

**Work Ethic is Relative**  
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Are you frustrated by the differences in work ethic among your younger and older workers? Veteran workers in general seem to be intrinsically motivated to work hard. They often show up early, stay until the work is done, and need little supervision. A lot of this has to do with experience, but the motivation to work appears to come from within.

People in their late teens and twenties generally seem to have no sense of loyalty to the job, or as some would call it, a lack of work ethic. If there is something more interesting to do, they casually call in sick. When one challenges their sense of responsibility, they say things like, "My girlfriend's car broke down and she needed a ride to the mall, so I took the day off." Working a job is something they do to fill their down time.

So how does a sandwich manager instill a sense of responsibility and hard work in their young employees? **There is no simple answer.** Over the past 50 years we have been blessed with a workforce full of people who came of age at a time when hard work was the only kind of work. With the age of technology upon us, youngsters see the world focusing on convenience at every whim. They think, "If my parents can benefit from this, why not me?"

**Begin by taking a look at your hiring practices.** Don't assume that new workers possess the same loyalty as your long-timers. Test them. Observe them in action. Hold them to a higher standard than "upright, warm, and breathing." **Recognize that young people are no longer simply thankful to have the job.** They have no expectation that they will remain more than a couple of years anyway. You have to educate them about the vital role they play within your organization and what's in it for them. Otherwise, it simply becomes another throwaway job.

**Finally, you must stay in touch with those you hire.** Employee motivation is far different from what it was even ten years ago. Younger workers need constant feedback and reassurance. In much the same way your veteran employees derive satisfaction knowing that they put in a good day's work, younger workers generally respond to praises and public recognition for a job well done. Remember that people used to go to work for organizations, but leave managers. Now they work for managers, and leave organizations.

**The bottom line is this:** When you can identify your employees' sources of motivation -- external or internal -- and use those to reward productive behavior, you'll hardly notice any differences in work ethic between your older and younger charges.

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