



Maureen McKenna

Maureen McKenna is an energy catalyst. She is a dynamic facilitator, thinking partner, mentor and coach. She engages her clients through inquiry, play and imagination. She is a TAOS associate & Certified Management Consultant and lives in Toronto.
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Diane Pascoe

Diane Pascoe is an HR Consultant in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA, having spent the majority of her career in human resources leadership positions. She believes that if appreciation, gratitude and concern for people are reflected in workplace conversations and HR processes, employees would really feel the "human" in human resources.
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Mentorship is Ageless

It is About Gratitude, Reciprocity and Appreciation

Millennials will soon surpass baby boomers as the largest generation alive in North America. Imagine if we came together to mentor each other, bringing out the very best in each other! Discover how boomers can leave a legacy and how millennials can teach boomers about a future brimming with new possibilities from technology. Together we can create a more thoughtful and energizing work climate.

Third try lucky. That was how millennial Zach felt when he finally discovered an organization where the working climate was one in which he could flourish as a member of a positive, productive team – a team where members supported each other, coached each other and laughed with each other. He would work long hours in his new position, alongside other people who cared about each other's job satisfaction and success. Feedback was direct and constructive, meant to develop not destroy.

In job number two, Zach had had a Neanderthal-though-30ish manager who drove competition, not collaboration, and who declared that friendly relationships with customers were for "pansies". When Zach was late for work due to a snowstorm, he had been ridiculed and mocked in front of the team. How could anyone thrive in such toxic work climate?

Mentored, not scolded

The key to maximizing the potential of young people is to understand what they value and what "turns their crank". Like most millennials, Zach wants an environment in which he doesn't have to check his brain at the door at the start of each day and just follow orders. He wants to feel respected, engaged and to be heard. And like his millennial peers, he wants to be mentored, not scolded. He craves coaching, not just criticism. And work flexibility gives him the ability to weave his work life and personal life together seamlessly. Everyone wins.

But millennials are far more than great employees. They also have a passion for creating something from nothing and carving out new pathways. Young entrepreneurs Alex Kolodkin and his business partner Lidia Bit-Yunan, believe



Jane Magruder Watkins and Alex Kolodkin, Maureen McKenna's mentors from both spectrums of the age bracket. Photo taken at AI StoryThon, Washington, DC 2010.

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that creating high quality connections is a basic principle for their business. Their company, Set Scouter, is an online marketplace connecting filmmakers and producers with homeowners looking to rent their spaces as film sets.

Building a company is more than just generating profits. It is about creating an environment where they, as founders, and their employees can learn new skills, grow as individuals, and flourish in a community. Launched in 2013, it was integral from the beginning that company culture and establishing a set of values were priorities – although defining those values continues to be a challenge. Their goal is to create a sense of belonging that makes employees feel as though they are part of a family. Being treated respectfully, caringly and professionally are essential. As a “family”, they work hard, play hard, and undoubtedly go the extra mile for each other and their customers.

Alex and Lidia constantly look for ways to light up their clients, their staff, their colleagues and each other. Every day holds an opportunity to create positive and renewable energy in their interactions and their performance. However, to fall short of hitting key milestones precariously weakens what the business needs to be successful.

How do you fire a family member?

Recently, Lidia and Alex had an employee relations problem that needed to be addressed in a way consistent with their core company values. As first time founders, they struggled with the how to navigate firing an employee without being cold, distant and hurtful. How do you fire a family member? Enter Diane, a retired HR director, who advised Alex and Lidia over Skype. The situation became clearer with Diane's help. This employee didn't have the skills needed for their stage of business, but was both a good employee and person. This person needed to be let go, but not using a “legally right” or “HR right” approach. It needed to be genuine, reflect their core values and be “right”.

It is similar to current dating practices, where young couples break up but remain good friends. Years ago, a breakup meant the relationship was toast – over was over. But in the age of social media and the internet, reputations are ruined in an instant, so most people feel the need to be more civilized, gracious and forgiving.

Empowered to move on

After the initial conversation that broke the news, Lidia followed up with a personal conversation over coffee to make sure that the employee had all her questions answered and was left empowered to move onto her next job. And best of all, this former employee is still visiting the group and Lidia is writing a recommendation letter!

Alex and Lidia knew all along what the best way was to handle the employee's departure: showing appreciation and gratitude in the most difficult of circumstances. Diane learned an important lesson: that HR and legal concerns should be trumped

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by solutions focused on the total needs of the separating employee, which allows everyone involved to move on feeling they did their best for each other.

Like Alex and Lidia, many young people in their early 20s have a strong moral compass and want to create, if they are entrepreneurs, or if they are looking for jobs, be part of, organizations that value gratitude, creativity, respect and appreciation. This new vision of work in the 21st century is aligned with Appreciative Inquiry, Positive Psychology and other strength-focused approaches, which inherently make these organizations more likeable, energizing and ultimately engaging to workers of all ages.

Vitality, intelligence, experience

We, the authors, both came into the workplace in the mid-1970s, and had the good fortune to be part of the first generation of women to break through the glass ceiling, and to be retiring with a professional identity of more than 30 years. As we move into our "third act" in life, we have the vitality, the intelligence, the experience, the power to help make the world a better place ... partnering with this next generation will be a win/win for us all.

So take a moment to go out and have a coffee with someone from a different generation and discover the passion and value of being a mentor and being mentored. We can all learn a lot from each other and have a lot of fun doing so.