

WORKFORCE HORIZONS

Planning Tomorrow's Workforce Today

Louisiana Department of Civil Service

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and Do They Matter? – pp.1 – 3*

WORKFORCE PLANNING MAXIM OF THE DAY

*“The best way to predict the future is to
create it.” – Peter F. Drucker*

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES – ARE THEY REAL AND DO THEY MATTER?

There is a lot of conflicting information out there today regarding generational differences in the work place. Are there real differences in values and attitudes between the generations? Even if there are, why is it important for us as employers to consider them? Isn't this just the traditional difference between inexperienced youth and their more experienced seniors?

W. Stanton Smith, Principal and National Director of Next Generation Initiatives Talent, Deloitte, LLP makes the case for the reality and importance of generational differences in his book Decoding Generational Differences : Fact, fiction...or should we just get back to work?¹

The book concentrates on the differences between Baby Boomers (persons born between 1946 and 1964) and Millennials or Generation Y as they are sometimes called (persons born after 1980).

The research shows that although all generations seem to basically want and value the same things, they differ significantly in their priorities, expectations and behaviors in achieving those things. One major conclusion from the research is that the attitudes and values of persons toward work and life are shaped and developed by experiences in their formative years. The world that the Baby Boomers grew up in was very different from that in which the Millennials grew up. The two groups need to understand each other and learn to play to each other's strengths in order to work together effectively.

Why should we listen to the Millennials?

1. Millennials are the future. They are the largest generation since the Baby Boomers (Generation X was relatively small) and constitute 20% of the current population. They are the fastest growing segment of the workforce and particularly for entry-level professional jobs, they *are* the applicant pool. According to the

National Association of Colleges and Employers, employers plan to hire 19.2% more new graduates this year than they did in 2005-2007.

2. As large as the Millennial population is, there are far fewer Millennials entering the workforce relative to the number of job openings than was the case when Baby Boomers entered the workforce. So by the law of supply and demand, employers have a greater need to listen to their demands.
3. Finally, technology now exists that can allow the Millennials' preference to work more flexibly and virtually. This technology just didn't exist when Boomers entered the workforce.

What are the differences between Boomers and Millennials? Stanton identifies three major divides between the generations:

Technology – Boomers regard technology as a tool. They grew up in a world where communication was limited to land line telephones, typewriters and carbon paper, and maybe fax machines and photocopying. Business had to be pretty much conducted face-to-face in an office. For Millennials technology is a way of life. Millennials are used to being instantly and continuously interconnected by technology via computers, cell phones, text messaging and the Internet. They expect fast turnaround times on everything and are used to the idea of 24 / 7 availability. They cannot imagine the laborious chore of writing or typing anything before the ease of cut-and-paste word processing. Millennials like to work in teams but the teams don't have to be face-to-face. Technology allows instant contact electronically and Millennials do this with

the ease that Boomers would engage in a face-to-face conversation and just as effectively from a business standpoint. Millennials find it hard to understand why business necessarily needs to be conducted in the office when technology allows it to be conducted from anywhere.

Millennials often regard Boomers as barely technologically literate and not open to the latest technological solutions or ways of doing business. Boomers, on the other hand, often downplay the value of new technology and consider the Millennials to be overly dependent on technology, scatterbrained and deficient in analytical skills or ability to think independently.

Attitude Toward Business – Millennials have a distrust of Big business. Having grown up during periods where parents were laid off, hearing about scandals like Enron, etc, they no longer trust businesses to be loyal employers. They believe corporate America is too concerned with profits only and not enough about employees. Research shows Millennials do want a long term relationship with one employer but with a "good" company – one that cares about its employees, the community and the environment. This is a challenge for private sector employers like Deloitte to overcome (They are one of the largest global accounting, financial and tax consulting firms). For public sector employers like us, this can be an opportunity. When recruiting Millennials, we should emphasize the public service aspect of the work. Talk about creating good government for the citizens of Louisiana, the opportunity to serve the community and be part of the solution. Millennials respond to this.

Consumer Mindset – Boomers were raised to work hard and climb the corporate ladder no matter what sacrifices were required in

their personal lives. Millennials are much less willing to do that and more concerned with work-life balance. They were also raised to question everything and demand high-quality, easy to handle experiences. Their questions and demands may seem impertinent or immature to Boomers who were conditioned to “go along with the program” to get ahead. Millennials want to interact with and have choices in their careers in the same way they would have choices in buying any consumer product. They are willing to exercise this power. They do not respond well to authoritarian approaches or persons demanding to be obeyed or respected due solely to their rank, age or experience. They want you to prove to them why they should listen to you.

The changing family structure where there now are usually two incomes has also given employees more leverage than when the Baby Boomers started working. In a single income family, the breadwinner had to be careful not to lose his or her job. In a two-income family, one member can afford to quit a job they don't like and be carried for awhile by their partner while looking for a new job. Employers have to adapt to this.

What are Millennials' attitudes and preferences about work?

Millennials prefer to stay with one major employer and work in a small organization. But they want an employer who cares about employees, the community and the environment. This is as important as pay.

They highly value honesty and respect from senior executives.

They believe electronic or digital connections are as acceptable as face-to-face.

Due to technology, they believe that work can be done anytime, anywhere any place – not just in a traditional office

They prefer learning that is in networks or teams, multimedia, engaging and stimulating and experiential or involving simulations

They believe in a work-life balance. They are not willing to make the sacrifices or work as hard or as long hours as Boomers are used to just for the sake of a job.

Some Tips on Managing Millennials

- They prefer to be coached rather than given orders by an authoritative boss
- They respond poorly to inflexible, hierarchical organizations and best to more networked less hierarchical situations
- They expect flexible schedules
- You should adopt a mindset of thinking flexibly when dealing with them
- Explain the rationale for work you ask them to do and explain the value it adds
- Explicitly reward extra effort and excellent results
- Be willing and available to listen to them, let them talk through their problems and ask questions.
- Provide variety
- Let them have fun. Have a sense of humor

- Provide opportunities for them to develop transferable knowledge and skills; by investing in them you increase their loyalty.

The book makes other observations about some of the dilemmas in bridging the generational gaps. For example, it is clear that Millennials were educated in a system that, relative to Boomers, does not emphasize basic literacy tools such as spelling, grammar, and written expression as much. Consequently businesses today are spending a great deal on remedial writing and even reading comprehension courses to get even their “high-talent” graduates up to speed in writing for business.

For more information, view the complete text of the book online or download by clicking on [Decoding Generational Differences](#)

¹Smith, W. Stanton, Decoding Generational Differences: fact, fiction...or should we just get back to work?, Deloitte Development, LLC (2008)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you into trouble. It’s what you know for sure that just ain’t so.” - Mark Twain

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Comments and submissions: We welcome questions about workforce planning and suggestions for improvements to the newsletter as well as submissions of articles about what your agency is doing in workforce planning. Questions, comments, and requests to be added to the distribution list for the newsletter should be sent to the editor.

Current and Back Issues may be viewed by going to the workforce planning portal of the Civil Service web page at www.civilservice.louisiana.gov