

LEADERSHIP AND THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

The Millennial Generation is taking over the workplace. They are now key team leaders and key contributors as team members. Leadership skills such as Inclusion, Respecting, Rewarding, Improvement, and Modelling must be tailored to this generation to be effective. This book shows you how.

Millennials as
Team Members, as
Team Leaders, and as
Team Leaders of Baby
Boomer Team
Members

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Team Leadership: Four lessons learned about leadership and the Millennial generation

Introduction: The Challenge

The majority of new professionals in all areas today are from the Millennial Generation (millennials) having being born between 1981 and 1996. By 2030, millennials will comprise more than 75% of the total U.S. professional workforce. If your organization is not actively developing capacity to lead this generation, productivity will suffer. While you may have excellent management talent and administration systems in place to design and control activity, leadership ability will make the difference in success or failure for organizations. How do I know this? Because that is how it is with any team effort: it is leadership qualities that make the difference in positive organizational outcomes such as productivity and employee satisfaction. Leadership, as I describe it in my research, is what gets team members to do what needs doing. Management talent is necessary; however, management skills and systems are control elements of employee activity. Team leaders motivate team members to do the necessary work to achieve goals.

Millennials aren't just team members, so this book also provides insight about millennials as leaders of both other millennials and older

generations. The book covers other areas such as the role extraversion vs. introversion plays, how this generation thinks about changing jobs, and communication style difference. Understanding how these elements play a part in the total leadership experience is basic to understanding the problems, challenges, and solutions regarding attracting, motivating, rewarding, and retaining team leaders and team members in today's workforce.

The concepts presented here were developed from several sources: my own professional career, interviewing team leaders and team members, and peer-reviewed organizational leadership research. Leadership challenges are presented, issues outlined, and solutions provided for the reader's use in their own leadership role.

This is not meant to be a textbook, rather a practical guide for use in the field. Here are solutions you can implement through your own efforts not requiring large-scale organizational change programs. The lessons learned provide the reader with a roadmap to new habits they can incorporate into their leadership practices. Just as you might want to improve your fitness by adopting exercise habits, you can improve your leadership of all generations by adopting new leadership habits.

Many team leaders are experiencing the challenges of leading millennials on their teams. Or you may be a millennial leading a team with

to the millennial leader that the boomer followers are “stuck in their ways” and dinosaurs. This type of thinking can lead down a path that creates a high desire by those team members to quit. There are so many minefields here this can be that one final issue that pushes the team member too far.

The leadership solution might be to ensure any modeling is done by another baby boomer. Find a respected salesperson from another division, for example, to teach new concepts. Point to senior management baby boomers as examples of how to look and act.

However, if there is value that can be provided by the team leader to the members, baby boomers will accept the modeling as they do want to be the best and to have team success. Appealing to these two attributes can open otherwise closed minds. It is even possible for the older generation to fully embrace the millennial way of acting and communicating, especially if they see this is the way to succeed in their job. They will not be committing fraud to their generation but will be adapting to change, something this resourceful generation is good at. The key is providing an acceptable pathway to this end. This involves the improvement behavior discussed earlier: a discussion about what can change to improve the team member’s prospects for success.

boomer members. If you are one of those leaders, these lessons provide you with comfort and direction.

Chapter One – Myth: Millennials are “job jumpers” by nature

A key factor in the success of a team is the depth of experience and knowledge of each team member. Time, effort, and organizational investment are how this depth is built. If people do not spend long in the job, the investment in those employees is lost and the new employer benefits. This is dysfunctional. A team leader’s goal should be to keep the team members who are worth keeping. The problem often heard, though, is that the millennial generation moves from job to job quickly. Government data says otherwise (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1997; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). The range of average tenure for employees ages 25-34 was 2.8 to 3.0 years for the period 1983-96 and 2.7 to 3.2 years for the period 2008-2018. Other age groupings show a similar pattern of little or no change over the years.

However, unreliable anecdotal data persists in reports that the millennials are “job hoppers” (Adkins, 2016). Here is the statistical reality: younger employees during any of the past worker generations are the most likely to “job hop.” This is not a “millennial issue” it is a “younger worker” issue. That is the first concept to understand in this chapter. This is not a new workplace phenomenon. The issue is how to approach the challenge of

any worker having some desire to quit. That is where millennials may differ from how previous generations reacted to leadership, so this is where attention needs to be paid to how millennials make decisions.

Leaders should change their focus from: "That's just the way millennials are and there isn't anything leaders can do about the turnover of younger employees because they are millennials." to: "How can I, as their leader, keep them with the team, keeping in mind they are millennials?" All younger employees of any generation studied had about three years of tenure on the job. To summarize:

1. Being from the millennial generation does not imply greater "job hopping."
2. Being from the millennial generation may imply the reasons for changing jobs may differ from earlier generations.
3. A leader must consider why an employee (any age!) may want to quit and address the reasons continuously to the best of their abilities and with the available resources.
4. A leader must learn how to lead millennials in a way appropriate to that generation's outlook and needs.

As noted, this leadership lesson can be applied to any age group, any demographic differentiation at all, and any psychographic characteristics of employee cohorts. This chapter is focused on keeping millennials longer than

the average three years: that is the organizational win in terms of productive team members.

This chapter provides background that is useful for the remaining chapters, so it is longer. The traits and characteristics of this generation provide clues to the personality drivers leaders can tap into to succeed.

Characteristics of millennials important to leading them

Improvement as a motivator

Millennials want to learn. They want to learn those things that will get them ahead. They want to learn about things that grab their attention. They want to learn the newest things. They want to learn in interactive ways, not lectures (Novotney, 2010). What this means to you as a leader is that you have a highly motivated employee who wants to learn, and if you don't provide the opportunity in the way they want it, they will find the opportunity to learn elsewhere (i.e. quit).

Growth, personal and professional

Millennials are very interested in becoming better people and better professionals. Growth is their key to opportunity. Coupled with learning and improving skills, growth is maturation in their profession. Millennials want to be respected as someone who has grown to become a serious contender. They want opportunity both in terms of positional advancement and monetarily. The bottom line is that if the millennial team member does not