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Our article for this season:

YOUNG MANAGERS – WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Haven't we wondered what it is that will keep the young managers in their position? What do they want and how do we attract them? The "ME" generation particularly is one that seems to be elusive and challenging to retain. Employers have been pushed to resort to increasing their salaries to where it has become quite absurd and incompatible to the experience of the recruit. And yet they continue to post a challenge to employers.

A recent survey conducted by the Chartered Management Institute in the UK throw some light on what young managers look for. Will the findings parallel our experience in HK or Asia? Let us see. (The comments made here are all from my own perspective.)

It is interesting to note that out of the 11 reasons why the young managers join an organization, the top 3 things the young managers look for when deciding on an organization are all related to non-monetary returns. The 3 key motivators are linked to the word 'opportunities' – opportunities to learn and develop and then opportunities for promotion. They understand that with opportunities come the challenge and they look for the challenge – and the opportunities to be challenged. That is an interesting revelation and quite contrary to the way we have sometimes perceived the young. Educators and parents lament the fact that the young these days steer clear of challenges and that they want an easy life. Does that mean that the young in Asia are more challenge averse?? Or is it that it has not been made clear to them that challenges can be tools or opportunities for development? Challenges are not ends in themselves but rather means to an end.

The young have frequently been told that opportunities are out there – look for them or create them and we point to the successful young entrepreneurs or high achievers and wish they work for us. How many of them are there? To create opportunities and take advantage of them require support and resources.

According to this finding, salaries and perks come up as number 7 in the list of 11. (No comments on that)

Another item in the survey is job benefits – and I find this a revelation – majority of the survey participants indicated pension scheme and private health care as job benefits they most desire in the organization. It is quite contrary to my perception of the young professional's outlook on life. Could this be because these participants are from the UK? Would young Asian managers share similar preference?

Whilst they are in the organization, what is it that makes them happy and want to stay? What management style would they prefer to work with?

Empowering is the most preferred management style (not surprising when it is related to what they look for when joining an organization). The next preferred style is innovative management. Both these two styles allow the young managers the opportunities and challenges that they

crave. On the other side the findings reveal that most existing management style is bureaucratic and authoritarian.

Whilst still with the organization, how would these young managers perceive their career progress? Do they see their career within the organization or do they see it outside? To the question where they see their career progress in the next 5 years, majority of them see themselves remaining in the company for under 5 years. 5 years seem to be the longest we will see them remain in the same organization and the trend is for that term to get shorter and shorter.

Well, how do you see the findings reflected in Asia and Hong Kong in particular? Do we see any parallel there? In a globalised work environment, what happens in one region will eventually flow to others – and young professionals share similar values. The lesson here is – how can we use the information to help us develop our hiring, retention and development strategies.

(The comments and views belong to this writer alone and is not reflected in the survey.)

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