

Action Checklist

Engaging Millennials in Professional Associations & Conferences

- 1 Assess Your Association**

Compare what your association offers to what many Millennials want from their association experience: career development, stimulating experiences, flexibility, respect, and open communication.
- 2 Go to the Source**

Ask Millennials what they want and need from your conference or association. Use surveys, focus groups and interviews to learn what appeals to your association's younger members. Ask what they need/want, what causes them to attend or not, the role would they like to have in creating conferences, etc.
- 3 Ownership = Participation**

Give Millennials responsibility and accountability for significant conference content. Provide resources and advice, but let them take the lead.
- 4 Feature a Millennial Panel**

The National Association of Electrical Distributors (NAED) has great success with Millennial panels on a variety of topics ranging from career development in the electrical distribution industry, to how a traditional, Boomer-dominated industry can attract and retain newer, younger workers.
- 5 Create a Targeted Conference/Event**

The National Association of Electrical Distributors has created a conference designed for tomorrow's *emerging* leaders for under 35's called LEAD. The LEAD committee, as well as attendee feedback, help plan the conference agenda including selecting the keynote topic and speaker. Tone is informal and there's a heavy focus on networking.
- 6 Create a Digital Strategy**

Create advance interest and hype via LinkedIn, facebook and twitter. Sustain the interest in hot topics with social media discussions about application after the conference. Post YouTube videos afterward of conference highlights. Ask your association's Millennials to create and manage the digital strategy.
- 7 Increase Your Conference "Channels"**

Encourage texting and tweeting about speakers, events and topics during the event. The annual Training conferences sponsored by Lakewood Publishing have games to play via Smartphone. Participants win training-related prizes based on being able to answer questions about speakers, sessions and the vendor fair. The Elliott Masie Learning conferences feature multiple channels during the conference – blogging, texting, tweeting. <http://www.learning2012.com/>
- 8 Emphasize Networking**

Studies from The Learning Café show that top Millennials career concerns are 1) developing credibility and 2) creating networks and industry connections. Conferences that focus on pre, during and post-networking do a good job of fulfilling that need. Think of networking beyond the cocktail mixer – things like industry roundtables with Millennial-friendly topics, and "meet the expert" sessions are appealing. Field trips to nearby facilities, or something as simple as a sporting event are other ways to connect.
- 9 Eliminate or Minimize Lecture-Driven Breakouts and Sessions**

Give speakers the message that sessions need to be interactive, hands-on with discussion and minimal talking-heads and PowerPoints. Millennials are used to team-based work and collaboration. Wireless audience response systems are a great way to create a connection between speaker and audience.
- 10 Meet Them Online**

Move your publications online. Promote conference speakers with Skype and YouTube.

The Millennial Generation

1977-1998

The Millennial generation packs power in numbers alone – by 2014, half of the employees in the world will be those born after 1980. There are 75 million members of the youngest generation in today’s workforce, all raised at the most child-centric time in our history. The Millennials display a great deal of self-confidence, even at times appearing cocky, perhaps because of the shower of attention and high expectations derived from their parents.

The oldest Millennials have stepped into adulthood, and are busy raising children, holding public office, becoming entrepreneurs, and working for corporations and not-for-profits. The Learning Café calls them “Generation Y-not?” because this generation packs power and potential. The challenge for leaders is living up to the high standards and expectations the Millennials bring to the workplace.

Sometimes coached by their parents, they do not see the value of “paying their dues” or “earning their stripes.” They perform best with some structure, especially younger Millennials who are newer to the workplace. They are learning *to* work as well as learning *the* work. Millennials also have a bit of a “whatever” view of title and position, showing less reverence for a position that’s simply based on experience, which they think Baby Boomers overemphasize. They respect knowledge and learning. They want a relationship with their boss. This does not always mesh with Generation X’s love of independence and a hands-off style. Watch out! They will leave for greener pastures if challenge, learning and fun are absent from their work.

Millennials are typically team-oriented and work well in groups, preferring group work to individual endeavors. In addition, they are used to tackling multiple tasks with equal energy, so they expect to work hard. They are effective multi-taskers, having juggled school, sports and social interests as children and young adults.

As you might expect, this group is technically literate like no one else. Technology has always been part of their lives, whether it is computers, the Internet, smart phones, IM’s, facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc.

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Delegate
Empower
Learn
Lead
Collaborate
Get set!

Innovate
Strategize
Communicate
Transform
Coach
Transition
Engage
Collaborate
Grow!

- ⊙ **respect diversity of learning styles** through multiple delivery approaches.
- ⊙ **engage learners** through discovery, conversation and reflection; learning by doing is powerful.

- ⊙ **create informal environments** for interaction and relationship-building; learning is social.
- ⊙ **structure the physical environment** to encourage interaction, social and peer learning.

- ⊙ **encourage self-directed learning**, learners take personal responsibility.
- ⊙ **honor the knowledge that already exists** in the organization.

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