

# WHAT TO EXPECT FROM GEN-X AND MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES

---

Fellow baby boomer business owners often ask us how to get the younger generations to change their work ethic. Sorry, that's not likely. We're all products of our upbringing. The parenting norms with which we grew up shaped us, as did the events, people, and issues we encountered. These change by generation.

Generational groups have different norms and behaviours that impact the workplace -- positively and negatively. Each generation believes that its work ethic is "better and/or stronger" than that of subsequent generations. Each also believes that theirs is sufficient and appropriate.

Since you're not going to change other people's work ethic, a better question is how do I recruit, retain and motivate younger employees? We are boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, so we'll consider the next two younger generations (X and Y or millennials).

## **Generation X**

Born between 1965 and 1978, individuals of this group are independent, tech-savvy, pragmatic and competent. Experts attribute much of their independence to the latchkey experience many shared. Single parents or parents who both worked outside the home raised many Xers. Therefore, this generation is more self-managing.

These early experiences caused Xers to strive for the work-life balance lacking in their workaholic boomer-parents. They also color Xers' feelings toward their employers. They tend to change jobs frequently -- every three to five years. They are inclined to be free agents and distrust corporate motives.

To recruit, retain and motivate Xers, appeal to their desire for balance. Develop family-friendly programs that offer flexible schedules, telecommuting and job-sharing. Encourage their independence and ability to manage multiple priorities. Remove bureaucracy and tenure-based rewards, but don't remove yourself. Xers crave feedback, especially from their boss.

Spend one-on-one time with these employees to create relationships and foster trust. Emphasize their accomplishments and results rather than the methods they used to achieve

them. Include them in decision-making -- they're problem-solvers. Finally, if you want something done, give it to an Xer. They've been self-managing from a young age.

## **Millennials**

Born between 1979 and 1994, members of this generation are often entitled, impatient and outspoken with limited ability to take criticism. They're frequently high maintenance, but most experts agree they have more potential than previous generations. They grew up with instant gratification, doting parents and an environment where everyone gets a trophy.

Millennials are adaptable and flexible, able to deal with an ever-increasing rate of change. They are beyond technology savvy -- they're technology sophisticated. Finally, although they've seen corruption in their sports heroes, business leaders and even their president, they continue to believe that they will change the world for the better.

To keep millennials, offer flexibility and fun. This may seem superfluous to baby boomers. However, organizations that hope to attract and retain millennials will need to support even higher levels of work-life balance. Short sabbaticals to pursue personal interests will be attractive. Offer the latest technology.

If you thought that the three- to five-year tenures for Xers were short, millennials change jobs even more frequently. This Generation expects to move up rapidly. They'll stay with organizations only if they expect to attain their goals quickly. Therefore, management should share possible career paths openly and often.

Millennials need positive feedback. Only offer constructive criticism after you have their trust. Finally, they value good corporate citizens. Support their causes and allow employees to contribute and participate.

To manage younger generations successfully, recognize their values. Accept that a different work ethic is not necessarily an inferior work ethic. Instead, develop programs and strategies that will allow you to leverage the positive qualities of each generation to the benefit of both your employees and your organization

*Posted by By Doug and Polly White on [www.entrepreneur.com](http://www.entrepreneur.com) | 23 December 2014*