between the generations in terms of motivation, attitudes to work life harmony, communication methods and transfer of knowledge as well as management style of superiors. His research also highlighted the positive effects of a multi generational workforce on the performance of the organisation, and the similarities these generations share. However, it is recommended that employers identify their multigenerational workforce to be able to adjust their management style accordingly.

Roger Collantes, a self-professed Gen Y advocate, felt that managers could engage their younger staff with a different approach. Through his past professional experience as a regional learning and development director, Roger found that Gen Y employees want small goals with tight deadlines to feel accomplished and to develop ownership of tasks. And like their older co-workers, they covet jobs that would allow them to manage their personal commitments and family obligations. He went on to elaborate that while Gen Y staff believe in their own self-worth, money is not the main motivator for attracting and retaining them.



"Gen Y employees are like Gen X on steroids!" said Roger Collantes

Rounding off the topic of the day, Ms Helen Ko sought to clarify and tear down stereotypes of older workers in the workplace with her presentation. Contrary to popular beliefs, older workers are dependable, want to be trained and impart their skills and knowledge to others. However, the workplace still retains a certain stigma for them as they feel they are not being seen, heard, understood and accepted. Ms Ko recommended employers adopt the 4 'E's - Emphasise, Educate, Explore and Empower - when it comes to engaging, retaining and hiring mature staff.

The event rounded off with a discussion led by the speakers. Some participants expressed concern for retaining and training their younger staff. It was advised that younger staff, notorious for their job hopping and boredom at work, be given lateral opportunities to grow to gain varied experience. It is important that younger staff are given clear directions on their career paths based on their current positions.



HR professionals catching up and networking during the break