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Next generation of employees want to be heard, recognized

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The workplace is changing — and so is the worker. The next generation of employees has new expectations and a new work ethic. Companies that want to attract and retain that next generation need to become employers of choice.

"Young people want more than a job. They want to be challenged, they want to be respected, and they want to grow. They also want to have fun," says Stephen Dempsey, president and CEO of the Greater Halifax Partnership.

"A company needs to have a clear and consistent vision, and everyone needs to understand that vision," says Kam Nichols, vice president, People Development and Branch Operations at Maritime Travel. "At the end of the day, everyone needs to know why their job is important."

Maritime Travel, which has more than 300 employees in 81 branches across the country, hosts an annual company-wide weekend to update employees on the direction of the company, enable them to reconnect with one another, and applaud their efforts over the past year.

"People get a sense of where the company is going and that there is a plan in place. They also get to feel valued," says Nichols.

Feeling valued is critical to keeping employees.

Kyla Giffen works with NovaScotian Crystal. In most companies, her job title would be sales associate. But the company, she says, sees her role as far more important than that. At NovaScotian Crystal, Giffen and her colleagues are Educators, a reflection of the pivotal role they play with customers.

Kieran Bowes, a crystal cutter, actually took a pay cut when he emigrated from Ireland to join the team at NovaScotian Crystal. He wanted to practice his craft, and Canada's only hands-on glassworks company gave him the opportunity.

Once he arrived, Bowes discovered the company also gave him a great place to work.

"There are regular meetings, for ex-



Karn Nichols, vice president of People Development and Branch Operation with Maritime Travel, at the Park Lane location in Halifax.



Kyla Giffen is an educator with NovaScotian Crystal. In the background, Andrea Duggan explains the process and patterns to cruise ship passengers.

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Bernadette Purcell

IWK Health Centre's director of Human Resources

ample, where all the staff come together and chat with the president. We get to hear about progress, and we get to ask questions. And we're listened to," says Bowes.

The next generation wants to be heard, and they want to be recognized for their contribution.

"Recognition is an important part of retaining employees and keeping them motivated and inspired," says Bernadette Purcell, director of Human Resources with the IWK Health Centre.

Atlantic Canada's foremost health care facility for children, women and families is currently developing a strategic plan for a healthy workplace. That goes well beyond wellness initiatives and lunch 'n' learn sessions, says Purcell.

"It's about healthy relationships,

learning and developing opportunities, and collaborative working," Purcell says.

Among the related initiatives that will be explored at the IWK to attract and retain employees, especially the next generation of employees, are workable solutions for phased retirements to ensure that corporate history is shared with new graduates. Other initiatives include the establishment of mentoring programs within the Health Centre's succession planning.

"The healthiest organizations, and those where most people want to work, are ones that are planned from the bottom up and supported from the top down," says Purcell.

That planning and that support starts on day one. An orientation program, for instance, is an important means of in-



Bernadette Purcell, center, director of Human Resources at the IWK, is with new IWK nurses (left to right): Jennifer Frank, RN; Jillian Sarty, RN; Karla Rout, RN; and Anna Martin, RN.

roducing the employee to the company and letting them see the bigger picture. At Maritime Travel, as part of the orientation initiative, the CEO spends time talking with each new employee.

"The first impression is crucial. The first impression we want to leave is that Maritime Travel is a company that cares about its employees," says Nichols.

For Lorena Rodgers, who gave up a job offer while waiting to see if she would be hired on at NovaScotian Crystal, good employers are those who make employees feel good about themselves.

"I feel listened to at NovaScotian Crystal," she says. "I feel valued, and I feel equal. I like to get up each morning and come to work."

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