

Productive Leaders

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Leading to Attract and Retain Millennial Talent



The millennial generation reached a significant milestone in 2016 when it surpassed the baby boomers to become the [largest generation in today's labor force](#). Born between 1982 and 2000, some millennials have already been working for more than a decade. The last of this group will graduate from high school and enter the labor force over the next few years.

Millennials are coming to work with expectations unlike those of any preceding generation, and a few innovative companies are making changes to meet millennial employees' needs. Many businesses are realizing that attracting and retaining millennials requires a new approach.

Critical Characteristics of Millennial Workers

Millennials grew up in a world dramatically different from previous generations, and their experiences impact their expectations of work.

This generation is the first to have internet access from birth, earning them the title of “digital natives.” Millennials are comfortable with technology, and they are used to having instant access to information. In addition, the rise of social media makes it possible for them to develop relationships with complete strangers from around the world. Millennials, and others on social media, develop bonds, friendship, trust, and working relationships with people they have never met.

Most American millennials were raised with a parenting style that focused on personal empowerment; as such, are accustomed to being included in the decision-making process.

They tend to be [committed to social issues](#), and community service is a priority. Many studies show that millennials place a high value on balancing their work and their personal lives, but they are also willing to put in extra hours at night and on weekends. In return, they expect flexibility and considerations when family obligations require time away from work.

Organizations that make the [Forbes Best Places to Work for Millennials](#) list offer benefits that are tailored to millennials' needs.

- 76 percent offer flexible scheduling, compared to 63 percent of other companies.
- 82 percent offer telecommuting options, versus 74 percent of other companies.
- 46 percent offer paid volunteer days, versus 39 percent of other companies.

These companies focus on meeting millennials' need for work/life balance and community connections, [creating a workplace that attracts millennial talent](#).

Creating a Millennial-Friendly Work Environment

Company culture and management practices are under closer scrutiny by millennials, as they are slower to conform to hierarchal structures. Businesses with comprehensive employee engagement strategies typically adopt [management methods built on these philosophies](#).

Frequent Feedback

The annual performance evaluation is nearly obsolete, as once-a-year feedback is simply not enough for millennial workers. These individuals want regular information on their performance, whether the news is good or bad. For some, weekly feedback conversations aren't even enough — some organizations ensure managers touch base with team members nearly every day.

Implementing a more frequent feedback process is often frustrating for baby boomers, who prefer to operate more independently. They view this constant feedback to millennials as yet another means to feeding millennial egos. However, what many of these baby boomers are forgetting is that more often, feedback is helping the millennials do a better job, and this need for feedback will decline over time.

Manager-as-Coach

Millennials are typically open to feedback, as long as it is presented in a constructive manner. They expect to partner with leaders to improve their performance, and they are looking for support and recognition as they make progress. Managers should think of themselves as coaches, rather than disciplinarians, as this approach is far more effective with millennial workers.

Again, many seasoned leaders and managers roll their eyes at this requirement to mentor employees, but what they should remember that this emerging workforce WANTS to learn from them, and they are listening.

Collaborative Teams

Thanks in part to constant communication made possible through mobile technology, millennials are accustomed to staying in touch with friends and family constantly throughout the day. Collaborative teams are an extension of this trend. Managers need to offer millennials the opportunity to partner with team members whenever possible on everything from day-to-day business tasks to creating innovative solutions for business problems.

Technology is a Necessity

Finally, millennials (and the rest of us!) have high expectations for technology, and we want to work for companies that keep hardware and software current. Outdated platforms,

unreliable internet connections, and antiquated machines impact productivity, leading to frustration.

I recently watched a major company struggle because they wanted to livestream the CEO's message to alternate sites. The internet was so sporadic and the signal was so weak that the alternate sites could not hear any of the audio, and the screen froze and stayed frozen for about half of the time. The employees at the other locations dutifully sat through the 45-minute talk – even though they couldn't hear any of it. Technology is now a given. It is expected that it will work. Frustrated millennials, as well as other employees – don't hesitate to move on to other opportunities.

Millennials are the largest demographic in the US, and they are going to lead our organizations and companies in a just a few years. We need to make sure they are part of our corporate culture, and that they are ready to lead.

What are you doing to plan for future leadership? Please share [here](#).

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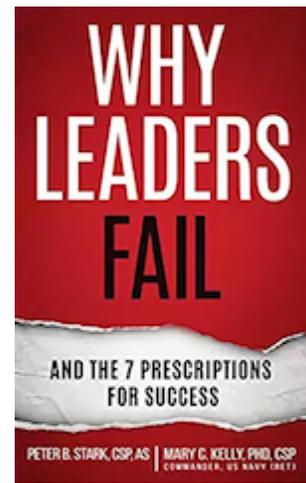
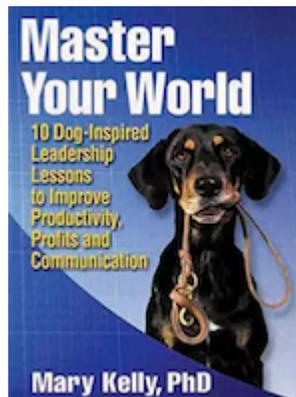
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