

Baby boomers, baby bosses

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But such turmoil can be avoided if those doing the recruiting ensure that young Turks recognize the value of long-term employees and the discomfort veterans may feel when their manager is so much younger.

It is important to make the older workers feel secure "so that they know they are valuable, needed and respected," Ms. Lochbihler says.

One way to do this, Prof. Duxbury suggests, is to assign an older worker to the role of "shadow manager" to mentor the younger boss and "phase him into the job.

This recognizes that older workers have given a lot and have a lot to give in the future," she says.

Once on the job, a younger boss must show sensitivity to and appreciation of an older person's background and experience, and make sure to acknowledge past contributions to the company, says career coach Don Campbell, owner of Kelowna, B.C.-based Career-Coach.

The new boss should also make

every effort to leverage senior workers' knowledge and expertise in a way that will dispel the notion that an older worker has been "put out to pasture," he adds.

One way of accomplishing this, Mr. Campbell says, is for the boss to seek regular input from older staff or assign them to projects that will make them feel wanted.

Another way, Prof. Duxbury says, is to offer older employees a chance to upgrade skills through training to help them move up to a higher job classification.

While not necessary a promotion, it "shows these workers the company has not given up on them," she says.

Companies that choose to promote younger staff over older employees should explain their reasoning, Ms. Lochbihler says.

"Talk over the company's strategy, determine why you as an employer are going down that road and be clear about what everyone involved should expect."

Employees also have a role to

play. Older workers, Mr. Campbell says, should be encouraged to accept a new boss's ideas, provide moral support and see the big picture in giving an employer credit for hiring someone to make improvements they would ultimately benefit from as well.

"Initially, older workers may have feelings of surprise but, over time, they must gain an appreciation of who the individual is and where he comes from," he says.

"They should consider that this person comes with credentials the older generation does not have."

Ms. Kovary urges companies to provide ongoing management and leadership training to ensure managers, young and old, are kept abreast of changing trends in the workplace, including the move toward young bosses.

Properly handled relationships will ultimately gel, resulting in a win-win situation for the boss and staff, Mr. Campbell says.

"The young boss sees the value in having experienced staff with their

depth of experience and maturity that, at times of chaos, can be the calm in the eye of the storm.

"At the same time, older workers can see their careers revived. The arrival of a young boss can be a breath of fresh air that gets them more deeply engaged in what they are doing."

The B.C. manager can attest to that. It took more than six months for him to overcome the challenges which, he said, he accomplished by encouraging and paying heed to older workers' input and reassuring them wholesale changes were not in the offing.

"I learned not to move too fast. I leveraged the experience of my older employees, rather than trying to come in and make changes," says the man, who is now 34 and vice-president of marketing at the same company.

"I showed I was willing to learn from them and, as a result, they felt less threatened."

Special to The Globe and Mail

Bridging the generational divide

Employers should:

- Provide workplace relationship training to make expectations clear and hold both younger bosses and older workers accountable for making relationships work.
- Divert attention away from the age gap by focusing on teamwork.
- Acknowledge the challenges older employees face.
- Inform staff beforehand of younger boss's hiring and reasoning.
- Appoint an older worker as a "shadow manager" to mentor the new boss.
- Reward overlooked older workers with upgraded training or a plum assignment to indicate the company still values their contributions.

Younger bosses should:

- Be sensitive to and appreciative of background, experience and contributions of older workers.
- Take advantage of older workers' knowledge, experience and

wisdom and involve them.

- Have an open-door policy that encourages input and new ideas.
- Be confident but not arrogant or cocky
- Create opportunities, such as social events, to strengthen workplace relationships
- Work with older employees to create long-term career strategies and roads to retirement.
- Be respectful. Resist making any age-related comments or jokes.

Older employees should:

- Accept a young boss; acknowledge employer made a decision for company's interests.
 - Be open to the boss's ideas and recognize that age and wisdom are not directly linked.
 - Encourage the new boss in his or her work and recognize the younger generation is their future
 - Leave their egos at the door; let go of the need to control; co-operate and lend support.
 - Recognize a younger boss can bring new vitality to organization.
- Randy Ray