# Managing millennials



For more than four decades the baby boomers, the largest generation in history, ruled the workplace, naturally, organizational programs and strategies revolved around their needs. Now in their late 50s and 60s, the boomers are beginning to leave the workforce, only to be replaced by another enormous demographic society – the millennials.

These children of the baby boomers were born between around 1980 and 2000. As a group, the millennials are more affluent, more technologically-adept, more educated and more ethnically diverse than any previous generation. By 2020, millennials will make up at least 50 percent of employees in countries around the world. Their potential is enormous and their values, expectations, and ways of communicating are unique. To harness their many talents and abilities, organizations and leaders need to understand what motivates and engages this positive, confident and energetic group.

**Motivating millennials**

Strategies and programs that worked for baby boomers are not as effective with millennials. Organizations and managers need a different approach to understand and optimize the potential of this generation.

Here are tips to get you started:

- **Listening.** Millennials are going to question leaders and management. This is not out of disrespect. Instead of getting annoyed or issuing orders, have a conversation. Most of the time, younger employees are just seeking more information or trying to understand their role in the overall corporate strategy.
- **Providing challenging work.** Millennials want to learn and contribute. They are also great multitaskers and problem-solvers. Without variety and challenges, they are likely to become bored and seek positions elsewhere.
- **Encouraging teamwork.** This is a generation that is changing how work gets done. They are the first generation to grow up immersed in social media, so they are comfortable sharing and accessing information, communicating and collaborating across a variety of platforms. This can be advantageous for managers as they can mentor, coach, and train their millennials as a team.
- **Giving recognition.** The millennials have spent a lifetime being told they are unique and special. They not only want recognition for their work, they expect it. Managers should also consider framing any criticism or feedback as learning opportunities and providing guidance as to exactly how their millennial employees can improve.
- **Fostering work-life balance.** Younger employees value their careers, but home, family, friends, community activities, and personal pursuits are equally important to them. As a result, they seek work-life balance. They will get the job done but not by spending 60 or 70 hours at the office like their parents. Allow them some autonomy and flexibility in how the job gets done.
- **Promoting corporate social responsibility**. Millennials are concerned about social issues and look for employers who support philanthropic causes. Consider integrating team-building events around your organizations corporate social responsibility program – such as charity walks, food drives, fundraisers, and community clean ups.
- **Communicating like a millennial**. This is a generation that grew up communicating electronically and likes instant two-way, 24/7 communication across many platforms. Many organizations are including interactive company-wide and/or team portals, mobile apps, YouTube, Skype, Flickr, Facebook, to engage their millennial employees and customers. Millennials also used to accessing information visually through YouTube and other sites, so incorporating images and videos in both internal and external communications can be effective.

Millennials seek leadership, even structure, from their managers, but also expect to be mentored and respected. Like the baby boomers before them, the millennials bring tremendous opportunities – and

challenges – to organizations. By understanding their views and values and respecting their talents and potential, you can help develop the workforce of the future.