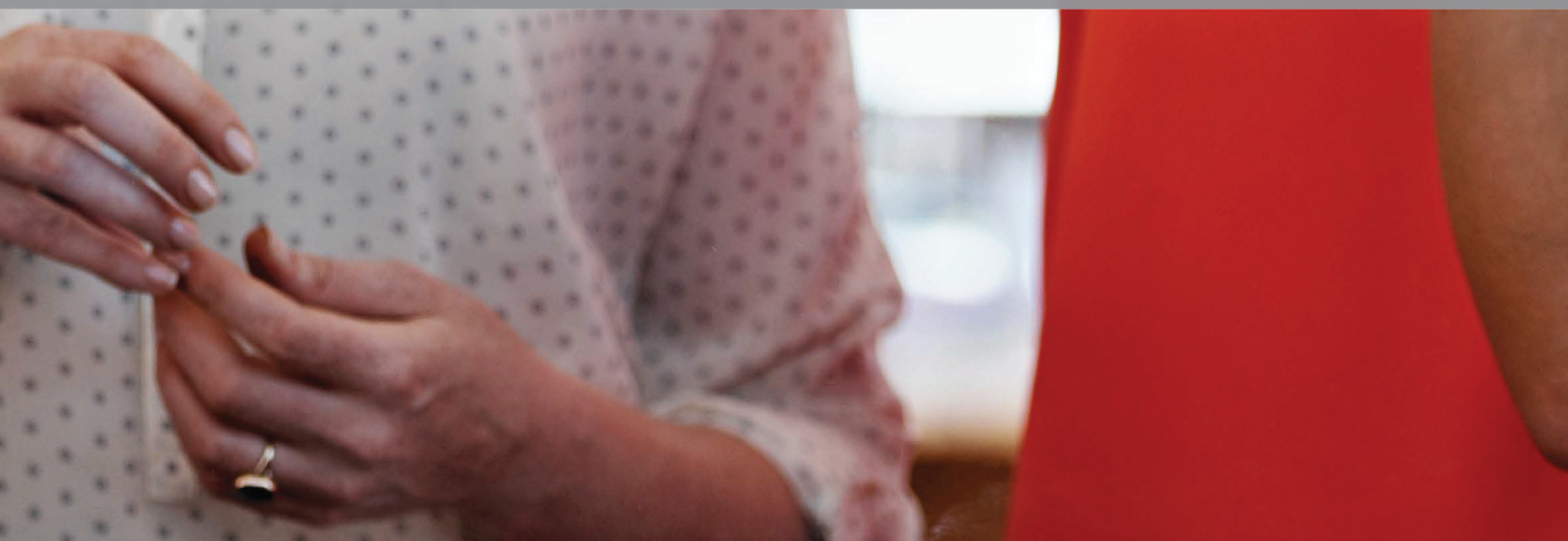




STEREOTYPES ABOUT MILLENNIALS OFTEN LEAD TO MISINTERPRETATIONS ABOUT THIS COHORT. THEIR CONFIDENCE AND IDEALISTIC AND AMBITIOUS OUTLOOK ARE FREQUENTLY MISTAKEN FOR ARROGANCE AND EGOTISM.

GIVEN TODAY'S ADVANCEMENTS, MILLENNIALS MAY BE ACHIEVING MILESTONES MORE QUICKLY THAN THEIR GENERATIONAL COUNTERPARTS AND, THEREFORE, LESS WILLING TO STAY PUT FOR EXTENSIVE PERIODS OF TIME WITHOUT PROMOTION.

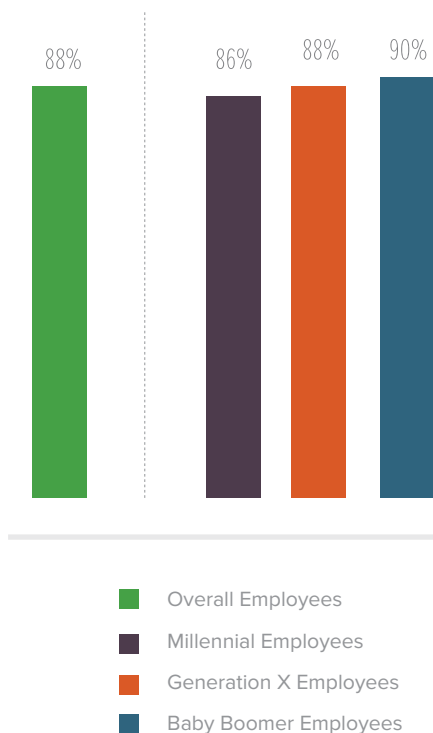


# MILLENNIALS

## Misunderstood in the Workplace?

**At the time when more Baby Boomers begin to exit the workforce, a greater number of Millennials will enter the workforce. It is estimated that Millennial workers (those born between 1980 and 2000) will comprise one-half of the workforce by 2020.<sup>1</sup>**

**FIGURE 6**  
JOB SATISFACTION BY GENERATION



**Note:** n = 158-517. Figure represents respondents who indicated they were "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their current job. Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very dissatisfied" and 5 = "very satisfied." "Neutral/Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" were excluded from this analysis.

**Source:** Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement (SHRM, 2016)

The Millennial generation is frequently generalized as entitled, lazy and self-centered. Given these stereotypes, it would not be surprising to see these young workers as less satisfied with their jobs. This research, however, found no statistically significant differences in job satisfaction between generations. Overall, 88% of employees were satisfied with their job this year; 86% of Millennials indicated the same. Similar percentages were reported for Generation X (88%) and Baby Boomers (90%) (see Figure 6).

Stereotypes about Millennials often lead to misinterpretations about this cohort.<sup>2</sup> Their confidence and idealistic and ambitious outlook are frequently mistaken for arrogance and egotism. Given today's advancements, Millennials may be achieving milestones more quickly than their generational counterparts and, therefore, less willing to stay put for extensive periods of time without promotion. Arguably a bit impatient, Millennials are, in reality, eager to contribute and want to be involved, but their attitude is repeatedly frowned upon. For example, as found in this research, younger workers want opportunities for development and self-improvement, even if that means searching for employment outside their current organization. Despite their determination, typically seen as a positive attribute, society misconstrues these shorter tenures as job-hopping, with the implication that Millennials lack a sense of loyalty to their employer.

As a result of these perceptions, organizations develop initiatives and programs to mitigate potential problems while working with these younger staff. However, how effective are these efforts? In fact, are they even addressing the correct issues? It is most likely that this workplace tension is actually a result of various factors and is falsely attributed to generational differences. Many conflicts may be more a product of various life stages, career stages or job levels.<sup>3</sup> For instance, employees with children may place a higher value on family-friendly benefits.

Moreover, this research indicates that there are not a lot of distinctions between what factors each generation values and the degree of satisfaction with these factors. Not surprisingly,

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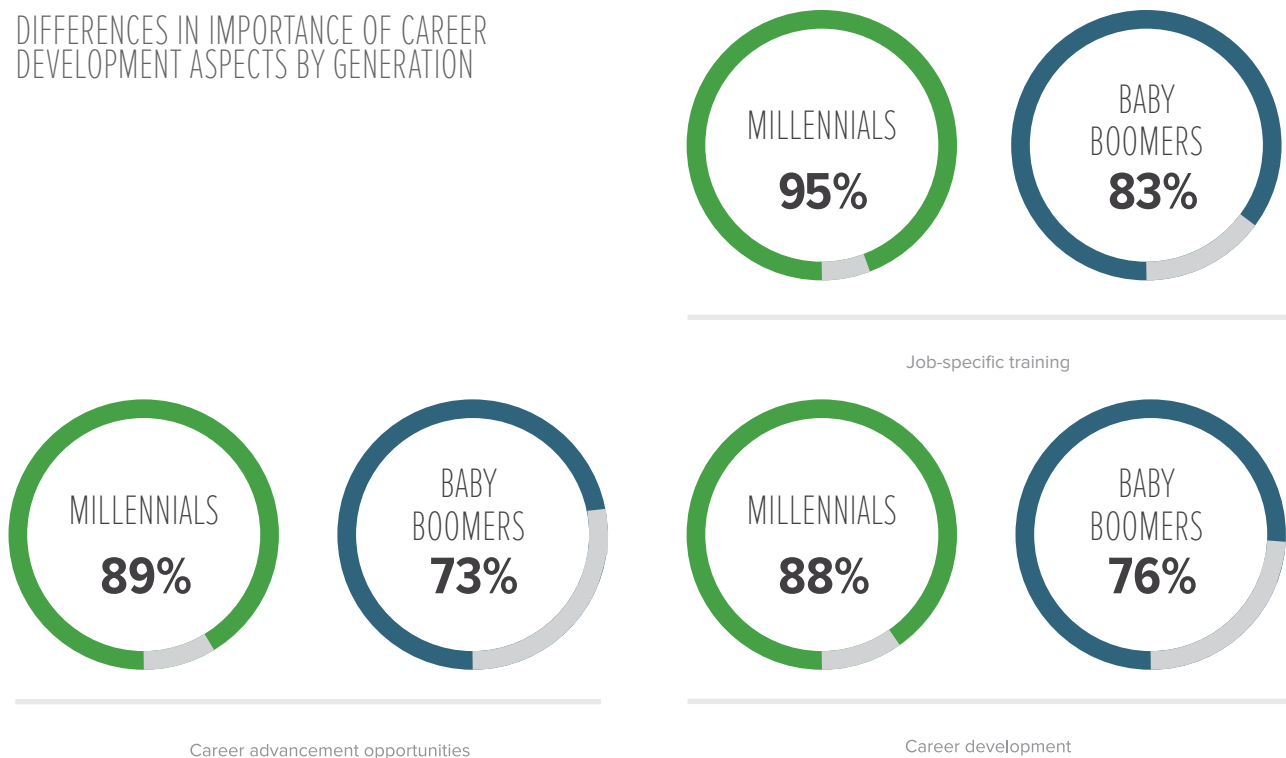
Misunderstood in the Workplace?

Millennials placed more importance on job-specific training, career development opportunities and career advancement opportunities contributing to their job satisfaction compared with older generations (see Figure 7). On the other hand, this research revealed several differences among employees from different job levels in their perceptions of importance of and satisfaction with overall compensation/pay, contribution of work to organization's business goals, variety of work and other aspects (see Table 6, Table 11 and Table 17 in the Appendix).

Furthermore, these shifts in workplace demographics coincide with a unique time period in the professional world.<sup>4</sup> Maintaining “business as usual” is anything but usual and is getting increasingly more difficult. Some believe that the demand for a 24/7 environment is a Millennial characteristic, but isn't that a universal attitude? Largely on account of access to and speed of the Internet and other evolving technology, we are able to attain vast amounts of information and resources in mere moments. Organizations must adjust to fit the changing business landscape, externally and internally. Fulfilling consumers' expectations and wants in a real-time manner requires revision of systems and policies. Organizations must also strive to be adaptable within their workplace to survive by transitioning to continuous feedback instead of relying on solely a formal performance review process and offering flexible work arrangements to avoid business interruptions. The need to dispose of rigid procedures is a reflection of the changing business world rather than the integration of the growing number of Millennial workers.

FIGURE 7

## DIFFERENCES IN IMPORTANCE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT ASPECTS BY GENERATION



Source: Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement (SHRM, 2016)

## What Should Organizations Consider as Millennials Are Integrated into the Workforce?

**Stop the stereotypes.** Getting rid of any preconceived notions about Millennials can avoid carrying forward inaccurate perceptions about the group. Although Millennials may have slightly different mindsets, on the whole, they tend to place significance on several of the same aspects of job satisfaction that Generation X and Baby Boomers do. Putting excessive focus on generational differences only perpetuates these false impressions. When designing training and development programs or benefits strategies, keep in mind other elements such as career level and life stage, not just age, to build an approach that is appropriate for various groups of employees.

**Cultivate culture.** Value-centric Millennials typically place high importance on openness, equality, community and purpose (although, according to this research, all employees are looking for these types of aspects). Transparency and fairness generate trust. In addition, building an inclusive feel within the organization will help establish an emotional connection between the employee and the employer.

**Develop and engage your talent.** Given that the only generational differences among job satisfaction contributors were within the career development category, it is obvious that Millennials believe managers and employers should nurture and invest in them with the intention of advancing within their profession. Millennials may become impatient with mundane tasks while attempting to pursue their interest, thus it is important to provide opportunities for them to be challenged with new tasks as they have mastered others. Another approach to engage this generation is to implement reverse mentoring: allowing Millennials to be mentors as well as mentees. This strategy may provide this tech-savvy and idealist group of employees an opportunity to display their abilities, especially during a phase of transitioning business conditions. Furthermore, this type of mentoring reinforces the idea that everyone matters.

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MILLENNIALS ARE LOOKING TO CREATE OUTCOMES WITHIN MEANINGFUL PROJECTS; DEVELOPING A BOND WITH THESE EMPLOYEES AND SHOWING CONFIDENCE THAT THEY CAN ACCOMPLISH OBJECTIVES WILL HELP KEEP THEM ENGAGED AND HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE IN ACHIEVING SET GOALS.