

THE THREE STEP NEW JOB AUDIT: A PROCESS DESIGNED TO HELP OUR RECENT GRADUATES AVOID GENERATION BASED CLASHES AT WORK

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Abstract

We have all heard stories about our bright and highly motivated GenY graduates who have failed to succeed at work because of a clash with their Baby Boomer bosses. The problem is so wide spread that many of our students think such clashes are inevitable, but they really do not have to happen. This paper presents a three-step new job audit process that was designed to avoid such generation clashes. The process describes in detail the specific steps GenY'ers can take to allow them to collaborate with colleagues in order to make positive contributions on the job that generate the positive feedback and praise they so dearly desire.

Introduction

Every year our graduates start their first post college job and every year they face the same problem that has plagued recent graduates for decades. Simply stated, they want to make an impact by changing the way things are done on the job. That is, they want to implement some of the things they have learned in college. The problem is and always has been that their bosses have a significant investment in doing things the way they have always done them. Their method is what has gotten them their current management position. Some people imply that this problem is unique to Gen Y'er graduate working for Baby Boomer bosses (see for example: Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009 and Tulgan, 2009), but that is not the case. This generational clash affected me 45 years ago when I took my first post graduation full time job.

The generational clash is avoidable and there is a way to deal with it in a positive manner. In this paper I will describe the main points of a lecture/presentation that I have been making to my marketing students for the past five years. There are three main sections to the presentation. Those sections include the reality of your first job, a three-step new job audit and the specific steps you should follow in order to make an impact in your new job.

The Reality of Your First Job

There are five main points to be made:

1. Your boss will want you to do things the way they have always been done.

2. You will want to apply your knowledge and collaborate with others to change the way things are done at work.
3. Some companies have programs in place to help Gen Y'ers collaborate and make changes.
4. Don't count on #3.
5. Be proactive by following the steps of the new job audit process.

The New Job Audit Process

All jobs are unique and at the same time all jobs are remarkably similar. The commonality is that any job can be described figuratively as opposed to literally, using the Transformation Model or input-process-outcome. Given that, I tell people to approach their new job by following a define-refine-redesign planning sequence plan.

This is what I tell my students. In the define stage, your goal is to quickly learn exactly how to do your new job using the currently acceptable processes and procedures. You essentially have to learn what I call the “get-do-give” details of your new job. That is, learn what you are given on the job, what you must do and who gets the results of your effort or who uses your work product. Once you know the job, your next task is to refine your existing work process. That is, you must make sure you are doing the job efficiently and effectively by following the rules as they have been explained to you. At this point you are ready to move into the redesign phase.

The redesign phase has a number of steps and I will present them in the most frequently used sequence (as reported by former students).

The first thing you do is to meet with the person who uses your work product to do his/her job. That is, your output is someone's input. You ask this person a specific question. “What would you like me to do that would make it easier for you to do your job”? I tell my students not to expect an immediate answer because their colleague will likely not be accustomed to being asked that question. Eventually he/she will come back with a request.

Second, you should do what he/she asked you to do. Then meet again and talk about what the two of you have done to improve both of your jobs. Third, you ask if he/she would be willing to attend a meeting that you have scheduled with the person whose work product (output) is the input for your job. The purpose of the meeting is for you to discuss what you would like him/her to do so that you can improve your job (get it done faster or better). This is where your

colleague whose job you have improved will be able to help plead your case for your other colleague to change the way he/she does the job.

Conclusion

This process may sound idealistic or too simplistic but I have evidence that it works. I have heard from many students over the past three years that it does indeed work.

I will describe in a generic sense how it should work and then I will give a specific example of how it has worked for a recent graduate.

In a generic sense, what happens is that you and your colleagues end up making all of your job processes more efficient and effective. The beauty of this process is that you, as a new employee will get noticed in a positive way by your boss and your colleagues (both input and output colleagues) and your colleagues will also get noticed in a positive way by their bosses. I have interviewed more than 20 former students who have implemented the define-refine-redesign process at work with positive results.

In one instance, a former student reported push back from his manager because he felt he was being blindsided by the change and did not know people were changing the way things were done at work. In response to this problem, I have added a step to the define-refine-redesign process. As part of the define stage, when you are learning what is involved in doing the job, you should find out how your boss deals with change. That is, do you have to ask for permission to investigate new ways of doing your job or does your boss expect you to try new ways on your own?

My most recent success story involves a former student who works as an operations manager for an electronic manufacturer. His job is to manage the pilot production process for new product production. His company follows a three-stage production process. There is a research run, followed by a pilot production process and then a full stage production process. He worked with his counterparts in the research process and full scale production process areas to redesign four features of the three step process. The changes that were implemented led to a significant improvement in the total cycle time of going from research to pilot to full scale production. My former student was asked by his boss's boss to share his process with plant managers the company's 15 other production facilities.

It is quite possible to have an impact as a new hire. You just need to find collaborators who have a vested interest in your efforts and can appreciate that if you succeed, they succeed as well.

References available upon request