THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION AND THE WORKPLACE

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of
The School of Continuing Studies
and of
The Graduate School of Arts and Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts
in Liberal Studies

By

Elizabeth Claps, B.A.

Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.
1 April 2010
THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION AND THE WORKPLACE

Elizabeth Claps, B.A.

Mentor: Elizabeth M. Duke, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Millennials, born between 1980 and 2000, are entering the workplace and experiencing tension with previous generations who have been there for decades. The overall experience is that Americans today are overworked, stressed, unhealthy and unhappy. Can this be remedied with changes in the workplace? Is it possible to have work/life balance for the Millennial Generation?

This thesis will discuss generational theory and its relation to the workplace. It will focus on the unique characteristics of the Millennial generation and how their upbringing has contributed to their values, culture and outlook on life. It will also compare how the three older existing generations have handled similar pressures and conditions and acknowledge the cyclical pattern of society through surveys, statistics and polls.

Millennials as a whole are independent, creative and efficient. They seek fairness, justice and diversity. Their development in a world of individualism and customization, their familiarity with technology, their ability to multitask and their desire for a balanced schedule of work and family all coalesce to create a life that is rewarding. They are looking for this type of flexibility to be institutionalized so that everyone can benefit from
a more peaceful work experience.

This thesis demonstrates that there is a mismatch of expectations in the workplace between generations. It describes one approach to resolving this issue and explains the basic tenants that will need to be addressed in any strategy. It is possible to have work/life balance if there is clear communication between employer and employee and if they work together to reach goals that are mutually beneficial.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT..............................................................................................................................ii

INTRODUCTION.......................................................................................................................1

CHAPTER ONE: GENERATIONS..............................................................................................5

CHAPTER TWO: MILLENNIALS AS CHILDREN.................................................................13

CHAPTER THREE: MILLENNIALS AFTER COLLEGE.....................................................38

CHAPTER FOUR: MILLENNIAL CHALLENGES IN THE WORKPLACE............................53

CHAPTER FIVE: WHY SHOULD BUSINESSES ADAPT TO MILLENNIALS INSTEAD OF MILLENNIALS ADAPTING TO BUSINESSES AS THEY ARE NOW?.............................................................68

CHAPTER SIX: HOW MILLENNIAL ENTREPRENEURS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN THIS ENDEAVOR.................................................................74

CHAPTER SEVEN: ONE MODEL FOR MEETING THE CHALLENGE..............................83

CONCLUSION.......................................................................................................................91

BIBLIOGRAPHY..................................................................................................................95
INTRODUCTION

On January 15, 2010 I turned 27 years old. I am a Millennial. I started researching this topic because I felt the pressure of having too many things to do and not enough time in which to do them all. Between a more than full time work week, graduate school, and keeping up with friends and family, it was difficult to find the time to get to the bank, go to the gym, drop off dry cleaning, do laundry and even go grocery shopping. I thought I couldn’t be the only one dealing with this dilemma. After talking with friends who agreed (each with their own theory as to why) it seemed the concrete workweek was the main factor in disrupting our schedules. I wondered, if I could schedule all of my responsibilities in the way they meant the most sense to me, I would ease a lot of stress out of my life. I began to wonder if any social researchers and theorists had looked into this complication and why it seemed to be more prominent with my generation.

After discovering that many social scientists, philosophers, and sociologists have studied these issues it seemed my problem was divided into two separate pieces: Generational Theory and Workplace Flexibility. How Generations interact, how Generations are unique, and how each generation impacts those after it are all aspects of Generational Theory. So to identify why the Millennial Generation was feeling upset with Work/Life balance, one first had to understand what made this generation unique, how they got to be that way, and what impact they will have as they enter adulthood. It should be noted that most of the studies and reliable statistics were taken from middle to
upper class children who were born to educated parents. Those children who are homeless or come from low income backgrounds often adopt the qualities of those in the middle class and assimilate to the group as they succeed.

Additionally, while there are very distinct behaviors and interests for each generation, they all share overarching American values. A Pew Research Center survey designed to analyze the generation gap found that regardless of age, concrete ideals such as marriage, homeownership and religion were identified as important. Similarly, the concept of freedom and the pursuit of happiness are identified as some of the most resonant American values. These are not limited by age, race, religion, gender, or socio economic status. Each generation also believes that they are smarter than all of the others. In America, generations have similar values that connect them in the national fabric, but they also each have their own unique approach for embracing them.

Workplace Flexibility entered the vernacular as older generations tackled the work/life balance issue. Unfortunately, these benefits cannot be extended to many blue collar jobs. For example, plumbers have to be at the site at a specific time in order to do their job. They are not afforded the ability to work remotely or at times they would desire. Restaurants will need servers and stores will need representatives while

---


2 Ibid.
customers are shopping. However, for a large percentage of the population working in forty hour, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. jobs, investigating alternative methods to achieve the same results can be beneficial for the employer and employee alike.

When these two research areas are combined, one discovers that the traditional workplace will not be able to provide a suitable environment to meet the needs of its Generation Y employees, also know as Millennials. This Generation comes into adulthood with a unique set of skills and expectations. Their development in a world of individualism and customization, their familiarity with technology, their ability to multitask and their desire for a balanced schedule of work and family clash with the current offerings of traditional businesses that were established during the Veteran and Boomer generations. Americans today are overworked, stressed, unhealthy and unhappy. Can this be remedied with changes in the workplace? Is it possible to have work/life balance for the Millennial Generation?

First, this paper will define the Millennial generation. It will look at statistical reports of how previous generations were determined and categorized highlighting important characteristics and distinctions of each. Second, it will focus on the unique characteristics of the Millennial generation and how their upbringing has contributed to their values, culture and outlook on life. It will also compare how other generations have handled similar pressures and conditions and acknowledge the cyclical pattern of society through surveys, statistics and polls. Third, it will focus on the future of the Millennials, identifying their needs, wants and expectations as adults, including the contradictory
views of experts in the field. Fourth, it will focus on what trends have developed in the past decade in the workplace, and how these offerings meet or do not meet, the needs of the Millennial generation. Last, it will identify what changes must be made in the workplace to ensure a balance of work and personal time for the Millennial employee and why it is so important that this change occur.
CHAPTER 1: GENERATIONS

“In today’s data-rich infosphere, people’s attitudes (toward family, career, risk, romance, politics and religion) together with their behavioral tendencies (in job choice, test scores, health, risk, crime, sex and drugs) can be tracked by birth cohort.”

Generation cycles span roughly twenty year periods and four living generations are recognized as existing in society today. These four generations are: the Veterans (born 1922-1943), the Boomers (born 1944-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1982) and the Millennials (born 1982-2000). The next generation of children, born after the year 2000, has yet to be named. Studying Generational Theory takes into account how the previous generations help shape the rising one and describes how this pattern repeats itself every twenty years or so. Neil Howe and William Strauss highlight this in their book *Millennials Rising* stating, “each new generation: solves a problem facing the prior youth generation, whose style has become dysfunctional in the new era, corrects for the behavioral excess it perceives in the current midlife generation; and fills the social role being vacated by the departing elder generation.”

Looking at this cyclical pattern, one can forecast how this group will develop its own identity and function in society.

---


2 Ibid., 62.
“In addition to the coincidence of birth, a generation is also defined by common tastes, attitudes, and experiences.”³ This chapter will identify the first three generations in these cycles, their unique characteristics, and how they relate to one another.

‘The Veterans’ were born between the years 1922-1943 and consist of approximately 52 million people.⁴ They are also referred to as the “WWII Generation”, “GI Generation” or “Silent Generation.” Tom Brokaw refers to this group as the “Greatest Generation” in the title of his popular book.

Known for their patriotism and sacrifice through tough times in United States history, the Veterans survived the Great Depression, World War II and the Korean War. They are today’s grandparents and the epitome of “American Values” such as civic mindedness, good clean fun, and apple pie. They married young and stayed relatively close to home. They are loyal to their employers and stay with companies for the duration of their careers. Financially they are savers by nature and want their children to enjoy the freedoms they never got to have.

Ron Zemke, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak identify the Veterans’ core values as dedication, sacrifice, hard work, conformity, respect for authority, patience, duty before pleasure, honor, and adherence to the rules, especially of law and order.⁵ Life


⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁵ Ibid., 30.
experience has taught them to prepare for the surprises of life and put away their pennies for a rainy day rather than showing off what they have.

If you were born into the Veterans, “male or female, you were considered strange if you did not marry by age 25 and even stranger if you married outside your race or religion. It was expected that you would have children—it was not considered a choice. Your race and sex dictated your fate and your behavior”6  Options were very limited, especially for women. The amount of structure this generation grew up within and grew into might appear to be rigid and restrictive; however this trait was absorbed by the Veterans as commitment. Whether it is expressed through their individual marriages, their children, their careers or their country, this group gave much of themselves for the greater good.

Even though this group is aging, they should not be underestimated. They have maintained their level of commitment into their eighties. Their voice is as loud and represented as ever. The veterans “control a significant part of the optional spending economy, own billions of dollars of Sun Belt real estate, are a staunch political force via the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), and will continue to be a force…”7 as a voting constituency and voice of experience. They are regarded as experts by their children and grandchildren; they should not be overlooked. These

---


Veterans are seen as the ultimate form of American idealism and what future
generations should strive to exemplify and aspire to become.

To describe the generation born between 1944 and 1964 only one word is
necessary: **Boomers.** Members of this group, 73.2 million people in all, were born in
the 1940s and 1950s among prosperity with core values focusing on optimism, personal
gratification and growth, work and civic involvement.

This was the “civil rights, empowerment and diversity” generation who fought
in and against Vietnam, listened to Bob Dylan, and experimented with the “sex, drugs
and rock n roll” of The Beatles, The Grateful Dead, Elvis, The Supremes, Jimi Hendrix,
Janis Joplin, and The Temptations.

“[A]bstraction and spirituality are the primary hallmarks of the Boomer
generation.” For this group life is about the journey, not the destination. They wanted
to experience everything internally and find their ultimate personal satisfaction. If this
meant going off the beaten path, or taking the winding road rather than the short cut—
that was something to be immersed in and valued.

As adults, however, they work as hard as they played as teenagers. They are the
first ones in the office and last ones out at the end of the day. Working on weekends?

---

8 Ibid., 3.
9 Ibid., 68.
10 Ibid., 21.
11 Twenge, *Generation Me*, 47
Not a problem for this group. They also focused on making sure their children had more direction than they did growing up. “Boomers have taken the lead in most of the family and school trends—from greater protection to zero tolerance to higher standards—that mark the shift from X to Millennial nurture.”¹² Perhaps the amount of time and devotion spent on their journeys allowed Boomers to get all of the spirit of adventure and play out of their system before entering into serious careers. These paths that they valued as teens and young adults were later seen as a waste of time for their own children and thus more emphasis was placed on structure and achievement as they became parents.

While the veterans stayed loyal to marriages and relationships, Boomers were not afraid to leave and find something more self-fulfilling. They redefined roles and promoted equality, but rather than following the rules, they “took them and manipulated them” to their own needs.¹³ Excited to not have the limited means their parents grew up with, this group began to amass wealth and they were eager to spend it. Appearances are important to the Boomers and as a whole they have amassed large amounts of credit card debt trying to show off how much they had earned and achieved. They were the first to use credit for purchasing power and, as might be expected, the first to abuse it. Material wealth is important to this group as a result of being raised by their minimalist parents. They are eager to show their success and buy now to experience something fun

¹² Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 54.

¹³ Zemke, Raines and Filipczak, Generations at Work, 70.
and new and figure out a way to pay for it later. However, Boomers will not neatly fall into place as they retire into old age and settle. First and foremost because they will have to be dragged kicking and screaming out of the workplace and secondly because while they impart the importance of structure to their own children, they continue to enjoy the freedoms they set out to explore as teenagers. Their journey is not over at age sixty-five. The Boomers “will re-define old and cool and important and success a half a dozen or more times before they are done with the world they’ve sworn to make over in their own Sharper Image.”

Immediately following the Boomers are the dark, edgy, latchkey kids. This is the generation that saw Music Television (MTV) launched, Auto Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) coming to the forefront of the national stage, and the age of personal computers. *Generation X* can be equated to the “middle child” of generational theory. Born between 1965 and 1982, these outsiders make up just over 70 million people according to Zemke, Raines and Filipczak. There is no debate on what they were to be called or who they are. These loners made their identity unique from their parents and grandparents.

While Boomers wanted to find themselves, Gen Xers learned how to take care of themselves at an early age. They were self-reliant, seeking balance, skeptical of

---

14 Ibid., 21.

15 Ibid., 93.
authority, and pragmatic. \textsuperscript{16} Generation Xers don’t want to be labeled, especially by the media; fitting into a mold, conforming to a preconceived identity and behaving as expected, are not in their interest. They do not concern themselves with what their parents, grandparents, teachers or employers want to see them do. They simply do what they want to do, and if it happens to fit in with the goals of the larger population—great.

The Gen Xers “are much more inclined to keep their own counsel than are their Boomer predecessors. Xers are very clear about the meaning of the word ‘balance’ in their lives: Work is work. And they work to live, not live to work.” \textsuperscript{17} Additionally, with many Xers coming up in divorced families, and watching as workaholic fathers affected the family dynamic for boomers, this otherwise jaded bunch was oddly optimistic in the desire for a traditional family. “For many Gen Xers, starting and maintaining a stable family can be a unique source of pride- the pride you get for achieving something that your own parents did not.” \textsuperscript{18}

Entering the workforce after the boomers and during the height of globalization left many of the Gen Xers lost in the crowd. It took them awhile to find their niche: a place where they have outshone the generation above them and outpaced the rest of the world. This manifested itself in the information technology (IT) industry and resulted in the creation of a tech-savvy bunch. The dotcom era would be their height of young

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 98.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 21.

\textsuperscript{18} Howe and Strauss, \textit{Millennials Rising}, 56.
success and an overwhelming amount of wealth at a young age. But how would the
generation after them be affected by this zealous group of independent thinkers? “If it is
true (as Alexis de Tocqueville once wrote) that ‘in America, each generation is a new
people,’ is there any pattern or dynamic that determines how each generation will be
new?”19 The next chapter will focus on the Millennials as children and how they were
immediately set apart from any generation that came before them.

19 Ibid., 61.
Chapter 2: MILLENNIALS AS CHILDREN

Generation Y, the Internet Generation, the Nintendo Generation, Millennials, Echo Boomers, Generation 2001, N-Gen\(^1\), Generation Me, Generation Next, the iGeneration and “the trophy kids” have all been used to identify a group born between roughly 1982-2000. When it comes to analyzing this particular group (estimated at 69.7 million people)\(^2\), critics often have conflicting views. Some regard them as motivated, critical thinkers with an advanced knowledge of technology and the ability to multitask to get things done at alarming rates of efficiency. Others suggest they are lazy, coddled, entitled and rude. The generation to which the critic belongs may have something to do with this assessment, but while some members may fall all along the extremes of that spectrum, the heart of the generation exists somewhere in the middle.

As the first chapter described, the Boomers are fighters whether it be about equality, freedom, civil rights or civil service. Their journeys were guided by a deep spirituality and a desire to engage in personal gratification and abstract thinking. Always the revolutionaries, this group also changed their approach to the role of parenting. In the early 1970s, legal use of oral contraceptives throughout all fifty states and the passing of *Roe v. Wade* allowed men and women to have more control over pregnancy than previous generations. As a result of these legal decisions, “Parents were

---


\(^2\) Ibid., 3.
able to lavish more attention on each child as the average number of children per family shrank from four to two”³ and “two-thirds of them [anyway]—planned to have these kids, and these kids experience the confidence that comes from knowing you are wanted.”⁴ Every child conceived did not necessarily go to full term, and many unplanned pregnancies were prevented before that choice ever had to be made. Additionally, rising rates of infertility prompted more doctor visits (quadrupling between 1986-1988)⁵ creating what Howe and Strauss call an “echo boomlet”⁶.

With the lowering of unintended pregnancies and choice of whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term, most of the children born during this time were wanted and desired by their parents. Generational theorists Neil Howe and William Strauss describe this phenomenon in their book Millennials Rising:

Thanks to two incomes, a new breed of “yuppie” parents often had more disposable cash than the parents of the 70s. Affluent, early-retiring grandparents were in a new mood to dote. Among families that were less well off, a new kids-come-first attitude was likewise settling in. And communities nationwide were taking a new interest in trying to provide each child with some minimal standard of material welfare.⁷

⁴ Zemke, Raines and Filipczak, Generations at Work, 130.
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid., 74.
There was no doubt that each child was wanted because parenthood had become a choice rather than an obligation. Always ones to set their own personal journey, Boomers were able to craft parenthood to fit their own dreams. This allowed for Boomers to focus on being parents as their role first and foremost and their children as their most important responsibility. Millennials were treated as treasures and therefore “…[t]he era of the protected child had begun.”

In 1987, “Baby Jessica” fell down a well in Texas gathering large scale media attention and around the clock coverage by CNN. It was as if all of America was suddenly concerned about issues related to children. There was suddenly a focus on safety in nearly every federal commission. Over the next ten years a number of laws were passed highlighting protection for children: Megan’s Law created the sex offender registry and community notification to allow citizens to know if a dangerous person moves into their neighborhood. Joan’s Law stated that people who molest and murder children under the age of 14 will receive a minimum penalty of life in prison without parole. Amber’s Law set up a child abduction alert system. And Jimmy Ryce’s Law required that a psychiatric analysis of convicted sex offenders be administered before they can be released and allowed authorities to detain them in a secure facility if there was a chance they could reoffend upon being reintroduced into society. Even “Baby on Board” signs were attached to vehicles to be visible to other motorists and specific

---

8 Ibid., 32.

9 Ibid., 113.
baby-proofing mechanisms were placed in households to show a commitment to this generation of children and the importance of their protection.

Once Millennial parents felt assured their child’s physical safety was not being threatened, they began focusing on the development and cultivation of these young wonders. Books, magazines, and television programs were all being used as educational tools. Shows like Sesame Street and the Muppets had set the groundwork to use television as a medium to help foster cognitive learning and educate children in addition to providing entertainment. Their success in the 1970s paved the way for cable stations like Nickelodeon to increase its educational programming aimed at children and still be profitable. Television was not the only medium to see the benefit in targeting this generation. “Between 1986 and 1991, the number of periodicals offered to young children doubled.” 10 The same was true of children’s music. U.S. News & World Report went as far as to claim “You’d think that every baby toy was made to increase IQ points.” 11

As one self-proclaimed Mappie (Middle-Aged Professional Parent) said:

We have elevated child-rearing to a sacrament. We arrange our schedules around our children’s soccer games, volunteer as much as we can in the classroom, hover over every science project and book report, and take our kids with us to restaurants and on outings with a frequency that makes our own parents snort and roll their eyes. 12

10 Ibid., 34.


12 Zemke, Raines and Filipczak, Generations at Work, 130.
The Washington Post also noted that there was an increase in focusing on children’s needs when it came to divorce.\textsuperscript{13} Couples routinely negotiated over how to make arrangements best for their children in terms of schedules, living arrangements, and minimizing the negative emotional impact. Such consideration for the protection of the child was not seen in previous generations and this focus routinely reiterated to the children that they were a number one priority. Let’s examine for a moment how this intense focus and attention shaped the childhood of Millennials and what characteristics and behaviors the generation adopted as a result.

First and foremost, Millennials had the unique experience of growing up with the constant affirmation of their importance and always knowing they were valued. “As Millennials absorb the adult message that they rank atop America’s list of priorities, they naturally come to the conclusion that their problems are the nation’s problems, that their future is the nation’s future—and that, by extension, everyone in America is naturally inclined to help them solve their problems.”\textsuperscript{14}

Many critics of this generation look to this line of thinking as damaging to young kids. Millennials have grown up thinking that they are entitled to many things simply because of who they are unrelated to their actions, beliefs, performances or achievements. This line of thinking can be traced back to the self-esteem movement

\textsuperscript{13} The Washington Post quoted in Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 130.

\textsuperscript{14} Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 175.
that was popular during the elementary years of Millennials: everyone who competes gets a trophy, there will be no keeping score, the ultimate purpose is to allow for participation by all and try ones hardest not to make a child feel bad about himself or herself if they are not the best. Education professor Maureen Stout noted, “The self-esteem movement is popular because it is sweetly addictive: teachers don’t have to criticize, kids don’t have to be criticized, and everyone goes home feeling happy.”

One might think that this group would then grow up without feeling competitive; however, ironically, this group craves recognition that goes above and beyond the rest. After all, since everyone gets a participant ribbon, the person who wins the first place ribbon is more special. And that recognition for achievement begins at home.

Parents would be the first to reinforce their Millennial child’s self esteem. This generation has been doted on in a way not seen before. This can partially be seen as a result of the economic prosperity of the time as well as the success of their workaholic parents. Children who felt the absence of their parents for work related reasons were often provided material things to help compensate for that loss. Adults could celebrate their success and feel they were providing their children with things they only dreamed of having when they were growing up: the newest clothes, the nicest cars, the hottest toys and the biggest house. Dan Conley is concerned about the amount of material wealth controlled by mere children. He says, “This generation of children had been

spoiled rotten. The amount of wealth held by today’s American children is absolutely appalling. They expect an ever-rising tide and a world of endless consumer choice.”

Many Millennial parents even rely on their children to help make household decisions. The democracy of the family allowed for everyone to have an equal voice (unheard of to the children of the Veterans). However, choice is something that Millennials have had as long as they can remember. From an increase in the number of television channels to music, movies and even cereal, marketing professor James McNeal comments, “the average 10-year-old Millennial now knows roughly four hundred brand names and asks for products by brand name 92 percent of the time.”

Not only is it important to catch this very lucrative group now, it is an investment for the future as companies will do their best to hold on to this demographic and have consumers for life. In between television programming commercials can speak directly to children. At a very young age, these Millennials have experienced an almost unthinkable number of options and they have grown accustomed to getting exactly what they want. The “one size fits all” option is a thing of the past. These children have the money and consumer power to obtain what they want and feel the privilege and entitlement to get it.

While over-indulgence is seen as a negative characteristic of this generation, their openness to try many different options and choices has served them well in other areas. They do not stick to the way things have always been done. Fairness and equality

---

16 Dan Conley one of the sidebars quoted in Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 100.

17 James McNeal one of the sidebars quoted in Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 281.
are and were important to these youngsters (a notion well imbedded into their psyches by their Boomer parents). While it is true they have not experienced a school divided by race, issues of gender bias, racial bias and discrimination based on sexual orientation permeate their culture. Title IX increased female involvement in sports, and Take Your Daughter to Work Day was created to expose young women to a variety of career paths that were now available to them; opportunities that were unavailable to previous generations of women. Millennials grew up seeing interracial couples on TV and non-traditional families in their own neighborhoods. Additionally, they themselves are comprised of children who are not of one traditional race or heritage. They are a product of open minds and crossing cultures so diversity is seen as a positive trend. With the increased familiarity with homosexuality on television and in their own families and friends, the discussion of gay rights has also become commonplace. Millennials have had the privilege of growing up with many outlets of expression and equally as many routes inward to educate themselves on current issues important to society. Their outspoken and opinionated parents have also brought political issues to the forefront for them to think about at a young age. They were taught to respect people of different backgrounds and the importance of obtaining civil rights. Millennials have simply extended this lesson and applied it to other groups that they see as deserving of equal protection under the law. Recognition of this equality among races, genders and sexual orientation is important to the Millennial generation and as they age their involvement in such efforts will be one to watch.
Fairness and justice are important hallmarks of the Millennial philosophy. Unlike their Gen X predecessors, these children thrive on organization, order and following the rules. These societal guidelines apply to everyone. *U.S. News and World Report* wrote a story highlighting this morality:

Last week, the principal of Potomac Elementary School, a top-ranked school in one of Maryland’s plushest suburbs, resigned and a teacher was placed on administrative leave amid charges that they had rigged a statewide achievement test. The Whistleblowers? Fifth graders, who allege that they were prompted to modify essay responses, provided correct answers, and given extra time to finish.18

Even when it benefits them this generation doesn’t want to cheat their way to the top. The irony of the aura of protectionism created around Millennials is that by providing this group with the tools to report inappropriate behavior they have used these resources and translated these skills in other unexpected ways. Ray Waters noted, “[Millennials] are the first group of kids savvy enough to know who to call in order to send social workers after their parents when the parents discipline the kids.”19

This is also the first generation to have widespread knowledge of technology beyond the capability of their parents. Protections were put in place to keep children from watching inappropriate content on television but again many adults were foiled. Parent Kelly Marcus remarked, “If I tried to use [the V-chip] with my son, he’d laugh at me. If I can’t figure out how to program a VCR, what am I going to do with a V-Chip

---


TV? I’d have to ask him to program the shows so he can’t watch them. Does that make any sense?”

The same goes for computer passwords and privacy settings. By watching the behavior of adults Millennials were able to mimic and amend their own behavior as it suited them best. This generation is extremely astute in noticing the complexities of situations around them to gain insight into matters and situations far beyond their years. Awareness can also lead to overexposure and Millennials have certainly been a victim of this. Knowing what is out there has set this generation up with very high standards to meet and unprecedented challenges to overcome.

First and foremost, this group’s awareness of brutality came at a much earlier age than in previous generations. Millennials have been exposed to violence through television programs, comics, video games, movies and the internet. It is more difficult to shelter young children from the horrors that can exist, specifically with a growth in the number of school shootings since the Millennials were born and a national spotlight that has been put on terrorism. It can be the news reports as much as entertainment that highlights this aggression. For this reason, the sight of a metal detector or bomb sniffing dog is not out of place in their everyday life experiences. For their safety they are warned to be on guard and protect themselves.

Secondly, this group of children is over-programmed. The prevalence of daycare, organized sports at an early age, arts offered to children and increased homework, have created a generation that does not understand spontaneous play.

20 Kelly Marcus quoted in a sidebar in Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 108.
Perhaps it might be their parents who spent too long playing before settling down to business, but Millennials were scheduled to start younger, move faster and excel farther than previous generations. The overarching idea is that this will put Millennials in a better position to succeed. This desire to “get ahead” does not come without consequences. Children now have injuries not seen in previous generations such as joint injuries from year round sports, repetitive stress injuries from typing, spinal and shoulders issues from heavy backpacks, Attention Deficit Disorder and other mental and stress disorders. Frequently however, a consequence of children’s behavior today is often seen in the form of lacking rest:

Many baby boomers have vivid memories of being packed off to bed at precisely the same time every night. Not today’s kids…The result: An entire generation is growing up without knowing the meaning of bedtime…All six of the accredited sleep laboratories in the nation that specialize in treating children were started after 1985.  

Starting a path to achievement early set up this generation to not understand what it means to be bored. There was always another activity to get to and the to-do list is never done. Millennials were frequently reminded that there was always a chance to be better, try harder, or do more. For example, Millennial Catherine Solazzo says, “I was very involved in music and competed at a national level so the feedback of my coaches and parents was how I learned where improvements needed to be made or

---

21 *The Washington Post* quoted in one of the sidebars in Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 170.
where praise was given.”22 This desire to consistently increase performance is seemingly in line with the business world of the twenty-first century. She continues to describe the pattern that results from this behavior saying, “I believe our generation craves recognition; it helps us become more motivated and productive.”23

While their access to more adult content increases, so does their awareness of world problems and issues. Because increased knowledge is difficult to ignore, Millennials have often turned the negative into a positive. Through learning in groups and starting organized activities at a young age, they are familiar with working together to attain a goal. Whether it is facilitated through a history project or a soccer game they are happy to include others. They have come to realize that keeping up with people and utilizing everyone’s individual strength can be extremely useful in achieving the desired outcome. Because this social networking started at such a young age it comes very naturally to Millennials. In addition to understanding that the work can never be completely finished, Millennials also are not wired to sit on the sidelines. They may not fight in a protest, but they will take action. Robert Hoffman described this situation after witnessing it first hand:

A group of 4th and 5th graders in Aurora, Colorado…decided to collect money to buy back slaves in the Sudan. One of the children said, “What are we going to do about this?” Unimaginable 15 years ago. Boomers would have gotten high and contemplated it. Xers would have written

---

22 Interview of Catherine Solazzo by Ron Alsop quoted in, The Trophy Kids Grow Up: how the millennial generation is shaking up the workplace. (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2008), 97.

23 Ibid., 98.
angst-filled songs about it. The Millennials, only 10 years old, are doing something about it.”

Even in 2009, with the economy in a tough spot and many families struggling, Millennial children are keenly aware of the difficult financial and economic situation and want to help. CNN wrote a story about eleven-year-old Zach McGuire who sold his toys to raise money during the tough time his family was experiencing after his father lost his job. Zach’s generosity is not limited to his family. “In 2005, he sold Kool-Aid for victims of Hurricane Katrina and raised $400. A few years later, it was "Cocoa for California," which he sold to help wildfire victims.”

This is not to say that other generations were not as compassionate or proactive about improving the nation, but that this generation is uniquely aware of the atrocities across the globe through means and information sources not available to previous generations. And while their parents may have talked about the large social movements that were created to facilitate political change through administrative policies, Millennials are more willing to roll up their sleeves and make a difference on a smaller scale using their individual talents and skills. With increased knowledge of global issues comes an increased responsibility to be active on the local, national, and global scene. While Millennial children are revolutionizing their role in both the family


structure and society, teenagers tend to be more self focused as they are developing, and the Millennials are no different.

As illustrated, the millennial child received enormous attention, support and protection from his or her parents. Every effort was made to ensure they would develop (seemingly effortlessly) into productive, moral and accomplished adults. However, before the success of this attempt can be examined, the Millennials first must take the rocky path through adolescence. During their teen years Millennials have celebrated individualism, encountered increased pressures to succeed, participated in the creation of social networks, planned for their futures and fought the widespread assumptions that they were spoiled little brats who got themselves into as much trouble as their parents did as teenagers.

The concept of individualism has been imbedded in American culture since its beginning. Philosophers such as John Locke and Alexis de Toqueville, leaders such as Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln all speak to the foundation of American society through individualism. Although it is manifested in many different ways, through ideological means or sociological means, American democracy is based on the concept that “Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not only morally
wrong, it is sacrilegious.”\textsuperscript{26} The modern expression of this individualism is at the heart of the self-esteem movement. While growing up, Millennials were told to celebrate their differences and understand that each person had a unique value. The late nineties saw this spirit of the individual reflected through advertising such as Prudential Insurance which replaced its slogan from “Get a Piece of the Rock” to “Be Your Own Rock” and the United States army, who in 2001 used the slogan “An Army of One.”\textsuperscript{27} This rippled into popular culture through customization where CD singles, ipods, scene selection on DVDs, digital recording devices and the ability to make your own CDs meant that the consumer never had to endure something they didn’t want. They could tailor all experiences to their specifications and desires. This pride was not simply felt internally, it was expressed very clearly for all to see as illustrated by the discovery that “…36\% of 18 to 25-year-olds have a tattoo, 25\% have dyed their hair an untraditional color, and 30\% have a piercing somewhere other than their earlobe” according to a Pew Research Center survey.\textsuperscript{28} Personal expression was not limited to creative writing or private release but rather visible on their physical bodies for all the world to see.


\textsuperscript{27} Twenge, Generation Me, 51.

\textsuperscript{28} Pew Research Center survey quoted in Alsop, Trophy Kids, 179.
“The choices of the individual are now held so paramount that the most common advice given to teenagers is ‘Just Be Yourself’.” The untraditional and gender concealing names of this time period are another illustration of its desire to be unique. Millennials also combine their individuality with their familiarity with technology to express themselves on the web. A Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C. survey notes that two-thirds of 18-25 year-olds have created content on the internet. They are proud to be who they are and want the world to notice and celebrate it as well. This interest in individuality also links to their continued belief in equality so that everyone with their unique characteristics will be valued inherently. “When the Boomers were girls, one in twenty-seven participated in team sports in high school. Social pressure and the reality of ‘Title IX’ has now made that number one in three.” Athletics specifically gave millennial girls another outlet to express themselves that was not widely available to previous generations.

Millennial teens, while their parents ‘trophy kids’, are under immense pressure to succeed. While previous generations were recognized for individual achievements as “the sports star” or “the great musician” or “the brain”, Millennials are expected to excel in all areas of teen life. “A 2002 Washington Post article titled, “These Teens Are at the

---

29 Twenge, Generation Me, 20.

30 Alsop, Trophy Kids, 138.

Top in Everything, Including Stress,” describes students who load their schedules with every Advanced Placement (AP) class available, and then pile on three or four extracurricular activities and hours of community service, all in pursuit of getting in to the right college.”32 And when “Harvard rejects 50% of applicants who have perfect SAT scores,”33 as high school principal Marilyn Cook says, “It can make the brightest kid in the world feel inadequate.”34 The immense pressure to never make a mistake can lead Millennials to feel that the smallest imperfection has catastrophic consequences.

Martin Seligman remarks, “It’s as if some idiot raised the ante on what it takes to be a normal human being.”35 But even to be categorized as normal is not enough for these achievement junkies. While Gen Xers proved themselves to be very resilient and familiar with being knocked down by parents, bosses and authority figures, Millennials do not know what it means to fail. It is not an option for them. “Pressure is what keeps them constantly in motion—moving, busy, purposeful, without nearly enough hours in the day to get it all done.”36 While young and energetic this is an amazing feat,


34 High School Principal Marilyn Cook quoted in a sidebar in Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 143.


36 Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 184.
however this type of constant stimulation and pressure of being overworked cannot carry on forever. Burn out is a serious concern for Millennials because if they do not stop to take a break, the consequences could be very serious.

Additionally, as this generation is looking for support during tough times, the nuclear family is not as reliable as it once was. As the U.S. Census noted in the early 1990s, “…high rates of separation and divorce, as well as larger numbers of never-married women having children, have resulted in significant numbers and proportions of adults and children experiencing life in one-parent families.”37 As a result of non-traditional family structures, children growing up during this time were often required to be more independent and desired to be more self-sufficient than their earlier counterparts. It was understood that your classmates and collegians did not all come from the same background and that it was not something to be ashamed of or judged. This generation appreciates that Nick-at-Nite families are ideals and not a guarantee to anyone. As a result, while looking for a social network of support, “they establish bonds with relatives, family friends, and neighbors as a means of finding security in an uncertain world.”38 Friends have become another version of family to Millennials and are not to be considered temporary or insignificant.


Even in the cases where a nuclear family does exist, a survey done in the year 2000 indicated that “82% of 18-to-22-year-olds said their mothers worked outside the home at least some of the time when they were growing up, compared to 65% of the mothers of Boomers and only 34% if the mothers of the World War II generation.”

Millennial teenagers are familiar with independence and a lack of parental supervision. In some cases the programming of clubs, sports, after school care, babysitters, or simply the sheer amount of homework kept them out of trouble, but others had to choose what path to take and make concrete decisions about the direction of their lives. As a general rule, this generation is very focused on their futures and chooses to behave very differently than the boomers did at the same age. Yet many Millennials feel that the consequences for what they do wrong, are much more serious than their parents faced at the same age.

*The New York Times* reported that Boomers approach the role of parenting with an attitude of “Do as I say, Not As I Did,” as parents who polls confirmed did not want their own children to have the same freedom with drugs, alcohol, and sex that they had once enjoyed.” The freedoms that they celebrated and experienced were now like a dark cloud hovering over their trophy children threatening to distract them and lure them from the path that was outlined so carefully by their doting parents.

---


“To the Millennial eye, Boomers are forever demanding more of other generations (now the young) than they demand of themselves—and are forever pointing to the quality of their attitudes and ideals to excuse the shortcomings of their own behavior.”\textsuperscript{41} Even with this dichotomy of standards, Millennials feel the need to please their parents and meet the expectations set for them.

When surveyed, “…by more than two to one, the Class of 2000 believes that its own members are being held to a higher moral standard (regarding sex, drugs, and truth-telling) than their parents apply to their own behavior.”\textsuperscript{42} These higher expectations extend to many areas of life, as Tina Hoff from the Kaiser Family Foundation notes, “Teens bear an unfair burden for national problems like unwanted pregnancies and STDs. In some ways, we hold them to a higher standard of behavior than adults are willing to accept for themselves.”\textsuperscript{43} Simply looking at the behavior Boomers in the spotlight have exhibited into their adulthood through scandals, cheating, lying, and adultery can illustrate the negative consequences of personal gratification over all else. The imperfections of their parents were not a secret from Millennials.

Howe and Strauss note that when seeing an R-rated movie, it is more likely that the teen is embarrassed the parent is in the room, rather than the other way around. Millennials sing songs with vulgar lyrics, curse freely in public, and often portray sexual

\begin{flushright}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{41} Howe and Strauss, \textit{Millennials Rising}, 55.
\item\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 177.
\item\textsuperscript{43} Tina Hoff quoted in a sidebar in Howe and Strauss, \textit{Millennials Rising}, 45.
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
content much beyond their years, but the blame cannot be placed solely on the teenagers. Howe and Strauss comment:

In an outlandish aspect of today’s culture-war charades, many adults are shocked when they hear 15-year-olds spew back a few artifacts of a pop culture that includes *South Park* dialogue, Duke Nukem sound effects, and Limp Bizkit lyrics. Yet few adults express any particular shock at the 30-year-olds who write it, the 50-year-olds who produce it, or the 70-year-olds whose portfolios profit by it.  

Millennials are exposed to mature content at extremely young ages. As was mentioned previously, Millennials are a prime target to be marketed to and they are bombarded with images and messages at alarming rates. Their desire to please and meet expectations makes them ideal consumers once a cultural trend has been established to look a certain way, talk a certain way or portray a certain image. As teenagers, this can mean using self-expression as a means for rebellion rather than acting out in ways that are unsafe or detrimental to one’s future. “Where the Boomer-era iconic teenager was a pleasant-seeming kid who behaved worse than adults thought, his Millennial-era counterpart is a foul-mouthed teen who behaves better than adults think.”

The difference of the teen years between Boomers and Millennials doesn’t end with an overarching generalization based on cultural interests. It is evident in academia as well. “Boomers liked subjects that defied accountability. Millennials prefer subjects

---


45 Ibid., 256.
Teenagers today are very practical. They don’t want deep introspective thinking; they want concrete markers and parameters for evaluation. They want to know if they are doing enough to make the grade or meet the standards to achieve a certain reward.

“When young Boomers planned their future, they saw themselves plotting their course by an internal compass, asking how a path felt rather than what it tangibly represented. Millennials…prefer timetables to compasses”47 Since birth the Millennial Generation has been pushed to succeed. After elementary school comes middle school, after middle school comes high school, and after high school “…64 to 71 percent plan on attending a four year college”48 Millennials have a sense of direction and a deep rooted drive to achieve. They were raised on short term deadlines to meet long term goals and have made a habit of juggling multiple priorities and succeeding in all of them. This generation wants to know exactly what work lies ahead of them so they can adequately prepare to tackle the challenges and best prepare for the future. This concern is no longer limited to men as was the case during the Veterans generation. Millennial women have emerged with a sense of purpose and direction not afforded to their mothers or grandmothers. “When my mother graduated valedictorian of her high school class in 1962, she was told that women could be nurses, teachers or secretaries—

46 Ibid., 166.
47 Ibid., 182.
48 Ibid., 179.
that was it. Like most women of my generation, I was told that I could be whatever I wanted to be.”

Even as teenagers the Millennial Generation does not rebel against authority as other generations have. They understand this is the time when they are supposed to act out, and appear unengaged so they fulfill this role flawlessly. Every sitcom and Brat Pack movie was like an instruction manual for teenagers. However, the appearance of insubordination through tattoos and piercings and self expression was a substitute for any behavior that would potentially jeopardize their futures. This is another way in which they differed from their parents when they were teens. “Where Boomers warred with their parents…Millennials are willing to accept their parents’ values as stated—but are starting to think they can apply them and someday run the show, a whole lot better.” Millennials believe they can work within the system to create change and solve problems. They do not argue for the sake of arguing, nor do they disrespect or disregard a person because of the argument they are making. Just because an idea comes from your parents does not mean it is automatically right, nor does it mean it is automatically wrong. Ideals and philosophies can be accepted while the method of implementing these can differ. For this reason, Millennials were not often seen

49 Twenge on her own experience in Twenge, Generation Me, 190.

50 Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 185.
demonstrating against large corporate or government institutions or protesting in the streets.

In some ways Millennial teens see themselves as a bright shining light for the future, set up with the tools to fix a lot of the problems that plagued their parents’ generations. *A Newsweek* article noted, “As a group, today’s teens are infused with an optimism not seen among kids in decades. (It doesn’t hurt to have grown up in a time of relative peace and the longest economic expansion in U.S. history).”\(^5^1\)

Former Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala commented that, “Most teenagers are making good choices—focusing on their futures and saying no to anything that would jeopardize those dreams.”\(^5^2\) Regardless of how many tattoos someone has, piercings in odd places someone has, or how many colors someone has dyed his or her hair, the teens of the Millennial generation have their heads on straight and are planning for the future (they just may not want you to see that).

“What gave rise to the large number of Millennials was, mostly, the passionate desire of their parents to bear and raise more of them.”\(^5^3\) With the intent to reintroduce Veteran values into society mixed in with Boomer modernization, Millennials were taught at an early age to strive for achievement and exceed expectations. They have been on a path seemingly since birth to prepare for a successful career and family. As


\(^{52}\) Donna Shalala quoted in a sidebar in Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 21.

\(^{53}\) Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 75.
children Millennials were protected and supported and as teenagers they were pressured to be the best and get ahead of the pack. The values that are seen throughout Millennial development are customization, independence, drive, open-mindedness, fairness, communication, friendship, morality, accountability, teamwork, goal setting and problem solving. These abilities that were fostered at a young age are paramount to the Millennial identity as adults and frame how this generation operates in society.
CHAPTER 3: MILLENNIALS AFTER COLLEGE

Members of the Millennial Generation were “the ‘babies on board’ of the early Reagan years, the ‘Have You Hugged Your Child Today?’ sixth graders of the early Clinton years, the teens of Columbine”\(^1\) and the collegians of the September 11\(^{th}\) terrorist attacks. Life after college brought the first unscheduled portion of their lives and this lack of defined direction was something this generation has found unsettling. Some Millennials returned to the nest and lived at home while they planned the next phase of their lives (Ron Alsop, author of *The Trophy Kids Grow Up* coined the phrase “Boomerang kids”\(^2\) to describe this group), a majority took that first step on the corporate ladder to set up a lifetime career, while the last group took a job to pay the bills while they figured out what they wanted to do next. For the purposes of discussing work life balance, this paper will look at the middle group: The bright-eyed and bushytailed eager beavers who felt that they had been preparing their entire lives for opportunities like these, and now was the time for their lifetime of preparation to pay off.

---


“For all of their lives, twentysomethings have been told that they can be whatever they want to be, do whatever they want to do.”³ So why is it so hard to have it all? This chapter will address the trend of how Millennials in their twenties feel about their work life, their social life, and the balance between the two.

Fresh out of college, this group was ready to dive into the workforce. Eager to get started on everything they had prepared for, many Millennials sought a high starting salary for their first full time jobs. This was both in part to pay off student loans accumulated during their undergraduate education, as well as credit card debt and other regular monthly expenses of individuals in their twenties. Financial Times writer Thomas Barlow commented, “…jobs are no longer just jobs; they are lifestyle options.”⁴ It will determine what apartment they can afford to live in, what clothes they can buy and what restaurants they can afford to dine in. Additionally, the salary you make is an example of your status- which Millennials are eager to show off through their materialistic purchases, a trend that began as children and never changed for this group.

Other ideals that were imbedded in Millennial children still exist as they enter the workforce. In their version of the American tradition of individualism, “Many


young people don’t want to commit to a career and stay with it because they’d like to find exactly the right job for them.” 5 Instead of going in with the feeling that this is the company they will be with for the rest of their careers, Millennials are encouraged and reminded to “look after their own best interests.” 6 They still firmly believe that they are each special as individuals and have this reinforced frequently, as Millennial parents are still very active in their children’s lives even after the children have left home permanently. Parents and Millennials communicate with each other daily, much more frequently than the once a week typical of older generations. Alsop refers to these ever present parental units as “helicopter parents” because of how they hover over their children’s lives. He even names those overly involved and active parents “Black Hawks” for how intently they watch over their precious children. “The cell phone has become the new high-tech umbilical cord” 7 and neither party seems to mind. While active parents can be more difficult on employers (as negotiations are no longer the same once “well my mom says” enters the discussion), millennial employees are proving that they are worth the additional effort.

5 Twenge, Generation Me, 98.

6 Alsop, The Trophy Kids Grow Up, 80.

7 Ibid., 51.
Millennials “…combine the teamwork ethic of the Boomers with the can-do attitude of the Veterans and the technological savvy of the Xers.”

They try to improve upon the shortcomings of past generations, and adopt their best qualities. This group will always continue to set new objectives and “…[t]hey believe—imagine this—that hard work and goal setting are sure tickets to achieving their dreams.”

Everything Millennials have experienced until this point reiterates the message that if you behave a certain way, you will achieve certain results. They are used to being successful and want to exceed expectations to prove their value.

“Barriers of time and space appear to have a different, less absolute meaning for them.”

Specifically, with the increased ability to work away from the office via blackberries, Millennials can attend to their responsibilities on a 24 hour timetable rather than an 8 hour timetable. “Perhaps the most distinctive attributes of the millennial generation are their technology savvy and their agility in handling multiple pursuits at once.”

Unlike older generations, Millennials are content chatting online while researching on the internet and are still able to create that spreadsheet, document or PowerPoint presentation on time.

Ron Alsop acknowledges the counterintuitive attributes of this group saying:

---


9 Ibid., 144.

10 Ibid., 23.

“It’s all about me” might be their mantra but many millennials … also demonstrate strong concern about social and environmental issues and tend to be active in community service. In another interesting twist, they want structure and clear direction in their work assignments, but they also expect flexibility to decide when and where they complete the tasks. And although they crave individual praise and recognition, they can also be terrific team players, whether in sports, the classroom, or the workplace.12

This counterintuitive nature plays a large role in their frustration with attempting to find balance in their lives. In addition to the stresses and strains of entering the workforce fulltime, these Millennials want to prioritize their personal lives as well. They want to give 100% to their career, their social life and themselves as they have always been told they can have it all. College provides a place to gain personal identity, cultivate character, and develop the foundation for a future. It is also the last chance many Millennials have to lean on their parents and depend on their support for tuition, housing and the essentials of life. Graduation day meant more than getting a diploma; it meant full and complete independence. Credit cards, car payments, rent, and loan payments are no longer being taken care of by parents. In some ways it was the Millennial’s dream: Complete and total freedom to do whatever he or she desired. At the same time, this group that always wants a clear view of “what’s next” ends up with many options and a lack of one clear concise direction. Many Millennials struggled with the initial insecurity of the future during this time. The emergence of a quarter life crisis has appeared in society (a time of unprecedented change that was once only

12 Ibid., 6.
limited to balding men in their fifties). Millennials do acknowledge a few priorities that they are unwilling to sacrifice.

As self-focused twenty-somethings, Millennials still place a large level of importance on personal satisfaction. No matter what else is driving them to succeed, Millennials are first and foremost driven by “individual needs and desires.” This generation “me” is willing to identify that about themselves, and takes pride in the fact that they will not succumb to the mistakes of their parents who put the company needs ahead of personal needs. Success will be partially determined by their own level of happiness. Ironically, while this group was largely dependent on their boomer parents throughout their childhood, their newfound self-reliance after college allowed this group to describe themselves as “independent” and “open minded”.

As mentioned above, this time of firsts: first apartments, first jobs, first time in “the real world” can be scary and stressful. Additionally, this group often sets a personal foundation for their careers in a city far from where they were raised. While rare during the Boomer generation, it is commonplace for Millennials to be located in a different state, country, even continent than their parents. During this time of uncertainty, while past generations might have reached out to their parents for support, Millennials often turn to their social networks for comfort. Friends from elementary school, summer camps, trips abroad, clubs, sports, hobbies, arts and a number of

---

13 Twenge, Generation Me, 19.

14 Ibid., 24.
associations have maintained contact with the help of new technology. It was difficult for older generations to write hundreds of letters and wait for weeks or months for them to reach their recipients (who may or may not still live at that location) however email, instant messaging, and social networking sites make it much easier for this generation to stay in contact with their close friends no matter where they live on the globe. This habit alone brings on a whole new skill set as described by Michael Ruane of *The Washington Post*, “It’s fast: try talking to six people at once. It’s brief: three or four words per exchange. It takes wit, concentration, and nimble fingers. And it requires tremendous linguistic economy.”

Additionally, this type of communication allows for more frequent updates, although quick (now as few as 140 characters long via Twitter), rather than long drawn out communications. Because of their familiarity with the internet, Millennials also “don’t have the same filters for censoring personal information.” Whereas past generations never had to worry about overexposure, with one quick internet search, future employers, future colleagues, or potential love interests can find out someone’s favorite movies, books, habits and preferences. Whereas Generation X would likely hate this sort of intrusion, the Millennial Generation simply sees it as an option for social connection and an outlet for friends.

---


The importance of friendships to the Millennial generation cannot be highlighted enough. They keep their friendships in as high of a regard as they do their own families. This is partially because they are choosing not to start their own families and settling down with marriage and children until later in life, but also because of shared generational experiences. Commitment to these friendships is unwavering and the support of one another extends throughout many arenas of their lives. As described in the previous chapter, Millennials also have friendships that transcend race, religion and gender. Having been exposed to all different kinds of people allows Millennials to attach personal stories to larger scale social justice issues. This is not unfamiliar to other generations. Similar to the women’s movement of the Veterans and Boomers, and the civil rights movement of the Boomers and Xers, Millennials will be instrumental in fighting for equality for everyone regardless of sexual orientation. “Describing the revolution in equality would not be complete without mentioning the enormous change in attitudes toward gays and lesbians.” Social taboos of earlier generations regarding homosexuality are taking a back seat to the desire for equality and justice that this generation values.

These values can be seen in their political activity as well. A high school student’s political beliefs typically reflect those of their parents while a college student’s beliefs change as they become more educated and exposed to new information.

17 Twenge, *Generation Me*, 207.
Once the voting age was lowered to 18, youth issues began to play a role in political campaigns. With the resurgence of 18-29 year olds in the 1992 election courting the youth vote has been a targeted effort by both political parties. “Research has shown that once a person votes three times consecutively for the same political party, they are 70-80 percent like to continue to vote for that party for life.”

“In the early 90s, Gen Xers of this age were identifying at a rate of 55 percent Republicans.” “In 2004, 18-29 year olds (three-fourths of whom would qualify as Millennials) voted 54-45 Democratic for president (55-44 for the House). If one examines even further and exclusively explores just 18-24 year olds (which was entirely Millennials) voted 56-43 Democratic for president while the older 25-29 year old group (generally not Millennials) voted only 51-48 Democratic.”

Currently the Millennials are trending towards progressive candidates, but it will take a few more election cycles, once Millennials make up the majority to truly see their political impact. Both parties are hoping to engage them early and often, using modern communication forums to gain their support.

---


Millenials’ commitment to civic involvement goes beyond previous generations’ engagements. This generation combines social organizations with community service in a variety of ways. “A new Millennial service ethic is emerging, built around notions of collegial (rather than individual) action, support for (rather than against) civic institutions, and the tangible doing of good deeds.”\textsuperscript{21} Almost every recognized club, organization, even corporation has some sort of cause to donate to, or charity to get involved with. Breast Cancer awareness, AIDS relief, victims of hurricanes and natural disasters have all come to the forefront of societal awareness. Additionally, this generation has been educated from a very young age about environmental impact of modernization and the prevention of global warming. “Having learned in school about recycling, global warming, the destruction of the rainforests, and acid rain, this generation is, and will probably continue to be, the most concerned and actively involved group of advocates for the environment.”\textsuperscript{22} They will be the ones with eco-friendly light bulbs and a focus on recycling and perhaps even alternatively fueled cars. Their concern for the planet is immense as well as the role the United States plays in the global scale of conserving the Earth for future generations.

Not one to ever be accused of all work and no play, this generation combines fun with service. Many organizations are created with the intent of meeting people while

\textsuperscript{21} Howe and Strauss, \textit{Millennials Rising}, 216.

\textsuperscript{22} Zemke, Raines and Filipczak, \textit{Generations at Work}, 136.
contributing to the community. Washington, D.C. has a group called SMASHED (Society of Mature Adults Seeking to Help, Entertain, and Donate)²³ that creates scavenger hunts, band competitions, date auctions, manpageants (pageants for men), even hair growing competitions to create fun social connections among participants and raise money for local D.C. charities. This is how Millennials forge new friendships, meet new people and even attempt to date.

Dating for Millennials looks very different than it did for Boomers or Veterans. For one thing, high school dating for Millennials typically happened in groups, with the on one on one traditional dating entering into their lives in college. Additionally, although the Boomers were believers in “free love” they also settled down into marriages at a relatively young age. The median age for first marriage was at an all time low in the early 1960s with Men aged 22.8 and women 20.3 years old at the time of marriage.²⁴ A November 2008 article in USA Today highlights a U.S. Census Bureau report that found Millennial men married on average at the age of 27.5 and women at 25.6. This is the highest that the median age of first marriage has ever been. The article continued:

Two yet-unpublished papers co-written by Jason Carroll, an associate professor of family life at Brigham Young University, reviewed data collected in 2004-06 based on student questionnaires of 448 items. One

---

study of 788 college students ages 18-25 from five campuses across the country analyzed marriage readiness by asking "Do you think that you are ready to be married?" Most weren't: 60% of men and 67% of women answered "no," and only 9% of men and 5% of women said "yes." Almost one-third of men and 28% of women said "in some ways yes, in some ways no."25

Delaying marriage means that the mid twenties are a time for Millennials to seek out potential partners. Dating and maintaining relationships takes a lot of focus and effort. This can be a challenge for those who are trying to use this time to establish themselves in their career. While someone may want to find that special someone, “…just having time to date and make friends is difficult. With the workweek expanding from relatively sane 9-to-5 hours into countless evenings and weekends, it’s often impossible to find the time and energy to be with other people.”26

Efficient time management and balance are significantly important to Millennials. Their other key “core values include optimism, civic duty, confidence, achievement, sociability, morality, street smarts and diversity.”27 Incorporating all of these characteristics is of utmost important to this generation. They do not want to sacrifice anything for the sake of something else. All of their interests are priorities and thus a delicate balance will be required to meet all of their needs. Millennials have the


26 Twenge, Generation Me, 115.

27 Zemke, Raines and Filipczak, Generations at Work, 132.
idea that they can achieve it all and have everything they ever wanted all at once partially because of their unique connection of sharing a common location in history.

On the one hand, they’ve never known what it was like to grow up without miracle vaccines, eat foods without vitamin additives, entertain themselves without electronic games of immense complexity, write a term paper without internet and word processor, be barred from schools because of race or from sports because of gender, or duck and cover in nuclear war drills at school. They’ve never known recessions, student riots, political assassinations, red scares or foreign crises that directly threatened the lives of their families.  

As described in the earlier chapters, this generation is very competitive. The importance of achievement has been highlighted at every step of their development. As the pressure to succeed is compounded exponentially on them, they will undoubtedly face moral challenges because “…in an increasingly competitive world, the temptation to cheat will be ever stronger.” Every chance to get ahead will prove to put their competing interest of justice, fair play and honesty, in direct contrast to achievement. Perhaps they will find a way to balance these values within their lives and not succumb to the pressures of previous generations. “Members of this generation have been reared to be winners and successful in the activities in which they participate. This group seems to have more respect for advice and procedures than Xers and does not mind institutional involvement.” Millennials have been reared to be rule followers. When a

28 Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 47.

29 Twenge, Generation Me, 28.

30 David Johnson, one of the sidebar voices quoted in Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 279.
process has been set, they will simply operate it in the most efficient manner to be successful. The difficulty lies when what is most efficient in the office and most efficient out of the office compete and contrast with each other.

“Seventy-five percent of women aged 25 to 35 say that their work lives interfere with their personal lives, and 35% say that the conflict is extreme.”31 Following the second wave of feminism and the modern “wonder woman” that their mothers became, millennial women have a broader understanding of what it entails to try to have it all at the same time. They have the benefit of looking at the generations before them in order to be better prepared for these challenges. “Millennials would rather strike a balance between what they have to do and what they want to do, rather than merge the two (common among Boomers) or compartmentalize the two (common among Gen Xers).”32 Time management for Millennials makes their days look much more like a jigsaw puzzle than a straight line. In their ideal world, they would like to move around important meetings, time working, exercise classes, music lessons, happy hours, errands and volunteering in a timeline that is most convenient for them to handle each task in the best way. They have specific ideas on how to improve their own lives and the lives of those around them. However, in order to be effective they will not only need to speak up, they will need someone to listen.


32 Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 183.
“Millennials believe in positive change, but that’s less the belief that things are getting better than the belief that things can get better. They seek some new form of order and stability- not a return to the 1950s, but the forging of a new national consensus.”

Because Millennials have many different competing interests, the need for balance is more important than ever. Their family situations growing up, the increased level of stress and their desire to focus on more than just their careers will mean a constant state of juggling and balancing priorities. Additionally, Millennials will be working hard to reconcile all of their areas of concern while juggling multiple priorities that are each deserving of attention and effort. While members of this group are experts of efficiency the workplace that they enter into, as it is now, does now meet their ever changing needs. The next chapter will discuss the challenges the Millennial Generation faces in the workplace.

---

33 Tobias Burmeister, one of the sidebar voices quoted in Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 349.
CHAPTER 4: MILLENNIAL CHALLENGES IN THE WORKPLACE

From early on in their development, it has been evident that there are some fundamental characteristics that separate the Millennials from generations before them. The first three chapters explored the different generations that exist today and how these basic traits have been woven throughout the Millennial Generation’s development. This chapter will focus on the unique generational needs and wants of Millennials and describe the many reasons why they cannot be fulfilled in the current workplace as it exists today.

First and foremost, no one is leaving the workplace. Old timers who were once eager to be ousted at 60 or 65 are hanging in past their retirement prime. With their inherent drive to succeed Millennials will want to advance in their careers at a fairly steady pace, however, with older generations staying in the workplace for a longer period of time it will be harder for Millennials to keep moving up the ladder within the same company. By nature this will disrupt the time-tested tradition of order in the workplace and Millennials will not be afraid to speak up no matter who they are talking to. “They appreciate directness rather than abstraction. They do not have automatic respect for authority and will feel free to make suggestions if they think it will improve things.”¹ Lack of efficiency, illogical processes and unreasonableness without explanation are just the elements of bureaucracy in the workplace that frustrate

Millennials. They like swiftness of action and straightforward solutions in order to improve things. While opinionated and perhaps gutsy, this directness is not rudeness. When Millennials speak; they are not doing it from a place of disrespect or disruption, but rather from a desire to have their opinion be heard and recognized. They will make suggestions on efficiency which often involve going against the status quo or the typical response of “this is how it’s always been done”. This is not change for the sake of change, but in their minds it is adapting to further advance the success of a company. Millennials “…think nothing of emailing top executives” and want a “…true meritocracy that rewards performance regardless of years of seniority.” While they do understand the notion of paying one’s dues, the best and brightest of the generation will be frustrated if they feel their talent is not being recognized and utilized. Part of it is ego, because for their entire lives they have been told how wonderful and talented they are. Naturally they would feel their insight should be valued. But the primary reason is that it goes against their nature to watch a company they want to succeed not do as well as it could because it is not taking advantage of the resources it has because of outdated management by leaders who are past their prime. “From their elders’ perspective, Millennials are not as loyal and dependable as traditionalists, aren’t willing to earn their stripes as work-centric baby boomers did, and are less self-reliant than generation X.”

---


3 Ibid., 42.
To the Millennial eye, the ceiling of advancement will make them more inclined to move out rather than stick it out until these older generations leave. Author of *Growing Up Digital* Don Tapscott says, “Because they have the tools to question, challenge, and disagree, these kids are becoming a generation of critical thinkers.” Millennials will continue to want to do what is best, not what has always been done and will want a company that values the same mentality.

Second, the workplace is designed for the traditional family structure as the backbone for its employees not the varying definitions of family and relationships that exist today. Specifically for Millennials, the difference between friends and family plays a large role in their support system and they will want that reflected in their work environment. “The American workplace today, perhaps 90% or more of it, remains largely calibrated to family patterns and life cycle rhythms of the early- and mid-twentieth century, when wives typically raised children at home and husbands worked forty hours a week in a factory, office or store.” With women making up more than half of the workforce now and very few professions actually limiting the work week to forty hours, this is a construct of the past that is no longer applicable. Additionally, with Millennials marrying later in life they are more likely to maintain and prioritize their friendships while starting out in their careers. It is understood that if a parent has to pick

---


up a child from school they must be out the door on time. It is understood that if there is a company event a spouse is invited. But how do millennial friendships weigh in as a reasonable excuse? Are long lunches with a friend in from out of town acceptable? If there is an evening yoga class, is that less important obligation than leaving work to pick up a child? Former managing partner of Arnold & Porter James J. Sandman says, “The person who doesn’t have a family can conclude that a family obligation is a professionally acceptable reason for not being available for late-night or weekend work. On the other hand, friends visiting from out of town are not considered an acceptable reason to say no.”6 In many cases, Millennials are not afforded the same flexibilities for their friends and social networks that other employees are for their family obligations. This is at odds with their desires and may cause friction if they are constantly asked to put work ahead of their personal obligations.

The importance of balance for Millennials was explained in Chapter Three and maintains at the same level of importance in regards to the workplace. Millennials are trying to balance exercise, dating, work, errands and possibly school. “Seventy-five percent of women aged 25 to 35 say that their work lives interfere with their personal lives, and 35% say that the conflict is extreme.”7 With the understanding that some of their responsibilities have specific times (dry cleaning, the bank, exercise classes)

6 James J. Sandman, telephone interview by Anne Weisberg, tape recording, October 6, 2006 quoted in Benko and Weisberg, Mass Career Customization, 72.

7 Twenge, Generation Me, 115.
whereas other responsibilities are more fluid (work not on a deadline, grocery shopping, appointments) it is possible to schedule each of these duties in a way that allows for maximum efficiency. As mentioned in the last chapter, Millennials manage their time more like a jigsaw puzzle than a straight line seeing how each piece can fit best and not necessarily where it has classically gone. Diane Piktialis, a project leader for the Conference Board in New York City, commented, “Older workers who grew up in a face-time culture believe young people have no work ethic if they leave at five o’clock…what they don’t realize is that the millennial worker gets online and is working at home at midnight.”

Additionally, Millennials have always been told that they could be anything. The problem is, “…the ‘you can do anything’ promise has a tendency to transform into an unrealistic ‘you should be everything’ brand of guilt.” It has not taken Millennials long to realize this is not possible and they want a workplace that allows them to juggle all of their responsibilities in a way that makes the most sense for them. Managers and supervisors who allow their Millennial employees to have this level of autonomy will benefit from a happier workforce.

Millennials have very high expectations for their managers. Similar to their parents, day care providers, teachers and coaches, Millennials want their bosses to maintain an open dialogue for feedback, criticism, mentoring and support. “It provides

---

8 Diane Piktialis (no information given on how quote was obtained) quoted in Alsop, *The Trophy Kids Grow Up*, 45.

9 Twenge, *Generation Me*, 131.
validation that their careers are on the fast track and helps them figure out how they can improve and advance even more quickly.”¹⁰ Millennials are rule followers by nature and they do not mind being held accountable for their work. In fact, they relish in it. They are achievers by nature and want to know how to be better so eventually they can be the best. “Unlike your teacher, your boss isn’t going to care much about preserving your high self-esteem”¹¹ and this is exactly the honest feedback Millennials are looking for. Diana Bing from IBM believes “millennials demand reviews not because they need stroking, but because they value their own marketability and want someone to honestly tell them what they need to do better.”¹² A large part of why Millennials want to improve on their performance in the workplace is to prepare them for continued growth and a successful future beyond their current company.

Throughout their entire development Millennials have been preparing and planning for their foray into the workforce. They worked hard in high school to get into a good college, and took every opportunity in college to land a great job. Debt from education both in bachelors and advanced degrees makes them eager to earn enough to pay those off. “Today’s young people are the most highly educated generation ever—more than 30% of people between the ages of 25 and 39 have a college degree. But all of that education comes at a price. Average student loan debt has increased 85% in the


¹¹ Twenge, *Generation Me*, 68.

last ten years alone; 66% of recent college graduates owe more than $10,000, and 5%
owe more than $100,000.”13 Because of these debts, their drive to succeed is partially
out of necessity. Rather than taking time to follow their inner peace as Boomers may
have, Millennials must immediately begin putting money in the bank. “While families
could once achieve middle-class status on the earnings of one high school-educated
person, it now takes two college-educated earners to achieve the same standard of
living.”14 The pressure to succeed early in their careers for Millennials is strong
because “housing, health care, day care, and education costs have all far outstripped
inflation”15 Cost of living increases in their paychecks are not actually rising at the
same rate as their bills so they must advance even more quickly. As mentioned in
chapter three, Millennials also want to make sure that all of their friends regardless of
race, gender or sexual orientation can prepare and plan for the future. They want
everyone to be taken care of equally and fairly.

It is important for Millennials to work at a company that they believe in, and that
in turn believes in them. This generation views themselves as an investment—a highly
valuable commodity that can be cultivated and shaped to benefit the company they work
for. With the understanding that signing up in their early twenties is a short term
commitment rather than a lifetime career, Millennials are eager to speak candidly with

13 Twenge, Generation Me, 126.

14 Ibid., 4.

15 Ibid., 120.
their employers about what their opportunities are and how working together will benefit both entities.

In a similar fashion, Millennials are proud to devote their time and resources to their employer and they desire the same type of investment in return. They consistently want new opportunities, workshops, training programs and a successful mentor. They want to observe the future path for their careers and learn how to easily navigate the terrain of the workplace and the industry they aspire to be in. Millennials also understand that they will not be in their current job forever, so they are regularly looking for ways to improve their resume to make them an attractive candidate for futures jobs and opportunities. They want to make themselves as marketable as possible, which is frightening to companies who desire to keep them for many years to avoid turnover.

This can be especially frustrating for those who manage Millennials. Likely Boomers, these individuals did not benefit from having organized mentoring programs or guidance throughout their careers. Typically their supervisors were very hands off and solely in line with the company message. Today’s managers are expected to work on employee development in addition to their own personal and professional responsibilities. Managers of Millennials also know that these employees are most likely not going to stay longer than a few years, so they may resent the expectations that Millennials have. Additionally, such investment in an employee is both time consuming and often expensive. The desires of the company and the employee are at odds in this situation which leaves the manager in the middle.
Competing interests between the needs of an employer and the needs of an employee extend to many other arenas as well. With the current heath crisis in America, maintaining one’s personal and physical health has become a priority. Long work hours have been associated with increased body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference, higher blood pressure, heart problems, increased risk of breast cancer among women, increased rates of injury, inadequate diet, higher rates of drinking and smoking, decreased rate of physical activity, increased fatigue, stress, poor mental health.16 Some companies are beginning to combat this by providing gym memberships but the consequence of over scheduling still lingers for Millennials. Making time to go to the gym adds to their never ending to-do list and often requires cutting back on sleep to work out before or after work. In addition to the long work hours, jobs that are particularly stressful add an extra burden to this laundry list of health risks. According to the American Public Health Association, workplace flexibility is larger than individual scheduling issues; it is an emerging public health concern. “[H]igh stress or high strain jobs have been associated with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, fibromyalgia, musculoskeletal disorders, depression, expedited biological aging”17

Women have especially felt the time crunch when it comes to balancing work and family. Studies have found that girls with working mothers are more likely to


17 Ibid.
embrace traditionally masculine traits like ambition and independence”\textsuperscript{18} and after watching the superwomen of the nineties and early 2000s, Millennial women have a better idea of what sacrifices they are willing to make to achieve balance in their lives. They thoroughly embrace the mantra of their youth that “you can do anything” but they have also come to realized that “you can’t have it all”\textsuperscript{19} at least not all at the same time.

“In a study funded by twelve multinational corporations, 74% of married women executives have spouses who work full time while 75% of married men executives have spouses who stay at home. This is one reason why senior women feel the strain of the corporate ladder more heavily than senior men: they are much more likely to also be the primary caregiver at home.”\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{Perfect Madness} describes how women today struggle with being a working parent. Women especially feel like trying to get the government to change public policy would be a dead end. “Our inherent self-focus and lack of confidence in political action lead us to assume that there are no other solutions to either (a) staying home and giving up income and a career or (b) working and scrambling to find and pay for expensive day care.”\textsuperscript{21} Millennial women are hoping to avoid making that choice. They “are looking

\textsuperscript{18} Twenge, \textit{Generation Me}, 194.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 202.

\textsuperscript{20} Cathleen Benko and Anne Weisberg. \textit{Mass Career Customization}, 34.

ahead, many beginning in their early twenties, trying to anticipate if and how they can achieve their dreams for both career and personal ambitions. If they can’t see a way within your organization, they will go in a different direction.” 22 It is not easy for employers to institutionalize special arrangements without appearing like favoritism or without causing discontent among other workers who abide by the traditional rules.

While women are the most obvious for facing this dilemma, the pressure to balance work and family extends to men as well. As more and more women are in the workplace (now over 50% of the workforce is female) that means less women are at home so it affects their entire family structure. Both men and women are trying to figure out a workable solution and millennial men in particular are willing to compromise. “Seventy percent of men in their twenties and seventy-one percent of men in their thirties said they would be willing to give up some of their pay in exchange for more time with their families. Only twenty-six percent of men over sixty-five said they would trade pay for more family time.” 23 Choices like these reinforce the priorities of Millennials and highlight how they differ from generations before them.

Another priority that continues with Millennials from their childhood into the workplace is pride in individualism. As children they were always valued for their unique abilities and they want the same to exist in the workplace. Millennials don’t want to just be a cog in the wheel. They want to be recognized for their individual


23 Radcliffe Public Policy Center, a sidebar quoted in Howe and Strauss, Millennials Rising, 123.
talents and make substantive contributions that they feel uniquely suited for.

Millennials want their work space to be personalized and their work place free for individual expression. They also want to be able to incorporate their own personal networks into their professional networks. This generation wants to maintain their relationships and interconnect their various networks because it increases their opportunities and helps them succeed.

The concept of teamwork might not seem to be in sync with the high stakes competition of business, but to Millennials it is of utmost importance. They want to succeed but with their moral fiber intact. The Millennial generation needs a company that reflects their values: supporting leadership, facilitating teamwork, devoting time and attention to civic involvement, providing equality for all and identifying priorities that are comparable to Millennial goals. At an early age Millennials learned about the WorldCom and Enron scandals which showed this generation that the “…breakdown in consideration and loyalty, and the increase in cheating, reaches all the way to the top”24 and they don’t want to put up with it. As described in the previous chapter, Millennials believe that situations can improve but understand there is no guarantee. Each individual has to work together and commit to changing the status quo in order to be effective.

Millennials want to be successful in everything-- they were raised to be winners. But having to win in the gym, in the community, in the workplace and in romantic

---

24 Twenge, Generation Me, 27.
relationships, how can this work for everyone? This generation will benefit from increased technology and what that means for the potential of workplace flexibility.

“Virtual private networks have enabled home users to gain secure access to corporate applications.”

Allowing the information to be accessible remotely and not just on a single desktop creates more opportunities for workers with non-traditional arrangements to still be productive and attentive to their work while simultaneously accomplishing other necessary tasks. Additionally cell phones, blackberries and laptops have created the ability to work remotely. However, it can be a complex situation to decide how the beneficiaries of these flexible work arrangements (FWAs) are chosen.

“FWAs are point solutions often expressed as one-off accommodations or exceptions; neither are they adequately integrated with the organizations ongoing talent management processes, nor do they address the larger question of how an individual’s career unfolds over time. In short, FWAs lack connection with the construct of careers.”

When these arrangements are exceptions, it can lead to resentment for those workers with traditional schedules, and they may feel as if they are picking up the slack and bearing the brunt that those with flexible work arrangements are able to avoid. Instead of a standard with exceptions, there needs to be a new series of options, all slightly different but of equal value. “FWAs are no match for the increasing complexity of the workforce in terms of what Gen Y employees want out of work and what they are

---


26 Ibid., 59.
willing to trade off to get it.”27 In order to create a system that facilitates these various needs and be able to oversee such a system thoroughly, it needs to be a priority. If a company understands that keeping their employees happy is a priority, they will consider making these changes. Arnold & Porter’s flexible work programs manager from 1995-2005 James Sandman says, “It’s been obvious to us for years that a culture with different career path options helps in attracting and retaining the best talent.”28 Arnold & Porter is the exception, but it is the type of system Millennials are looking for. This generation entered into the workforce wanting to be successful. They are hungry to achieve and make a difference, but they are not able to make the most efficient and productive decisions because of all of the competing interests that exist in their lives. This constant battle of priorities and juggling of commitments is creating an unhealthy and unpleasant environment for Millennials.

The current workplace is not meeting the needs of the changing workforce. In the popular movie *Fight Club* the main character states, “Our generation has had no Great Depression, no Great War…Our depression is our lives…We were raised on television to believe that we’d all be millionaires, movie gods, rock stars, but we won’t.


And we’re starting to figure that out. And we’re very, very, pissed off.”29 So too are the Millennials.

---

29 Twenge, *Generation Me*, 129.
CHAPTER 5: WHY SHOULD BUSINESSES ADAPT TO MILLENNIALS INSTEAD OF MILLENNIALS ADAPTING TO BUSINESSES AS THEY ARE NOW?

A disconnect currently exists between the desire of the workplace and the desires of the workforce. While some policies and practices can thrive year after year, others need to be amended based on the needs and wants of the employees that make up the workplace. Those who have existed in the workplace for quite some time now might be resistant to these changes. Previous generations have been able to adapt their behavior and adjust their expectations to succeed in their careers, so why should this generation be any different? Why can’t Millennials morph to meet the demands of the workplace rather than the other way around? It’s not because Millennials are rigid, clearly they can adapt. It’s not that Millennials are selfish or lazy, because they have been raised to value achievement from a very young age. The truth is Millennials see change in the workplace as benefiting society as a whole. They do not want exceptions to be made in order to benefit themselves and their peers alone. They want everyone in the workplace to be happier.

There are currently “…six converging workforce trends: shrinking pool of skilled labor, changing family structure, increasing number of women, changing expectations of men, emerging expectations of Generations X and Y, increasing impact
of technology.”¹ Each of these individual trends can help to explain why changes in the workplace are necessary.

“Employers clearly cannot afford to ignore Millennials because of the imminent need for talent to replace retiring baby boomers. If companies don’t take notice of the striking differences of this generation and prepare to deal with them, they are sure to lose the battle for the best talent.”² As The Veterans are passing away, and the Boomers are preparing to leave the workplace, a lot of experts with historical knowledge will be unavailable for companies to rely on. This will require businesses to retain young talent as they are not so easy to replace. Retention of employees benefits the company as replenishing staff is time intensive, costly and often times at the expense of other efforts that would move the company forward. Preventing turnover benefits the company as much as it does the employees.

“With so many more dual-income families, perks like on-site day care, flexible schedules, work-at-home options and generous parental leave will also significantly improve retention.”³ The nature of the American family is changing. Husbands and fathers are not the only ones in the workplace, and the nuclear family is no longer the primary familial arrangement. Many untraditional households are looking to find a way


² Ron Alsop, The Trophy Kids Grow Up: how the millennial generation is shaking up the workplace. (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2008), viii.

to balance work with keeping the home. A large push is being made for these broad changes to exist in the workplace as an official policy. Institutionalizing these flexible arrangements would prevent the appearance of special treatment or inconsistencies in application on an ad hoc basis. “Most workers [also] believe that using family-friendly policies will jeopardize their future work prospects and thus fear penalties for using them.” Millennials will want the current Boomers and Gen Xers to begin institutionalizing these changes, so that when it comes time for Millennials to have families a precedent will have been set for them. This will make it easier for them to achieve work-life balance.

Part of the reason for this change in family structure, is that there are more women in the workplace than ever before. “Women now, for the first time, make up half (49.9 percent as of July 2009) of all workers on U.S. payrolls. This is a dramatic change from just over a generation ago: In 1969, women made up only a third of the workforce (35.3 percent).” While this is great for advancing women in the workplace, it also leaves a gap in the household day to day responsibilities. Previously men in the workplace were expected to have a spouse at home to take care of cooking, cleaning, running errands or accepting packages. Ironically, although adding to their

---


responsibilities in the workplace, many of the duties outside of the workplace have not changed for women. “Most women today are providing for their families by working outside the home—and still earning less than men—while providing more than their fair share of care giving responsibilities inside the home, an increasingly impossible task.”6

It is not simply the individual homes or families that feel this impact. “This transformation also boasts profound implications for communities around the nation. In schools and religious and community organizations women are now less available to volunteer during the work week and have less time to devote to leading community organizations.”7 Former at home duties, such as cleaning, child care, pet care and health care for sick, recovering or elderly family members, are no longer a guarantee. While some government policies have already been enacted to help alleviate these changes (Family and Medical Leave Act, Pay Equity Act, The Civil Rights Act and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act) many more will be needed to address the over arching societal shift that has occurred as the result of more women in the workplace. While Millennials watched their mothers, aunts and grandmothers be a part of this shift, they will be focused on institutionalizing support so that their generation does not have to struggle in the same way.

The inclusion of Generation X and Generation Y (Millenials) in the workplace has also changed the nature of employer-employee relationship. “Millennials often

---

6 Ibid., 32.
7 Ibid., 33.
resign after a year or two if they don’t feel that all of their myriad needs are being satisfied.”

Employee turnover is not advantageous for a company and Millennial employees that have their needs met can be a vital asset to a company’s success. It may seem frustrating for Boomers who have been “super” parents and now have to be “super managers” in a way not required of those older than them, but adjusting to the needs of their young employees will make the company more attractive to future generations, and will create an environment to retain employees and prevent quick turnover. After all, this is a group that is ripe to be stellar employees: they are rule followers, dedicated to the job and eager to succeed. They should be looked at as an investment. They are progressive technologically, and constantly striving to be better. A wise employer will not want to miss out by being inflexible. Peter Eio of Lego Systems says, “This is the first time in history of the human race that a generation of kids has overtaken their parents in the use of new technology.”

Bringing Millennials into the workplace who are already more familiar with technology than their superiors can rapidly increase efficiency and create a knowledge base that will only increase from that point forward.

“The Nexters will be our best educated generation ever, and they will probably continue their education well into adulthood to keep up with rapidly changing

---


technology.”

Cell phones, blackberries, iphones, laptops, online servers and databases have all provided technology to allow workers to access their information from remote locations and not require that an individual physically be in their office to get work done. One might think that all of this technology has allowed of more efficient production and therefore more free time for employees to spend with family and friends. However, “The typical middle class family puts in 568 more hours at work each year compared to the late 1970s.” So instead of using this efficiency to benefit the workers, it has been used to benefit the employers. This inequity will not continue for another generation.

Ultimately, employers would be wise to adapt to meet the needs of the Millennial generation because “…they not only will need this generation to fill positions left vacant by retiring baby boomers but also can benefit from this generation’s best and brightest, who possess significant strengths in teamwork, technology skills, social networking, and multitasking. Millennials were bred for achievement by success-driven parents, and most will work hard as long as the task at hand is engaging and promises a tangible payoff.”

---


CHAPTER 6: HOW MILLENNIAL ENTREPRENEURS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN THIS ENDEAVOR

Reports in the mainstream media would have one believe that the Millennial Generation has single handedly caused disruption in the workplace where it never existed before. They describe a group that wants to wear flip flops, wants to make too much money too fast, has no respect for authority, multitasks too much, wastes too much time online, and is lazy, entitled, and only interested in themselves.

On March 24, 2009 Gary Hamel wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* that this generation has grown up online and therefore expects the rules of the web to be the rules of the workplace. “At a minimum, they’ll expect the social environment of work to reflect the social context of the Web, rather than as is currently the case, a mid-20th century Weberian bureaucracy.”¹

*BusinessWeek* explains, “With both parents working and more disposable income than previous generations, Gen Y has often been branded as an overindulged, spoiled and disengaged group that looks at the world through a prism of self interest.”² To some extent, they have been able to indulge in such luxuries.

---

Laurie Hodges Humble of Suite101.com reports, “We know they are the techno-
savvy, open-minded, never-heard-the-word-no-before kids who we all doted on for the
past 20 some years.”

CIO.com warns, “…sixty-eight percent of Baby Boomers feel ‘younger people’
do not have as strong a work ethic as they do and that makes doing their own work
harder. Thirty-two percent of Gen Xers believe the ‘younger generation’ lacks a good
work ethic and this is a problem. And thirteen percent of Gen Yers say the difference in
work ethics across the generations causes friction. They believe that they have a good
work ethic for which they’re not given credit.”

Nadira Hira from CNNMoney.com writes “They’re ambitious, they’re
demanding and they question everything, so if there isn’t a good reason for that long
commute or late night, don’t expect them to do it. When it comes to loyalty, the
companies they work for are last on their list—behind their families, their friends, their
communities, their co-workers and, of course, themselves.” She continues “These kids--
self-absorbed, gregarious, multitasking, loud, optimistic, pierced—are exactly what the

---

3 Laurie Hodges Humble, “Preparing for Generation Y: Welcoming Generation Y To the
article.cfm/whats_up_with_y. Internet; accessed December 3, 2008.

Available from http://alphawomen.com/career/gen-y-gen-x-and-baby-boomers-workplace-generation-
wars. Internet; accessed December 18, 2008.
boomers raised them to be, and now they’re being themselves all over the business world.” 5

By examining those Millennials who have been successful in the business world and run their own companies, it is possible to see what this generation is truly looking for at work. It is also to see the potential that exists if these promising Millennials are tapped into. Otherwise, if employers don’t budge, the self-indulgent behavior of Millennials will be taken to a new extreme. If Millennials feel their best interest is being looked after, they too will sacrifice for the greater good. However, if they feel it is ‘every man for himself,’ they will not hesitate to make sure they are taken care of first. Therefore, it is the environment that must adjust in order to benefit the whole. Looking at Millennial entrepreneurs who have embraced the former principle can show what success can be achieved if this is implemented.

The most obvious Millennial-run company is the social networking site Facebook: The 5th most valuable internet company of 20076 and the world’s largest social network with over 300 million active users. Mark Zuckerberg, born May 14, 1984, created Facebook in a Harvard dorm room and officially founded the company on February 4, 2004. Initially only open to Harvard students, the social networking site


was quickly expanded to included colleges and universities nationwide before finally
going public in September of 2006. If Facebook were a country, it would be the fourth
most populous country in the world just behind the United States and just in front of
Indonesia. Anyone who has used Facebook knows of its open dialogue with users and
customers, but does that translate within the Facebook organization? Yes, it certainly
does.

Employees of Facebook participate in a number of office perks relating to health
care, family planning, food, time off, career planning, saving and retirement, and
transportation. “Facebook pays 100% of employee benefit premiums and 50% of any
dependent premiums in the United States. This includes medical, dental, vision, life
insurance and disability coverage, as well as the Employee Assistance Program. We also
provide 50% reimbursement of most monthly gym fees.” In a modern approach to
family, Facebook also offers four months of paid parental leave for parents whether
attending a birth or participating in adoption. During this time no benefits are denied and
custodial parents will receive $4,000 in cash. Once back in the workplace, parents
working at Facebook are eligible to be reimbursed for up to $3,000 annually to assist in
day care or babysitting costs. Additionally, for those employees who can’t seem to find
time to eat or go grocery shopping, Facebook provides free breakfast, lunch and dinner
at their headquarters every single day. If one is looking to find out their paid time off
policy, they will find 21 days of paid vacation, 11 paid holidays every year and a very
specific policy for sick days: “If you're sick, stay home and get better (unlimited sick
days.)” It is not a problem if an employee hasn’t had a chance to get to the dry cleaner

---

or run errands, everything from laundry service to photo processing and leather repair can be accomplished by simply bringing it to work. When completed, the items are brought right back to the employee’s desk. Being a modern internet company, Facebook employees are provided discounts from a number of IT companies such as Microsoft, Dell, Apple and AT&T. Getting to work at Facebook is not a problem when there is a shuttle service provided and public transportation costs are a reimbursable expense.

While all of these perks help to bring down modern costs and increase efficiency, Facebook also does not forget about the employee’s career goals: it offers weekly opportunities for employees to hear an interesting outside speaker discuss their experiences and passions. “Recent guests have included Gloria Steinem, Arianna Huffington, Craig Newmark and Marc Andreessen.” The employees of Facebook range in ages, however they all understand the democracy of the web.

For this generation, the web has been a place where age does not matter. It is a level playing field where one must advance based on his or her ideas rather than any sort of institutional bureaucracy. It is interpreted as a more just system. This is why Millennials have no qualms speaking truth to power, whether it is called for or not. They want to bring ideas to the place where it can have the most effect and the best chance of being implemented efficiently. Employee Steven Grimm notes, “We try hard to keep the environment egalitarian; if you can make a solid technical case for

---

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
something, you'll convince your peers, whether you've worked at 10 previous jobs or none.” 11

Grimm continues, “Our CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, can be pretty hands on. But he picks his spots. On the internationalization project, for example, we met with him to review the user interface before we launched. He looked at it and said: ‘That's reasonable.’ We had the freedom to go ahead with what we thought was the best approach. I think his insights have proven generally right.” 12 As CEO, Zuckerberg was offered an opportunity to sell to Viacom for $750 million or Yahoo with a $1 billion offer. He chose not to, preferring to oversee and evolve his product and company personally. This can be interpreted as a refusal to “sell out” strictly for money and instead choosing the personal investment and gratification.

On Facebook’s 5th birthday Zuckerberg wrote “Tuesday, February 3, 2009, Why is it important to us to keep building better ways for people to share information? Enabling efficient sharing is important because it makes the world more open, and this gives everyone a voice to express ideas and initiate change.” 13 Through being open with this philosophy and vision, Zuckerberg has created a work environment that feels invested in the site’s success and personally intertwined with Facebook. Employee and


12 Ibid.

Platform Operations Specialist Sara Brooks, who has been with the company for just under one year, describes this feeling saying:

Facebook is super open. It's a team environment with smart, really driven people who work well together and on an individual level, also. Management is very accessible and open to new ideas. Everyone (any age, any title) is encouraged to participate in forums and share ideas frequently. The perks are incredible and no matter how long someone has been with the company, they still view them as perks (hello, a laundry service and free gourmet food?!). Social opportunities are endless, as are volunteer and charity events. There's a real sense of camaraderie, both in a professional and personal sense. The career advancement opportunities within the company are amazing and I feel so grateful to have a present with Facebook and hopefully a future!14

The next set of Millennial entrepreneurs are Native Washingtonians Nick Friedman and Omar Soliman. These two college students were looking to make money during the summer of 2002 and so they launched America's first “all-student junk removal franchise.”15 College Hunks Hauling Junk was officially incorporated in 2004 after winning the Leigh Rothschild Entrepreneurship Competition. The company's "hunks" -- clad in bright orange hats and green shirts -- will haul away everything from construction materials to old couches, and have grown into over a dozen locations across the country.

While performing a service, College Hunks Hauling Junk also looks to serve the greater good. Friedman and Soliman donate a portion of revenue from each job to


College Bound, a local college scholarship program and have created their own scholarship fund. They also seek to include young people in their company. “Law students, medical students, undergraduates, and athletes have joined the College Junk™ Team to earn money and gain valuable business experience.” Friedman and Soliman also regularly donate their trucks and physical resources to assisted with food drives and efforts to relieve the effects of Hurricane Katrina.

Their hard work to become a reputable, civic minded and generous company has not gone unnoticed. College Hunks Hauling Junk was named one of the Washingtonian’s great places to work in 2007. As the article describes, employees receive a four percent 401K match, flexible spending account, health plan, and they can keep any items they find in the clutter. and Nick Friedman and Omar Soliman were listed in the Top 30 Entrepreneurs in America Under 30 by INC Magazine and the Top 35 Entrepreneurs Under 35 by Bisnow.com.

The Millennial Generation is shaking up the workplace, but they are not the decay of civilization as they are often portrayed. “They [Millennials] will show what can be done about over-the-top free agency, social splintering, cultural exhaustion, and...

---


civic decay in an era when Americans are increasingly yearning for community. The Millennial solution will be to set high standards, get organized, team up, and do civic deeds.”19 Looking at Millennial business leaders can provide insight into what they value: maintaining relationships, admitting mistakes then improving and evolving, contributing to the education of the next generation, donating to those less fortunate, helping everyone plan more effectively for the future and taking something that used to be difficult and making it easy. Mark Zuckerberg, Nick Friedman and Omar Soliman have shown what the Millennial ideals can mean for businesses. The next chapter will discuss one approach to solving the crisis in the workplace.

---

CHAPTER 7: ONE MODEL FOR MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Modern society is full of customizations. There are special mixes on ipods, selective recordings by Tivo, the ability to watch movies at anytime on DVDs at home, and 19,000 combinations that can be made at Starbucks. With that many options for coffee, it is understandable that not one solution will work for everyone. A survey by careerbuilder.com found that “…the generation’s greatest expectations are higher pay (74%), flexible work schedules (61%), a promotion within a year (56%) and more vacation or personal time (50%). Millennials have realized that there is no longer a “one size fits all” mentality for entertainment or in the workplace. Cathleen Benko and Anne Weisberg have coined the term “Mass Career Customization” (MCC) to describe their model for the workplace improvement in which all employees are extended benefits that include the following principles:

(1) increasing choices that help employees shape career paths that fit the various stages of their personal lives, (2) making career building a more explicitly shared responsibility between the enterprise and the individual, (3) making adaptability over time a core competency for individuals and enterprises, (4) creating transparency regarding trade-offs and choices that lead to better planning, better decisions, and greater satisfaction, (5) selecting choices that are good for both the employee and the enterprise, (6) retaining talent by cultivating a new sense of loyalty and connection.

---


These principles are used by Benko and Weisberg to build their model through which they seek to cultivate an open dialogue between employer and employee and work to ensure the process is handled fairly. Both sides discuss how they would like to move forward based on four specific aspects of their career:

Pace: Options relating to the rate of career progression
Workload: Choices relating to the quantity of work output
Location/Schedule: Options for when and where work is performed
Role: Choices in position and responsibility.\(^4\)

Pace refers to how quickly an employee wants to advance in their career. For example: how quickly one progresses from being an Account Executive to an Account Supervisor. The speed with which an employee wants to increase in authority and responsibility is the pace of his or her career. Having the flexibility of pace would mean the employee would have the choice of how to accelerate or decelerate their advancement in their career as they see fit. Early on, Millennials will likely be moving at a fast pace wanting to move up in the company. However, flexibility of pace allows individuals to slow down when they desire as well, through life changes and transitions.

Workload refers to the amount of work an employee takes on. Typically a forty hour workweek is considered full time. Flexibility with workload would allow an individual to keep a full workload when they wanted and a reduced workload at other times. Likewise, if an employer needs an employee to have a full workload, or needs an employee to cut back, those options are available as well.

\(^4\) Ibid., 84.
Location/Schedule discusses the options for where and when work gets done. With updates in technology through laptops and wireless internet, individuals are not bound by location to be able to work. Files, emails and research can be accessed remotely making the physical office less important. Likewise, many projects do not need to be completed within the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. The workday has become 24 hours so if an employee prefers nighttime hours he or she has the flexibility to work when it is most convenient for them. This is great for Millennials who want to arrange their schedule to be the most efficient. Particularly those who like night time hours will now have the ability to set when and where work is completed.

Role refers to a person’s place within an organization; not only the specific jobs and responsibilities of the specific individual, but also, how that position relates to other individuals in the company. The definition of role looks to see if this person is completely independent or leader who is depended upon by others. This aspect is likely to vary based on each specific company and how interdependent one person’s responsibility affects others in the company. This aspect of workplace flexibility is particularly a two way street. Employer and employee must discuss how each person’s role can be fulfilled to meet the goals of the company.

Through Mass Career Customization they create a workable solution so that both the employer and the employee have their needs fulfilled. Certain times and situations will allow for dialing up of pace and workload, where as other times may require more flexibility with location/schedule. CEO of Deloitte & Touche USA LLP, Barry
Salzberg, described this approach by saying, “Let’s figure out what is non-negotiable like values, integrity, independence, skills and quality, and everything else becomes a choice.” This willingness to change and openness to negotiate is desirable to Millennials but they are not the only ones who benefit from this arrangement.

While Boomers are staying the workplace longer than previous generations, they will not be able to work forever. “As the boomer generation enters retirement, elder care will become a growing concern and responsibility for workers. Moreover, unlike child care, elder care can affect all workers . . . and impacts men and women equally.”

Gen Xers and Millennials will be juggling their promotions in the workplace, their families at home and taking care of their parents all at the same time. Juggling these priorities will be much easier with more flexible work arrangements. As older workers are starting families and in need of a slower pace Millennials are happy to ramp up their pace and workload. They are eager to begin making a name for themselves and advance quickly.

“Advancing technology not only opens the aperture for how and where work gets done; it also gives high performers more bargaining leverage.” Laptops, PDAs, blackberries, email, online databases and access to work servers remotely all create the ability to work from places other than the office. This can be invaluable access to

---


7 Ibid., 53.
individuals juggling the need to be in two places at once. A physical impossibility, yet for those who are excellent multi-taskers, like Millennials, this is extremely helpful. Millennials, who also crave efficiency, want to have control of their schedules to handle all of their responsibilities in the best way they can. “Studies show that giving employees decision making power and options in managing their career results in greater job satisfaction.”8 Additionally, “Employees who believe they have some level of control, or options, in setting priorities and organizational support are happier, more loyal, and more productive.”9 As was discussed in previous chapters, employee turnover is costly to an organization in terms of time, energy and resources. Retention of employees also leads to more institutional knowledge being retained and increased reliability as the trust and relationship builds over time.

Harvard Professor Myra M. Hart describes her view of a corporations’ current approach that will be successful saying, “We really want a lifetime contract with you. We know that some years you will be giving more and some years you will be giving less. But that’s fine as long as we can plot this in a way that works and makes sense for both of us.”10 This is similar to the veteran style “stick-to-itiveness” that was described in chapter one during which an individual would stay for their career with one company

---

8 Ibid., 88.
9 Ibid., 88.
if they really invest in the employee over time. Whereas the Veterans knew they were going to stick with one company, in today’s time this is considered a luxury.

While everyone can benefit from this Mass Career Customization approach, it is especially important for Millennials to be included in this type of system based on their specific generational distinctions.

Millennials are very adept at learning and operating new technology. They embrace the liberties increased technology allows them to take. It makes Millennials more efficient and gives a feeling of overall satisfaction that they are being as productive as possible. Problems can arise because increased flexibility and lack of oversight can lead to abuse. Here is where Millennials differ from previous generations. They have high standards and want to be held to a high quality of work. Not ones to encourage shortcuts if it means a lack in excellence, Millennials will want to make sure that all parties are held accountable for their work. This may mean checking in with their employers more regularly, or online logins to track employee progress, however Millennials are willing to sacrifice some of their privacy for the sake of the freedoms it will provide.

With this increased flexibility of pace, workload, schedule and role and the ability to dial up and dial down the intensity, Millennials can better plan for their personal lives, their health needs and their social lives. Errands, workouts, and dating can each have time carved out without sacrificing a commitment to work. This
combination is perfect for Millennials who can arrange their puzzle piece of a schedule to fit the way it makes sense to them and reflects their individual needs.

Millennials have celebrated their individualism since childhood. They want their company to invest in them for their personal and unique characteristics. “MCC supports a customized approach to career development that engages the individual as a partner in his or her development—and signals the organization’s commitment to each individual’s growth.”¹¹ Millennials will want to stay longer as long as they are continually challenged and presented with new opportunities. These include the possibilities for personal career development training and the appropriate programs to cultivate new skills that the employee would like to develop. These once little trophy kids are now grand achievers who continue to crave recognition and accomplish goals that are set for them. Mutual goal setting and set points for advancement will motivate Millennials to do their best to achieve as much as they can.

“MCC provides an ongoing process for employees to customize and visualize their career paths over time among a defined set of options that management can synchronize to fit the enterprise’s strategic priorities.”¹² Through clear communication and an open discussion of expectations on the part of both the employer and the Millennial employee, they can create an environment that is efficient, productive and successful at meeting the needs of the company and the individual. Equality in this


¹² Ibid., 145.
situation is based on fairness, not the exact same arrangement for everyone. A level of trust among employees is required so that no one judges another’s arrangement and that they act as a team. If there is distrust that someone is benefitting more than someone else, resentment can build and the entire system falls apart.

While it may be true that the Millennials are “the most high-maintenance workforce in the history of the world”¹³ as generational research firm founder Bruce Tulgan asserts, he also says, “The good news is they’re also going to be the most high-performing workforce in the history of the world. They walk in with more information in their heads, more information at their fingertips- and sure, they have high expectations, but they have the highest expectations first and foremost for themselves.”¹⁴


¹⁴ Ibid.
CONCLUSION

This project began as a desire to better understand myself and the world around me. I learned that there is an entire field of study devoted to generational theory that explains why my generation is the way it is. Of course, there are a few outliers, those who are the best (naturally gifted at sports, the arts, or just abnormally smart and inventive) and the worst of what the generation has to offer (those who cheat, lie, and take advantage of others for their own personal gain). But overall, there are concrete characteristics of each generation and they are predictable based on the generations that have come before them.

Millennials as a whole are independent, creative and efficient. They seek fairness, justice and diversity. Overall they want to do good work and give back to those who need it the most. They understand the importance of security and privacy and good health. They are observant and analytical; ‘teachable moments’ will not be lost on them. Millennials have high expectations of everyone and everything, including themselves.

This generation comes into adulthood with a unique set of skills and expectations. Their development in a world of individualism and customization, their familiarity with technology, their ability to multitask and their desire for a balanced schedule of work and family all coalesce to create a life that is rewarding. They understand what wonderful privileges they have grown up with, and seek to give others in their workplace and their environment the same. They seek balance and moderation.
in an attempt to be successful and happy. This does not guarantee that they will be as successful as possible, or as happy as possible, however, they are not the generation of extremism. They will keep the basic tenants of work required and meet all non-negotiable terms. But they will also seek to eliminate unnecessary burdens that waste both energy and resources. They will want to bring balance and a strong foundation to their companies as well as themselves. They are a generation that focuses on interdependence with the desire of building lasting prosperity for the next generation.

Some companies led by Millennials are using new techniques with their employees to reflect their values and create their ideal work environment. Facebook, College Hunks Hauling Junk, and Mint.com are maintaining relationships, admitting mistakes then improving and evolving, contributing to the education of the next generation, donating to those less fortunate, helping everyone plan more effectively for the future and taking something that used to be difficult and making it easy. Millennials Mark Zuckerberg, Nick Friedman, Omar Soliman and Aaron Patzer have shown that it is possible to incorporate these values into a successful business venture.

Scholars are beginning to develop methods for conceptualizing these approaches. One of the most promising was discussed in chapter 7, Mass Career Customization. This approach allows for institutional adjustments in measurable quantities to make sure the application of workplace flexibility is handled fairly. By dialing up and dialing down in four areas, Pace, Workload, Location and Role, employer and employee are able to develop a satisfactory work relationship over time accounting
for the company’s needs and the individual’s life and career changes. The ability to adapt and be flexible will allow for managers to satisfy their multi-generational workforce with their individual cultural norms and preferences in a way that is fair and objective.

With all of the potential this generation and this theory has to offer, there are challenges that will impede Millennial expectations and possibly restrict the implementation of Mass Career Customization. Globalization and competitive pressures within the United States requires that employees work longer, harder and faster than our competitors around the globe. With the implementation of programs like MCC, businesses will be able to be successful, but it may limit them from being the most successful. They can still be profitable, but they may not be achieving the maximum profits that they would achieve if they cut corners or mandated that their employees live to work rather than work to live.

A second potential deterrent to the Millennial ideal of work life balance is the recent recession and its impact on the long term economic health. When it is difficult to simply be hired and maintain a job, asking for flexibility and the type of attention this thesis describes seems almost impossible. This type of workplace flexibility is an ideal, and it might take some flexibility on the part of the Millennials to pay their dues within the current system and prove their worth as a team player while the United States economy stabilizes enough to allow for better job security and more of an equal
partnership between employer and employee. This is comparable to the sacrifices the
Veterans made during the Great Depression.

As generational theory suggests, Millennials will need to emulate those of the
generation being lost, and correct what they see as the flaws of their parents’ generation.
They do not have to oppose their parents completely however. Both generations can
agree upon uniquely American values that they believe should be upheld. We are the
land of opportunity. Through the freedoms we as a society inherently value, and the
rights we recognize as important such as marriage, homeownership, religion, and
success we hope to achieve the American ideal of happiness. What differs in each
generation is how these values are approached.

So what does this mean we can expect from the next generation? What they will
keep from being lost by the baby boomers dying? How they will tweak the Gen
Xers/Millennials? Will advanced technologies create a new outlet for old ideologies?
The next twenty years will provide an opportunity to see if Millennials live up to their
own lofty expectations and if workplace flexibility can ease the challenge of work/life
balance not only for the Millennials, but also for generations to come.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


