Designing A Multi-generational Workforce Culture

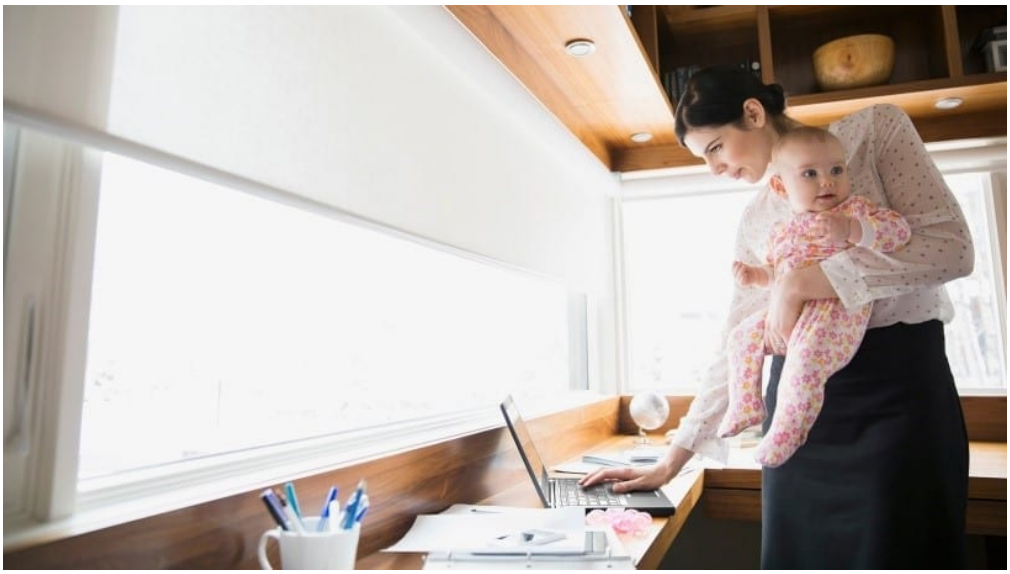
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By Gao Lan, SVP, Human Resources

I remember in my early career at Lenovo the first time I had to present to our CEO. At the time, my daughter was sick, and I didn't know what to do. Finally I asked if I could present remotely, which wasn't common then, and could be a career killing question. Long story short – my remote presentation request was accepted and it went well. My daughter recovered. This experience told me Lenovo was progressive and valued outcome more than physical presence. That is the way we've approached managing our global teams in a way that puts diversity and inclusion at the core of everything we do.

How the world of work has changed today. The workforce looks, behaves and wants very different things than when I started my career. I've experienced firsthand how our Millennial employees, 56% of our workforce, and soon Zillennials who will be entering the workforce, share the same mentalities about work across countries and borders – in fact, with globalization, they have more in common with each other than with others outside their age group yet who share the same location. We now have for the first time, four generations of employees with greater diversity than ever before all together in the workforce, and each has their own set of needs to be most productive and engaged. Companies that respond well to this changing world of work will be better off in competing for global talent.

Here are three trends that we're seeing around the world that are causing us to rethink how we engage with employees.



- **Work-Life Integration** – We've spent a lot of time focused on helping employees balance work and their home life, but today, thanks to technology, the lines are even

more blurred. Previously, we helped employees set boundaries for balancing their time working – whether it's not scheduling meetings during certain times or making sure they took time away from work for vacation. Now, we're more focused on helping them personalize how they get work done – whether it's our global policy that allows for working from home, providing flexible working time , giving more options for customized benefits or giving them the technology they need. For employees in the office, the work spaces look different than in years past. Some of our buildings have more open, agile environments without assigned seating, and many offer gyms, cafeterias and even wellness centers. In fact, our Research and Development Building in Beijing houses one of our pilot projects – an unmanned store – that's pioneering the future of shopping. Read more about it and the technology it uses here. At the same time, we're supporting our diverse workforce with Employee Resource Groups that help give a sense of belonging, erasing the boundary between being yourself at home and at work.



Lenovo employees during 2018 Make A Difference Week in Buenos Aires renovating a school and its technology room.

- **Values-Based Fit** – More so than previous generations, our Millennial employees as a whole value culture fit foremost. As part of an older generation, I never considered leaving a job without having another lined up, but many entering the workforce today will leave a job if the culture doesn't fit with their values. When we created our #WeAreLenovo culture, we initially focused on using it to unite our diverse workforce around the world and those who came into Lenovo from acquisitions. However, over

time, we've seen this culture piece become even more important in recruiting and retaining talent. Living our brand vales, and giving employees opportunities through the Lenovo Foundation to give back to the communities we serve and to be brand ambassadors in fun, unique and unexpected ways, like featuring them in our advertising in our Extreme I.T. videos, sets us apart – we want talent to choose to come work here and feel like they belong.

- **On-Demand Learning** – With the dynamic pace of technology development and new competition coming from all corners of the globe, we must stay ahead of the curve, and that means continually realigning and retraining our workforce. This entrepreneurial mentality has led to a culture of on-demand learning where we continually identify and build the competencies needed to make us more agile and responsive to customers. We offer an online learning portal so employees can take more than 3,000 elearning and video-based courses in a variety of languages. Our rotational programs to groom future leaders across the business are one way we're doing this. Our Global Future Leaders Program identifies top talent out of universities and fast tracks their development to get them to leadership roles faster. We also have various leadership development programs at the manager and director level to build our future executive talent with a bench of global women and traditionally underrepresented groups in the US, like US Black, Hispanic, Asians, Individuals with Disabilities, LGBT and Veterans.

By applying the same customer-centric mindset to our internal customers, our employees, we're making Work-Life Integration the new norm.