

More Than Money: Business Strategies to Engage Millennials

Kristin Holmberg-Wright, University of Wisconsin –Parkside, Wisconsin USA
Tracy Hribar, University of Wisconsin –Parkside, Wisconsin USA
Jennifer D. Tsegai, University of Utah – Salt Lake City, Utah USA

ABSTRACT

The overall disengagement of employees continues to climb while the workforce undergoes a paradigm shift as Baby Boomers retire and Millennials take over. Work conditions, not financial, must be provided which allow Millennials to succeed professionally and personally. Companies need to provide such things as a clear career path, strong coaching, mentoring and leadership, making the vision and mission statements drive the organization, on-going personal and professional development, and a semi-structured environment. As the workforce is experiencing a paradigm shift, it behooves us as academics to address not only what this means to the workforce but also to correct the deplorable disengagement issue. Academe must work in consort with business to identify and make the changes necessary to engage the Millennials in the workforce.

Keywords: millennials, engagement

INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that our workforce is changing rapidly. It now appears that the workforce is experiencing a paradigm shift. Currently, there are three generations in the work place. The Baby Boomers (born 1946-64) are now retiring in large numbers; Generation X (born 1965-79) and Generation Y or Millennials (born 1982-2004) are the makeup of today's workforce. According to a study by CAA Intel Group, 86 million Millennials will be in the work place by 2020 – representing a full 40% of the total work population. More than one in three American workers today are Millennials and in 2015, they surpassed Generation X to become the largest share of the American workforce. (Fry, 2015) Obviously, the makeup of the workforce is undergoing a major shift.

Yet, a stark reality today is that overall employees of all three generations are not engaged in the workforce. According to a Gallup survey, from 2000-2015, only 32% of employees in the US were engaged in the workplace. The sad statistic is that 50.8% of US employees were not engaged while 17.2% were actively disengaged (Adkins, January 2016) Employee engagement is the emotional commitment an employee has to the organization and its goals. (Kruse, 2012) Employee engagement is not a measure of how happy an employee is at work, rather, it is how much the employee feels invested in and motivated by the job. Engagement can often be seen in the amount of discretionary effort workers exert on the job.

Millennials will be approximately 75% of the workforce by 2020. (PWC, 2011) Today, there are more 26 year olds in the US than any other age. (Mogan, 2016) Due to greatly outnumbering the Gen Xers in the workplace, and with the increasing retirement of the Baby Boomers, the Millennial generation is taking on more roles in business. Yet, stereotypes have emerged that Millennials are lazy, self-centered, and have unrealistic expectations for job titles and pay in the workplace. Many companies have turned their focus to programs aimed at their Millennials in an effort to build engagement and increase retention. And still, Millennials have emerged as the job hopping generation, (Adkins, May 2016) supporting the 2016 Gallup report indicating that over 70% of Millennials are not engaged at work. Academia needs to assist with business in addressing the current situation and to assist businesses to make the necessary changes to provide engagement opportunities for the Millennial generation.

The companies that don't realize and adapt to the generational changes are rapidly losing employees due to disengagement. Managers are left trying to figure out why employees – most especially Millennials - are leaving and what they can do to keep them. It isn't as simple as studying the culture and understanding what motivates the younger generation. The challenge is how to find a balance between the generations so that the workplace is harmonious and can work together and remain engaged. The question becomes how must the current business scene change to not only recognize the newest generations entrance, but to capitalize on their strengths and new found perspective while engaging them in changing the way we teach business. This is where responsibility should lie with

higher education institutions. We need to change the way we educate and engage with the new generation of students and future employees. When the business world experiences changes, the immediate impact should be felt and addressed by academia. It is critical higher education institutions and programs lead the change and are open to refining not only the way we teach, but the actual way we engage with the Millennial generation. Our study will discuss strategies business schools should/could implement to address Millennial engagement issues.

OUR STUDY

Our study involved focus groups of individuals from both Generation X and Y. We concentrated on asking individuals and focus groups about job engagement and motivation, decision making, communication, and leadership. Many people shared ideas or thoughts in other areas as a result of their answers. The quotes included are from the focus groups.

Millennials are different from previous generations and in a number of ways – some say an infinite number of ways. Millennials are bringing a new perception of what the business world should be like and how the relationship between the employer/management and employee should be structured. The average tenure of a Millennial is two years. (Fromm, 2015) While two years may seem like a short amount of time to a Gen Xer or Baby Boomer, it may be just enough time for a Millennial to absorb their surroundings and make a decision on whether or not the position, manager, or company satisfies their needs. *“We are used to watching TV on demand, Netflix or binge watching an entire series when we want, so waiting for a promotion might be challenging.”* Because of the Millennial generation’s entrance into the workforce, we see some dramatic shifts.

Who is a Millennial?

“We like technology and innovation. We get bored easily. We want to have the next best idea. We love our lives outside of work. We are not like our parents or their parents. We do things differently. We have different priorities. Managers must adjust to us, because we are here and we will be here longer than they will.” This is how a Millennial in a focus group described himself and his generation.

Howe and Strauss are credited with coining the term “Millennial” and in their book *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584-2069*, they describe a Millennial as someone born between 1982 and 2004. (Rouse) Although opinions differ about the specific age range, there is general consensus that Millennials are the generation born in the last twenty years of the twentieth century.

The following captures overall the Millennial generation (Goldman Sachs, 2016)

They are the only generation that has lived totally in the digital age and, as such, have collected a huge network of friends through internet based relationships.

They have witnessed the largest recession since the Great Depression, watching the adults around them suffer job loss, losing homes to foreclosure, and experiencing the disappearance of 401K’s and pensions.

They are the children of the highest divorce rates and most single parent homes in history.

They have lived in the super media infused age of news where they witnessed 911, Columbine and other school shootings, and natural disasters and terrorist attacks.

They are the children of the 2001 ‘No Child Left Behind’ initiative.

They are the largest generation. There are more Millennials than any other generation in history, approximately 91 million.

They have the highest unemployment rate and the lowest income of all generations before them, while also holding the largest amount of student debt.

There is a certain stigma that has developed referring to Millennials as lazy and lacking in a work ethic that prior generations portrayed. While there are definitely examples of 20-year-olds with a poor work ethic, the stereotype should not be applied to all young people in the work place. Millennials can and are excelling in the work place. From our study, we have identified certain characteristics that an organization may choose to develop in order to engage Millennials.

Mission and Vision

Motivating Millennials starts with portraying the company values, vision and mission clearly throughout the entire organization. This should apply to all people within organizations, regardless of the average employee age, but it is especially important to companies with a strong Millennial presence. Millennials want to work with purpose and to make a difference within the organization and to the world. (Watkins, January 2015)

Renjen (Renjen, 2016) offered three factors for consideration to organizations to ‘earn the loyalty of their Millennial professionals.’ The first factor was to create a culture of purpose, next, establish values to have a long term success, and finally, utilization of people’s strengths and abilities. *“I was severely underutilized in a position and ended up leaving the company because I was bored. I think this is something that ties into having a clear vision. With a clear vision, everyone in the company understands where they need to go and can assign the right tasks to people. Without a clear vision, management will not be sure what tasks to assign and will then assign mundane tasks in order for their employees to be doing something. These mundane tasks generally do not lead to employee development but to boredom and the urge to search for another company that has the possibility of being more fulfilling.”*

It is important that work environments provide satisfaction to Millennials existential needs. The generation wants to give back to the community and the world in meaningful ways rather than focusing merely on profit making. *“If a company wants to attract me, their organizational culture must match my values. The values, culture and perception of a company play an important role in how I feel or think about a company – whether it be to work for them or buy from them.”* Our focus groups also made mention of the importance of offering Millennials volunteer opportunities, internships and business based projects while in college. Perhaps, colleges and businesses should work together to design these type of high impact learning experiences for students that can then open work opportunities in the future for the students.

Millennials tend to value knowing what they are working toward. In general, they like to understand the reason why they are doing things and what the final outcome should be. When the company vision is clear, they not only work towards it, but they can also apply creativity in finding ways to reach the goal. It is the responsibility of upper management to make the vision clear and should be a major priority and emphasis at all times.

Learning

Millennials are also motivated by learning. Constant learning and change keeps them interested and encourages engagement. A survey led by Adecco states that 68% of Millennials are looking for professional/leadership education. (Rouse, 2015) Likewise, a study by the University of North Carolina found nearly 2/3 of the Millennials say that the most influential factor in their current job is the opportunity for personal growth. (Nickell, 2014) They are looking for the next best thing and they want to improve themselves constantly to reach the top. *“To motivate Millennials, you need to offer us growth, because we are not satisfied until we move onto the next job.”* Here is another opportunity for colleges and universities to work in consultation with local businesses providing on the job learning and growth opportunities.

Millennials who continue to learn new things in the work place by job sharing, cross training, and development activities can experience great benefits. *“I love to learn new things at work. I am definitely aiming to become more and more of an asset to the company and the best way to do that is to learn a lot.”* Another Millennial commented *“the more I learn, the more useful I am. Because my tenure cannot be an advantage at this point in time, knowledge is my biggest asset to advancing. I don’t want to be stuck in the same position forever.”*

Many Generation Y’s enjoy learning by associating with other individuals. In a study by Bentley University, it was found that Millennials like to learn new skills through in-person methods including face-to-face training, third party events and guidance from co-workers. (Hyder, 2013) This isn’t to say that online modules don’t work, but one should not assume that a tech savvy group doesn’t value personal interaction. *“I especially enjoy learning from others in the workplace where I can ask questions and enjoy the compadre.”*

Communication

For the most part, Millennials enjoy social interaction with co-workers, managers, and also suppliers and customers. (Gasca, 2016) Yet, communication is viewed in many ways differently by Generation Y. Growing up in the world

of Facebook and Twitter has had an impact on Millennials that no other generation could even imagine. Any 20-something today has spent the last 5-10 years of their life constantly engaging in social aspects of life. Millennials are social in two vastly different worlds. One of these worlds is real while the other world is entirely virtual using social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat. Millennials have an app for everything they desire in a fast paced and changing world. Most young adults are not comfortable just being alone in the peace and quiet. They want to be part of something and communicate with others. *“I am generally a quiet kid and keep to myself, but I do love the fact that everyone in the finance department does know me and I know them. This has helped me a ton and made showing up to work that much better. I love working with others in teams and learning from them and teaching them things. It does motivate me to come to work with a good attitude and contribute quality work to the group.”*

Communication is the key to improving the attitude, understanding, and direction of Millennials. With the progress of technology, communication no longer has to be (nor should it be) completely face-to-face. Facebook and Twitter have been the biggest drivers of change in communication patterns. *“I enjoy being able to quickly type a message and share it with the world. It gives me instant feedback on whatever topic is on my mind and resolve it within a moment of posting.”* The Millennial worker wants communication to be quick, more instantaneous, and shared among many. Their primary form of communication is chat or text and, because of access to these forms of communication, individuals are available 24-hours a day on their technology. They get their news, movies, and books via the internet and that is where they may seek to learn and grow on the job.

Yet, having actual personal interactions is also important. Communication needs to be two-way as Millennials want to be heard. They want to feel important to the organization and that requires a relationship and communication with leaders of the company. They want managers and executives to promote honesty and integrity going both ways. And, they want their leaders to provide and teach them the ‘why’ of what they are doing. *“At my company, executives have made themselves accessible to all employees. We regularly have ‘town hall meetings’ which has allowed me to understand what they are trying to achieve and the vision they have for the company. Hearing that explained from actual people was way better than reading a quote on a website. All managers should be personal with employee and allow employees to be personal with them. It motivates employees to truly do their best to help out others in the company.”*

Having learned to communicate using technology, often Millennials are unaware of their nonverbal cues which has often contributed to miscommunication between friends, coworkers, and managers. *“At times, I must admit, I forget that my words only account for a small part of communication.”* College classes in communication and management should address the new communication technologies as well as discussion and understanding of the impact – both negative and positive – such technologies present. The learning should definitely be addressed while the individual is in college and in a learning environment.

Millennials electronic literacy can be leveraged for communication in general. They are the first cohort to grow up with computers and cell phones in their homes. They have been with technology for much, if not all, of their lives. While most Millennials prefer to email and text over other communication mediums, happy mediums are becoming more popular that bridge the gap between efficiency and effective relationship building. For example, Skype and telepresence meetings allow face-to-face conversations from the convenience of one’s office.

Though the Web plays a supporting role in getting and communicating information, Millennials may also use what has been referred to as a ‘Millennial Advisory Board’ composed of parents and other family members, friends, coworkers, school advisors, professional specialists like wedding planners and realtors, and their partners or spouses.” (Albritton, 2017) This is the group the individuals will rely on regularly for assistance and advice as decisions are made and the future is approached.

Teamwork

Having grown up in a world where they can instantly reach out to anyone, Millennials are used to working in teams and expect to make friends with people at work. Generation Y has grown up in the world of collaboration, a world where you can reach out instantly to anyone and virtually see them. Collaboration and teamwork go hand-in-hand. This generation truly believes that teams can accomplish more and have witnessed the success of teams. *“When I first started working, I was mocked by my colleagues for signing up for too many extra-curricular activities/committees at work – but quickly learned that this was an easy way to get exposure and get ahead in the company.”* As Millennials jump at the opportunity to work on teams, they are networking, marketing themselves,

and getting exposure to help them with their intrinsic satisfaction and career growth. Colleges and universities do offer a multitude of team experiences. What, perhaps, needs to be improved is the actual teaching of what teamwork involves. The actual experience of working on a team needs to be expanded to foster additional understanding of the dynamics of various team efforts.

Generation Y has often been dubbed the ‘everybody gets a trophy’ generation. They are a generation in which everyone either played a sport, were in a band or orchestra, or took part in dance recitals. They learned early in life to recognize everyone’s contributions in a group setting and how to work together to achieve success. Understanding this view can be difficult for the Baby Boomers and Gen Xer’s who were raised in a generally more competitive environment. While it’s been recognized that collaborative thinking often breeds greater success than an individual approach, earlier generations seek a greater level of personal recognition, whereas Millennials are content to enjoy success together as long as the greater goal is achieved.

As such, Millennials approach tasks from a team perspective, even when a team has not been defined. An insightful example came from a member of a focus group. *“I held an experiment about two years ago as part of a seminar that I was taking on understanding the generational gap. In this experiment, I had a Millennial intern on one side and a seasoned employee on the other. I asked each team to come up with a strategic plan on how we could make improvements on our current maintenance work management system in order to reduce inefficiencies. I gave them 20 minutes to brainstorm the ideas and then they were to get back together and see me the ideas. As the teams went on their way, I noticed that the millennial immediately picked up an electronic device and started texting acquaintances and posed the question online to them. After a few minutes, their inbox was filled with suggestions and ideas from hundreds of people. The Millennial gathered all the ideas and responded to everyone that had sent in suggestions. He then emailed me the list and still had 10 minutes to spare so they continued chatting on social media. The Boomer was different in the fact they went off on their own to figure it out themselves. They went straight to the technical library and started physically researching the information. The Boomer then walked over to a fellow coworker that was also a Boomer and began talking about the task. After about 15 minutes, the Boomer finally emerged from behind the desk and was ready to discuss. I asked the Millennial to pitch to me what they had researched. The next words that came out of the mouth of the Millennial made me realize a major difference. When the Millennial was giving me ideas, they kept saying WE came up or WE suggest. The Millennial gathered answers as a group and then presented those ideas as such. The Boomer, on the other hand, pitched the idea to me and kept saying I. The interesting thing about it was they both came up with similar ideas but by very different methods.”*

Diversity

Millennials also expect teams to have diverse representation. The generation is very respectful and forward thinking about diversity. They look at diversity as something to blend together experiences, culture, perspective, and backgrounds. Diversity to a Millennial is not merely a racial or gender divide. They have grown up with representations of other races and backgrounds portrayed in the media and popular culture. They will not notice differences per se. Millennials view diversity as a strength resulting in many different viewpoints and solutions to the same problem. Working on diverse teams also offers the Millennial a learning experience they can make use of in their future undertakings. *“We don’t care if our coworkers or boss is a woman or someone from a different racial background; we just want to work with bright people that advance our careers.”*

Wilkie (Willkie, 2015) pointed out that it may be important for Millennials managers to be more aware of diversity. Their early exposure to diversity doesn’t mean they will automatically approach the hiring or promotions process in a manner that embraces different races, genders, cultures, religions, or sexual preferences. They will overall be inclusive but may need to be more aware of the varied differences to assure an organization has wide representation. It behooves higher education to continually address issues of diversity throughout the Millennials’ educational experience which allows the transfer of understanding to the workplace.

Feedback

Millennials like to get immediate feedback on their thoughts and performance and this is exactly what they get by working in a team and collaborating through technology. Millennials don’t want annual reviews; they want ongoing conversations. Reviewing performance once or twice a year does not work for them. They want constant feedback. Millennials don’t so much want to fix their weaknesses; they want to develop their strengths. *“It’s not just my job, it’s my life.” “In my profession, I do manage Millennials and it is my personal experience that they expect feedback*

often. *However, they need assignments that create continuous learning and allowing them to solve important problems for the company.*”

It has been hypothesized that the reason the generation needs constant and consistent feedback is due to the hyper-focus on performance they were accustomed to during their school years. For example, No Child Left Behind was introduced into the public schools in 2001 which forced funding to be tied to test results. It is at that time that American education shifted from a learning focus to a performance based focus. As a result of this shift, instructors increased the frequency of feedback to ensure that students could correctly answer test questions based on the content they were being taught. (Thompson, 2012) *“Providing regular feedback is especially crucial for us, because we are constantly seeking feedback (good and bad) so that we can remain motivated and develop ourselves.”*

Flexibility

Millennials require flexibility on the job. Flexibility has multiple aspects to it, such as putting an end to the classic 9 to 5 job, decision making, telecommuting, and innovation. Flexibility in the workplace is becoming more of the norm than an actual incentive. The Insurance Education Foundation ran a study in 2016. 4 out of 5 of the millennial respondents said that they would rather have more vacation time and the ability to work from home than increased pay. On the other hand, Gen Xer’s took the same survey and 1 out of 5 came back with the same results. This shows a stark difference regarding flexibility in the workplace and has implications going forward.

Though they require flexibility to get things done, they also require structure and boundaries due to the fact they were often hyper-scheduled by (overbearing) adults during their childhood years. Overall, as a group Generation Y appears to be less tolerant of boredom than any other generation. They will need structure in their job duties and assignments much like they had in school when they juggled schools, sports, music, and other activities. The major difference is that they will want flexibility from the employer once a duty or assignment is given.

Flexibility also comes in the form of telecommuting. Growing up with cell phones and laptops have strongly formed the lifestyle of Millennials. This accessibility has encouraged the creation of telecommuting. *“If you told me I could have one day a week where I didn’t have to wake up at 5:30 and drive an hour to work, I would be ecstatic. Working from home would allow me to wake up at 8, eat breakfast, watch TV, make a nice lunch, get some laundry done, and be home before I would on a normal day. With that said, I do not believe I would be nearly as productive with the many distractions that are at home. But for morale purposes, I believe it would be worth it to a company to allow it in a moderate amount.”*

Flexibility in decision making can also be a strong asset for the engaging a Millennial. When a Millennial has the power to make their own decisions and are supported by their managers, they can apply innovation and take risks. Innovation and risk taking are also strong characteristics of Millennials. *“I love the freedom to improve processes and make my life easier whenever possible. I also like the idea of having the freedom to innovate and impact the company in a positive way with an idea that was my own. Something that I actually did actually made a difference.”*

The overall decision making process will look very different from past generations. As discussed earlier, they have been reared to work in group settings and to value input from everyone. *“Our generation grew up with the words ‘Google it’, that is what we know and that is what we are going to use. Digital media reverberates throughout the decision making process. What we see or how we interpret the world is based largely upon our online experience.”* They need to be allowed to integrate the use of information technologies and computer mediated communication as aides in decision making. While they may not have historically been seen as the most effective form of decision making in the past, utilizing instant messaging and other technology mediums is quickly becoming a preferred method of communication in the workplace. *“I often find myself calling team meetings via technology to talk through scenarios, collaboration on decision making, and to build consensus.”*

Encouraging risk taking is another motivating factor for many Millennials. Millennials should be involved in decision making and the consideration of risk factors. *“I could conduct the necessary research and pursue certain risks that I believe could be beneficial to the company. Then, I would present my case to upper management and they would make the final call. That would be the freedom I would prefer and would incorporate if it were my call. I would not tell anybody they couldn’t take risks, but I wouldn’t let them take any big risk alone.”*

Leadership

When it comes to leadership and management styles, Millennials want a mentor and a coach, not a manager. The generation wants an open door relationship with an experienced professional who will encourage them to reach their full potential. *“When we ask questions like why, which other generations taught us to do, it’s not that we are being disrespectful. It’s because we do our best work when we see the purpose behind it and we are looking for someone to coach us to understand the purpose. So if you want to get the most out of Millennials, it’s paramount that you have managers that understand the best way to lead is by being a good role model and coaching employees.”*

They want to be treated like adults and trusted. Millennials are “used to loving parents who have scheduled their lives around activities and events of their children. These young adults have ideas and opinions and don’t take kindly to having their thoughts ignored. After all, they had the best listening, most child-centric audience in history.” (Tips for Managing Millennials) Generation Y also looks to others such as parents, other family members, friends, co-workers, school advisors, partners or spouses for coaching and mentoring. One Millennial in the focus groups referred to such a group as her ‘Millennial Advisory Board.’

Work environment. Millennials want an enjoyable or fun work environment. They read about companies like Google, Zappos and tech startups and get discouraged when their work environment does not compare. They are easily excited by the little things such as their boss spontaneously letting them leave an hour early, bringing in food, or planning a fun activity together. *“We are more productive and engaged when we are happy. We appreciate company events, luncheons, social gatherings, fun contests.”*

They are interested in the overall office layout. They are interested in flexible work stations and open areas for small meetings. The workspace design can often attract the Millennial to an organization and adds to the overall corporate culture Generation Y is interested in being a part of. Millennials often organize their space to meet their goals. (Brandt, 2014) *“My office cube regularly has visitors. I have a huge collection of magnets from all over the world on my overhead shelves, my cube walls are lined with printed canvases of my photography, and it is all compete with a huge candy bowl. My mentality is that work is my home away from home so I might as well enjoy my living quarters; but I have also found that it benefits me socially at work. All sorts of people notice my cube and stop and talk with me – I’ve formed a lot of friendships this way with other departments which has helped with networking and even talking out projects I’m working on or issues I am facing.”*

Fun work environments also are known for boosting or driving innovation, creativity, and collaboration. 73% of US Millennials consider themselves to be creative (Bergh, 2015) and when asked what creativity meant to them, the word ‘innovation/new’ ranked #1. Having grown up in a world which experienced a lot of societal change, many educated Millennials tend to be innovative and creative. As such, there is a high enthusiasm for being in environments that facilitate innovative independence. *“I am part of the social media team at work and I asked a fellow younger coworker what he would do to improve our social media presence. He immediately said we should do funny videos with our employees that highlight our product and service. These videos would be more organic and engage our customers better than another print ad. It is also possible that a video may go viral which would really enhance the company’s exposure. This would be something creative that he would love to work on and come up with and applies perfectly to how Millennials can use their creativity in the workplace.”*

Ethics

Generation Y is the first to study business ethics in college, with plenty of examples such as Enron and WorldCom to learn from. Millennials care about the environment, and this can be seen in the increase of companies who publish sustainability reports (81% of Fortune 500 companies in 2015). (npr, 2016) They strongly feel that an organization’s success should not be measured by profits, but should include a larger purpose. In one study, 49% of the Millennial participants had rejected an assignment at work due to ethics and 56% would not work for a company with questionable values. (Yakowicz.) As Millennials become a more significant percentage of the economy, companies need to appeal to their need for social responsibility if they want to hire and/or sell to this generation. They constantly share stories on social media platforms of companies who are not socially responsible. *“Just this last month on Facebook, I’ve seen lists of companies who test on animals, horrific videos of the treatment of dairy cows and a ‘how it is made’ video on gummy bears that will prevent me from ever eating gummy candy again.”*

Work/life balance. Finally, work/life balance is an expectation of Millennials. They appreciate perks such as flextime, unlimited PTO, and telecommuting. The generation does not want to dedicate all of their time to their career. *“I have worked way too many weekends already, thinking to myself that this is supposed to be the best time of my life.”* Millennials don’t have the attitude of ‘work, work, work’. They combine work with fun and fun with work. Because Millennials are so attached digitally, there is a blurred line between work and home. They also don’t believe you have to work a certain number of hours and in a particular location to be viewed as productive or ‘doing your job’. They want to enjoy life and place high importance on life outside of the workplace. The 40 hour workweek is more than enough for Millennials to handle right now. *“Forcing us to work more than 40 hours is detrimental to morale.”*

A Few Success Stories of Engagement

“One way to modernize and increase employee engagement is that leaders in business and human resources need to raise employee engagement from a human resource program to a core business strategy.” (Bersin, 2016) There are many stories of how companies – both large and small – are attempting to attract, retain, and most especially, engage the millennial generation. Likewise, the organizations must not just focus on Millennials but should seek ways to reduce intergenerational problems while more effectively integrating Millennials within the workforce.

In 2012, General Electric formed a team of 21 Millennials from various GE business areas. The team was named Global New Directions and was given three months to ‘attract, develop, and retain the talent of the future.’ (Peters, 2012) The team presented a list of key recommendations that were later implemented by GE such as the development of a new performance management system that allowed just-in-time feedback and coaching. Rather than rely on the best practices of other organizations, GE decided to address their generational issues by using an internal research team to focus more specifically on what might be successful for GE.

Northrop Grumman also created a group based program designed to help develop and engage new employees. The program, called ConnectNIG, used volunteer teams to organize social networking, community outreach, and professional development activities among 26 geographic regions. According to (Rikleen, 2016), the effort addressed the new employees needs of acquiring relevant career planning knowledge, aided in achieving their personal success and business results, and most especially, provided an opportunity for the new hires to establish networks outside of their particular work area. Executives see the effort as successful in recognizing different people’s interest in new projects, obtaining more and more immediate feedback on initiatives, and establishing networked relationships throughout the company.

Marriott provides “Evenings of Engagement” Dialogues which are hosted by senior leaders in Marriot’s central geographical area and open to high-potential younger managers. The goal is to provide the managers with an opportunity to network with senior leaders, offer an opportunity for the younger managers to discuss aspirations, and allow both the Millennial manager and senior leaders to share methods on achieving career goals. (Rikleen, 2016)

Stories and ideas for successfully engaging all employees should be widely shared. Successfully working with Millennials is an imperative for our country in order to promote overall growth and sustainability. Often, our egos and past success lead us to believe we have all the answers or we should not share our successes for fear they will be used by other companies. This thinking is no longer acceptable. All companies need to gather intelligent people from multiple perspectives and to include Millennials. If your company is not hearing what Millennials are thinking, you are missing the whole picture and the hope of the future. Obviously, Millennials are not the miracle pill, but without designing your work place to recognize the Generation’s goals, motivations, engagement practices and being opened to listening to and often implementing their suggestions, businesses will suffer greatly.

CONCLUSION

As Baby Boomers continue to retire and Generation Y enters in larger numbers, a monumental shift in the labor market is taking place. Concurrently, we have witnessed the downward slide of all workers being engaged in the workplace. Companies cannot allow this slide to continue nor to get steeper.

The growing percentage of disengaged workers should also be addressed immediately by colleges and universities. Internships and experiences with business leaders should be a priority. Bringing more business personnel onto campus and participating in classes, lectures, volunteer experiences, etc. will open communication and understanding of and for Millennials.

Management overall is starting to change, but to cater more to Millennials, we must change faster or risk having either an older workforce or a workforce that is disengaged and not made up of the best employees possible. The problem for most companies is that today's workforce and work environment is drastically different from the past. Today, more research into how best to engage the overall workforce as well as engaging students while in college is paramount.

Companies hiring Millennials must provide certain work conditions to allow Millennials to succeed professionally and personally. Companies need to provide such things as a clear career path, strong coaching and leadership, ongoing personal and professional development, and a semi-structured environment. Companies must be flexible, provide training and educational advancement. This is again an area where colleges and universities can be actively involved and not only help businesses to relate to Millennials but to more fully offer necessary courses, training, and volunteer opportunities that open the chance for engagement at all levels – worker, business, and college experience. Millennials crave increased workplace responsibility and rely on the mentoring from more experienced employees. The company vision and mission must be front and center. As the workforce is experiencing a paradigm shift, it behooves us to address not only what this means to the workforce and academia, but also to correct the deplorable disengagement issue. We believe, as has been identified in the literature and throughout the comments we gathered from our focus groups, that changing the workplace environment to engage Millennials in the workplace holds the key to success overall in the future.

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Kristin Holmberg-Wright is Distinguished Lecturer of Management and Organization Behavior at University of Wisconsin-Parkside and author of numerous publications in the area of soft management skills, leadership, and business management.

Tracy Hribar is Clinical Program Coordinator for the Institute of Professional Educator Development and Vice President of Hribar Trucking.

Jennifer Tsegai is completing her MBA at the University of Utah and currently serves as Technical Corporate Trainer, Salt Lake City Community College and Marketing Analytics Fellow at Morgan Stanley Bank.