

3 THINGS
EVERY
EMPLOYER
NEEDS TO
KNOW ABOUT
MILLENNIALS

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3 THINGS EVERY EMPLOYER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT MILLENNIALS

They're everywhere and they're a hot topic — they're the Millennials, also known as Generation Y, made up of those born between approximately 1982 and 2000.

Millennials are now the largest generation in the United States workforce, currently comprising 34 percent, and that number is growing rapidly. By 2025, a full 75 percent of the U.S. workforce will be millennials. Most importantly, this generation is quickly moving beyond entry-level roles and into leadership positions.

No matter what your business or industry, Millennials are your future, so it's essential to learn about who they are, how to work with them and how to make the most of their involvement in your organization.

Here are the three most important things every employer needs to know about Millennials to survive and thrive in the coming years.

01

MILLENNIALS SEE THEMSELVES AS INDIVIDUALS

Millennials were largely raised by Baby Boomers, and that's had a major effect on who they are and how their identities developed. Many Boomer parents raised their children to believe they were special and gave them opportunities to have unique experiences and points of view.

While this generation is known to the rest of us as millennials, keep in mind its members rarely call themselves that. They generally don't identify with or often even recognize the terms "Gen Y" or "Millennial." Instead, true to form, they want to be seen as individuals.

Millennial individuality started early. They didn't grow up with teddy bears lovingly selected by parents or grandparents. Instead, they created their own Build-A-Bears. They didn't receive a cassette or CD of their favorite music; they created playlists on iTunes and Spotify. Even universities have made it standard practice to offer millennials customizable majors and curricula.

The now-adult millennials look for customization in the workplace as well. Knowing this, your company needs to make jobs and career paths as customizable as possible to appeal to millennials.

Millennials want flexible hours, the chance to create their own job titles and the freedom to decorate or arrange a workspace the way they want. Millennial-friendly companies are also creating rotational programs where employees can move around and try different career paths to see where they fit best.

These offerings may sound radical and time-consuming, but if millennials don't feel their current employers appreciate their individuality, they will take their talent and potential elsewhere.

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02

MILLENNIALS REQUIRE RECOGNITION

Many millennials were carefully coached in organized sports and other activities, and they received trophies for participating — not necessarily for winning. Their parents, teachers and culture celebrated their creativity and potential, and planted in them a feeling the future was theirs for the taking.

As a result, millennials crave recognition, feedback and rewards. They're often criticized as "entitled." Because they have received feedback on almost everything they have done since birth, many of them expect that attention and guidance to continue once they enter the workforce. They thrive when they're coached — when they're told how they're doing, what's expected of them and what support they can expect as they do their jobs.

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The good news is millennials generally like and look up to their managers. They see them as mentors, not adversaries. They want to be guided, coached and trained; they want to improve. As a result, training and development programs are high priorities for millennials in the workplace — according to a PwC study, millennials say they want training and development more than cash bonuses.

Millennials also like to be recognized. To them, rewards are natural outcomes of good work, and smart employers establish recognition programs that incorporate the millennials' love of customization, including offering a choice of rewards they will find meaningful.

Millennials' desire for recognition can feel a lot more high-maintenance compared to what other generations need, such as Gen Xers, who tend to prefer to be left alone. Yes, providing regular feedback to Millennials requires more effort, but the payoff — employees who are engaged and feel good about their work — will be high as well.

03

MILLENNIALS CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT TECHNOLOGY

Millennials grew up with screens all around them — personal computers, cellphones, laptops and video games. They wrote their term papers on computers, apply for jobs through websites and make purchases on mobile devices. They are comfortable sharing personal and professional information through instant and text messages, and feel intimately connected with people through social media.

Combine this technological fluency with their wish to customize their jobs, and you'll find millennials have a fairly fuzzy line between their work and home lives. They won't mind answering a boss' email on a Saturday night, but they will also shop online or text their friends while they're at work. Millennials are also big foes of face time, preferring to complete their work wherever they happen to be — an airport, a park bench or a Starbucks.

Managers may find that some of their Millennial

employees lack eyeball-to-eyeball skills, such as networking at professional events or giving a live sales pitch to clients. This is often because they haven't prioritized in-person communication and make many of their connections through technology. Remember, though, millennials are eager to learn and pick up new skills, and if their managers tell them they need to work on their soft skills, they will. It may feel strange to provide training to young professionals on how to make a phone call, but if that skill is important to your business, it is something you'll need to do.

A strong emphasis on technology and social media will help make your company attractive to high-potential and high-performing millennials. Be sure to offer an easy-to-use recruiting website (don't forget to optimize it for mobile devices), a strong presence on the appropriate social networks for your industry, and the latest technology tools or a bring-your-own-device policy.

UNDERSTANDING MILLENNIALS ISN'T JUST ABOUT EMPLOYING THEM

It's about marketing to them, too. The qualities that set millennials apart in the workplace — their desire for customization, recognition and technology — define them as consumers as well. And as millennials move into leadership roles, they're going to be making business buying decisions, so it's important for both B2C and B2B companies to understand how to market to this generation of 80 million Americans. If you're trying to sell to millennials, keep these tips in mind:

Millennials like to see themselves in advertising. When one clothing brand started using customer photos instead of models, their sales jumped by 40 percent.

Millennials love to use reward programs. Whether it's through earning points, a loyalty program or a select buyers club, millennials are eager to have marketers recognize them as special, unique and appreciated.

Millennials use and value online reviews. They will share their opinions and check up on others' feedback. They are comfortable communicating with their favorite brands through social media -- and expect responses to both complaints and compliments.

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Lindsey Pollak is the leading voice on millennials in the workplace, trusted by global companies, universities, and the world's top media outlets — and, most importantly, by millennials themselves. A New York Times bestselling author, Lindsey began her career as a dorm RA in college and has been mentoring millennials — and explaining them to other generations — ever since. Her keynote speeches have audiences so engaged that, in the words of one attendee, “I didn’t check my phone once!” Contact Lindsey to discuss a speaking engagement for your organization.



“FEW PEOPLE OUT THERE KNOW MORE ABOUT [MILLENNIALS’] THOUGHTS, VALUES AND PRIORITIES THAN GEN Y EXPERT LINDSEY POLLAK.”
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