

A young woman with long, wavy brown hair is looking down at a tablet computer she is holding. She is wearing a dark, patterned top. The background is a blurred city street at night with bokeh lights in various colors (yellow, orange, green, blue).

UNDERSTANDING THE MYTH OF MILLENNIAL WORKERS

*A Stronger Workforce Can Begin With
A Deeper Understanding of Millennials*

By Tommy Schroeder, Vice President, Workloud

Summary

Tuning into the growing conversation regarding Millennials as a generation, it's not hard to find an assemblage of articles debating various perceived differences between Millennials—also known as Generation Y—and their predecessors. But are Millennials really that different than their elder coworkers when comparing workplace values and desires? New research has found clear and insightful evidence that workers across all generations are significantly more similar than many employers might assume. Businesses that are attempting to adopt an altered attitude and treatment towards their Millennial workforce are likely harming, rather than benefitting, their workplace culture. Obviously, maintaining a healthy and positive workplace environment is crucial to ensuring your business is both successful and productive, but is it balanced, consistent and objective? In this report, we'll take a closer look at how a modern workforce management system connects employees across generational gaps and maximizes employee exuberance and engagement.

Millennials vs. The Rest of Us: Much Ado About Nothing?

Generational disparities are indisputable. As decades pass, technologies progress, along with societies and communities that envelop those technologies. Consequently, it's only natural for the people within these societies to adapt to the occurrences that surround them. It wasn't long ago that "baby boomers" would sound the alarm about the perceived differences between their own generation and the generation of their children, know as Gen Xers. Now we are seeing that same scrutiny applied by the Gen Xers to the new generation of Millennials, defined as those born roughly between the years 1980-2000. Millennials have been described as lazy, entitled, and narcissistic. Beyond that, they carry the stigma of not capable of working hard when there is a lack of instant gratification, due to their "addiction" to cell phones and the Internet.



Millennials vs. The Rest of Us: Much Ado About Nothing? (Continued)

Although the media has created significant hype around this topic, dissenting research and data claims the opposite, dismissing many of these beliefs as myths, and proving that Millennials might be a lot more like their preceding generations than is often recognized. In fact, research highlighted in an article in the Harvard Business Review, *What Do Millennials Really Want at Work? The Same Things the Rest of Us Do*, supports this very argument in regard to workplace habits, values, and desires. Despite certain claims, Millennials in the workplace have proven to be much more similar to their elder coworkers than they are different. Interestingly, generational differences outside of the workplace are vastly different than they are within the workplace. In the end, Millennials care about fundamental values like hard work, fair treatment, the opportunity to advance, and a culture where hard work pays dividends. Sounds vaguely familiar, does it not? In fact, meaningful differences between employees of varying generations are practically nonexistent when it comes to what most of us are looking for from an employer. It turns out that much of the chatter circulating around Millennial employees vs. previous generations, actually fails to hold up under primary and secondary research scrutiny.

What Do Millennials Really Want at Work? The Same Things the Rest of Us Do.

While pithy descriptions of what makes Millennials unique are presented as self-evident and seem to have a ring of truth to them, very few are supported with solid empirical research. On the contrary, a growing body of evidence suggests that employees of all ages are much more alike than different in their attitudes and values at work. To the extent that any gaps do exist, they amount to small differences that have always existed between younger and older workers throughout history and have little to do with the Millennial generation per se...There are plenty of examples to cite. For one, a group of researchers from George Washington University and the Department of Defense analyzed more than 20 published and unpublished studies examining generational differences and concluded that meaningful differences among generations probably do not exist in the workplace.

Reprinted from the Harvard Business Review, From *What Do Millennials Really Want at Work? The Same Things the Rest of Us Do*. By Bruce N. Pfau, April 7, 2016, Copyright © 2016 Harvard Business Publishing; all rights reserved.



How do Generational Differences *Actually* Manifest in the Workplace?

According to Forbes, Millennials will make up 75% of the workforce by the year 2025. As business owners and managers have become hyper-aware of this fact, articles and studies have begun to examine Millennials' behavior as employees. Findings are abundantly clear that the key to a strong work culture isn't to treat Millennials differently, but rather to unite around a strong core mission for all employees across generational divides. The solution isn't treating one employment segment differently than another, the real solution is making certain we treat all segments with empathy and understanding. As many would say, we need to turn our sights away from "self-help" and start focusing on "helping others" and that spans any generational chasm.

"Targeted organizational interventions addressing generational differences may not be effective."

Generational Differences in Work-Related Attitudes: A Meta-analysis, David P. Costanza, Jessica M. Badger, Rebecca L. Fraser, Jamie B. Severt and Paul A. Gade

In the previously referenced Harvard Business Review article, *What Do Millennials Really Want at Work? The Same Things the Rest of Us Do*, the conclusions are that the media clamor on the "Millennial vs. Us" topic should be written-off as a phenomenon that has occurred between generations throughout history. In the author's book, *The Human Capital Edge*, which he co-wrote with Ira Kay, they found that regardless of the generation, and for that matter race, religion and gender, all employee segments had a strong desire to answer "yes" to the following four questions:

- 1 Is this a winning organization I can be proud of?
- 2 Can I maximize my performance on the job?
- 3 Are people treated well economically and interpersonally?
- 4 Is the work itself fulfilling and enjoyable?



How do Generational Differences *Actually* Manifest in the Workplace? (Continued)

Similarly, an Executive Report published by IBM's Institute for Business Value sets out to dispel the common myths surrounding Millennials in the workplace. Entitled *Myths, exaggerations and uncomfortable truths: The real story behind Millennials in the workplace*, the report tackles the false claim that Millennials, as a generation, differ vastly from their coworkers. By studying 1,784 employees of all generations from companies across 12 countries and six industries, IBM was able to reveal unsupported workforce management fallacies. In their research, they found that Millennials aligned with Gen Xers and Baby Boomers regarding their career goals, and likewise shared the same workplace priorities and desires. Across the board, every generation emphasized the need for inspirational leadership, a clearly articulated vision and business strategy, a flexible work-life balance, performance-based recognition and promotions, the freedom to innovate, and a collaborative work environment.

“What does it take to engage employees at work? Millennials’ priorities align with those of other generations”

Myths, exaggerations and uncomfortable truths: The real story behind Millennials in the workplace, IBM Institute for Business Value

Millennials, statistically, are almost identical to other generations in every category pertaining to their professions and the workplace. With all of the outcry over Millennial's supposed entitlement, narcissism, short attention spans, and participation medals, we have yet to see any of it actually have a noticeable statistical impact in the workplace setting. Claims such as increased job-hopping have proven to be identical between Millennials and older generations, when they were the age that Millennials are now.

It turns out that, where it counts, Millennials in the workforce are just like the rest of us.



Engaging Employees and Maximizing Productivity

In order for your company or organization to be successful, it is crucial that you promote a positive workplace culture, which prioritizes and exemplifies the values and wants of your employees. Every employee must be motivated to fulfill their individual potential, which is achieved through building a higher sense of purpose among the entire workforce. It's this sense of purpose that will drive individual employees of all generations to give their best and achieve the most. This sense of motivation, if prioritized in conjunction with employee well being and happiness, lays the foundation for successful companies in every field and industry.

According to a study by economists at the University of Warwick, employee happiness led to a 12% spike in productivity while unhappy workers proved to be 10% less effective. That's a 22% swing in productivity that could have a very real impact on any company's bottom line. The study also found that the more content workers are, the better collaborators they become. This is an essential trait for achieving a wide range of goals. As Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage* sees it, companies that take the right steps, and that includes treating Millennials the same as other workers, will find that "happiness leads to greater levels of profit."

"Human happiness has large and positive causal effects on productivity. Positive emotions appear to invigorate human being."

University of Warwick



Every manager would agree that success does not come easy, and every day there is work that needs to be accomplished. Each employee must fulfill their role and uphold their responsibilities in order to make this happen. Because we know that productivity is tied to happiness and discontent employees almost always underperform, it stands to figure that any tools or resources that a business can utilize that increases the chances of enhancing a content workforce, will pay dividends in the end. Work that is completed faster, better, of higher quality and cheaper, is unanimously recognized as superior. Considering these factors, it is clear that we all must build a team-oriented workplace environment, where work is regarded as more than just a required job or collection of mundane tasks.

By instilling passion, employees will tackle their responsibilities with increased diligence and excitement. By giving employees more latitude, they'll feel more connected to the outcomes and achievements of the business as a whole, which will, in turn, elevate their sense of purpose. This is a common theme across all workplace cultures that are effective and prosperous. This task is made much easier by modern workforce management systems, such as Workloud, which help to instill a greater sense of purpose, not only in each individual employee, but also as a pillar of a workplace environment. Adding inspiration to the workforce is, in effect, adding a jolt of profitability.

Fostering Workplace Culture in the Modern World

No doubt, technology has revolutionized society and our daily lives in every facet of our existence. Technological advances have altered and improved not only a customer's experience, but also the way that employees interact with their company on a daily basis. New technology has afforded many opportunities that were previously inaccessible and this includes workforce management systems, which have created a new way of connecting employees with their employers in a manner that can be both collaborative, transparent, empowering and inspirational. Workforce management systems facilitate the creation of a stronger, better work environment, and enable companies to create the type of culture that breeds success.



How Workforce Management Systems Work For You

If you're looking to build a stronger, better company culture in today's world, look to a workforce management system to provide your required outcomes. Not only will using a workforce management solution reduce your labor costs by 2-4%, and in some cases quite a bit more, the right systems can save a business between 10-20% on overtime costs.

By providing employees with greater flexibility through scheduling features, or offering them mobile applications that increase engagement and communication, or by managing vacation and leave requests in an organized and orderly manner, virtually any business from 50 to 50,000 employees can see differences in productivity, morale and a blurring of the lines between inter-generational employees.

And as we've learned, believing that the Millennial workforce is looking for a leg-up, some sort of special treatment and acknowledgment, or more work-life balance than someone else just isn't accurate.

About Workloud

Founded 21 years ago, Workloud is a technology company focused on workforce management software solutions. The company specializes in providing small, mid-size and large corporations and organizations with a SaaS solution for Time and Attendance, Employee Scheduling and Absence Management software. The company's products are used throughout the United States and Canada in locations that serve 10,000 employees and in facilities with 50 employees.

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