

By Dawn Stanyon, AICI FLC, Professional Image Consultant



According to a Lee Hecht Harrison survey, more than 60% of employers say they there is tension between the generations in the workplace. Fifty percent or more of Millennials, Gen Xers and Boomers alike perceive that their talents and abilities are not appreciated by the other generations.

Fascinated by these statistics, I dug deeper and reviewed the Pew Research Center's survey Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next, a comprehensive take on what drives the generation born between 1979 and 1997 (the survey was conducted in Oct. 2008). What I found illustrates the many strengths these new arrivals bring to the workplace. Here's what all of us can learn from them:

1.) Embrace education: 39.6% of all young adults surveyed (ages 18-to-24) are enrolled in a two- or four-year college. These are the same workers who don't hesitate to request permission to attend a workshop or knock on the door of their supervisor to ask for a three-month review. These professionals will be life-long learners.

2.) Understand technology: Millennials express themselves in the virtual world and are comfortable with technology. Three-quarters have created a profile on a social networking site. One-in-five have posted a video of themselves online. If your workplace doesn't appreciate the power of social networking as a relationship-building tool, these young professionals may feel stifled.

3.) Be creative: Creativity, an attribute that has been encouraged in Millennials from a young age by parents, teachers and coaches, is expressed through their use of social media, ability to multi-task, and body art (one-in-four young adults have tattoos; 70% cover them up), to name just a few. To keep this generation engaged, encourage creative thinking to benefit the

workplace.

4.) Define balance: Boomers and Gen Xers have worked hard. Millennials are willing to work hard too - they just want it to be in a more flexible context. They'll work from home. They'll work in the airport. They'll answer an email from their iPhone at 9:00 pm. But they want to be able to leave at 4:30 pm to meet a friend for a hike or bike home before it gets dark. If employers consider flexibility a workplace benefit, Millennial engagement will follow.

5.) Teamwork is good: This is the generation that grew up doing school projects in teams and playing team sports since age four. They are very comfortable expressing opinions in a group setting. While many Boomers and Gen Xers are more comfortable with independent work, Millennials like to brainstorm and "share the load."

Perspective helps each generation understand the others. Try to replace that tension with perspective and the workplace may become a little less tense.



Dawn Stanyon

Dawn is a Certified Image and Professional Development Consultant. A graduate of The Emily Post Institute, the London Image Institute, 360Reach Brand Analyst training and WSET Level 1 wine certification, Dawn's focus is on empowering people to reach professional success. As Director of Sales at The Emily Post Institute, she worked with the Post family for nine years. Prior to Emily Post, she was a non-profit director of development and community relations, a PR and fundraising consultant, and a graduate of the University of Vermont.

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