



# THE SECRET GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING & MANAGING MILLENNIALS IN THE WORKPLACE 2018

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**Still attempting to figure out how to vibe with your millennial coworker? This digestible read compiles the top trends you must know to understand millennial characteristics in the workplace.**

While every prospective employee is a unique individual, millennials share many traits that are affecting trends in the workplace today. The millennial generation is defined as those born between 1980 and the end of the last century. They are the largest generation and will be 50% of the population by 2020 and 75% of the population by 2025.

As past workplaces changed to accommodate Gen X or Baby Boomers, effective business owners, managers, and recruiters can attract, recruit, and retain today's top talent by learning what makes millennials tick. Successful workplaces will adapt, evolve, and incorporate the best of what millennials have to offer. At the conclusion of this guide, you will have a deeper understanding of how millennials think, feel, and engage in order to best recruit, retain, and manage this growing workforce.



# THE PARTICIPATION AWARD GENERATION

You may have heard that millennials were given awards for participation. Instead of seeing that as a negative, let's turn this into a positive. Here is what those awards would look like in today's workforce.



## ADAPTABILITY AWARD

Millennials are easily adaptable and enjoy flexibility. Why? They grew up in a world that required and nurtured these characteristics. Most had working mothers—some in single-parent homes. They experienced friends and family members lose jobs or even lose their nest egg due to the great recession. This taught millennials to value work/life balance over financial rewards—a lesson that many did not learn until later in their careers!

The concept of living one's life working for the same company until retirement is long gone...so Millennials may be on the lookout for new opportunities. Remember they also have a great deal of student debt —[34% of millennials have a Bachelor's degree with student loan debt averaging \\$41,200](#). Millennials have invested in their futures and need to pay off debt.

A downside for the employer is that when millennials are unhappy at work, they will likely share their grievances on social media (hello, [Glassdoor!](#)). An upside is that when they are happy, they are very loyal and will share that information as well.

## FEEDBACK LOOP AWARD

Millennials are used to feedback and honesty. Remember they grew up gaming and expect the constant feedback loop. A key to managing millennial characteristics in the workplace.

As their coworker or manager, you might be taken back by some of their openness at work, but you may grow to embrace their heartfelt desire for coaching. In fact, some businesses are replacing the [annual review](#) (which many find to be time-consuming paperwork) with more frequent updates and ongoing mentoring, a style more suited for the millennial. The good news is millennials are responsive to this coaching and will work harder in response to constructive feedback.

As the generation that was raised with awards, millennials often value appreciation higher than other forms of job satisfaction. In fact, for many, being valued at work is a more critical component of job satisfaction than salary (not to say they should not be underpaid).



## **BIG PICTURE AWARD**

There is a myth that millennials do not like to do busy work. This is a miss-characterization of their approach (and we'll be discussing more myths later in this download).

What millennials do not like is to do something just **“because that is the way we have always done it.”** An example of this characterization in action is in their approach to politics—where they trend liberal but are less likely to identify with the major parties; or religion where the majority say they have faith in God, but do not trust religious institutions. In the context of the workplace, millennials like to understand the ‘why and how’ in order to achieve the best end result. They will do the “grunt work” if they understand where it fits into the whole picture.

Questioning received truths can be valuable in the workplace if the employer does not feel challenged and is open to change. Perhaps everyone on the team can help contribute to a better way of doing things. This leads us to the final award which characterizes millennials.

## **TEAMWORK AWARD**

Millennials are the ultimate team players. They have been raised on teamwork. It ties into everything we have discussed in understanding millennial characteristics in the workplace: feedback, adaptability, and looking at the big picture. They really do play well with others and enjoy working in teams. Millennials were brought up in environments that fostered collaboration (we are back to the participation trophies!) and have grown with social media. They are used to sharing more and generally, feel less competitive.

How many times have you asked candidates if they are team players?  
**A millennial candidate will most likely have an honest answer of ‘yes’ to this question.**

# RECRUITING THE GENERATION WITH A PURPOSE

With a grasp of the “Millennial Awards system”, you are ready to integrate these co-workers into your workplace. Our next step: recruiting and welcoming new Millennial hires into your company.

Millennials tend to be career-focused in college (50% of recent college graduates say they know exactly what they want to do at work) and yet it now takes longer than ever for them to find jobs. Despite all the benefits of hiring millennials, the average job search for unemployed college graduates now takes 27 weeks versus 12 weeks in 1979.

In today’s candidate driven market, an employer needs to take appropriate steps to attract and secure the best Millennial talent.

## ADAPT HOW YOU HIRE MILLENNIAL TALENT

The days of simply offering competitive salaries and benefits packages are over. For example, Millennials are looking for growth potential and the opportunity to learn new skills. They are not only seeking salary and job titles.

Companies need to adapt by using recruiting practices that will appeal to the way Millennials job search. They seek jobs online, through job boards, and social media – but still use personal contacts and print media. What is a huge difference in the way Millennials job search is how much more likely they are to trust reviews and feedback from current employees on review sites, such as Glassdoor, than rely on the word of the recruiter or senior leadership.

Millennial candidates are also likely to be more candid with their recruiters about what they are looking for. This openness can be disarming for people who are used to guarded behavior in work (and interview) situations – but it can benefit you in your recruitment.

## RECRUIT MILLENNIALS USING “GREATER GOOD” PERKS

Millennials are seeking meaningful perks that affect their lives – they choose workplace satisfaction over compensation. 76% of Millennials in the workforce say that they would be more likely to accept a job that offered college loan repayment assistance. Some companies are more creative with their perks, like paying part of the premium for pet insurance or by offering on-site physical and mental wellness programs. Flexibility is another popular perk. One company even offers money towards staff weddings! [Are you offering any of these? Are there others that make sense for your company, keeping in mind the needs and concerns of Millennials?](#)

Remember Millennials want to make an impact in this world. Perhaps, consider offering paid volunteer days or charitable opportunities as a team. The team days benefit both the local community and your company.

While many of these perks will have appeal across the generations, one feature that is particularly suited to Millennials is the opportunity to work as a group: they will likely want to hear about [group trainings](#), team-building activities, and other group activities.







## EVOLVE YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE

Appealing to Millennials may mean some evolution in your corporate culture, which will likely benefit all employees. For example, Millennials want on-the-job training and the opportunity to gain more skills. They are happy to wear many hats and take on “other tasks as assigned,” if they feel that these will add to their skill-sets. When you recruit, it’s important to let them know that they will have opportunities to grow at your company.

## MILLENNIAL BRAND AMBASSADORS

To attract (and retain) top Millennial talent, it is critical to focus on branding for your employer brand just as you do for your company brand. [77% choose a company that provides a sense of purpose.](#)

Your current employees may be your best recruiting tool. When you are creating your dynamic media, consider using your staff’s actual photos instead of stock images or use them in your recruiting videos. This is a fun way to provide authentic testimonials about your workplace.

Empower your employees to be your first line of brand ambassadors. Millennials share their experiences online, so create a corporate environment where they will express their positive experiences with other job hunters on social media or Glassdoor.

Finally, ask your Millennial employees what attracted them to your company and why they like working there. You will learn a lot from them about how to attract others. They will likely share something about changes they would like to see – and that may make this exercise frightening. It is possible that everyone in your company will benefit from this corporate culture evolution. Your current staff will enjoy the opportunity to share their feelings openly and honestly, thus cultivating an environment where everyone thrives. And who knows – maybe you will finally get those nap pods, on-site massages, and even climbing walls.

# A GENERATION OF FALSE ACCUSATIONS

You may have heard that Millennials—who now are 53 million individuals in the work force — are a difficult breed, have demanding expectations, and are hard to manage and retain.

Given the number of Millennials that you are likely to employ, you want to avoid turnover, since it can cost upwards of \$15,000 to \$20,000 to replace a millennial employee.

But are Millennials really all that bad?

While there is no magic formula to recruiting, managing, and retaining Millennials, you've done the hard work to begin changing your recruitment strategy to attract top Millennial talent. You are on your way to better retention! However, it helps to address the reality of working with this generation by looking at three widespread myths that we are sure you have heard.



### **MYTH 1: Millennials feel entitled at work, need coddling, and have always won awards just for showing up.**

While there may be some elements of truth to this myth, the reality is that Millennials thrive in a work environment that has strong, confident leadership and structure. It is incumbent on senior leaders to evaluate their own internal culture and to transform it into a workplace that perhaps does not coddle employees but makes them feel appreciated by rewarding their real accomplishments. It can be as simple as taking a few minutes to explain why they are being asked to do a certain task and how their work fits into the big picture. A few moments of your time will certainly cost you less than the \$15,000 to recruit and hire a new employee.

The days of “do as I say” are over. Millennials want to understand the reasoning behind their tasks. This new approach—if indeed it is new for you—is likely to be appreciated by all employees, at any age.

### **MYTH 2: Millennials are tech savvy and want to play with the latest gadgets.**

Millennials were raised with the computer and Internet. Instead of viewing their interest as a childlike need for toys, it is worth listening to them about more efficient applications. They are likely to have great ideas, even if you have to sometimes tame down their enthusiasm because you cannot always invest in the latest and the newest. It does pay to listen to your millennial employees about how to use the technology you have.

Consider reverse mentoring. A Millennial employee may have a digital or social media skill set that can be taught to senior leaders in the organization. Now the Millennial employees can demonstrate added value to the company. Make it a habit to micro-mentor, not micro-manage.

### **MYTH 3: Millennials are not looking for job stability. They are job hoppers and part of the “gig economy.”**

There is some truth to this myth since the average tenure for Millennials at a job is 1.7 years—but note that this is actually slightly higher than Gen Xers. This job hopping does not mean that Millennials do not appreciate stability or long-term opportunities. Much of their moving from job to job is a reaction to the environment at work. They are eager to grow, and you can take steps to offer them an [engaging employee environment](#) that will make them want to stay.

Millennials love teamwork. They have been raised to be good team players. Provide opportunities for them to work with others on projects. They also like to make friends at work and seek out social opportunities. It is not only the teamwork, but they look for after-work activities such as sports teams and happy hours. Offering an office culture that includes these features will be attractive to Millennials. Work/life balance is also of interest. Millennials are willing to work hard if they know that there will be opportunities for play and family.

Lastly, Millennials want opportunities for advancement—perhaps, at a somewhat accelerated pace than what you as an employer may be used to. Can you find ways to mentor, create new job titles, and gradually increase responsibility? If so, you are likely to retain your best Millennial.

**Millennials have gotten a bad reputation over the past couple years (see myths above), but really all employees these days yearn for the advancement, benefits, and perks first sought by Millennials. Visionary companies succeed because they enhance the employee experience for everyone.**

# EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE FOR ALL GENERATIONS

Sir Richard Branson, the management visionary, has said “My philosophy has always been, if you can put staff first, your customers second, and shareholders third, effectively, in the end, the shareholders do well, the customers do better, and your staff remains happy.” Branson has succeeded with this approach – and many other companies have realized the importance of this approach in today’s war for talent.

Enter employee experience or EX.

## WHY DOES EX MAKE SENSE FOR YOU?

For years, management gurus have emphasized the need to focus on the customer experience. But contemporary studies show that focusing on the [employee experience](#) actually benefits everyone – and brings in great results for the company.

Jacob Morgan, author of *The Employee Experience Advantage*, found that companies that invested in EX, had the following results. These companies were:



as often in Glassdoor's Best Places to Work



as often in LinkedIn's list of North America's Most In-Demand Employers



more often among Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies



as often on the Forbes list of the World's Most Innovative Companies

Perhaps the biggest surprise is that companies that focus on the employee experience were found twice as often in the [American Customer Satisfaction Index](#)!

A recent study found that companies that focus on the employee experience have four times higher average profits and two times higher average revenues. Also, hiring managers will be happy to note that they have 40% less turnover than other companies. In sum, focusing on EX is good for business, good for customer satisfaction, and good for your bottom line.

## SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUR EMPLOYEES

The first step in implementing the employee experience is for senior leaders to start seeing the workplace through the lens of the employees. Just as you would look at your customer brand through forums and surveys, the same approach would be just as appropriate for your employees. EX emphasizes open communications and explanation on where the employee fits into the big picture, leading to employee satisfaction. The key to success for a holistic EX is having all levels of management embracing this approach, rather than letting it all fall solely on HR.

## EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION

Why do some people hate their jobs and some people love their jobs? This is a matter of their perception – which is at the root of EX. To boost this perception, organizations must ensure that every touchpoint along the employees' journey is part of this holistic experience. EX should be prioritized right along with the customer experience. The same type of strategic planning and mitigation of pain points that goes into the customer experience are applied when developing the employee experience.

## ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

EX requires a paradigm shift where employee satisfaction is not relegated to only HR. So much so, there may be a need for a head of EX to insure implementation throughout the whole company. CEOs can be thought of as Chief Experience Officers in this model.

As we have seen, EX creates an environment where everyone can thrive – through support and openness as well as ensuring employees understand their roles in the company and how it contributes to the big picture. This management model has proved itself to be successful in today's workplace. It is interesting to note that many of the unique features of EX were not designed exclusively for Millennials and appear to contribute to overall employee satisfaction and retention among all ages – while many of its features address issues that we have seen are important to recruiting, retaining, and managing Millennials.



## IN CONCLUSION...

Millennials have significantly changed the workplace in a way that benefits everyone – if the employer is open to the change. Visionary companies focus on the employee experience, teamwork, and feedback, and find everyone benefits. What you have learned about Millennials will actually be a boon to your company in its next phase of growth as it meets new challenges.

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