

Employers turning backs on younger workers as 'snowflake' generations struggle to build careers

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Nearly twice as many British business owners would choose to recruit an older worker than a younger candidate with exactly the same skills and experience, according to new research.

More than a third of 1,000 SME business owners (36%) said that they would sooner recruit a 55-year-old, with just a fifth preferring a 24-year-old with the same CV (20%). Issues raised by business leaders about so-called 'snowflake' and 'Millennial' employees included 'lower productivity', 'higher absence rates' and 'a poorer grasp of the English language', according to data gathered by the UK's most trusted business healthcare provider, Benenden Health.

The study, which also surveyed 1,000 employees, found that more than half (56%) of Generation Z employees (aged 16-23) felt they have been overlooked for roles due to their age compared to 47% of Millennials (aged 24-38), 29% of Generation X (aged 39-54) and a third (34%) of Baby Boomers (aged 55-72).

However, when it comes to attracting and retaining a workforce, the findings have shown a major discrepancy between what employers and employees see as a priority.

Health and wellbeing packages are starting to command increasing importance for employees, with half of all respondents (50%) saying a strong health and wellbeing benefit would increase their likelihood to join or stay with a business. Generation Z employees (aged 16-23) revealed they would be willing to sacrifice a whopping third of their salary to receive a healthcare package that fits their personal needs.

Yet, despite this, as many as 85% of SMEs reported that they don't have a healthcare package in place for employees above statutory allowances, with 44% of those without one claiming they don't believe it is necessary and as many as 36% saying they don't believe a strong health and wellbeing package is valuable in recruiting and retaining employees.

In addition, more than half of businesses (53%) revealed that they have never consulted workers on what they would value in a healthcare package, despite employees having different priorities depending on their age. Younger workers revealed that they place value on mental health support, counselling sessions and life skill lessons, whereas older generations said regular medical checks and flexible working were top of their list of potential healthcare benefits.

Helen Smith, Chief Commercial Officer of Benenden Health, commented: "Our research has highlighted some interesting differences between the attitudes of employers and employees when it comes to identifying what makes a business attractive. Healthcare is becoming increasingly valued by workers - often more so than other benefits and even salary - indicating that businesses should move away from a one-size-fits-all healthcare offering and think about tailoring a plan to meet the varied needs of a modern workforce.

"Younger generations told us that mental health support is of great importance to them, but these

priorities change over time. Generation X workers often have the dual commitment of looking after children and parents so flexible working is valued by them, and with employees working longer than ever, ensuring your older workers are catered for as well – through regular eyesight and hearing tests, and ergonomic offices, for example – is vital to maintaining a strong modern workforce.

“At Benenden Health we firmly believe that a healthy workforce is a productive and motivated workforce and having these open conversations with employees and tailoring a healthcare approach to suit will put businesses in prime position for recruiting, retaining and maximising talent.”

Benenden Health is a not-for-profit society with a UK-wide membership of over 815,000, founded in 1905 to bring people together to help pay for medical care when they might need it. Today, it has a mission to support businesses by providing affordable healthcare that helps keep employees healthy and valued and businesses thriving.

To download Benenden Health’s guide to managing the needs of a multigenerational workforce, go to:
<https://www.benenden.co.uk/health-through-your-life>

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For enquiries please contact Ben Rowe or Megan Anderson at Definition (Ben.rowe@definitionagency.com / Megan.anderson@definitionagency.com) 0113 341 6612

Note to Editors

regional data available on request

Research was carried out by Censuswide, the independent survey consultants, in September 2019. It questioned a total of 1000 SME business owners (1-249 company size) including sole traders, and 1,000 employees.

Benenden Health is a not-for-profit organisation, founded in 1905 with the purpose of people joining together to help pay for medical care. It is one of the UK’s longest serving and most respected mutual healthcare societies, offering an affordable alternative to health insurance to more than 815,000 members.

Many UK businesses have also chosen to offer Benenden Health membership as part of their employee benefits package, with the organisation named as the UK’s most trusted provider of corporate healthcare by Moneywise in 2019.