



Are You Ready For The Millennials?

According to a recent survey by Derhak Ireland and Partners, 88% of employers aren't ready for Millennials but does it really matter? You may think that Millennials will eventually just fall in line, but here's the problem, although every generation is different from the last, social, cultural and technological change is happening at an ever increasing rate. As a result Millennials present a much larger shift in values, attitudes, vocabulary and working habits than previous generations. Additionally, it will be up to the Millennials to fill the gap in the workforce left by the retiring early boomers and the Gen-X bust before they have completed the years of experience employers are often seeking.

To make the culture gap even bigger, some people are working longer, often past age 65. As a result, for the first time ever, there are four distinctly different generations in the workplace, which at best can result in misunderstanding, or at worst, cultural mayhem. As a result employers, hiring managers and recruiters need to adapt how Millennials are hired, managed, and developed to succeed. According to generation broker and author Lynne Lancaster here is a brief overview of the four generations in today's workforce.

The Generations:

Traditionalists: born between 1900 and 1945, this group, about 18% of the population, reflect a "heads down, onward and upward" attitude on the job and possess a work ethic shaped by World Wars and the Great Depression. This group is generally patriotic and knows what its like to do without. If there were a single word to describe traditionalists, it would be loyal.



Baby Boomers: with 30% of the population, the largest of the four groups, Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964. In general, they can be described as optimistic. This was the generation that believed that anything was possible—that they really could change the world

Gen-Xers: born between 1965 and 1980, is relatively small 21% of the population. This is the generation that is defined, more than any other by media and technology. For Gen-Xers, the watchword is scepticism—this group puts more faith in the individual, in themselves, than in any institution, from marriage to their employer.

Millennials: the youngest members of what will be the next Boomer wave, with 26% of the population, Millennials were born between 1981 and 1999. This group is more realistic than their boomer parents, very

confident, pragmatic and social. They also seek job stability, fairness and good work life balance. They are also the most educated generation and expect that this investment will get their careers off to a perfect start. As a result they are more teachable as long as it comes with constant feedback. Raised by optimistic Boomers, Millennials feel empowered to take positive action when things go wrong.

At face value they sound like good employees but early experience has been mixed. Members of Millennials were found to be "demanding, impatient and bad at communicating" by a 2007 survey of business owners in Australia. The survey found that almost 70% of those surveyed found their Millennial workers to be dissatisfying, with poor spelling and grammar and no understanding of appropriate corporate behaviours. However the survey also showed most employers praised the energy and charisma. Other employers have found they work well when given clear goals and allowed to work in groups.

We also can't ignore the profound impact of technology on this wired

generation. The huge integration of technology into the everyday lives of Millennials has created a generation in need of instant gratification. In their book, *Connecting to the Net.Generation: What Higher Education Professionals Need to Know About Today's College Students*, Reynol Junco and Jeanna Mastrodicasa found in a survey that out of 7,705 college students in the US:

- 97% own a computer
- 94% own a cell phone
- 76% use Instant Messaging (IM)
- 15% of IM users are logged on 24 hours a day/7 days a week
- 34% use websites as their primary source of news
- 28% have a blog and 44% read blogs
- 49% download music using peer-to-peer file sharing
- 75% of students have a Facebook account
- 60% own some type of expensive portable music and/or video device such as an iPod.

Lesson's Learned for Hiring and Managing Millennials:

When it comes to hiring Millennials the key is to make it quick, focus on the challenges and opportunities and communicate with them in way that makes them more comfortable. For many of them a long hiring process can be incredibly frustrating and often leads to missed opportunities for employers who wait. Some of our key learnings include:

- Adapt communications. Change candidate interview forms to accommodate personal Blog sites. We have been asked if we can connect with them on FaceBook, Instant Message or Linked-In. We also often confirm interviews with these candidates via Text Messages rather than email or voicemail. We have an office MSN IM system

and one of my clients has asked if I can add him to my IM address book so we can communicate more easily. One candidate even asked if we could provide a job briefing as a downloadable Podcast rather than emailing a written document.

- Be flexible. Two of our current search projects are being completed using web-cam interviews with both the candidates and the clients. In addition to a Web-cam Studio in our office we now have 4 laptops with web-cams and expect to add three more by the end of the year to accommodate the trend. We also bring our laptops to our off-site interviews so we can download candidate resumes from their memory sticks.
 - Guide their energy. Give them access to opportunities and challenges while providing feedback and clear goals. Millennials learn quickly, train well and work very effectively in groups. As more Millennials enter the workforce focus on achievement, education, character, energy and fit with team members more than length of career. Once hired treat them fairly, based on achievement and skill and they will exceed expectations.
 - Provide more than just a pay cheque: Millennials are looking for job security and a work life balance. Find out what your Millennials want and adapt employment packages to their values.
- Future business success will go to the companies that learn how to get the most their next generation of employees and the recruiters that guide them along the way.

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