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Talking 'Bout My Generation...

Just what are we getting ourselves into with the newest generation entering the workforce today? Presented here is an insight to the life of the Millennial generation and what to expect when working with them.

“Although they are better educated, more techno-savvy, and quicker to adapt than those who have come before them, they refuse to blindly conform to traditional standards and time-honored institutions. Instead, they boldly ask, ‘Why?’”

Eric Chester
Employing Generation Why?

Many cooperative managers face two difficulties in dealing with youth entering today’s workforce: 1) attracting the good ones to the business, and 2) understanding them once they are hired.

The newest generation might seem vastly different from your own in terms of expectations of and attitudes toward the workplace. Even so, the majority of employees share the desire to have a successful and satisfying career. However, *successful* and

satisfying are subjective terms that vary by generation!

As rational individuals, each of us works in a manner that best achieves our individual goals and desires. Individuals within the same generation may share similar beliefs, values, and experiences that shape these goals. Therefore, managers who want the most out of their employees first must understand what motivates them and what shapes their expectations.

Meet the Millennials

They are called by many names: Generation Y, Generation Why, Echo Boomers, the Net Generation, the Google Generation and Millennials. Depending on who you ask, members of this generation were born somewhere between the years 1980 and 2000 into a world where technology is

Side by Side View of the Generational Workforce

Topic	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
The Future	Is ours!	Sucks!	Might not happen!
Wealth	I’ll earn it!	I don’t care much about it!	Give it to me, or I’ll take it!
Role Models	Men of Character	Men and Women of Character	What’s character?
Employer Loyalty	I can work my way to the top!	This could lead to the top!	No Saturdays, I quit!
Justice	Always prevails	Usually prevails	Can be bought!
Respecting Elders	Is automatic	Is polite	Who cares if they are older?
Borrowing Credit	Only if I have to	If I really want something	How much can I get?
Communication	Via parent’s phone	Via personal phone	Cell phone, Email, Blogs
Change	Dislike	Accept	Demand
Technology	Ignorant	Comfortable	Masters

Source: Eric Chester & *Generation Why*, www.generationwhy.com

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commonplace. Not surprisingly, technology plays a larger role in their socialization than other generations.

To put them in perspective...

- ✦ They have been raised in the most child-centric time in history
- ✦ They don't remember the Challenger explosion, Chernobyl meltdown, or the Cold War
- ✦ They have never known life without computers or cell phones
- ✦ They are the first generation to grow up with the internet, music downloads, instant messaging, and chat rooms
- ✦ Before they could type, they were raised with modern media including the television with an endless amount of cable choices available by a simple click
- ✦ They expect information to be at their fingertips
- ✦ They have grown up multitasking and assume that they will undertake more than one line of work at any given time
- ✦ They are interracial and multiculturally tolerant and have a wider range and diversity of friends than previous generations

Managing Millennials

Being the children of Baby Boomer parents, Millennials are the largest generation since the Baby Boom and are entering college in vast numbers. As the Baby Boom population retires, Generation X is expected to fill roles in middle and upper management while Millennials obtain the positions in the lower half of the workforce.

The Millennial generation may need access to different paths that accomplish their goals than what has been offered in the past. Of course, there are some compromises that you may be unwilling or unable to make. However, diminishing rural workforces and increased pressure on immigrant labor may require increased flexibility for employee needs in the future. A word of caution: when the wants and needs of anyone, especially Millennials, are not being satisfied, the temptation to find work elsewhere is often sought where one is more willing to work with them.

As the gap in generations grow, it is reasonable to expect workplace road blocks along the way. Communication is an important part of overcoming these hurdles. However, effective commu-

nication given today's countless choices can be a daunting task. With various generations in tow, a manager needs to consider how to deal with each employee to best deliver the intended message. Is it best to be formal or frank? Should I be verbal or is it best to have a written arrangement? Is an e-mail always the best choice? Should there be a set time for everything or can something be most effective when done on the spot?

Millennials come into a job with their own ideas about employment and rewards:

- ✦ They want to be "in" on the whole picture and understand their purpose in their work and organization
- ✦ They want to add value to the workplace
- ✦ They desire communication with management and expect on-going training as they are very education oriented
- ✦ They expect feedback and information at the push of a button or "click of a mouse"
- ✦ These employees are ready for the challenge to multitask and take on the world
- ✦ They want a structured and supportive work environment
- ✦ They are team oriented and need to socialize
- ✦ They will respond to nurturing and mentoring

Gone are the days when those entering the workforce felt lucky to have a job and worked their hardest just to keep it. Now help wanted signs dotting landscapes are a common sight and rarely is there a shortage of ads in the classifieds. Who ever said work was everything? The Millennial believes in balancing their work without interrupting their personal life and activities. Since we can't survive without them, make the best of them with recruiting, training, managing, and motivating. Their performance determines your success.

For More Information

An abundance of information on generations can be found on the internet:

- ✦ About.com
- ✦ Deloitte Consulting, LLP
- ✦ Generationwhy.com
- ✦ Wikipedia.org
- ✦ Or just Google "Millennial Generation"