10 Tips for Motivating and Engaging Millennials in the Workplace

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Millennials. At 33 percent, they now represent the largest generation in the U.S. workforce, surpassing the Baby Boomer group, which has declined to 31%. The growing workplace influence of this segment (born between 1980 and the mid 2000s) has sparked an urgency to understand their world and their motivations. Why won't they pick up the phone? How different are they from previous generations? How can we best manage their performance? Following are the answers to these questions, as well as a review of the 10 best tips for managing Millennials in the workplace.

Why the sudden interest? Although Millennials have been in the workplace for several years, they are just entering the management ranks. Career survival and economic growth depend upon understanding, as well as working with and for, this unique breed.

Millennials are also poised to begin spending—their purchasing power is estimated to be anywhere between $125 billion and $1 trillion dollars. Never mind that 40% of Millennials don’t yet have a job, or that 60% of Millennials receive financial support from their parents. That hasn’t stopped them from spending. Millennials use social media as part of their purchasing behavior. They check friend recommendations, use a variety of comparison shopping apps, and regularly use their smartphones to order or pay for purchases. Do their friends “like” or recommend the product or service? How committed is the manufacturer to corporate social responsibility? Do they have any first-hand knowledge of the benefits or reliable friend endorsements? These are the factors that typically drive their purchasing decisions. The purchasing power of Millennials has not gone unnoticed, and the scramble is on to learn how to attract and retain Millennials as customers.

Why won’t they pick up the phone? How different is the mindset of a Millennial? If you raised one, you know. Growing up in the 1990s was a far cry from being raised in the 1960s. While older generations remember the adoption of color TV, bookmobiles, or their first computer, Millennials don’t know a world without the Internet. They’ve always had unlimited information just clicks away—24/7. Just think…no card catalogs, no World Book Encyclopedia, and never knowing the frustration of typing a term paper footnote that goes off the page.

Information, which had been a limited resource—limited by the time allowed to scour for it and the libraries in close proximity—is now unlimited. Most Millennials have always had Google, and some may barely remember the introduction of Facebook (2/4/04). Documenting their day on social media and getting immediate feedback are normal. How much time do they spend on their devices each day? An average of 17.8 overlapping hours—Instagramming while watching YouTube and looking up information on their iPads, etc.

Email is considered old school by Millennials, and phone calls are thought to be a distraction. To their way of thinking, texting or snap chatting is more efficient and doesn’t put anyone on the spot. Companies now need to hire consultants to teach Millennials phone etiquette and how to think on their feet and respond to customers in the moment (instead of carefully crafting their words in text messages).

How are Millennials’ work attitudes like previous generations? In reading articles on Millennials, one can’t help but wonder if Millennials’ perspectives are shaped less by their generation, than by being 22 or 24 years old? What if you could ask different generations the same questions when they were the same age? One researcher asked herself that question and found a valuable data source. Dr. Jean Twenge, professor of psychology at San Diego State University, analyzed UCLA’s Monitoring the Future, “which has surveyed a nationally representative sample of high school seniors [about their work attitudes] every year since 1976.”

Dr. Twenge and her team grouped the survey questions by topic to analyze five distinct work values: Intrinsic (focused on the process of work—learning, being challenged, and being creative), extrinsic (focused on the external outcomes of work—compensation, bonuses, promotions), altruistic (helping others and contributing to society through work), leisure (opportunity for free time, vacation, and freedom from supervision), and social
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**Note:** This list is not exhaustive and represents a selection of articles and resources that provide insights into managing millennials and their work preferences.