

Managing Millennials

15 tips for managing the new workforce

By Preston Ingalls



Just as previous generations have contributed much to society, the current generations have and will, too. In fact, millennials will overtake the baby boomers as the largest portion of the workforce this year. But, millennials are different from the preceding generations. In a 2013 Ernst & Young survey, 75 percent of managers said that managing multi-generational teams is a challenge; 77 percent said that different work expectations among generations is a leading challenge they

face.

Millennials have come of age during a time of major technological change, globalization and economic unrest. All of this has given them different perspectives, experiences and values from their parents. They have been slower to marry and move out on their own, and have shown different attitudes towards ownership of homes and automobiles. For baby boomers and Generation X, managing millennials can appear different

and challenging.

Jeanne C. Meister, a founding partner of Future Workplace and the co-author of *"The 2020 Workplace,"* stated, "It's important to be aware of generational tension—loosely defined as a lack of respect for someone who's of a different generation from you—among colleagues. It's your job to help your employees recognize that they each have distinct sets of skills and different things they bring to the table."

The following 15 recommendations will help you take steps to understanding the expectations of and working cooperatively with millennials.

1. Set up mentorships.

Millennials have mastered the use of the Internet and social media, and can share that knowledge with older employees in exchange for knowledge on processes, techniques and

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nuances paramount to succeeding in an organization. This exchange of knowledge and skill via one-on-one coaching can be mutually beneficial.

2. Target communications to the generation.

Every generation has its own favored method of communications. Baby boomers generally prefer a face-to-face meeting, while a Generation X or millennial may prefer an email.

3. Focus incentives to the right audience.

Some may prefer monetary rewards, while others may prefer time off from work. This flexibility makes the incentive more personal and effective.

4. Recognition works.

Millennials were raised with constant praise and reinforcement. They are accustomed to words of reinforcement, more so than previous generations. A few words of praise may be more motivating to them than an older worker.

5. Use flexible benefits.

With a growing number of millennials entering the workforce, companies should re-evaluate their recruiting

methods and employee benefits packages. While salary is important, enticing top talent from today's generation might also require a comfortable workplace, flexible hours and the option to telecommute.

6. Challenge with multi-tasking.

Most millennials are good at performing several tasks at the same time. Millennials want a variety of tasks and the expectation that they will accomplish all of them. Giving them challenges creates a stimulating workplace, as long as they are not overwhelmed.

7. Clarify growth potential.

Millennials need to see where their career is heading, and they want to know exactly what they need to do to get there. Unlike baby boomers, who would accept that hard work and dedication would lead to advancement, millennials want more clarity and direction. Asking them to accept growth with good faith may not work as well as it does with older generations.

8. Provide structure.

Show that reports have specific due dates, rather than suggested monthly ones. Jobs have fairly regular, rather than suggested, hours of attendance. Meetings have agendas and minutes,

rather than free-flowing conversations. Goals need to be clearly detailed and progress assessed. Define assignments and success factors (observable evidence of accomplishment).

9. Get them involved in teams.

They are generally confident with their opinions and want to be engaged in improving the enterprise. They will eagerly seek new ways to apply their ideas. They will like the social interaction that teams provide, as well as the opportunity to share opinions.

10. Provide feedback and coaching.

Millennials have a "can do" attitude about work activities and tasks at work, and most search for feedback and coaching on their performance. They are self-confident and enjoy having their confidence reinforced or corrective critique provided.

11. Show use of technology.

Because they are comfortable with technology, it benefits the organization to integrate technology into their job. They will enjoy the challenge of the application. They embrace social media very closely. You may have to remind them that breaks and lunches

are permissible for those activities, but not normal work hours.

12. Provide leadership and direction.

Because of how they were raised, millennials often want to look up to their leader and learn as much as possible. This requires time and commitment to develop. They will expect one-on-one guidance. Take the time to explain the big picture. If they understand the logic of the approach, they are more likely to be able to troubleshoot it when it does not work. If you want to inspire them, then understand and respect the difference in expectations. Plan to invest considerable time training them.

13. Avoid boring, repetitive tasks.

Millennials will bore easily if they are assigned tedious tasks. Intermittently, alternate these tasks with more stimulating and challenging tasks.

14. They may not retire at your company.

Millennials are often described as overly self-absorbed. There is a trend with millennials toward personal branding. This self-awareness may cause many to not develop the degree of loyalty to the organization that previous generations have. According to a survey by Red Brick

Research, 52 percent of millennials viewed the concept of employee loyalty as being overrated. When asked about what they value in a job, the top three responses were exciting work, flexibility and control. If advancement opportunities do not come at a rate they feel is right or the work doesn't appear exciting and fun, they may look for greener pastures and move on.

15. They expect a balance of work and life.

Unlike many of their predecessors, they don't live to work, they work to live. They won't be inspired by 70-hour weeks, and will see that as an impingement on their personal freedoms. They will enjoy social interaction and company parties, lunches and events. They expect to spend time with family and friends and will be less committed to long work weeks. Understanding these differences will provide more successful oversight and retention.

Red Brick Research reported that, in general, millennials are more creative, entrepreneurial and open to change than older workers. View this as an opportunity, rather than an issue. Go forth and manage!

