LEARNING MADE EASY

Managing Millennials

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Motivate and engage the workforce of the future

Unearth strategies to get the most out of Millennials at work

Dispel Millennial stereotypes and tell fact from fiction

Hannah L. Ubl
Lisa X. Walden
Debra Arbit
BridgeWorks, generational experts, thought leaders, and consultants

Managing Millennials

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by Hannah L. Ubl, Lisa X. Walden, and Debra Arbit

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Introduction

If we were in the business of doling out participation awards, we'd give you a shiny red ribbon just for picking up this book. Sadly (or fortunately?) for you, we're actually in the business of information — generational information to be specific. In this book, our focus — as you may have guessed by the not-so-subtle title — is Millennials. Prepare yourself for a meticulously crafted story about the generation everyone loves to hate, replete with tools, techniques, and strategies to help you better lead and manage this infamously unmanageable generation.

At its core, *Managing Millennials For Dummies* is intended to be a truth-teller and problem-solver for anyone who manages, leads, or works with Millennials. We won't kid you (or ourselves) by claiming this book is the #1 solution or the be-all and end-all cure for your Millennial woes. Humans are complicated, and contrary to popular belief, Millennials are in fact human. As Millennials ourselves, trust us when we say we get the challenge. We feel your pain. We sympathize, we empathize, and we also know when to tell it like it is. As generational researchers and management consultants, we hear the good, bad, and ugly about Millennials, and we work tirelessly to dispel myths and shed light on truths. This book is a collection of all our best work around recruiting and retaining the Millennial generation. We hope that you'll use this tool as suits you best to find out more about this slippery generation, cull actionable strategies to improve your Millennial management style, and maybe, just maybe, leave with a changed perception about this complicated generation (and by that we mean you'll stop hating them).

Managing Millennials For Dummies is not intended to be read as a step-by-step manual. We get that as managers trying to lead four (and sometimes five) generations in the workforce, you've got more than enough on your plate. So instead, treat this book as a choose-your-own-adventure, but with more intellect and less redirection.

Side note: Though this book is all about unwrapping the layers behind the Millennials, we also strongly believe that they need to learn about you, their manager, and the other generations as well. That said, we can only cover so much in the span of one book. We've incorporated a few chapters on Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and post-Millennials, but the majority of the content and strategy is focused around understanding and managing the Millennial generation.

About This Book

Although this book is called *Managing Millennials For Dummies,* you don't need to be a manager to glean something valuable from these pages. Whether you're a CEO; a retiree who's curious about the "why" behind your Millennial children; a manager seeking to improve recruiting and retention efforts; or an entry-level, inquisitive Millennial who just wants to learn more about your own generation; this book is for you. All we ask is that when you turn to any given section, you come ready to take off your own generational lens and commit to seeing the world through Millennials' eyes.

Another thing we ask of you? If you can, set your preconceived doubts and skepticism aside. Trust us when we say that we know managing Millennials is no easy feat. We know this not only because we *are* Millennials, but also because we *manage* Millennials. Most importantly, we know because we've talked to thousands of managers on the front lines who are dealing with this newest addition to the workforce. Some are struggling and some are thriving, but all are just trying to do their very best. While we've seen Millennials get the short end of the stick (they certainly aren't winning any popularity contests) and also praised as the best thing that's ever happened to the modern world, the truth, as usual, lies somewhere in the middle. Within these pages, we've found ways to shed light on this truth. We celebrate the greatness of Millennials, show you how to manage the not-so-greatness away, and give you a road map for building a cohesive, collaborative, and connected cross-generational team.

Perhaps the most unique aspect about this piece of writing is that it's a bit of a generational Russian nesting doll (stay with us here): It's a book about Millennials written by a group of Millennials who work in a company that researches everything and anything Millennial, as well as all things generational. As a heads-up for the odd Millennial hater who may have picked up this book, we actually think Millennials are great. If you were hoping for some more Millennial bashing, you most definitely have not come to the right place. We believe that while Millennials may not have deserved all those participation trophies, they're most certainly worthy of some understanding (plus, we didn't give those trophies to ourselves, people!).

In true Millennial fashion, we ran with not "two heads are better than one," but with three. Tapping into our collaborative spirit, your Millennial authors represent a three-pronged perspective on this generation: Hannah Ubl, a Young Millennial; Lisa X. Walden, an Old Millennial; and Debra Arbit, a Millennial/Gen X cusper.

Foolish Assumptions

We took the liberty of making a few assumptions about you, fair reader. Yes, we know what people say about assuming, but please forgive us! We assume that you

- Are a leader, manager, or have a managerial mindset
- Manage Millennials and find yourself struggling
- Want to improve your multi-generational management skills
- Think Millennials are gems, or at least cloudy gems, that need some buffing (if you are here to read about how terrible Millennials are, you'll need to find another book)
- Have a general curiosity about generations broadly, and Millennials in particular

If any of the above are a fit, then you've come to the right place. Please fill free to jump around and choose the sections that best fit your unique need.

Conventions Used in This Book

When writing, we skewed toward keeping it simple. In so doing, we adopted a few conventions to make reading an enjoyable and confusion-free experience:

- When we refer to Millennials, we're talking about the cohort born between 1980 and 1995.
- Nearly all elements of the book are grounded in U.S. generational theory, so the Millennials we refer to work in the United States.
- In our eyes, managing and leading are of equal importance, so we use both verbs throughout the book.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout your exploration of this content, you'll find a few markers along the way. Our approach calls out certain elements throughout the book. The images in the left-hand margin of the book are signs to pay attention. Here are what those icons look like and mean.

TIP

This icon alerts you to a tip or action that will make managing Millennials easier.

WARNING

This icon serves as a flashing light to alert you to potential missteps and mishaps. Heeding the warning is a good idea.

REMEMBER

If we want to remind you of previously stated knowledge, or just how capable of a manager you are, you'll know it when you see this icon.

Beyond the Book

If you're more of a bullet-point, "give me the a skimmed virtual version so I can read it on my phone while in line at the grocery store" kind of person, we've got you covered. To view this book's Cheat Sheet, simply go to `www.dummies.com` and search for "Managing Millennials For Dummies Cheat Sheet" to find a handy electronic reference guide that answers the most common generational questions.

Where to Go from Here

Your adventure has only begun, and we look forward to where it takes you! Before exploring the wealth of knowledge these pages have to offer, remember to walk (or read) without judgment and be willing to change your perspective by donning different generational hats. This book is designed for you to choose the adventure, plot your course, and curate the information that is most useful to you and your endeavors.

If we could wave our magic wands and cast a spell, we'd have you read this entire book cover to cover. Alas, we are mere muggles, and aren't imbued with such powers, so we'll tell you this: Read what matters most to you. We know that time is of the essence, and we've written this content for busy people on the go. This book is "skippable," crafted so you can jump around to any section of the book and pull bite-sized pieces of information that give you the most bang for your buck. Gray sidebars are intended to give you a dose of the interesting but slightly tangential (not the essential need-to-know) info that should be seen as extra spice, but certainly not your nourishing generational veggies. They'll (hopefully) be fun to read, but not pivotal enough to change the course of your management approach.

The content within each chapter varies, and the title should very clearly point the way. Some chapters are focused on providing actionable strategies, while others raise awareness and start a dialogue. You may be inclined to skip the awareness chapters (Chapter 2, 3, 4) as unnecessary fluff, but we encourage you to take a look if/when time allows. Awareness is a huge piece of solving the generational management puzzle. If you're well-versed in who Millennials are, skip ahead to the generational clash points in Part 2. If you want to know about a deeper, more nuanced dive into the Millennials you don't usually hear about, skip to Part 3.

Our ultimate goal is for what you read in these pages to trigger an aha moment and inspire you to take a different approach. So, venture on, dear reader. Millennials aren't half as bad or challenging as they may seem, and the information held herein will help you come to that realization, if you haven't already. Turn the page. Your sojourn into the mind of the Millennial awaits you.

1 Getting Started with Managing Millennials

IN THIS PART . . .

Uncover why managing Millennials can be so tough.

Orient yourself with generational birth years and key events and conditions that shape the people you live and work with.

Gain an understanding of where generational theory comes from and how to use it (and how not to!).

Take a deep dive into the Millennial psyche.

Decode who Millennials really are, how they got that way, and how they show up at work.

Distinguish fact from fiction when it comes to Millennial stereotypes.

Compare and contrast Millennials to Baby Boomers and Generation Xers.

Understand and eliminate your own generational biases when managing Millennials.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Introducing the generational timeline
- Examining shifts in today's multigenerational workplace
- Meeting the Millennials: traits, insights, and subtleties among them
- Recognizing clash points
- Finding a lot to love about Millennials

Chapter 1

Confronting the Millennial Management Challenge

If you felt the need to pick up this book, page through chapters, or scan a series of helpful lists, you must have a reason. You may love every Millennial you work with and want to learn more about them. You may scratch your head anytime a Millennial asks when he can move up the ladder. You may struggle to motivate a generation that wears headphones at work and longs to bond with you at happy hour over a local IPA. You may be a Millennial yourself who doesn't understand your own generation. Whomever you are, we're glad you're here, because this whole "Millennial thing" isn't made up, and we understand your interest to learn more.

It's no secret that Millennials are winning the generational media popularity contest. In 2015 alone, approximately 44,000 articles featuring Millennials graced the digital newsstands, partly because they're a massive generation, set to comprise 75 percent of the global workforce by 2025. This coverage, bordering on excessive, has given Millennials a pretty notorious PR problem, often slandered as lazy, narcissistic, entitled brats.

Once upon a recent decade marked by neon fashion and big hair, another young generation entered the work arena. They appeared apathetic, wore flannel, rocked out to Nirvana and Run DMC, and entered work determined to succeed and enforce balance. Bosses and colleagues welcomed them with (somewhat) open arms and chuckled with a profound sense of knowing: "Someday we'll figure out these kids, but until then they'll have to figure it out themselves." Now these flannel-wearing kids are Gen X managers and leaders running organizations. The companies who welcomed them reaped the rewards. Others who hoped their few hires would magically turn into Baby Boomers are reeling. They missed out. Companies may face a similar fate if they look to the Millennial generation and wonder, "Do I have to pay attention to you? Do I have to change things just to meet your needs? Maybe we'll wait for the next generation and skip these needy Millennials." While we understand your thought process, fair reader, we know your plight if you gloss over the youngest generation making waves in the workplace.

This chapter will prove that the Millennial struggle is real — first, we'll forecast the current and future generational demographic shifts and then introduce who the Millennial generation is and is not. You'll discover the importance of not just knowing *who* Millennials are but *why* they are the way that they are. Next, we'll pepper your palette with what happens when the next generation clashes with other generations at work before finishing the chapter with giving you a solid glimpse into the future.

Pinpointing Millennials on the Generational Timeline

Understanding the generations begins with acknowledging that the time you're born into influences who you become. Table 1-1 gives a breakdown by generation.

TABLE 1-1 Generational Breakdown

Generation	Birth Years	Benchmark Fact
Traditionalists	Pre-1946	Got their news on the radio
Baby Boomers	1946–1964	Television started entering the home
Generation Xers	1965–1979	Grew up during the birth of cable TV
Millennials	1980–1995	Saw the Internet become social for the first time
Generation Edgers (aka: Gen Z)	1996–2010	Grew up on Wi-Fi and smartphones

While it's easy to look at this breakdown and think, "You're just putting people into boxes!" the truth is more complex. For decades, generational theorists have found that the end of one generation and the beginning of another stems from the experiences they have in their formative years. To get a glimpse into some of those major moments, take a nostalgic walk through the timeline of generations past in Figure 1-1.

These years are not static; they're fluid. Here's a brief FAQ:

- **These numbers are different than others I've seen — why is that?**

  Generational-year breakdowns are not fixed. They're fluid because generational theory is a sociological science and therefore doesn't follow hard rules. These years are determined by the researched truth that the events and conditions that you experience growing up shape who you are. For more about the distinction between sociology and psychology, see Chapter 2.

TIP

  Before jumping to any conclusions about who generations are, an education in generational theory can set you straight. If you feel like becoming a generational expert who knows all things generational, take a dive into Chapter 3.

- **What happened to Gen Y?**

  If you are excited to read the passage on Gen Y and how different they are from Millennials, or if you're a Millennial who is proud to be Gen Y and not a Millennial, we are sorry to disappoint you. "Gen Y" and "Millennial" are synonymous. When researchers were first puzzling out the youngest generation at work, they named them simply as the successor to Gen X and made fun with the play on words "generation why." Super clever. However, as more research was done, "Millennial" stuck. You can use either moniker you want. Just know that they're the same, and in this book, we mostly use the term "Millennial." (Gen Y is more popular outside of the United States.)

- **What are their population sizes?**

  At their peaks:

  - Traditionalists — 75 million
  - Baby Boomers — 80 million
  - Generation Xers — 60 million
  - Millennials — 82 million

  Note: Peak population indicates the highest population point of a generation. Information is taken from U.S. Census Data.

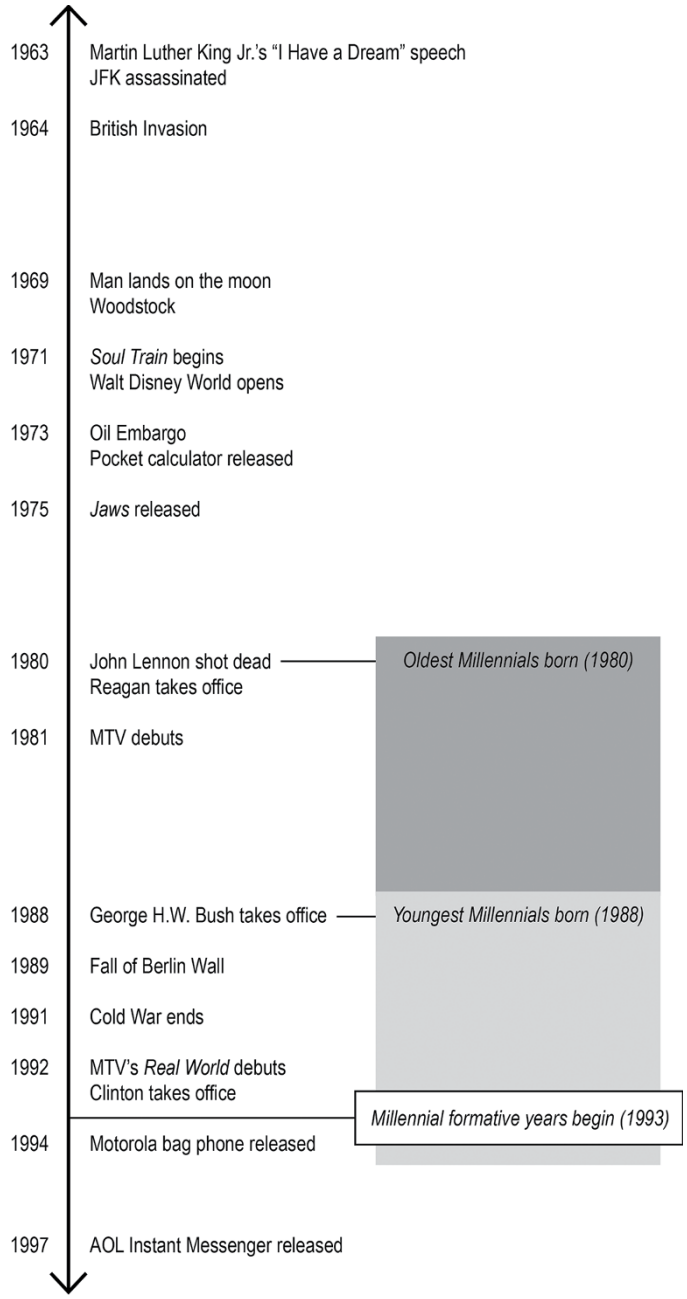

FIGURE 1-1: Generational timeline.

BridgeWorks. Minneapolis, MN. (October, 2016)