

# retain and motivate the next generation

## *7 ways to get the most out of your millennial workers*

Tip Fallon

**F**inding and keeping good, young talent can be challenging for any business. And in today's economy, the next generation can hold the key to boosting your bottom line. Most new graduates are eager to showcase their talents in the workplace, have not picked up bad working habits from years of experience at another firm, and are excited to take on new, challenging responsibilities. While there are many benefits to hiring Millennial employees (also called Gen-Y), keeping them motivated and happy requires different techniques compared to past generations.

First, even though they may face enormous student loan debt, Millennials care about much more than money. Cash does play a role, but it is not always the most important part of retaining young employees. They are aiming for a much more holistic fulfillment through work, including fun at the office, the ability to feel good

about their job, and balance in their social lives.

So, before your competitor hires your Millennials out from under your nose, implement these seven strategies to keep them productive and happy. Best of all, you can do them at little or no cost!

### **1. Give them ownership.**

Millennials have been raised to believe they are special. They get to make their own decisions and take ownership over their results. This is where they experience a lot of shock in the workplace. All of a sudden, after years of being a soccer star, leader on campus, and diva on Facebook, they are no longer in the spotlight at work. Give your Millennial employees something they can call their own and be proud of. Let them redefine an operating procedure in their position, facilitate a meeting or even plan an event. They thrive on knowing something has their name on it. This allows them to be more

driven and can make them feel more valued than even a pay raise would.

What do your millennial employees have ownership of? What can you give them ownership of in the coming months?

### **2. Give regular feedback.**

Many managers and business leaders avoid giving feedback or don't do it regularly enough. Even annual reviews for new employees get pushed back for months. Millennials yearn for feedback to see how they are doing and if they can improve. They are used to getting grades for their work, multiple times a week. It's a big shift to receive feedback only once or twice a year. Take time to let them know how they are doing. It does not always have to be a pat on the back. They want to know how they can improve as well. By showing you care about their growth and progress, they feel

more valued and loyal to your company.

When is the next time you can have a conversation about how your millennial employee is doing? What kind of feedback can you provide on a regular basis?

### **3. Show them the Big Picture.**

Millennials know what's going on in the world – from the dire economy and corrupt politics to wars and our sick planet. Yet they are probably experiencing their first taste of independence in a cubicle, in front of a computer monitor for eight hours a day. When they absorb everything going on in the world, their current jobs can easily seem mundane in comparison, which can lead to low morale and creativity. To resolve this, explain in an informal conversation – possibly through a mentor – the role they play in the “big picture.” Let them consider how their job drives company productivity, which increases our GDP, helps provide jobs for people, which supports many families, and serves a need to consumers.

What is the interconnectedness of your Millennials' jobs and the “big picture”? How can you explain that to them?

### **4. Let them do good.**

Along those same lines, Millennials care about improving the world. If they had their way, many of them would be “professional volunteers.” A paycheck is not always going put a smile on their face at the end of

the day. You can buy their time, but you cannot buy their hearts. You can help them become emotionally invested in your firm, however, and that's when you will see more enthusiasm towards their work. This doesn't mean your organization must integrate philanthropy as a part of your business strategy. It can be done by simply hosting a charity dodgeball tournament, setting up an e-mail pen-pal program with an elementary school, or having a local nonprofit come in to discuss volunteer or donation opportunities.

What opportunities can you give your employees to do good and feel good?

### **5. Build enjoyment into the workplace.**

Many Millennials live by the creed: “Life is short.” They've witnessed natural disasters, terrorist attacks and school shootings as a part of their formative years. They know not to take life for granted. If they are bored out of their minds at work, they may not stay there long, as their hours are precious. They want to enjoy their time. This comes through creativity, spontaneity and relationships with those around them. This may mean having more social activities, or less conference calls and more in-person meetings, or occasional team lunches and outings. Putting out an “Employee Superlatives” list around the end of the year, high school yearbook style, or making short videos about

people's jobs and posting them on an intranet are fun ways to see what's behind the shirt and tie. Look outside of your office for socializing and networking opportunities with other branches and their Millennials.

What can you do to let your employees enjoy their workday more with their coworkers?

### **6. Tap into their talents.**

It may sound like common sense, but it's striking to see how many workers are not contributing their unique talents and passions to the workplace. Some unknown talents may include music, planning events, online social networking, photography, fitness training, or public speaking. Letting an employee use her unique talents at work may not be a part of her job description or bring in extra dollars – but it can boost her comfort level, appreciation and creativity. And that can be invaluable in terms of increased performance.

How can you find out the hidden talents of your employees? When you find them, make sure they get a chance to demonstrate them at work if they desire.

### **7. Give them bragging rights.**

Millennials are a hyper-competitive bunch. When they gather for brunch or go out with friends, especially when they have a new job, they want something to brag about. This gives them a sense of significance in their social circles and reaffirms that you, as an employer, are doing them well.

Find out what it is they want to brag about. They will most likely be turned on by one of the six items described above. Through your conversations, find out what they value most and give it to them in spades. When they brag about their jobs on weekends, they'll be much happier showing up on Monday.

What do you think your employees tell their friends about working for you? What can you do to give them something to brag about?

Though Millennials may require a slightly different management style, in the end, they simply want to be happy. Simply keep in mind they may have different expectations when it comes to the satisfaction they get from work and how their job plays into their overall life balance. Using these tips is the starting point to harnessing greater levels of ambition, creativity and productivity from your Millennials. 📖

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