

Are you struggling to understand Generation Y in the workplace?

By  Antoinette Pombo

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Generation Y, also known as millennials, were born between 1982 and 2003. They're between the ages of 13 and 34, so they're either in high school, tertiary institutions or employed in junior to mid positions.



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If you're employed or in business for yourself, there's a good chance you've had to work with a millennial... And there's also a good chance you could be scratching your head, thinking 'Where do these people come from?' The reason: This generation is like no other before it.

Andrea Kraushaar, research director at Youth Dynamix (YDx), a specialist youth and family marketing and research agency, sheds some light on what makes this generation tick in the workplace.

Seven traits of the millennials you'll need to get your head around:

1. **Personality traits:** They're generally confident, optimistic and expectant. Older generations that were brought up in a more subdued fashion, and were taught to earn their respect, may read this over-the-top sense of confidence as a strange form of entitlement.
2. **Ambitious:** The fact is, millennials are going places and they're resourceful enough to get there, so if you get in their way, they will find a different route. If you're thinking of hanging on to your top performers, best you show them a neatly packaged career path they can look forward to. But don't expect everyone to hang around forever, the expected average tenure for young employees is only about two years.

3. **Social:** This generation grew up with a cellphone in their hands. They have a wide network of friends and socialising is a part of their daily routine. They are open-minded and accepting of others as well as cultural differences, and they prefer to work in teams rather than independently.

4. **Crave feedback:** Today's young want frequent feedback on how they're doing as well as advice on how to get ahead faster. Peer learning is a concept that has taken off with this generation and you could be surprised at how much they appreciate knowledge and progress.

5. **Value:** If you can add value to their lives and their communities, you will capture their loyalty. Help them succeed in their careers by offering additional training and reviewing your CSI initiatives, for example. While they appreciate earning well and know it's a sign of success, they value medical, travel, life, disability and funeral cover, and similar benefits.

6. **Work-life balance:** Unlike previous generations, the millennials strive for success while valuing work-life balance and work flexibility. It's not unlike today's young to take an hour off to go to the gym in the middle of the day and make up the time at the end of the day. They also prefer to work flexi-hours and remotely when possible as it gives them more freedom.

7. **Technology:** They adopt new technology quickly and expect businesses to run efficient systems that don't hold them back.

There is no doubt that this new generation of employees is wired differently to their predecessors and with them making up a great portion of the population, it's best we start adapting to them to get the best out of them in the workplace.

For more youth and family insights, contact Youth Dynamix info@ydx.co.za.

ABOUT ANTOINETTE POMBO

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