

# What Millennials Want In The Workplace (And Why You Should Start Giving It To Them)



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*I write about what success looks like today.*

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Do you enjoy judging the Millennial Generation? If so, take heart: You'll have plenty opportunities to do just that in the coming years. That generation (which is also known as Generation Y, and which spans the ages of roughly 20 to the early 30s) will soon represent the biggest chunk of the American workforce.

Given this reality, some experts argue that it's time for older generations—especially the cranky and cynical Generation X, which covers the ages of roughly the mid-30s to late 40s and which seems to have the testiest relationship with its younger sibling—to spend less time judging and more time engaging the millennials.

Jamie Gutfriend of CAA's Intelligence Group says that smart organizations are adjusting to the unique style of millennials.

In fact, as Jamie Gutfreund, chief strategy officer for the [Intelligence Group](#) notes, a full 86 million millennials will be in the workplace by 2020—representing a full 40% of the total working population.

So Gutfreund says it's in every organization's interest to learn to how attract and reach and motivate millennials. A few do it well—but most don't, and they soon may pay a price.

“No organization can afford *not* to recruit the best talent,” she says. And that especially includes the best talent from the millennials—even though Generation X finds their younger siblings to be so flighty ... so flakey ... so unwilling or unable to pay their dues.

We'll look more deeply in the coming days on the differences in generations, and how they arose. But let's first touch on some of the findings of the Intelligence Group, which is a division of the Creative Artists Agency that focuses on analysis of youth-focused consumer preferences and trend forecasting.



Gutfreund says that Intelligence Group studies of millennials have found that:

- 64% of them say it's a priority for them to make the world a better place.
- 72% would like to be their own boss. But if they do have to work for a boss, 79% of them would want that boss to serve more as a coach or mentor.
- 88% prefer a collaborative work-culture rather than a competitive one.
- 74% want flexible work schedules.
- And 88% want "work-life integration," which isn't the same as work-life balance, since work and life now blend together inextricably.

Millennials are, in essence, "*venture consumers*," Gutfreund says. They're not looking to fill a slot in a faceless company, any more than a good venture capitalist is looking to toss money at a faceless startup. They're looking strategically at opportunities to invest in a place where they can make a difference, preferably a place that itself makes a difference.

This may seem like wishful thinking, particularly in the eyes of cynical managers who hail from Generation X.

Gutfreund, herself an Xer, says she's learned far greater empathy for millennials through her own work. "It would help to find ways to coach them to be better employees," she says. "We need to teach them the expectations [of our organizations] in a way that makes sense to them."



Shara Senderoff says millennials and Gen X will benefit from learning to speak the same workplace language.

Shara Senderoff, co-founder and CEO of [Intern Sushi](#), which specializes in career services for millennials, is herself a millennial (who has been listed by *Forbes* as one of "[30 Under 30](#)" leaders in technology and by *Fast Company* as one of the "[100 Most Creative People in Business](#)").

Senderoff is remarkably non-defensive about the reputation that millennials sometimes have in the working world. She's even empathetic about how older managers may find millennials to be difficult. She finds, though, that conflict comes from a tendency to speak different workplace languages. And she says there are practical ways to begin speaking the same language.

Companies can gain immensely by better engaging millennials, who are "very iconoclastic and very ambitious," she says. "We just need to find ways to wrangle them into our organizations" in a manner that they find compelling and consistent with their distinct values.