

# NOT EVERYONE GETS A TROPHY



REVISED AND UPDATED

HOW TO MANAGE **THE MILLENNIALS**

**BRUCE TULGAN**

Bestselling author of *IT'S OKAY TO BE THE BOSS* and *MANAGING GENERATION X*



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Bruce Tulgan

WILEY

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*This book is dedicated (now re-dedicated) to Frances Coates Applegate*



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## ● PREFACE

I wrote this book with a clear mission: To help leaders and managers—mostly those who are older and more experienced—bring out the best in their newest new young workforce.

Indeed, we have been hard at work on that mission since 1993. That's when I first began the research that led to my first book, *Managing Generation X*, about bringing out the best in those of my own generation when we were the new young workforce. Today that mission continues, based on what is now decades of ongoing research tracking the attitudes and behavior of the ever-emerging ever-“newer” new young workforce.

We began tracking the Millennial Generation in the late 1990s. Ever since, we've kept our finger on the pulse of this very large and very important cohort through many twists and turns.

The publication of this revised and updated edition of *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy* is happening precisely because there have been so many twists and turns since the first edition of this book was published and also because our research about the Millennials has proven to be so accurate and because the best practices we've identified have proven to be so effective for leaders and managers. Leaders and managers of Millennials tell me every day

that they have read and re-read this book to remind themselves about where young people today are really coming from and where they are going.

So many business leaders have told me that they buy this book for every leader they know who is managing young people today because the book is filled with practical step-by-step solutions for recruiting, on-boarding, training, performance-management, motivation, retention, and leadership development.

But it's not just that. It's also because so many of the other so-called "experts" on the Millennial Generation are still giving managers such bad advice—telling managers they should praise Millennials regardless of performance, reward them with trophies just for showing up, put hand-held devices in their hands and then leave them alone to manage themselves, let them come to work whenever they feel like it (and bring their dogs), eliminate managers, and try to make work "fun." For 99 percent of managers, that advice is nonsense.

Millennials are NOT a bunch of disloyal, delicate, lazy, greedy, disrespectful, inappropriate slackers with short attention spans who only want to learn from computers, only want to communicate with hand-held devices, and won't take "no" for an answer. Our research demonstrates clearly that Millennials want leaders who take them seriously at work, not leaders who try to humor them; leaders who set them up for success in the real world, not leaders who pretend they are succeeding no matter what they do.

I hear from managers on the front lines every day, and the results are clear. The real-world strategies and tactics in this book are working:

- Millennials need strong, highly engaged managers;
- Millennials need structure and boundaries;
- Millennials need guidance, direction, support, and coaching;
- Millennials need clear expectations;

- Millennials need to know that somebody is keeping score; and
- Millennials need to understand the *quid pro quo* of work every step of the way.

Yes, of course, Millennials want more money, more flexibility, more training, more interesting projects, and more exposure to decision-makers. Yes, they want more of everything! But they don't expect any of it on a silver platter. They just want to know, every step of the way, "Exactly what do I need to do to earn that?!"

Every day, in our seminars, I teach leaders and managers the strategies and tactics in this book. Nonetheless, we are fighting against very strong widespread myths and a lot of bad management advice. This generation is still vastly misunderstood, and leaders and managers are still struggling to engage, motivate, and retain the best young workers today. Especially challenging are today's newest new young workers—the second wave Millennials who are flooding into the workplace today.

## **Meet the Second-Wave Millennials—Introducing Generation Z**

How do we recognize a new generation when we see one? Demographers, sociologists, historians, and other "experts" often debate this very question, just as experts differ about the exact parameters of each generation. The general consensus among demographers is that the great Millennial cohort begins with the birth year 1978. The working definition of the Millennials has been all those born between 1978 and 2000. But 22 years is simply too large a time frame to capture just one generation, especially in this era of constant change. Like the massive Baby Boom (1946–1964), the massive Millennial cohort simply must be treated as two distinct waves, coming of age in two very distinct decades.

We refer to the first-wave Millennials (those born 1978 through 1989) as “Generation Y” and the second-wave Millennials (those born 1990 and 2000) as “Generation Z.”

Gen Zers were small children on 9/11/01. They graduated from high school and (maybe) went through college or university during the deepest and most protracted global recession since the Great Depression. They are entering the workforce in a “new normal” of permanently constrained resources, increased requirements placed on workers, and fewer promised rewards for nearly everyone. From day one, they find themselves bumping up against a crowded field of “career delayed” Gen Yers, not to mention plenty of even older workers who themselves may have faced their own career setbacks. Meanwhile, Gen Zers—unlike any other generation in history—can look forward to a lifetime of interdependency and competition with a rising global youth-tide from every corner of this ever-flattening world.

While the first-wave Millennials (Gen Y) were children of the peace and prosperity of the 1990s, the second-wave Millennials (Gen Z) were children of the war and uncertainty of the first decade of the 2000s. By now, all Millennials have been indelibly shaped by the 2000s and 2010s—an era of profound change and perpetual anxiety.

As a whole, the Millennials embody a continuation—and Generation Z, perhaps the culmination—of the larger historical forces driving the transformation in the workplace and the workforce since the early 1990s:

- Globalization;
- Constantly advancing technology;
- The painfully slow death of the myth of job security;
- The never-ending ever-expanding information fire hose;
- The accelerating pace of everything; and
- Increasing human diversity in every dimension.

In that sense there is great continuity in the long generational shift from the Boomers to X to Y to Z. After all, regardless of generation, we are all living through these historical changes together.

In another sense, Gen Zers represent a whole new breed of worker. Advances in information technology have made them the first generation of true “digital natives.” They learned to think, learn, and communicate in an environment defined by wireless Internet ubiquity, wholesale technology integration, infinite content, and immediacy. They are totally plugged in—through social media, search engines, and instant messaging—to each other as well as to anyone and everyone, and an infinite array of answers to any question at any time. As a result most Gen Zers grew up way too fast. That’s why they seem so precocious.

“So then,” managers often ask me, “why do they also seem so immature?”

Here’s why: At the same time, they have been insulated and scheduled and supported to a degree that no children ever have been before. Remember, pre-Boomer parenting was, in large part, focused on teaching children humility, diligence, grit, gratitude, and grace—what was always simply known as “building character” has become so out of the norm that it is resurfacing now in the form of a “movement” in educational circles. By the 1970s, of course, first-wave Boomer parents were busy awakening their consciousness and tended to be more hands-off as a rule—due in part to rising divorce rates, more dual working parent households, and a general increasing permissiveness—leading to the cliché about Gen Xers being a generation of under-supervised “latchkey kids.” But the major sea change came in the mid to late 1980s, led by second-wave Boomer parents. All of a sudden, the norms of parenting shifted sharply toward safety and self-esteem—constant supervision and lots of trophies. Ever since, it seems, we’ve barely left our children alone for even a minute! What began as the “self-esteem”-based parenting was morphing by the 1990s into the Gen X led “helicopter-parenting.”

By the early 2000s, the helicopter-parenting trend reached a new apex. Relationship boundaries have been blurred for Gen Zers because they've grown accustomed to being treated almost as customers/users of services and products provided by institutions and authority figures. Parents and their parenting posses (relatives, friends, teachers, coaches, counselors, doctors, and vendors in every realm) are mobilized to supervise and support the every move of children, validate their differences, excuse (or medicate) their weaknesses, and set them up with every material advantage possible. In China, where there are so many only children due to the longstanding "single child policy," a similar trend in child rearing has yielded a phenomenon referred to by many there as "Little Emperor Syndrome."

These second wave Millennials, Generation Z, will usher in the final stages of the great generational shift.

As the older (first wave) Baby Boomers are now steadily exiting the workforce, the simultaneous rising global youth-tide of Generation Z represents a tipping point. By 2020, Generation Z will be greater than 20 percent of the workforce (much greater outside the West in younger parts of the world—especially South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South America). Indeed, the 2020 workforce will be more than 80 percent post-Boomer—dominated in numbers, norms, and values by Generations X, Y, and Z.

In this rising youth-tide, why ever would Gen Zers see established institutions as their anchors of success and security? They never will. Instead they will be most likely to turn to their most reliable anchors growing up:

- Hand-held super-computers,
- Proximately powerful grown-ups, and
- The ability to construct a unique identity—a personal brand—which they can wield in public (mostly on social media) and revel in privately.

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Indeed, Generation Z—East, West, North, and South—might be seen as a rising global generation of “Little Emperors,” each seeking to build his or her own “personal brand.”

Sorry to say, this book offers no easy solutions. The book does offer many, many difficult partial solutions for recruiting the best Millennials; helping them get on board and up-to-speed in your organization; form new bonds with your organization, their new colleagues, and their managers; perform successfully, add value, keep learning and growing; and earn more and more of what they need and want. If you want high performance out of this generation, you had better commit to high-maintenance management. That is, ultimately, the message of *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy*.

*Bruce Tulgan*



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## ● CHAPTER ONE

# MEET THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

## The Most High-Maintenance Workforce in the History of the World ...and Likely to Be the Most High Performing

They keep telling me, “Here’s what you get in five years, ten years, twenty years...” But they expect me to come back to work tomorrow. What do I get tomorrow?

—Millennial

Not long ago, the president of a health care consulting firm told me he had just interviewed a twenty-five-year-old man for a job in his firm. The young candidate came to the interview armed with a number of ordinary questions about job duties, salary, and benefits. When these questions were answered, he made a request: “You should know that surfing is really important to me and there might be days when the surf’s really up. Would you mind if I came in a little later on those days?”

...

At a major food conglomerate, summer interns are usually given an assignment, such as a big data-entry project, that they

can complete during the course of their summer employment. An executive there shared with me the story of one of his latest interns: “On the first day, she announced she had invented a new cereal. She had a box, complete with artwork and a bag of her cereal inside, that she called her ‘prototype.’ Clearly she had gone to great lengths, including the recipe and nutritional information and preparing a slide show. She wanted to know when she would be able to pitch her idea to senior executives. ‘The sooner the better,’ she said.”

• • •

An experienced nurse-manager in a busy hospital told me she stopped a new young nurse from administering the wrong medicine by intravenous drip to a patient. The manager pulled the young nurse aside and explained emphatically how serious a mistake she almost made. “I explained that this is how patients die unnecessarily. I told her, ‘You need to check the wrist bracelet, then the patient’s chart, then the charge list, then the IV bag. Then you need to check them all again.’” Before she was finished, the young nurse interrupted her. “Actually, you are doing this conversation wrong,” she told her boss. “You are supposed to give me some positive feedback before you criticize my work.” What did the manager respond? “Okay. Nice shoes. Now, about that IV bag...”

• • •

A group of executives in the U.S. Peace Corps reported that program administrators receive e-mails on a regular basis from parents making suggestions and requests about the living accommodations and work conditions of their children stationed on missions around the world. One of the Peace Corps executives told me, “I just got an e-mail from a parent saying the meals being provided don’t meet his kid’s dietary needs.

Could we get this young man on a nondairy diet?” The funny thing is that generals in the U.S. Army have told me similar stories about the parents of soldiers.

• • •

Another experienced manager, this one in a retail organization, told me an even more striking story. This manager was trying to correct a young associate who had just spoken rudely to a customer. The young man turned to his boss and said, “You know what? I’m thinking about buying this place. And the way you are going, you are going to be the first one out of here!”

• • •

Managing people has never been easy. Stuck between employer and employees, managers are tasked with the tough job of negotiating their often competing needs and expectations. But as these stories illustrate, being a manager is even more difficult when a new generation enters the workforce and brings with it new attitudes and behaviors. Every day, leaders and managers in organizations of all shapes and sizes in just about every industry all over the Western world tell me stories about working with the new generation of young employees—the so-called Millennial Generation—that suggest this might be the most difficult generation to manage yet.

Managers tell me:

“They walk in the door on day one with very high expectations.”

“They don’t want to pay their dues and climb the ladder.”

“They walk in the door with seventeen things they want to change about the company.”

“They only want to do the best tasks.”

“If you don’t supervise them closely, they go off in their own direction.”

“It’s very hard to give them negative feedback without crushing their morale.”

“They walk in thinking they know more than they know.”

“They think everybody is going to get a trophy in the real world, just like they did growing up.”

It seems to me that the vast majority of leaders and managers think Millennials have an attitude problem. But isn’t this always the case when a new generation joins the workforce? Doesn’t every new generation of young workers irritate the older, more experienced ones?

At the early career stage of life, young people are just learning to break away from the care of others (parents, teachers, institutions) and taking steps toward self-sufficiency and responsibility. Some do it more slowly than others. As they move into the adult world with the energy and enthusiasm—and lack of experience—that is natural at that stage, they are bound to clash with more mature generations.

And yet as much as human experience—such as the rite of passage into the workforce—stays the same over time, the world doesn’t. One epoch may be defined by an ice age, another by global warming. What makes each generation different are these accidents of history that shape the larger world in which human beings move through their developmental life stages. So while every generation rocks the boat when they join the adult world, they also bring with them defining characteristics that alter the rules of the game for everyone going forward.

Millennials’ “attitude” probably is not likely to go away as they mature; their high-maintenance reputation is all too real. Still, the whole picture is more complicated. Yes, Millennials will be more difficult to recruit, retain, motivate, and manage than any other new generation to enter the workforce. But this will also be the most high-performing workforce in history for those who know how to manage them properly.