



Managing MILLENNIALS

Millennials are now a huge part of the workforce. Offices across all industries are dominated by young graduates, leaving older professionals with a potential management crisis in their hands.

By **AYANDA NKONYANA**

As a millennial who's recently joined the workforce, I've noticed that there's a vast difference between managers and colleagues in the same age group as me. The older generation is very strict, and they like rules, whereas we're comfortable with change and embracing new ways to do things. Even the way we communicate is different, and some of my peers feel that their age might work against them when it comes to being trusted with big tasks. We're different, but we're here to stay so we have to find a way to work together. So, what are millennials? Millennials are considered to be those born between

1980 and 2000. In general, we had parents who focused on giving us structure through planned activities and constant encouragement. We have high self-esteem and are very technologically savvy, having grown up with computers, the internet and cellphones. This group also thinks of work differently than members of other generations, yet these differences can be understood through a managerial lens focusing on qualities such as duty, drive, and reward.

According to O*NET online database, 75 million millennials are joining the workforce – in other words, we've become the majority of workers. When you make your millennial employees happy in a fun, yet structured setting, you're building the foundation for the superior workforce you desire. As millennials, we really do want to accomplish great things. It's in the best interest of managers to support those goals.

GIVE FEEDBACK

Millennials have a different social mindset, that's according to the Ivey Business Journal. One aspect of that

mindset is that we want feedback on how we are doing and we want that feedback often. Previous generations have the mindset of getting the job done, while millennials require much more praise to encourage them to continue. Joburg-based Life and Career coach, Penny Holburn, suggests that you emphasise

teamwork, appreciation and give them honest, real-time feedback. "Millennials look for feedback on how they are doing. Feedback includes praise as well as constructive criticism. They like to generate ideas, flesh out a plan, and then get feedback from their manager. They don't like to do everything and present the manager with a finished product."

She adds: "Millennials also like engagement

in the workplace so they want to regularly talk with managers and colleagues and get their feedback on ideas and progress. They can work independently but they like to check in and make sure they are on track. It motivates them. This means that millennials work best with a manager who is more of a coach or mentor."

PROVIDE BALANCED WORK CULTURE

As millennials, we want to enjoy our work and workplace. We want to make friends at work too. A recent report on millennials by Griffith Insurance Education Foundation found that millennial workers will sacrifice pay if it means that they have a better work and life balance. Holburn says you should worry if your millennial employees aren't laughing or going out with workplace friends for lunch. "Workplace culture is very important. Help your long-term employees make room for the millennials. They want transparency, individuality, freedom to provide input and be heard, and openness to diversity. They can work on their

own but like teamwork a great deal. The workplace needs to be fun and employee-centred. The ethics of the company matters to them. They work at things that matter and like making a contribution rather than just working for profit. Companies can capitalise on their ability to network and cooperate with diverse groups. Because they are computer experts and have grown up being connected all over the world, managers should make use of their high levels of electronic literacy."

OFFER VARIETY

Millennial employees are often up for a challenge and change. They seek ever-changing tasks within their work. Joburg-based career coach, Judith Matthis, suggests you accept the reality of the differences. "Different perspectives contribute to diversity and growth. Millennials may hold different work values to the traditional Gen-X values of loyalty and diligence (for example), however, what they bring may be a more innovative and holistic approach to work." Millennials are motivated by the prospect of creativity, change and social connections rather than typical motivations of high salaries and moving up the ladder. "They do like some structure, leadership and guidance, and they like clearly defined goals and success factors, but don't box them in. And frequently change the type of assignments they are on," says Penny.

BE RESPECTFUL

This may not seem controversial but it's the core of difficult relations between millennials and the previous generation. Respect means that their manager allows them to express their ideas and feel consulted which in turn makes them feel valued. Holburn says: "They value respect more than the traditional hierarchy and authority lines so you need to get their respect to work well with millennials." Encourage them to voice their thoughts and opinions. "Managers would do well to encourage their can-do attitude, and positive self-image," says Penny. ■

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