

CARE-FRONTATION: BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN YOUR MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES



If you're hiring, chances are more than 35 percent of your applicants are Millennials. Americans born between 1982 and 2002 now make up more than one-third of the U.S. labor force. This is the largest generation in our labor force, [according to Pew Research](#), which estimates approximately 56 million Millennials were employed or seeking employment as of year-end 2017 (the most recent year for which data is available).

Millennials have been the dominant generation in the labor market since 2016 and, given their penchant for emerging technologies and their firm belief in work-life balance, they are turning our 20th century conception of work inside out and upside down. Stand aside, Boomer – there's a new sheriff in town, and he or she is already done using apps you've never even heard of.

So, these upstarts want to work for you, but these aren't men (and women) in gray flannel suits. What is it Millennials want out of work? [A recent Gallup report boils it down to six things](#):

1. Millennials don't just want a paycheck; they want a purpose. They want work to have meaning. Compensation is important, but Millennials are motivated more by mission and purpose than paycheck.
2. Millennials aren't pursuing job satisfaction; they are pursuing development: they expect opportunities to learn and grow.
3. Millennials don't want annual reviews – they want ongoing conversations and feedback on their current performance.
4. Millennials don't want to fix their weaknesses; they want to develop their strengths.

5. Millennials don't want a job, they want a good job, one in which they contribute to an organization that values their strengths and gives them the chance to do what they do best.

6. Millennials want coaches and mentors, not bosses: they expect their managers to coach their performance and to value them as people and employees.

Number 6 is especially important in bringing out the best in your Millennial employees. You need to build real relationships – command-and-control management doesn't work with this cohort, particularly given their tech savvy. They are coming to your company with expertise, high expectations and a full tank of gasoline and, if they're unhappy, they're willing to pack up and go. The whole "start in the mailroom, end in the boardroom" path so many people took during the postwar era is, like the era itself, a thing of the distant past. These youngsters are on the move, always.

Think about how it feels to be young: you have endless energy and a million ideas. You know everything! The problem is, when you think you know more than you really do, the people around you may perceive this as arrogance. They may think you feel you're superior to them, that you know best, that what they do isn't necessary. Arrogance is a distorted picture of one's own abilities, and it sometimes travels in tandem with real talent and a strong work ethic. Even if your young achievers don't feel this way, they may charge through the front door with an attitude that alienates both coworkers and management.

In business, what's most important is to be effective – this is far more important than being right. So, what's an effective way to deal with your amped-up go-getters? I've devised a simple strategy I call "care-frontation". How does care-frontation work? It starts quite simply: you sit down with an employee who's having problems and share both the positive and negative feedback you've gotten from their coworkers and managers. As you can see in number 3 above, Millennials want regular, direct feedback, as opposed to annual reviews – care-frontation is a great way to satisfy this desire while addressing a problem in the workplace *and* hewing to number 6 above. It demonstrates to your Millennial employees you value them as people and employees.

Start with the positives first – if you don't, you've lost your opportunity. If you begin the conversation dishing out negatives, your employee will (a) go on the defensive and (b) be deaf to anything positive you have to say. Lead with, 'people really like this about you, our team has been really impressed with, we're really excited to have you on board...' before you start listing specific examples of arrogant or insensitive behavior.

Rather than being judgmental and a scold, your best move is to give constructive feedback and offer your employee an opportunity to self-correct within a clear-cut plan for improvement. Keep number 5 from the list above in mind: "Millennials don't want a job, they want a good job, one in which they contribute to an organization that values their strengths and gives them the chance to do what they do best every day." Care-frontation is an excellent way to show your Millennial

employees you value their strengths, that you truly want to help them contribute to your organization and enable them to excel.

Sometimes great work comes from somewhat difficult characters – you'll have to decide if the value of the substance exceeds the challenge of the style, if "the juice is worth the squeeze." But remember, there's a difference between difficult and toxic, and most people in a professional setting want to do their best. This speaks directly to number 2 from the list above: "Millennials aren't pursuing job satisfaction, they are pursuing development, and they expect opportunities to learn and grow." If handled right, care-frontation gives them an opportunity to grow personally and professionally. And it gives you an opportunity to be a coach and a leader, to manage expectations, and manage them swiftly and diplomatically.

Maybe, in helping your Millennials along their way, you'll discover opportunities for your own personal and professional growth? The juice might just be worth the squeeze.