

# 9 Assumptions You're Making About Your Millennial Employees That Are Dead Wrong

*Lazy? Disloyal? Unable to excel except in digital companies? Not true. Not true. Not true.*



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Plenty of sweeping generalizations are being made about the millennial age group nowadays. I'm one of them, so I want to put these rumors to rest.

After all, we've gotten used to hearing about how we're destroying multiple industries, relying too much on technology and being largely impractical. Luckily, most of these myths are easy to shrug off, as just another case of the older generations misunderstanding and mistrusting the younger ones.

But where the stigma can be damaging is where it affects our work. Things can get dangerous here because, as the largest generation in the U.S. workforce, we millennials sure have a lot of wrongful assumptions being made about us as employees. So, if you're an employer who wants to avoid falling into these assumptions and limiting the potential of the millennials in your workforce, read on to understand what fact is and what is fiction.

Here are nine wrongful assumptions commonly made about millennial employees, and the truth about each.

## **1. Millennials are all the same.**

Although it's pretty easy to identify common values and behaviors among millennials, we can't forget that there are tens of millions of us in this generation -- and we aren't all the same. In fact, 79 percent of top marketers identify millennial sub-segments that are dramatically different from one other, ranging from "beer transitionals" to "new homeowners."

This means that you need to treat millennials as individuals in the workforce, and not assume that what works for one person will work for all of them.

## **2. Millennials want participation trophies.**

Although we might have gotten these on our childhood sports teams, the truth is that millennials have grown up and understand adult expectations for success. In a recent survey, millennials prized ethics and transparency in their managers more than getting recognized for their accomplishments. In fact, Gen X employees are more likely than millennials to think that everyone on a successful team should be rewarded.

### **3. Millennials perform well only in digital spaces.**

Despite the fact that 98 percent of millennials aged 18 to 24 own smartphones and they are called “digital natives,” this generation’s potential isn’t limited to the digital realm. When it comes to learning new skills at work, millennials on average prioritize face-to-face contact over digital options. Furthermore, they are significantly less likely than baby boomers to prefer virtual meetings for collaboration.

### **4. They aren’t loyal.**

Another common misconception is that millennials aren’t loyal to the companies that hire them, and that they jump around from job to job. In truth, millennials stay with their employers longer than Gen X employees did at the same ages, largely due to the fact that the labor market is less fluid than it once was. This means that as long as you’re treating your millennial employees well, they’re not any less likely to stick around than older employees.

### **5. They’re lazy.**

A common wrongful assumption made about millennial workers is that they want raises and promotions before they’ve earned them, and that they’re unwilling to do the work necessary to succeed. However, the data suggests otherwise: 87 percent of millennials surveyed have said that opportunities to learn and grow are extremely important to them when they’re applying for a job -- which suggests that they are hungry to put in the work.

### **6. They’re complacent.**

There is much talk about the complacency of the average millennial. However, this is unlikely to be reality, given the economic situation many millennials find themselves in: They have higher levels of student loan debt and poverty, as well as lower levels of wealth and income, than Gen Xers and Baby Boomers had at the same age. This means that millennials are hungry to work to dig themselves out of economic insecurity.

And if that isn’t convincing, consider that 59 percent of millennial workers in a recent poll said that competition is what “gets them up in the morning,” compared to agreement with that statement by 50 percent of baby boomers polled.

### **7. They don’t follow directions.**

As much as other generations may think that millennials don't like to follow instructions, the reality is that 41 percent of millennials surveyed agreed that "employees should do what their manager tells them, even when they can't see the reason for it," compared with 30 percent of baby boomers and 30 percent of Gen Xers surveyed who agreed with that view.

## **8. They care only about themselves.**

Despite what I'd call a myth that says millennials are selfish, the truth is that as a group we are extremely socially conscious and care deeply about the world. This is why 61 percent of millennials in one survey said they were worried about the state of the world and felt personally responsible to make a difference.

## **9. They rely too much on collaboration.**

Another wrongful assumption made about millennial employees is that they rely too heavily on others in the workplace. However, although they do largely embrace teamwork, 78 percent of us in one survey said that we would be more productive at work if we had more private space for individual work and reflection.

Overall, it's certainly true that certain stereotypes can have their roots in truth. However, in the case of millennial workers, there seem to be more myths out there than fact. And that's not good, because it's imperative that businesses understand the truth about millennial employees in order to build the best workplace teams.