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Baby Boomers Are The Most Highly Engaged Employees

Wrightsville, PA. Researchers at Holleran, a national engagement research and consulting firm, have discovered that Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, are the most highly engaged workers. Over half of all Baby Boomers in the Holleran National Benchmark are highly engaged at work--53%. In contrast, 47% of Generation X workers (born between 1965 - 1976) are highly engaged. The age group known as the Millennials (born between 1977 - 1993) have 41% in the highly engaged category.

Why the 12% spread between the Boomers and the Millennials in terms of their engagement levels in senior living? "There are many reasons," states Dr. Michele Holleran, CEO of Holleran. "We know that for one thing, supervisors are also more likely to be highly engaged, and Baby Boomers represent a larger proportion of the supervisor population than the Millennials. I would say this is likely the most significant reason for the gap. I would expect as this generation steps into more significant leadership roles at work, we will see their engagement levels go up."

Dr. Holleran is not convinced that the popular notion of Millennials being "less driven" than their Baby Boomer counterparts is true in senior living. "It would seem that this younger group of employees is driven by different things--from what we are hearing, they want purpose, connection and flexibility, as well as a good life/work balance. And I don't see that as a bad thing," states, Holleran, herself a Baby Boomer. "We Baby Boomers are driven more by achievement, income and the work itself--we are workaholics by nature. And, we have a high burnout rate because of it, which doesn't necessarily serve us well."

In contrast to corporate America, Millennials in senior living are much more engaged--41% compared to 29% (according to the latest Gallup statistics). Holleran believes the reason for the difference is two-fold: (1) Serving residents provides an immediate sense of "purpose" and (2) the mission-driven nature of senior living work. "We do a good job in our field of emphasizing the importance of mission--it drives most of our work, especially in the not-for-profit sector," according to Holleran. "Mission and connection to it is absolutely critical to engaging young employees."

Millennial workers--the youngest who are still in college--will grow to dominate the workplace. Millennial employees make up almost 40% of the U.S. workforce. This percentage could inflate to 75% by 2025. "This presents a unique opportunity for senior living if we are able to harness the passion of these younger workers. Our benchmark also reveals that people are significantly more engaged during their first year of work in senior living, and many of these first-year workers are younger generation employees. We must put a variety of strategies in place to keep them excited, motivated and passionate about their jobs so we keep them longer term. While many Millennials do job hop, 42% according to a recent Jobvite survey; many others do not. We need to tap into those who want a long-term career in our senior living organizations."



One way to do this is through career laddering. Another--hire the right people for the job through behavioral interviewing and other proven best practices. Holleran also believes that mentoring, coaching and supervisor training can help keep Millennials committed longer term to the organization. "The supervisor is key," affirms Holleran, citing that more than 60% of an employee's engagement is a result of a trusting and strong relationship with the worker's supervisor. "Many of our supervisors have not learned the softer side of leadership--the relationship built between supervisor and direct report is absolutely critical to keeping these younger workers."

With workforce stability listed as a top concern by LeadingAge and other national organizations, attracting and keeping Millennials is an important recruitment and retention strategy for all senior living organizations around the country. "We are already facing an employment crisis," states Holleran. "We need to leverage the great advantages that working in a senior living community affords young people."

Holleran is the premier provider of employee and resident engagement and satisfaction research and benchmarks, serving more than 1,000 not-for-profit senior living provider organizations nationally.

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