



Company Culture is the First Draw for Millennials

By Bobbi Kloss

Gallup, LinkedIn, and Recruiter.com all have studies showing that recruiting and retaining millennials tops the list of the most challenging HR business objectives for employers across the country. It is not surprising when you consider the following statistics:

- At 75 million, Millennials make up the largest generation, according to the U. S. Census Bureau;
- They have been entering the workforce over the past 15 years and now are moving into management roles. The oldest millennials in workforce are 35+;
- By 2030, seventy-five percent of the employee workforce will be Millennials.

As discussed in Part 1 of our three-part series, the Millennial generation is far different than its predecessors, the Baby Boomers and Gen Xer's. They are challenging – and changing - the way employers manage their workforce. The Millennials have completely different career priorities, with culture being the draw versus a traditional benefits package, according to SHRM. The low unemployment rate, at 4.2% as of Sept 2017 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, means that employers are vying for the same talent pool.

In this part of our three-part Attraction and Retention series, we will look at the characteristics of the Millennial generation that employers should be working with to be the “employer of choice” for this new generation.

The Age of...Technology: Millennials have grown up in the Knowledge Age. This post-industrial age sees knowledge as the main form of economic growth. The ability to manage knowledge is critical to the success of today's businesses and organizations.

Looking back through the 20th century (1901-2000), we can see how access to and sharing of information progressed and advanced into the 21st Century. The 20th century began without cars, planes, television, and computers but ended with these familiar technological inventions:

1. 1980's Personal Computers first hit the market;
2. 1990's the volume of email surpassed regular mail;
3. 1999 Bluetooth, WIFI and social media hit the market.

Into the 21st Century we find technology growing at an even greater speed, changing the way business operates. In a short time, we have seen the invention and rapid adoption of various technologies, such as Facebook, YouTube, Nintendo Wii, Apple's iPhone, Google's Android Mobile phone, and 4G broadband standards, to name a few.

While the 20th Century provided what seemed like a more leisurely introduction of the technology advancements, it also gave employers time to introduce – and adapt - these inventions to their workforce. Today, the rate of speed and almost simultaneous advancements in technology creates opportunities for businesses to achieve greater efficiencies and streamline processes in ways that leave employers struggling to keep up.

We see that with these instantaneous-like advancements, technology continues to improve and expand our methods of communication. Employers have opportunities for greater bandwidth in worksite mobility, both in expanding their customer base and in an employee’s outreach – from the ability to diversify worksite opportunities to offering non-traditional working hours and instant accessibility across the country and around the globe. For Millennials, this has been their world: technology consistently providing instantaneous and current information, multi-directional access to information, and ever-changing information.

A Change in Values: Throughout the 20th and into the 21st Century, we started to see a major shift in worksite values that morphed with the Millennials. How has this played out? In the 20th Century there were multiple World Wars, the Great Depression, women entering the workplace, employers taking on more responsibility for employees (i.e. unemployment taxes and pension plans). Work that was traditionally an obligation of the men to provide stability in the family began to shift to a career focus as the two-person working family evolved. With more two parent workers, the children of the Baby Boomers, Generation X, the latchkey kids became known as the “lost generation” without a voice. This generation fights for their chance to be heard and to make an impact; and as part of the shift to viewing a job as “just a job” when not heard they jump to another employer. Promoted by cries of education first, the college debt ridden Millennials see a job as a way to get out of debt first and balance their life second.

Note how the paradigm shift evolves in the valuation a job. The Traditionalists believed in a long-term career and today Millennials see a job as a means to an end, whatever that end may be (debt, work-life, career advancement). The chart below, taken in part from the Workflow Management Coalition Generational Differences Chart, evidences the work values definition that has been created as we shifted from the 20th into the 21st Century.

| | Traditionalists | Baby Boomers | Generation X | Millennials |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| | 20 th Century | | | |
| | 21 st Century | | | |
| Work is... | An obligation A Long-Term Career | An exciting adventure A Career Work and then Retire | A difficult challenge A contract Just a Job | A means to an end Fulfillment Flexible Work Arrangements |

With a job just being a means to an end, what additional characteristics and values exist within the Millennial generation that an employer can work with to attract and retain this worker? Again, return to the collective data that has been obtained on Millennials from groups like Gallup, SHRM, and Korn-Ferry. This tech-savvy, independent, altruistic generation is seeking employers that allow them to incorporate their purpose into their jobs. What is the purpose of the Millennial generation?

Collectively, we see that the Traditionalists punched the clock and kept work distinctly separate from family life. Baby Boomers feared taking time off from work and losing the momentum up the corporate ladder. They set the 50-hour workweek standard. Seeing the workaholic behaviors of the Baby Boomers, Gen Xer's decided that wasn't for them. Work-life balance began to take shape as a required benefit employers needed to offer. The Gen Xer's had employers implementing the fun things at work that spurred creativity, engagement, and collaborative work environments, such as concierge services to ensure that life continued while at work, pool tables, table tennis, and latte machines, in favor of water coolers.

Millennials have moved even further across the spectrum and the continued push for work-life balance is now expanding outside of the traditional workplace. They are searching for jobs that offer the four pillars of holistic wellness: physical, financial, social, and emotional values. They are also searching for opportunities that are supportive of developing work ethics. This includes companies that offer the opportunity to be engaged with management, collaboration with co-workers, an ability to participate in furthering the company's purpose, and access to employer resources through technology.

Employer Reinvention: Employers are also finding that they need to reinvent their message to attract this group of employees. This in turn means that they need to reinvent themselves. With the competition in the marketplace, 6.1 million jobs and the lowest post-recession unemployment rate (4.2%), employers are continuing to find that they cannot just be marketing the skills and qualifications they are looking for in an employee. Employers need to equal the marketing efforts of other advertisers who are attempting to reach this generation. They also need to market their career openings, treating prospective employees like consumers. Employers should use techniques that provide access to current and instantaneous information that is generationally directed as well as incorporate multi-directional messaging through the use of multiple channels to demonstrate why they should be considered the "employer of choice."

Business spends a lot of money and time gathering customer feedback and satisfaction data to create and maintain market share. This helps them survive. Consumer engagement is critical to revenue from both new and repeat customers. Why buy here when they can buy elsewhere? The same concepts apply to employees and today's buzz phrase is "employee engagement." However, this is not a new concept. Business 101 has always taught company owners that employees impact the bottom line. For employers, this was translated into policies and practices, that dictated long hours, high production rates, monitoring absenteeism rates, no question of management and zero tolerance for poor performance. While production and performance are still integral to the bottom line, turnover is measured differently with the changing tides of Millennials view of employment. Employers find that without changing themselves to move with the changing tides, they will continue to have high turnover rates.

In Conclusion: Employee engagement today begins with an interview flip-flop. Instead of employers asking, "Why should I hire you," candidates are asking, "Why should I come to work here?" Has management asked itself that question? Have they asked their current workforce what is keeping them in their job? If finding that money or benefits is the key motivator, and while being competitive with compensation is still important, employers should be looking at redefining their business objectives and weigh them against the motivating characteristics of the Millennial worker.

If not, as statistics from Korn-Ferry show, the employee who is only motivated to work at the company because of money and benefits will be gone as soon as the next best offer comes around.

How can you change that culture that is driving the “I am only here for the money attitude?” In the last part of our three-part series, we will look at a how an employee engagement campaign could look to attract and retain your Millennial worker.

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