

YOU KNOW WHAT COMES WITH EXPERIENCE?

...READING GLASSES

Achieving longevity in a chosen career and gaining valuable experiences along the way makes an employee a potentially valuable asset to a company. You know what else comes with longevity and experience for many of us? Reading glasses. Don't avoid it if you need them. Being able to clearly see the changes in your workforce is going to be important to an employee's (continued) success.

EXPERIENCE HAS ITS OWN CHALLENGES

My career path has provided me with wonderful opportunities to learn and grow in my field which has led me to experience some great professional success. To be honest (most importantly with myself), my experience has also included a few significant failures as well.

Cumulatively, however, these experiences have made me a stronger human resources professional. As I complete the 25th year of my career, I am thinking about the most significant changes in me and the challenges that I face in the future.



In the past year, the most significant change and challenge for me personally has been that I now need to wear reading glasses to perform my job. If I forget those glasses, I find that reading most documents is basically impossible. Human resources professionals are inundated with policies, procedures, job descriptions, payroll data and other written material crossing our desks and computers each day. To be successful, an HR professional better be able to clearly see what's in front of them. Missing a zero or two on a couple of employee paychecks is not going to win any fans of the human resources department!

DON'T LET YOUR EXPERIENCE GET IN THE WAY

This personal reflection started me thinking about a recent meeting with an experienced (yes, older) manager who is struggling because newer (yes, younger) employees do not appear to be following his direction. He was upset because these employees are questioning why tasks are performed in certain ways and making suggestions about how to improve the work flow. During this meeting, my biggest concern was that he simply concluded that these employees: (1) don't have the same strong work ethic as past employees and (2) in his day, employees just did what the boss told them to do.

EXPERIENCE SHOULDN'T PREVENT PROGRESS

My response to him was simple: (1) overall employee work ethics today are no more or less strong than in the past but he should recognize that employees entering the workplace today are different; and (2) that is not a bad thing because these differences represent an opportunity for him to build a great team of engaged and motivated employees who want to make an impact on the company's success.

Ultimately, for him, this represents change from 50 years of doing business a certain way. For the employees, it represents progress. New employees have been trained to ask questions, participate in team environments, share the workload and, maybe most importantly, engage in problem-solving as a group. As a manager, he should recognize these traits and skills to the company's advantage.

USE YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE BUT LISTEN TO YOUR EMPLOYEES

My suggested solution? Engage with the new employees, share your experience as to why certain procedures need to be followed but also listen to them. Use their natural skills and let them find better, more efficient methods to complete the work. Ultimately, this will lead to a stronger team and a bright future for the company.