



Here Come the Millennials: Tips for Connecting with Generation Y...and Beyond

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The most relevant candidates in hospitality

Every decade or so, employers are faced with the challenge of gearing up to meet the needs of a whole new generation of workers. As the pace of cultural change quickens, the generation gap that defines each age group's world views, values, and beliefs grows more pronounced. This can pose a problem for managers seeking to attract, hire, and retain talented young workers.

Historically, the hospitality industry has relied upon young workers to meet its ever-expanding demand for entry-level service positions. In the past, many younger candidates put the promise of a steady paycheck above all other concerns. However, today's young workers have a broader, more complex view of job satisfaction – and they're willing to wait to find a position that offers it.

What's So Different About Today's Young Workers?

A lot, according to Claire Rains, author of classic generation-based management texts such as *Twenty something* and *Beyond Generation X*. Coming of age in an era defined by the Internet, globalization, and long periods of economic uncertainty, today's young employees are likely to be ambitious, inclusive, resourceful, technology-savvy, and creative.

Still, despite these positive attributes, Generation Y and millennial workers will also likely bring with them some unique challenges. Reared by highly involved parents and regularly fed heaping helpings of self-esteem, today's younger workers can be hard to please – and a bit high-maintenance, to boot.

So how can you get the most out of your millennial and Gen-Y employees without losing your mind in the process? It can be done, but it's going to take some strategic thinking and planning on your part. Use these guidelines to help develop an approach to millennial management that makes sense in the context of your organization.

- **Provide a clear sense of stability, structure & leadership**

For all of the hype and buzz surrounding concepts like “flattened” organizational structures and lateral collaboration,

today's younger workers still crave a stable foundation on which to build. Without taking an overly authoritarian approach, make sure they understand the ground rules.

- **Encourage creativity, open dialogue & collaboration**

Once you've established the basic parameters, let your younger workers know that they have some latitude to think outside the box and develop alternate solutions to problems in the workplace. Most millennials bring to the table a fresh perspective and an innovation-friendly outlook, so make the most of their unique gifts – and express your appreciation when they deliver.

- **Offer plenty of opportunities for professional growth**

Today's younger workers want more from their careers than just a paycheck – they're looking for personal development, fulfillment, and a sense of accomplishment, as well. Make sure your millennial workers are working at the upper tier of their abilities, and provide a constant stream of challenges and growth opportunities to keep them engaged and on their toes.

- **Praise excellent performance, but don't overdo it**

Much ado has been made about the supposedly fragile egos of today's young workers, but it's important not to bend over backwards to placate prima donna tendencies. Offer sincere praise when your younger workers earn it, but steer clear of empty compliments that have no basis in their performance.

- **Loosen up**

If there's one thing that today's younger workers can be counted on to bring into the workplace, it's a profound appreciation for fun. For many millennials, camaraderie and team spirit can help foster a sense of job satisfaction. Place an emphasis on policies that promote a sense of fun, such as group outings, healthy workplace relationships, and positive team dynamics.

Once you begin to develop an understanding of the values, talents, and unique challenges that Gen-Y and millennial employees bring with them into the workplace, it won't be too difficult to devise a managerial approach that accommodates their needs -- and brings out the very best in your younger workers.

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