



YOU RAISED US

Now You Have to Manage Us!

For the first time in history, four separate generations, each with their own styles, beliefs, and abilities are commingling in one office.

Confident, cutting-edge, and 76 million strong; these are just a few of the terms used to describe the newest generation entering today's workforce. Unfortunately, this generation has also been labeled "management's greatest challenge." As this generation, better known as the "Millennials," enters the workforce, the vast differences between them and previous generations will cause friction and clashes that can either hinder an organization or carry it to greatness. The question becomes, how can

organizations successfully manage this diverse, knowledgeable and savvy group of youngsters, who, at the same time, seem to require coddling, continuous praise, and non-traditional benefits and incentives?

The first step is to acknowledge that these generational differences exist. The second is to examine why these differences exist. The third is to develop specific plans, policies, and programs designed to recruit, develop, and retain the Millennials.

That might seem like a huge



The Effect of the Millennial Generation on Today's Workforce

by Nicola McCarthy, CPPS, Alamo Chapter

initiative to undertake, but organizations with these procedures in place will ultimately be more successful than their counterparts that choose not to. My generation (yes, I'm a Millennial) might seem like your biggest challenge and greatest weakness, but with some forward-looking thought and what might seem like revolutionary internal changes, we can become your greatest assets and most loyal resources, and can help to propel the property management community into the forefront of each organization.

The generation known as the Baby Boomers represents just over 80 million Americans, and is often called the "pig in the python" of US demographics because they move along the United States' age-distribution line as a huge, pronounced bulge. They represent the largest generation in history, and the impact of their impending retirement on our workforce cannot be overstated. Currently, the "Boomers" represent over 35% of the US workforce – with estimates of their proportion in the management

ranks reaching up to 60%. In January 2005, 26% of the boomers reached age 55; by 2010, 33% of this group was eligible for retirement; and by 2015, an additional 34% will be ready to hang up their white collars. Enter the Millennials. The Millennial generation is the only generation that has the numbers necessary to replace the rapidly shrinking Boomer workforce. This is why it is imperative that all organizations embrace this new workforce; determine how to work with them, and also how to integrate the different generations that now co-

exist within the workplace.

For the first time in history, four separate generations, each with their own styles, beliefs, and abilities are commingling in one office. Each of these generations was shaped by the circumstances and institutions that existed during their formative years. The generations include: The Traditionalists, The Baby Boomers, Generation X, and lastly, the Millennials. Let's take a closer look at each one:

The Traditionalist: This generation was born before 1946 and is loyal, patriotic, desiring to leave a legacy, fiscally conservative, with a strong faith in institutions. Some of their defining moments include: The Great Depression, the invasion of

Pearl Harbor, the establishment of Social Security, World War I and II, the GI Bill, the Atomic Bomb, Jackie Robinson, and the Holocaust.

The Baby Boomers: This generation hails from between 1946 and 1965 and are considered to have a strong work ethic and significant work experience, a respect for hierarchy and tradition, a belief that putting in "face time" at the office is critical, and a focus on their children (we'll revisit this idea when we look into why the Millennials are who they are). The most defining technology of their formative years was the invention of the television. Some of the defining moments for the Boomers include: post war economic prosperity, rapid technological

progress (TV, aerospace, and computers), feminism, the Civil Rights Movement, and both the Vietnam and the Cold Wars.

Generation X: This generation was born between 1966 and 1980 and are seen as independent minded and self reliant, while skeptical of institutions and authorities. They have a strong desire to acquire workplace skills, a belief in the work/life balance, and are very techno literate. The defining technology of their formative years was the personal computer. Some of their defining generational moments include: the fall of communism and the Berlin wall, the Challenger disaster, a major recession and jobless period in the 1990's, corporate downsizing, video games, AIDS,

Chernobyl, and the Iranian Hostage Crisis.

The unique experience, expectations, and values of each generation result in both converging and diverging attitudes and expectations about work and life balances. While organizations as a whole recognize the criticality of the Millennials for the future, members of each preceding generation have characterized Millennials as fickle, naïve, lazy, impatient, disloyal, and high maintenance. But, how did these stereotypes come to be, especially when Millennials would describe themselves as motivated, loyal, smart, tech savvy and confident. Let's dig a little deeper and determine what motivates my generation and where some of these biases might come from.

1. Millennials were raised by a doting constituency of Baby Boomers that focused significant effort on parenting. We have been consulting and collaborating on decisions (family vacations, allowances, punishments, etc.) our entire lives. We have been treated as equals and have been given privileges and rights that blurred the line between child and parent roles. While our parents would do anything for us, they also allowed us more freedom and authority over our lives than other generations were granted.
2. Millennials were raised in a school system that focused on participation over differentiation. For example, every student received a trophy or an award for each sports team or each science fair they participated in. We are accustomed to excellence; the average GPA of graduating high school seniors in 2010 was

an A-. From the trophies, the grades and the near-perfect SAT scores, we have not learned how to handle negative feedback! Negative feedback de-motivates the Millennials; but, don't worry, we can easily be motivated into better performance by being asked to focus

on a "special" task that we can own or by hearing a mixture of both positive highlights intertwined with constructive criticism.

3. Technology and media have blurred the lines between reality and fantasy for the Millennials.

Whether real or imagined, places such as Dawson's Creek and Bosnia are equally represented in our memory. Nothing seems out of the ordinary or impossible for us. If we can think it, we truly believe that we can do it. All that's needed are the tools, the understanding of the bigger picture, the approval, and the encouragement to go out and give it a try. Once Millennials have that and realize that efforts will be rewarded, hard-work, loyalty, and a desire to be the best will push this group to the finish line. The idea of failure is not an option for us.

4. We are connected to each other, information, and the world 24x7. Our devices reside in our pockets, and from the time we knew what a computer was, we have been using one to find information, plan our lives, and communicate with family and friends. This can be both a hindrance and help in the workplace. If Millennials have downtime, you can bet they will be texting, tweeting, or Facebooking. But, they will also use their knowledge of technology for good. Millennials are quick to research if something is unknown and perfectly content to check and respond to work related requests after hours.

So what does this all mean? It means that the Millennials represent the 75 million Americans who have started trickling into the workforce. It means that regardless of whether or not organizations want to know what makes Millennials function, they need to, because Millennials can change the way organizations think. It means that at the end of the day, organizations need to give

Millennials something to be in charge of, the freedom to run with it, the reassurance that help is available, and lastly, praise when expectations are exceeded. Armed with this "reinforcement," Millennials will get the job done, understand the bigger picture, and seek out leadership opportunities that haven't been given to entry-level personnel before.

The good news is that this is all possible because the Millennials have absorbed "best practices" from preceding generations, and have seen (albeit through both movies and reality) how and why things fail. The traditionalists have given us a dose of their loyalty and faith in institutions; boomers have imbued us with boundless optimism; and "Gen Xers" have given us just enough skepticism to be cautious. The Millennials believe that competence and expertise define the workplace authority structure, and are without a doubt loyal to people within organizations and not the organization itself. Millennials also continually seek diverse work experiences that are aligned to personal goals, but this group will require 24x7 access to information, and believe that work is "what you do" (versus where you go). These views can cause natural clash points with the other generations who fundamentally have different beliefs. Take, for example, the area of organizational hierarchy; boomers believe that authority is directly related to position, while Gen Xers are skeptical of institutions altogether, and Millennials believe that authority is based on expertise alone.

In sum, research has determined that the Millennials have four main workplace needs: flexibility, balance/sociability, a sense of meaning, and access to technology. Organizations that can show a direct link to a

higher purpose (for example a pharmaceutical company working on a cure for cancer), will find it easier to recruit them. Companies that provide opportunities for internal mobility will be able to retain them. Companies with a strong social network that host activities like happy hours and show a commitment to the communities in which they work, have the prerequisite environment for millennial growth and development. Companies that do not readily share information or allow for 24x7 access to business functions, for example requiring a call to elect benefits over having it all online, will not be successful with the new generation. These are just a few examples; in order to be successful in the recruitment, growth, development, and retention of the Millennials, companies need a targeted set of HR policies and benefits that will attract them and keep them on board. Understanding generational differences and motivations will allow companies to tailor high impact programs and projects that keep the workforce motivated. The Millennials have a chance to rival the greatest generation in their accomplishments – they are poised to change the world. The question is, are you ready for them? ■

BIOGRAPHY

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