
the future of leadership™

Millennial Views on Leading

from The Learning Café

bold moves
work 3.0
what's old is new again
Wild Card

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The Future of Leadership

The Millennial generation is assuming leadership roles earlier than any US generation to date. Many Millennials articulate that their leadership style will be different than previous generations. The Learning Café's latest research focuses on the views of early Millennials (born 1977-87) about the organizations they lead and the future they are creating.

From March 2009 to February 2011, The Learning Café asked a sample of corporate Early Millennials (aged 24 to 34 in 2011) about their views on leadership and organizational life. No longer neophytes, these Millennials fit the model of the new, high value workforce – advanced degrees, high expectations, willing to walk not whine. All respondents are Senior Managers or Directors. Some have direct reports, some do not.

Curious about what lies ahead as the oldest Millennials mature in age and management experience, we asked them to predict, **“What will make your generation of leaders different from previous generations of leaders?”**

This report contains their verbatim responses.

Reading Guide

How do these views match (or not) with your observations?

Where do Millennial leaders complement and clash with your organization's culture?

How is your organization preparing Millennials to lead?

Definition

The Learning Café divides Millennials into two sub-cohorts: Early Millennials, born 1977-1987, and Millennials born 1988-2000.

The Learning Café specializes in solving issues related to the four-generation workforce. For eleven years, they have learned from the age-diverse workforce by engaging in primary research, analyzing secondary research, capturing trends, teaching in organizations and observing workplace behavior. They have helped organizations in many industries create strategies to manage their four-generation workforces and bridge the generation gap at work. Their presentations, training materials and workshops provoke thought, change behavior and have educated thousands of managers and employees on the importance of flexing to meet the needs of a changing workforce - and practical ways to do so.

The Millennial Generation

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 to other generations, perhaps because of the shower of attention and high expectations from their parents.

Sometimes coached by their parents, as a generation Millennials 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 position that’s simply based on experience, which they think Baby Boomers overemphasize. They respect knowledge and learning.

“The challenge for leaders is living up to the high standards and expectations that this generation brings to the workplace. Can we measure up?”

The Learning Café

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 grew up working in groups. They may prefer group work to individual endeavors. In addition, they are used to tackling multiple tasks with equal energy, and have a reputation as effective multitaskers. As children, they juggled school, sports and social activities.

As you might expect, this group is technically literate like no one else. Connecting and technology have always been part of their lives, whether it is computers, the Internet, iPhones, blogging, text messaging, Twitter, Facebook, Foursquare, Bebo, YouTube or a host of other connection opportunities.

Speaking Up & Out

We are less afraid to speak up with our seniors, which some of the “older” generations could perceive as being less respectful (which is not true of course.) I think we’re also more apt to engage in open and candid discussions with colleagues of all levels.

We value discussion and debate, and definitely DON’T value “yes-men” roles.

The Fall of Information Asymmetry

Given that information is so easily accessible to employees of this generation, as leaders we will use a different set of communication skills and employ a different tone of communication altogether. My generation of leader will be more self sufficient since we’ve been brought up in a “do-it-yourself” environment due to the internet. We will have less patience for information asymmetry since we are used to getting so much information and feedback.

The people who communicate most effectively with this generation will be transparent.

Restless Change & Rapid Innovation

We have grown up in fast paced, information-centered environments in which data, ideas and opinions are exchanged immediately and constantly changing. It may be to my generation’s detriment that we overlook the ‘tried and true’ and embrace the new more than the old, but I think this will be a common theme going forward.

For us, ‘old’ can mean a product that has been on the market for six months and is now considered a dinosaur. Constant change, constant innovation is the norm.

Corporate Entrepreneurship

We don’t plan to stay with a company forever, nor do we expect to be taken care of for a full lifetime. I don’t think that’s due to any fundamental generational change, it’s simply because the world is different now and we don’t have that luxury anymore.

I think we may be more willing to take risks. I think we are a bit more ‘entrepreneurial’ within the corporate context. Said a different way, I think we’re not as afraid to shake things up, because we don’t expect to be there forever anyway.

Changing Criteria for Leaders

I think my generation of leaders will not necessarily be 'accomplished' in a traditional sense (e.g. educational degrees or years of work experience) but rather individuals with stand-out ideas.

We will continue to see leaders from unconventional backgrounds and nontraditional career experiences becoming very successful at a rapid pace.

In Sync with Cultural Differences

We are more accepting of people from diverse backgrounds with diverse ways of approaching a situation. The increasing presence of women in the work place has and will continue to undermine that very 'masculine' perception of power and status.

This will bring more of a consensual and inclusive approach to decision making, which is now fully enabled by technology.

Work Not Bound by Time & Place

At one time, being at the work place and putting a certain amount of hours (usually the 8-5 convention) was considered the model of a good /productive employee. It is all brain work now, and technology allows for the brain to be at work in many different ways. I think we'll recognize and leverage the fact that different brains function differently - if you can get the best out of one person at 10 pm, then why force that person to work from 8-5?

This also encompasses the way in which the leader communicates with others - more technology = more virtual working environments. However, like the Boomer generation, the importance of "who you know and who knows you" will remain critical.

Dynamic, Inclusive Decision Making

The way we understand hierarchies and the decision making process that goes with it will be different from the one we see from our Boomer leaders. Organizations are getting flatter and decision making is more inclusive. Decisions need to be made more rapidly and more often, because the context is more dynamic than before. The traditional hierarchical models, full of bureaucracy, are going to become useless. Our Boomer leaders strived in that hierarchical structure because it was perceived as a source of status and power.

Political maneuvering at the expense of overall business outcomes is not respected – my generation highly values merit.

what's old is new again

Some leadership values translate from generation to generation.

Time Troubles

Contrary to the 'work-life balance' that most people think my generation is about, my generation actually works much more intensively and we have much less free time. Yes, we play hard too, but it tends to be at the expense of sleep, not work.

The higher up you go – the more you work (still).

Balanced Values

We'll take a pay cut to work towards a "great goal," or to be near family, or to work for a company with a terrific culture that values the individual, has humanity, etc.

We are a bit more balanced in our values.

Hierarchy is Dead (again)

As subordinates we need leaders to be more than just in a senior position; they need our respect, and we will strive to lead others the same way. To inspire us, leaders need to have integrity, competence, and a 'flat' mindset (i.e., they value contributions and ideas from all levels.)

There are still many people in organizations today with a very "hierarchal" style, which works fine when the leader clearly deserves that position and re-earns the position through their actions every day. But it really falls flat with my generation when they don't earn it, which is frankly the majority.

Wild Card

**An Early Millennial insight...
that may articulate the future of leadership...**

Rise of Individual Performance

As business environments continue to get leaner, and younger employees continue the pattern of moving jobs more and more frequently, I think a stronger emphasis will be placed on being an individual performer both at more junior management levels as well as for senior leadership levels.

This trend could create a gap in developing people to become managers and will create the need for leaders who are naturally good managers and who can help their employees develop these skills.

Organizational Report Card

Want to rate your organization's appeal to Early Millennial leaders? Use the report card below to provoke conversation and spark dialogue. Circle the grade you would assign for each area.

BOLD MOVES

Our culture values speaking up and speaking out	A	B	C	D	F
Information flows freely and equally	A	B	C	D	F
Our organization, departments and managers change before they have to	A	B	C	D	F
Risk taking is encouraged	A	B	C	D	F

WORK 3.0

Openness to non-traditional, talented job candidates	A	B	C	D	F
Diversity and inclusion are more than lip service	A	B	C	D	F
Flexible work is part of the culture; it's okay	A	B	C	D	F
Decision making is inclusive	A	B	C	D	F

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

There is support for leaders who live balanced lives	A	B	C	D	F
Political maneuvering is minimal	A	B	C	D	F

For more information on generations in the workplace visit us on the web:

The
LearningCafé
www.thelearningcafe.net

The Learning Café Programs & Products

Engaging a Changing Workforce™ Workshops

Engaging a Changing Workforce looks at today's workforce through a generational lens. This workshop focuses on the practical advice, skills and tools that managers and employees need to win in the new game.

The Art & Science of Engagement: Winning the War for Talent

Employees don't disengage or leave because they are pulled away by better offers. Employees disengage because they are pushed out by factors under management's control – initial stimuli that open the door to the pull of outside opportunities. This session energizes and focuses managers on the realities of employee engagement.

Building Your Brand

Personal branding is a leadership strategy for managing reputation within an organization and marketplace. A personal brand is how you define and differentiate yourself. The Building Your Brand experience includes Make It: Identify who you are and why you're unique; Market It: know your audiences, make connections and sell yourself; and Manage It: how to change, compensate and leverage your brand.

Instant Expert Manager Series

Front line managers never know what new challenges each day will bring. Their days are busy and unpredictable. In their high-speed work environments, they only have time for training that is fast and targeted. The Instant Expert Manager Series includes six modules. Each 90-minute session delivers how to's, powerful actions, and a key skill to coach and engage employees from recruitment to retirement.

Mentoring for Success

An easy-to-use program that ensures mentoring initiatives get quick, sustainable results. The user-friendly tool kit prepares participants for a comfortable, productive relationship. The tools supplement a Mentor and Mentee's natural abilities with guidelines, how-to's and structure for maximum effectiveness and joint satisfaction.

White Papers from The Learning Café

2011 Engaging a Changing Workforce Study, by Diane Thielfoldt & Devon Scheef, 2011. Comprehensive, groundbreaking research about the four generations in the workplace, and the engagement and dissatisfaction drivers for each. The report provides invaluable information for anyone who needs to hire, lead, engage, or retain multiple workplace generations.

2009 From Backpacks to Briefcases, The Millennial Workforce Study, by Diane Thielfoldt & Devon Scheef, 2009. The study showcases the new workforce, and what every organization needs to know and do to keep pace with their future employees.

See the Cafe Newstand (<http://www.thelearningcafe.net/cafe-newsstand/>) for a complete list of recent articles, publications and podcasts.