Reversing the Generation Equation

Mentoring in the New Age of Work

In collaboration with

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CONSULTING
DIVERSITY | LEADERSHIP | INNOVATION

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About Jennifer Brown Consulting

Jennifer Brown is an award-winning entrepreneur, dynamic keynote speaker, and leading diversity and inclusion expert. As the founder, president and CEO of Jennifer Brown Consulting (JBC), Jennifer's workplace strategies have been employed by some of the world's top Fortune 500 companies and nonprofits—including Walmart, Microsoft, Starbucks, Toyota Financial Services, T-Mobile, and many others— to help employees bring their full selves to work.

Jennifer's work in talent management, human capital and intersectional theory has redefined the boundaries of talent potential and company culture. Her best-selling book *Inclusion: Diversity, the New Workplace & the Will to Change* creates the case for leaders to embrace the opportunity that diversity represents, for their own growth and for the success of their organizations.

As a successful LGBT entrepreneur, Jennifer has been featured in media such as *The New York Times*, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, *Forbes, Fortune, Inc.*, *The Wall Street Journal*, Huffpost Live, CBS, Fox News and many more. Jennifer has spoken at many top conferences and events such as Interbrand's Best Global Brands event, the INBOUND Summit, Emerging Women Live, Multicultural Women's National Conference, and the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce's International Business and Leadership Conference, as well as at organizations such as Allstate, Pepsico, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the NBA, and Google.

JBC team members, Nikki Groom and Jessica Loccisano, also contributed to this whitepaper.

Introduction

By 2030, nearly 75% of employees are projected to be Millennials.[1] For some time now, forward-thinking organizations have been laying the groundwork for this generation and the changes in expectations, work styles, and values that they are ushering in. But most firms are woefully behind. They are under-investing in new tools and approaches to attract, retain and engage this new breed of team member. More than many other organizational imperatives, a strong vision and execution around generational diversity will make or break companies as they endeavor to thrive in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (otherwise known as "VUCA") future marketplace.[2] These also will help them deal with an existing and tenured workforce that is ill-equipped to flex to this challenging, or exciting (depending perhaps on your generational perspective), new reality.

The problem is not just a lack of investment in the challenge that Millennials present to all employers. Negative assumptions might be the most difficult and harmful hurdles to overcome. It's a common soundbite heard in management circles that Millennials are "hard to please." This is followed by the belief that they will inevitably soften with the added responsibilities of adulthood such as marriage, parenting and mortgages. But the picture is considerably more complex than that. This generation possesses the most diverse attitudes, tendencies and requirements of any preceding generation. And they are bringing all of that to work wanting—in fact, demanding—to be Welcomed, Valued, Respected, and Heard[SM], a definitional framework for inclusion developed by this paper's author, Jennifer Brown.[3] The world and families they've grown up with have ensured that they see themselves as more central to the work and business equation than any previous generation. The study "Millennials in Adulthood" conducted by Pew Research Center provides an illuminating deep dive into just how unique this generation is. It also touches on the social, political and economic realities and the powerful headwinds—and tailwinds—that shaped them in their formative years.[4] We underestimate the depth of their particular generational character.

Most importantly for workplace designers, as a result of the disconnect between their expectations and the ability of today's employers to meet them halfway, Millennials experience greater job dissatisfaction than Generation X or Baby Boomers. This hurts the bottom line, as it costs organizations up to three times an employee's annual salary if he or she chooses to leave the firm.[5] How will organizations attract, develop and retain these future leaders that they desperately need?

By 2030, nearly **75%** of employees are projected to be Millennials.

[1] Josh Steimle, "Reverse Mentoring: Investing in Tomorrow's Business Strategy," Forbes, May 5th, 2015. http://www.forbes.com/sites/joshsteimle/2015/05/05/reverse-mentoring-investing-in-tomorrows-business-strategy/#50c1a0b6666d

[2] "What VUCA Really Means for You," Harvard Business Review, 2014. https://hbr.org/2014/01/what-vuca-really-means-for-you

[3] Jennifer Brown, "Inclusion: Diversity, the New Workplace, and the Will to Change," November, 2016. https://www.inclusionthebook.com/

[4] "Millennials in Adulthood," The Pew Research Center, March 7th, 2014. http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/Millennials-in-adulthood/

[5] Heather Boushey and Sarah Jane Glynn, "There are Significant Business Costs to Replacing Employees," The Center for American Progress, 2012. https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CostofTurnover.pdf

The Opportunity of Generational Diversity

Companies should be grateful for the wake-up call. The entrance of this large professional generation with increasing access to technology, social media and emerging consumer knowledge represents an opportunity to better resonate with a diversifying talent base and marketplace. It also brings much-needed shifts in mindsets, policies and practices. To dismiss this because of perceived over-entitlement of a particular generation, or hoping it will ultimately conform to business-as-usual, is to miss the point. In fact, one could argue that the influx of Millennial talent has begun to impact the expectations that all employees—regardless of age—now have toward relationships with their employers and colleagues.

Over the last decade, reverse mentoring programs have helped organizations address the seismic shifts that the incoming generation is introducing.[6] These programs are seen as a great way to use existing—and eager— Millennial talent to encourage much-needed tech savviness in the executive suite. Younger talent learns organizational and leadership skills through direct communication with their executives. These managers impart organizational savvy and context to this generation that craves information and meaning in its work, as well as direct access to decision makers.[7]

But today's innovative programs have gone well beyond that. They position the Millennial cohort as key to strengthening core business strategy, whose bottom line depends on flexing to, and monetizing, a diversifying world. That world includes internal talent, as well as external stakeholders like customers, clients, and partners. In other words, the entire business ecosystem can benefit.

Why a New Mentoring Paradigm Is Needed

A key fact that distinguishes Millennials from other generational groups is their prioritization of well-being and growth. Known as the "why" generation, they have grown up being accustomed to being able to get answers right away, due to their technological savviness and connectedness. In the workplace, this has taken the form of their unusually strong voice and

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[6] Wendy Murphy, "Reverse Mentoring At Work: Fostering Cross-Generational Learning and Development Millennial Leaders," July-August, 2012. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264268957_Reverse_Mentoring_at_Work_Fostering_Cross-Generational_Learning_and_Developing_Millennial_Leaders
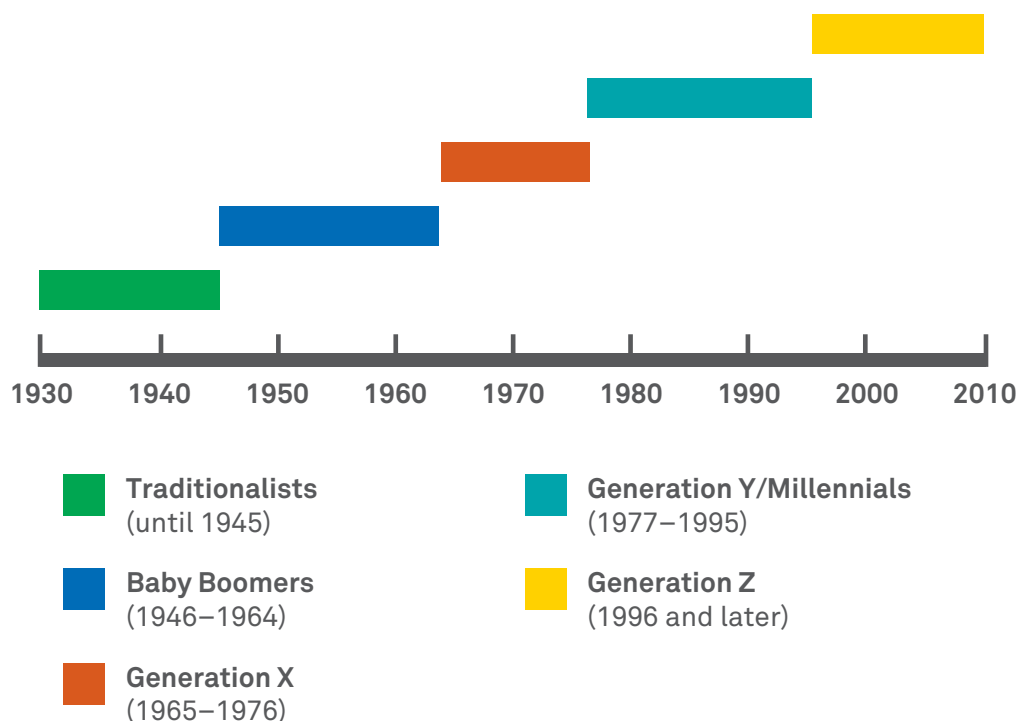
[7] Punit Renjen, "Millennials and Purpose: The Message Is Clear for Business," Politico, September 24, 2015, http://www.politico.com/sponsor-content/2015/09/Millennials-and-purpose-the-message-is-clear-for-business-leaders

advocacy for themselves and their viewpoints. A very real disconnect emerges when we contrast this with how stratified and layered the bureaucracy is in most companies.

A study conducted by Deloitte predicted that, when given the option, Millennials would quit their current jobs to work at different organizations or take on different roles if the desire for personal and professional development were not met.[8] This attitude is not just seen among younger Millennials, but among those Millennials in more senior roles as well. No job title is exempt. A primary reason for this is their desire for growth and embrace of a strong entrepreneurial mindset, which is not reflected in the core processes and mentality common in today's workplaces.

Millennials are steered by strong values at early stages of their careers. This is reflected in the employers they choose to work with, projects they accept and decisions they make. Deloitte reports that 56% of Millennials have "ruled out ever working for a particular organization because of its values or standard of conduct." In fact, nearly 49% declined a task that was thought to go against personal values or rules of ethics.[9] Some of what they seek in the employment relationship includes traditional elements such as a good work/life balance (more than they value monetary compensation), their own homes, a partner, flexible working conditions and financial security. When it comes to respecting organizational hierarchy however, this group strays from tradition by questioning the automatic deference to seniority seen in previous generations. For them, respect must be earned.

Generations by Birth Year

Traditionalists
(until 1945)

Baby Boomers
(1946–1964)

Generation X
(1965–1976)

Generation Y/Millennials
(1977–1995)

Generation Z
(1996 and later)

Note: There is some disagreement about birth year ranges for the Millennial and Generation Y cohort(s); Jennifer Brown Consulting has consulted the following: http://genhq.com/faq-info-about-generations/. For more information on the various generations, please see: http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/03/here-is-when-each-generation-begins-and-ends-according-to-facts/359589/.

Source: "Inclusion: Diversity, The New Workplace and The Will to Change" by Jennifer Brown, November 2016, page 6. https://www.inclusionthebook.com/

[8] Deloitte, "The Deloitte Millennial Survey," 2016. https://www2.deloitte.com/lu/en/pages/human-capital/articles/Millennial-survey-2015-mind-gaps.html
[9] Ibid.

Diversity as a Core Value

Questioning the status quo often has its roots in a desire to contribute, and to make one's contribution count. This is true of Millennials, raised by late Baby Boomers (sometimes referred to as "helicopter parents"). These parents have ensured this generation is not afraid to ask for what they need and want. And if they are, their parents are close by to ask on their behalf. This generation also strongly values diversity as 20% have one, if not two, immigrant parents. According to Pew Research, the number of Millennials born from immigrant parents will increase 38% over the next 30 years.[10]

The Need to "See It, to Be It"

To retain talent from this generational group who grew up identifying with two or more ethnicities or nationalities, the organizational leaders above them in the corporate hierarchy should reflect the diverse identities they are most familiar with—and expect. The failure to mirror the younger and incoming generations' multiculturalism will cause more frequent and deeper disconnects with companies around the globe.[11] The rub, of course, is that the lack of diversity at the top of many organizations cannot just be changed through strategic hiring. That's because it is a product of many years of struggle by under-represented, untapped talent to stay, flourish and grow into those roles. This is made more difficult because of day-to-day workplace culture and the dynamics of unconscious bias that permeate hiring and promotion decisions to this day.

In the meantime, however, there is a compelling lever we can pull with the incoming generation to increase retention. That is its strong desire for its own leadership development—the learning that comes from managing projects and teams, building rapport and fostering networks. Research from the Center for Talent Innovation shows that 64% of Millennials cite learning from people with experience they lack is an important aspect of rewarding work relationships, and 73% cite learning new professional skills as an important aspect of their intellectual growth.[12] The most satisfied and loyal are those who believe there is adequate support/training for employees who seek leadership roles. The Millennials who are less likely to remain loyal to an organization say they are overlooked for these positions.

> **64%** of Millennials cite learning from people with experience they lack is an important aspect of rewarding work relationships.

[10] Jeffery Passel and D'vera Cohn, "U.S. Population Projections: 2005–2050," Pew Research Center, February 11, 2008. http://www.pewhispanic.org/2008/02/11/us-population-projections-2005-2050/

[11] Deloitte, "The Deloitte Millennial Survey," 2016. https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/About-Doloitte/gx-millenial-survey-2016-exec-summary.pdf

[12] Center for Talent Innovation, "The Other 91%: Myths about Millennials at Work," 2016. http://www.talentinnovation.org/_private/assets/Millennials_Infographic-CTI.pdf

Authenticity and Diversity of Thought

This group is also known for their high level of interpersonal connection and desire for meaningful work experiences. Millennials were raised in a technological world, thus developing a different relationship with knowledge and ways of learning. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are among a few social media sites that Millennials connect with the most. As the first digital natives in the workplace, they use these tools for marketing and new platforms for networking. Through these advances in technology, Millennials are surrounded by a different culture than Generation X or Baby Boomers. It is one that strongly emphasizes being seen, heard and valued. It is a generation that acknowledges authenticity in the workplace and values cognitive diversity or the "blending of different ideas, thoughts, opinions, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives within a team."[13,14]

Millennials are surrounded by a different culture than Generation X or Baby Boomers. It is one that strongly emphasizes being seen, heard and valued.

Reverse Mentoring: History and Best Practices

Reverse mentoring was originally championed by Jack Welch, the former chief executive of GE, who encouraged 500 top-level executives to reach out to people below them to learn technological skills like using the internet.[15] He introduced a formal version of this program to the corporate world in the U.S. during the late 1990s. Welch even participated in the program, being matched with an employee in her 20s. It is through this program that Millennials "got visibility," as Welch shared to The Wall Street Journal.[16]

Since then, reverse mentoring programs have reached beyond technological learning and have expanded to include deeper exchanges of ideas, advice and insights. Elements of cultural knowledge, effective leadership, team building and change management are all possible topics for discussion. Organizations such as PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC), Everwise and AARP are among many that have launched successful programs.

[13] Jennifer Brown, "Inclusion: Diversity, the New Workplace, and the Will to Change," November, 2016. http://www.inclusionthebook.com/

[14] Christie Smith and Stephanie Turner, "The Radical Transformation of Diversity and Inclusion," Deloitte University, 2015. https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/radical-transformation-of-diversity-and-inclusion

[15] Josh Steimle, "Reverse Mentoring: Investing in Tomorrow's Business Strategy," *Forbes*, 2015. https://www.forbes.com/sites/joshsteimle/2015/05/05/reverse-mentoring-investing-in-tomorrows-business-strategy/#2ebc13846769

[16] Leslie Kwoh, "Reverse Mentoring Cracks Workplace," *The Wall Street Journal*, November, 2011. https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970203764804577060051461094004 (subscription only)

PWC's Mentoring Connection

At PWC, the mentors for its Mentoring Connection program are carefully selected for their mentees. Usually, the mentors are in their early 20s and have been working at the firm long enough to understand how it operates but not long enough that they cannot bring their fresh perspective. This is considered the "sweet spot" of employment experience where an early-in-career employee is not yet normalized to the organization. The Millennial mentor must also be confident enough to speak to senior leaders who must take the time for mentoring and embrace their role as a mentee.[17]

Everwise

One of the challenges for successful programs is senior executives' need for "face-saving," according to Mike Bergelson, CEO of Everwise. Executives are willing to learn from Millennials but are worried that agreeing to be a mentee will send a false message to their peers. The support for programs needs to be given from the very top of the organization. Programs with more confident and engaged pairings tend to exist in organizations where the CEO has encouraged the program and highlighted its strengths, such as looking at the give-and-take relationship as a partnership, eliminating the "us versus them" mentality.[18] Role reversal can be a challenge, especially since many of the senior leaders typically run massive organizations. Yet in the reverse mentoring context, they are asked to question assumptions and be open to learning and shifting their behaviors.

AARP Foundation's Mentor Up

The AARP Foundation created a Mentor Up program in September 2013, where teens and young adults come together with older generations to keep them current and connected with a youthful world. The volunteers mentored older members on technology and health and fitness. They also participate in a Love Letters campaign where close to 74,000 young volunteers made over 250,000 Valentine's Day cards to older adults. Since its start, the program has partnered with the National 4-H Council and DoSomething.org, engaging more than 300,000 young people to reach out to over 200,000 seniors. One of the mentors, Robert Fisch (a senior at Northwestern University) showed his mentee in his mid-70s how to set up Bluetooth wireless in his car. He says that "it was just nice to have a conversation with him…I felt like I was able to actually connect."

In essence, the concept of a reverse-mentoring program can serve to educate and highlight the differences and similarities among generational groups. For example, Millennials tend to be more individualistic and self-focused than Baby Boomers. They place a higher value on leisure time and extrinsic rewards and have a high priority on work-life balance.[19] In the workplace, this group tends to learn best through collaborations. By understanding these differences, organizations can build on the strengths of their employees. Creating the opportunity and structure for repeating, one-on-one conversations in a reverse mentoring scenario can help to mitigate negative stereotypes about all generations. It will emphasize the benefits and similarities of each viewpoint.

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[17] PricewaterhouseCoopers, "Millennials at Work: Reshaping the Workplace," 2011. https://www.pwc.com/m1/en/services/consulting/documents/Millennials-at-work.pdf

[18] Eileen Ambrose, "Boomers, Millennials Reverse Mentoring Roles," AARP, March, 2015. http://www.aarp.org/work/on-the-job/info-2015/on-the-job-mentoring.html

[19] Leslie Kwoh, "Reverse Mentoring Cracks Workplace." https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970203764804577060051461094004 (subscription only)

There are other benefits of these programs. For example, current research shows that both Millennials and Baby Boomers share a strong desire for high-quality colleagues and access to new experiences and challenges. It is important for both of these groups to be satisfied with their work. The use of a reverse mentoring program can fulfill these preferences by putting members of each group in a challenging situation with substantial growth opportunity. Even fundamental differences such as gender, race/ethnicity and personality are potential challenges to these relationships. The Millennials are more ethnically and racially diverse than older generations. People tend to be more attracted to those most physically similar to themselves, making these cross-gender and cross-race mentoring relationships a new and potentially transformative experience. Differences can be highlighted and brought to the fore when the younger and less experienced Millennial identifies with a minority group and takes the role of mentor instead of mentee. Acknowledging that difference is present early on and discovering shared experiences or common ground across that difference can ease the relationship. It also can build the capacity for leaders to influence the future, in the relative safety of an individual pairing.

Specifically for Millennials, this type of program is also a way to gain sponsorship. Sponsorship is defined as a strategic alliance with people who hold the professional and social capital to advance someone into a leadership position. Sponsorship occurs when a senior leader takes an interest in an employee and goes out on a limb on their behalf, advocating for them if need be, and providing advice for the future. They might also do this as an important investment in their own careers as well.[20] Reverse mentoring programs ensure that Millennials can begin to develop a relationship with a senior leader in their position of interest and form this type of relationship. Benefits of this connection can include an expanded sense of career possibilities, better executive presence, enhanced customer insights and honest feedback on skill gaps. The more junior person in the pairing can be empowered by having the open ear of a senior leader, and a chance to showcase his or her leadership skills. In turn, the more senior leader can hear a fresh perspective and embrace his or her flexible side in a position of power, reducing the stereotype of being in an older generation who is "stuck in its ways." Overall, the interaction builds a culture of adaptability and learning, which stand as critical cultural imperatives in today's workplace.

> People tend to be more attracted to those most physically similar to themselves, making these cross-gender and cross-race mentoring relationships a new and potentially transformative experience.

[20] Sylvia Ann Hewlett, "Forget a Mentor, Find a Sponsor: Getting the Right Person in your Corner," Today.com: November 27th, 2013. http://www.today.com/popculture/forget-mentor-find-sponsor-getting-right-person-your-corner-2D11653414

Reverse Mentoring at BNY Mellon's Pershing

In the fall of 2013, BNY Mellon's Pershing launched a Reverse Mentoring Program, CONNECT, to generate this new perspective and understanding while increasing Millennial retention rates. CONNECT is just under four years old, with a total community of nearly 150 supporters and participants. The vision is to "leverage Generation Y talent to shape the future direction of the firm and position Pershing for continued success" by developing a firm Millennials would want to work for in the future.

Two Millennial employees, Kayla Flaten and JamiLynn Cimino, helped initiate the program as an unofficial Business Resource Group, or BRG. As explanation, BRGs at BNY Mellon are voluntary, employee-led communities, serving as a resource for employees of a certain identity within an organization to create an atmosphere of inclusion for diversity and align with the mission, values, and goals of the company.[20] BRGs also aid in the development of future leaders, expand market reach and increase employee engagement. Although BRGs have been formed for women, LGBT, veterans, African American and Hispanic employees, there was no group pertaining specifically to Millennials. The Reverse Mentoring Program emerged as a grassroots program and operates as an initiative, not a BRG, but with a consultative and collaborative relationship with the company's BRG community in co-sponsoring events to gain traction and increase involvement.

Program Structure and Goals

Three core efforts underpin the program: the Reverse Mentoring Program, Business Unit Engagement Ambassadors and the Client Experience Initiative.

The initial goals of this program were to provide "the organization with generational perspectives that bring a balanced view of ideas, challenge strategic-tactical mindsets, promote forward progress and attract/retain top talent." It also kept the Executive Committee members informed about evolving technology and social media influences. The program quickly led to an increased rate of reliability and communication with younger employees. The program has experienced much success by maintaining the following:

› A direct confidential reporting relationship between mentors/mentees by scheduling meetings regularly (typically once a month).

› Open communication where insight, information and constructive feedback can be shared naturally.

› The elimination of all aspects of hierarchical titles during meetings; pairs must engage as equals who are both in a learning relationship.

[21] Jennifer Brown, "Employee Resource Groups that Drive Business", 2010. http://jenniferbrownconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/ERGreportEXTERNAL1.pdf

Criteria and Process

Each new class of Millennial mentors meets several criteria to participate in mentoring pairs:

› Born after 1980 and before 2000

› Has worked at Pershing for at least six months to a year

› Holds title of Vice President or below

› Has "achieved expectations" or better in all performance reviews

When applying to the program, potential Millennial mentors are asked to share a topic, theme or idea they are interested in sharing with a mentee and to explain two-way learning opportunities. Once selected, Flaten and Cimino train these mentors, who are then responsible for scheduling meetings, planning an agenda, and leading the discussion with mentees. It is up to the mentors to maximize time spent during meetings and be prepared to share personal experiences, insights and perspectives.

All Millennial mentors have monthly meetings on various topics, which allow each mentor to have topics to bring back to his or her mentee and other opinions to share besides their own. This has been done since the inception of the program and is considered one of the key differentiators in its success.

Pershing helps facilitate open communication between mentor/mentee pairs by communicating key responsibilities that both should maintain:

› Invest time in getting to know one another, building trust and respecting one another.

› Discuss the desired goals, outcomes and expectations, while adjusting if necessary.

› Agree how you are going to track progress.

› Plan and commit to meetings, and stick to the commitment.

› Be explicit about maintaining and respecting confidentiality.

› Give and receive constructive feedback and challenge each other.

› Be prepared to share personal experiences and collaborate as equal learning partners.

The role of the mentees is to identify the skills, knowledge or goals they wish to achieve and communicate them with their mentor. Together, the pair encourages open and honest dialogue and challenges one another.

CONNECT publishes quarterly newsletters, which lay out discussion topics, program successes, and upcoming events. To stay connected, mentors meet with their mentees at least once per month (but frequency of the meetings is up to the discretion of the particular pairing). They sign up for a year and gather for monthly meetings with the entire mentor team.

Mentors are responsible for scheduling meetings, planning an agenda, and leading the discussion with mentees.

Program Successes

One of the best lenses to view the impact of the program is in the number of strong mentor/mentee pairings. As Chief Operating Officer of BNY Mellon's Pershing, mentee Jim Crowley is responsible for the operational controls, administrative and reporting procedures, and people and systems in place to effectively grow and maintain financial strength and operating efficiency. Even with his expertise and seniority, he furthered his own skill set and recognized his mentor as a driver in the way he communicates and presents himself within the organization. Now, Crowley is an avid user of social media, an early adopter and user of the firm's internal social media site, and is highly active on LinkedIn. He said, "My personal development has been enriched in several ways. This includes improved focus on communication such as frequency and more on day-to-day doings, and greater inclusiveness with Millennial employees to broaden and enhance idea generation including our people plans." Crowley appreciates the mindful engagement with Millennial employees and enjoys diving into deep conversation on a broad range of topics, which requires both parties to listen, think and discuss. If he were to recommend changing anything about the program, Crowley said he would like to meet more frequently every week.

His mentor has similar feelings. Drew Weinstein works in Managed Investments and said, "It was a career highlight that helped to shape my perspective on not only our organization but the industry as a whole. While there have been a lot of tactical achievements over the past 18 months through the mentoring relationship, I've found the conversation itself often yields the greatest value." He attended numerous meetings with Crowley, and felt he had frequent opportunities to express his view. "It makes me feel connected to the organization in ways I never expected," said Weinstein.

Mentee Mark Tibergien, CEO of BNY Mellon's Pershing Advisor Solutions, also had a successful experience with the program. He said "The meetings with one of my reverse mentors are among the few that I look forward to. This is one of the single best things I have done since I joined Pershing six years ago." The experience allowed him to engage with employees in a way that he never had before. A pressing question Tibergien sought to address was the lack of Millennial presence in finance positions. Working with his first mentor, Flaten, Tibergien came up with questions for the reverse mentoring group, which provided feedback he then used in speeches and media coverage. Tibergien would continuously ask his mentors for advice to advance his programs.

The issue of financial education was critical to this pair not only at the level of their organization but for future generations. Tibergien had adopted his high school some years earlier, in 2009, but in the reverse mentor conversations, he and Flaten discovered their shared enthusiasm on the subject. Tibergien wanted to find a way to inspire the firm's clients to get involved, so he and Flaten formed a team of colleagues, including Andrew Conde, Becky D'Ambrosio, Kathy Kaye and Liz Kigin, to create the "Adopt a School" team. They now gather resources for advisors within Pershing to adopt a school. Since then, the team has inspired over 100 clients and internal associates to start the conversation with their schools.

Sustaining the Effort

Developing the program required many hours on the part of the original team—hours on top of their standard "day jobs" but considered well worth it because of the belief that the program would have long-term impact. They likened the experience to launching a new "business within a business," learning how to navigate throughout the organization to define, get buy-in and roll out the program. The care taken in the initial effort led to positive outcomes for the pilot's beta pairings. Word travelled quickly about the benefits of the experience, from both sides of the mentoring relationship. In one case, a pair that struggled in the beginning became one of the strongest relationships that resulted from the program. The Chief Information Office of BNY Mellon's Pershing, Ram Nagappan, was originally challenged by the concept of being mentored by a Millennial, but he became inspired by the program and wanted to learn more ways to get Millennials involved in the tech industry, an area where the company was looking to increase its attraction of a younger generation. Out of his experience, a successful idea was born: the founding of "TechMill." It's a group composed of Millennials in his business unit focused on making the technology department a better place to work. The group works on self-directed initiatives which they feel will have the biggest impact on employees. One such project involved helping to redesign the group's floor plan to more closely resemble that of a tech company layout.

Beyond the expectations of just technology exposure and Millennial mentoring and sponsoring, many unexpected outcomes have also developed. After mentoring then-CEO Ron DeCicco, Cimino realized more than ever that perception matters at the C-suite level. There are not many instances where Millennial employees can interact directly with top-level executives and learn about their personalities, business strategies, and networking advice. As a result of this program, Cimino was motivated to organize an employee event called "Off the Cuff," in which she informally interviewed DeCicco. This became one of the highest rated and attended events in 2015 and has since continued to include other mentor/mentee interview pairings. Its informal (and sometimes humorous) format has allowed Millennials—and the entire firm—to see a more intimate side of senior management while gaining key business insights.

The Pershing Reverse Mentoring Program has support at the senior level of its organization. It has also been noticed and adopted at the broader enterprise level, too. With a long-standing commitment to diversity and inclusion, BNY Mellon first incorporated a reverse mentoring component into one of its existing BRGs, the Women's Initiative Network (WIN). WIN supports the advancement of women across the enterprise through various channels and opportunities for professional development, leadership, enhanced visibility and greater connectivity with other employees and clients. WIN already had a traditional mentoring program for its members, so the addition of the reverse mentoring component has added another dimension for how members can learn from—and support—one another. Reverse mentoring has also become an important component of BNY Mellon's GenEdge BRG, which seeks to enhance workplace effectiveness by unifying its culture across generations and tapping into the knowledge capital, energy and individual skills of the four (soon to be five) generations of its workforce.

> **The Chief Information Officer of BNY Mellon's Pershing, Ram Nagappan, was originally challenged by the concept of being mentored by a Millennial, but he became inspired by the program.**

The Way Forward

In terms of publicity, the Reverse Mentoring Program story is starting to be told more broadly. The idea of having an executive mentee enhances the view of potential career development from within. To gain more coverage and find younger talent, program participants hosted a panel for the Big Brothers Big Sisters program to speak more about the industry. The leaders are also bringing CONNECT together with next generation leadership at client events and discussing topics of interest to Millennials. For future involvement, the program looks to pair executive members from the client side with Millennials at the firm. They hope to have a Millennial Advisory Board consisting of Millennials from the client side and led by a Millennial employee. The goal of this new board would be to work together to look at the future of the business and determine what the clients need most from the entire enterprise.

Lessons Learned

With a retention rate of 95% of Millennials who have taken part in the program, the development of outsourcing programs for client usage, and the mutual education of the mentor/mentee pairings—the program owes its success largely to its determined founders. When replicating this program in another organization, the number one piece of advice given is to have the right executive sponsor on board from the start. As a Millennial employee at a new firm, it can be difficult to find relationships or networks that can provide this kind of aid. However, once the right executive is identified, it can speed the program forward.

As noted, there was some initial apprehension about the program. Executive Committee members found it difficult to find time in their schedule for monthly meetings. When Cisco began its Gen Y Reverse Mentoring Program about two years ago, it was proud of the success of the program, but experienced a bit of the same pushback from executives in the mentee role. They weren't convinced of the value of being mentored by someone with less or little work experience. However, the program seems to prove the value of such an experience and has accomplished the original goal of Millennial retention.

Closing

Innovative programs such as reverse mentoring will likely proliferate in organizations, in all industries, in the coming years. Every company's ability to retain the incoming generations will depend on its stance toward them, and its ability to relate and to communicate to them the value proposition of staying, and succeeding, at the firm. As management teams depend on their ability to understand and reflect a diversifying workforce and marketplace, they will need to consider new concepts like mentoring, experimenting with traditional models and organizational assumptions and orthodoxies. This creates the need to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. This is where great learning occurs. Indeed, successful organizations will depend on it.

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