

8 Reasons the Millennials Drive Us Crazy & How to Prepare Them to be Star High Potentials!

If your organization is to succeed, you must win the war for talent. This means attracting and retaining Millennials (those born 1980-2000). The Millennial Generation is the largest cohort since the Baby Boomers and by 2025, they will comprise 75% of the workforce. The first step to attracting and retaining Millennials is to understand why they are the way they are and act the way they act. The next step is know what to do about it.

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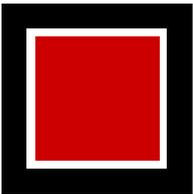
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By: Sue Daoulas

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Millennials have been empowered with a high level of self-regard and self-esteem. They have been taught to value community service, place a high priority on working for ethical companies, and performing meaningful work. They have also been taught that their opinions matter, that they can and should be an active participant in all decision making, and that they deserve respect, but only give it when deserved. They both embrace and expect teamwork and diversity in the workplace.

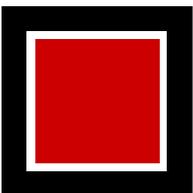
The consequences of these behaviors and attitudes among the Millennials are often a source of frustration among their supervisors and older co-workers.

Don't get mad, get even -- you can transform your high potential Millennials into star performers for your organization.



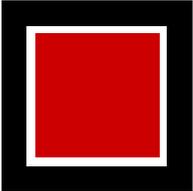
CONTRADICTION: Millennials have been conditioned to believe that their opinions matter and that they deserve respect, but are not taught to unconditionally "respect their elders", even their bosses.

SOLUTION: Be ethical and transparent in your actions and communications. Millennials respect hard work, integrity and honesty. Millennials need to be taught that being respectful will help them succeed in work and life. A respectful employee takes care of responsibilities, and a respectful employee gets along with colleagues. Remember, respect is not the same as obedience. Millennials might obey because they are afraid. If they respect you, they will obey because they want to and the quality of their work will be greater.



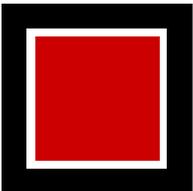
CONTRADICTION: They have been taught to be achievement oriented, but were raised on expressions such as "the results don't matter as long as you tried" and behavioral dynamics including "everyone makes the team" and "trophies for everyone".

SOLUTION: Be fair in the way you treat all employees. Millennials need to be taught that results DO matter in business, that competition is a good thing, and that not everyone is going to succeed unless they put forth great effort. Shift the message from "as long as you tried" to "it's not worth doing if you don't do it right". Taking pride in and ownership of workmanship/work product is a learned skill. Teach them that real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody's going to know whether you did it or not.



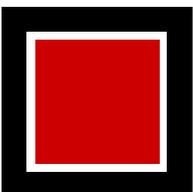
CONTRADICTION: While a high premium has been placed on education and high standards were set, schools were held accountable for students achieving the standards.

SOLUTION: Be very clear and aligned with your communication. Clearly communicate rules and expectations as well as rewards and consequences. Speak with clear authority, deliver clear and detailed messages, be assertive, build accountability at work, take more time teaching responsibility and creating trust relationships. Set high standards, communicate those standards and hold them responsible for meeting (or exceeding) those standards. Millennials (and most people) enjoy their work more when they feel a level of ownership. Their self-esteem goes up as they begin to feel valued as a contributing asset to the business.



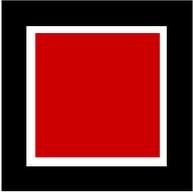
CONTRADICTION: In an era characterized by a heightened need for safety, the Millennials decision-making processes were curtailed; they had arranged play dates, parental controls on TV and computer games, and mandated safety requirements (e.g., bicycle helmets and car seats).

SOLUTION: Be an example of and advocate for good decision making skills. Decision making is an essential leadership skill; if you can learn how to make timely, well-considered decisions, then you can lead your team to well-deserved success. Millennials need to be encouraged to make responsible decisions at work; it helps them manage their own behavior and relate more effectively to co-workers. Build goal setting and decision making steps into assigned tasks by making them an explicit component of task instructions. This builds their capacity for self-regulated learning, which will enhance performance. It may be possible to improve the quality of people's lives by teaching them better decision-making skills.



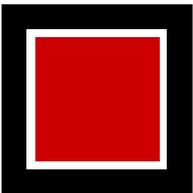
CONTRADICTION: After school activities, often determined by the parents, were usually designed to "build" their resumes and "expose" them to a range of academic, athletic, cultural and philanthropic enrichment opportunities. However, they frequently moved from one activity to the next when they became bored or unsuccessful, often before the program/season was complete.

SOLUTION: Be a guide, mentor, and teacher. Millennials need to be taught to take ownership of every task. To guide, provide opportunities and give them what they need -- clear directions. It is both effective and efficient to have them echo their understanding of a task back, and correct, as needed, from there. This also puts them in the right mindset of owning the task, and making sure they understand it, clarify, push back as necessary or reset expectations. Teach them the value of committing to a worthwhile endeavor because it's worthwhile, not just because it's easy or convenient. If they are to be taught to finish what they start and provide quality work, it is important to instill these lessons whether they like you for it or not.



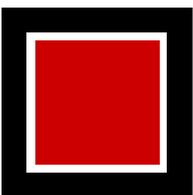
CONTRADICTION: Everyone, from parents and teachers to coaches and neighbors, has been intent on building their self-esteem, but has not necessarily taught them accountability and personal responsibility.

SOLUTION: Be a role model for personal responsibility and accountability and make it a priority throughout the organization. Building accountability at work will save you and your organization time and money. There are 5 essential elements of personal responsibility and accountability that Millennials need to learn: accept responsibility for their actions -- good or bad -- no excuses; they alone are responsibility for managing their own career; establish clear expectations for yourself and of others -- make sure everyone understands to avoid misunderstandings; let go of past disagreements, slights (real or imagined) and regrets -- it's in the past, it's over, move on; honesty IS the best policy -- trying to cover up a mistake only makes it



CONTRADICTION: Millennials grew up with very structured lives; the extreme opposite of the "latch key" children of Generation X who are known for their independence. Many have "helicopter parents" whom the children have come to rely on heavily in making college and career choices as well as everyday life decisions.

SOLUTION: Be clear about rules, policies, and expectations for work product as well as for procedures, behavior, dress, and communication. Most Millennials did not enter a new school, from kindergarten to college, without a check-list of personal supplies needed, a handbook of some sort that set forth rules and expectations as well as consequences for failure to comply, and information about available resources to aid in their transition and outline their path to success. Computer games have also conditioned them to expect clear steps to achieving the next level. All environments were structured to help them succeed and high levels of reciprocal communication were encouraged. Millennials want to succeed, they just need to know the rules and the steps required to achieve success. Successful organizations will attract and retain Millennials if they provide Millennials with the tools they need to learn and grow.



CONTRADICTION: The ready availability and widespread use of technology has ensured that they are "digital natives". Millennials use technology to give and receive nearly constant feedback and guidance. Posting personal information electronically (e.g. Facebook & Twitter) has dramatically shifted the lines of what is appropriate information to share with others.

SOLUTION: Be an advocate for the use of technology and establish clear limits. To the Millennials, online and real life are the same; they are skillful and creative about sharing information online. Successful business leaders have a track record of recognizing and capitalizing on advances in technology. Technological revolutions have always precipitated dramatic changes in the way organizations operate. Consider what the initial impact must have been by introduction of the telephone, the typewriter, the mimeograph and photocopying machines, and then desk top computers. Use the Millennials speed and efficiency with the Internet as the next technological revolution. There is no group better at using online social networking to promote people, services and ideas; establish and maintain connections with others; and mobilize volunteers and generate support for various causes. Let them help you identify and utilize the Internet to promote your organization, teach them the online behavior expected at your organization, and clearly communicate limits to what they share.

Strategy for Success:

Employers frequently make the two-fold mistake of expecting Millennials to be like them and to effortlessly transition into a traditional workplace. Understanding generational differences is the first step toward improved communication, employee relations and employee engagement. For organizations to compete successfully in today's challenging global business environment, the workforce must operate at peak performance, but to do this, organizations must meet these contradictions head on.

Millennials will likely be remembered for their hard work at the grassroots level through the renewal of community, teamwork, and the civic spirit, and as those who ushered in the internet as the next technological revolution.

Resources:

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Dealing with those #\$\$@ Millennials: 7 Strategies to Manage Millennials in the Workplace - By: Sue Daoulas