

# Boston College Center for Work & Family

Executive Briefing Series

## **Creating Tomorrow's Leaders: The Expanding Roles of Millennials in the Workplace**

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Boston College Center for Work & Family  
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# Lauren Stiller Rikleen



- Nationally recognized expert on developing a thriving, diverse and multi-generational workforce.
- A former equity partner at Bowditch & Dewey, LLP, Lauren launched the [Rikleen Institute for Strategic Leadership](#) to help businesses and other organizations create a culture where their professionals can advance and flourish.
- Author of [\*Ending the Gauntlet: Removing Barriers to Women's Success in the Law\*](#), [\*Success Strategies for Women Lawyers\*](#), and is currently writing a book on the Millennial generation in the workplace.
- Executive-In-Residence at the Boston College Center for Work & Family.

# Creating Tomorrow's Leaders: The Expanding Roles of Millennials in the Workplace

**BOSTON COLLEGE**  
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**EXECUTIVE BRIEFING SERIES**

**In this Issue:**

- The expanding roles of Millennials
- Cautionary note about generational prim
- Millennials as leaders in the workplace
- Tips and best practices for leading Millennials into Leadership Roles

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**Creating Tomorrow's Leaders: the Expanding Roles of Millennials in the Workplace**

For nearly a decade, the leading edge of the Millennial generation – also referred to as Gen Y – has been entering the workplace in growing numbers. Their arrival has spawned books and articles which describe their generational characteristics, offer advice on how to retain and manage these younger workers, and provide guidance on ways to foster collaborative intergenerational teamwork.

Even, however, as employers focus on ways to attract and retain today's younger workers, they must also begin to prepare for the next imminent challenge – guiding Millennials into leadership roles. To successfully accomplish this will require capitalizing on the Millennials' generational strengths and helping to overcome perceived weaknesses.

**Introduction to Millennials**

It is important to begin any analysis of generational distinctions by noting that there can be variations among members of the same generation just as there are differences between the generations. This briefing analyzes some generalized characteristics of Millennials that can be helpful as we develop this generation into successful leaders.

Millennials are described as an ethnically diverse generation who are team players, optimistic, confident, trusting of authority, rule-followers, achievers in school, and generally achievement-oriented in everything they undertake. They are also the most affluent and well-educated generation in history and are estimated to be as numerous as – if not larger – than their parent's generation, the Baby Boomers (Howe and Strauss, 2006). Though this description from researchers Howe and Strauss was developed in 2006, it remains accurate today.

The Millennial generation offers diversity in a variety of ways. Their racial and ethnic profile is far more diverse than previous generations. In addition, there are more students today from single-parent homes, blended families, and families with same sex parents than ever before. This generation is also seen as having far more egalitarian views about the roles of women than did their predecessor generations (Broido, 2004).

Most significantly, Millennials are the first generation in history to have been immersed in technology throughout their lives, which will have a significant impact on the way they will communicate as leaders. Raised as "digital natives", Millennials are constantly connected. But a challenge related to the opportunities that technology provides is the need for everyone to be "digitally literate" and to keep abreast of constantly changing technologies (PalFREY and GasseT, 2008).

This early and constant exposure to technology has resulted in certain behavioral characteristics. For example, technology has enabled increased availability and

- Designed for executive –level audience
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- Features leading practices from our corporate partners
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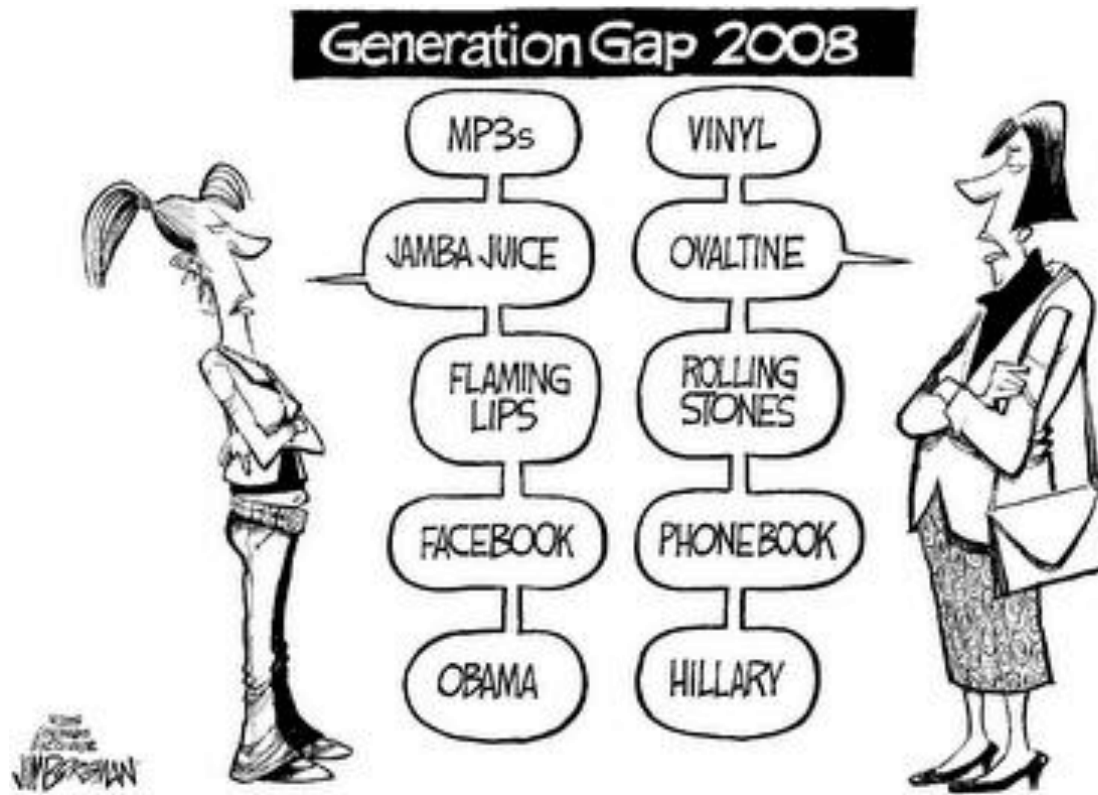
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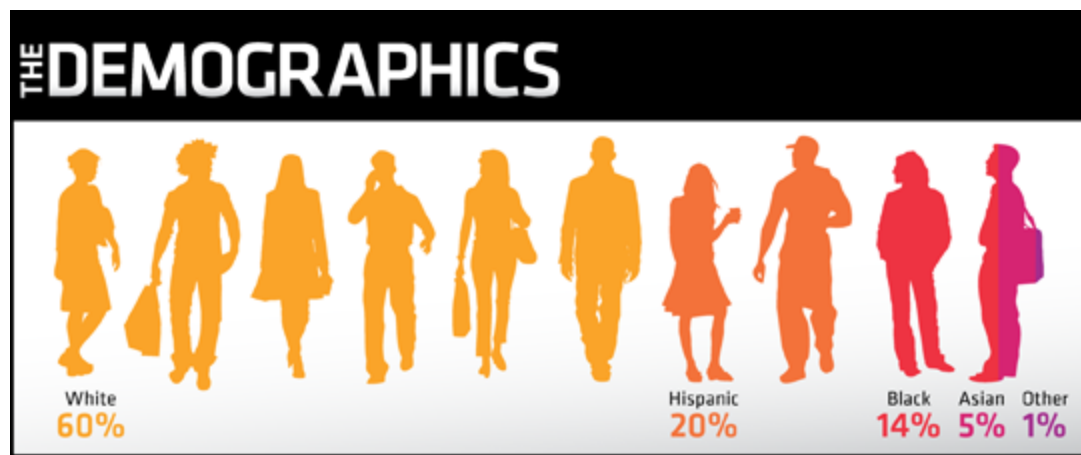


# Cautionary Notes in Viewing Through the Generational Prism



# General Characteristics of Millennials

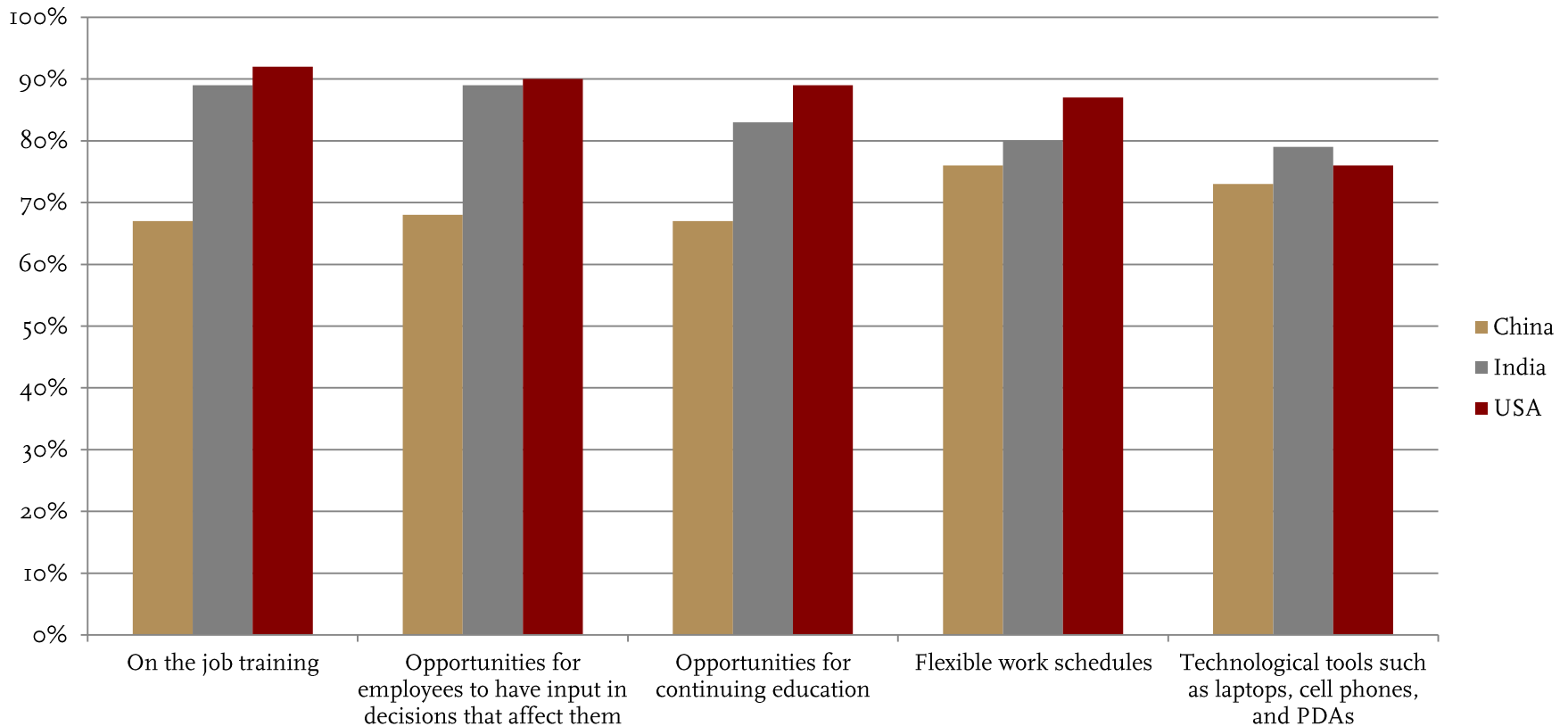
- Diverse – Ethnically, Racially, Family Structures
- Achievement-Oriented
- Trusting of Authority
- Well-Educated
- Digital Natives
- Expect Flexibility
- Delayed Adulthood



Source: Pew Research Center, 2009

# Millennials' Desires at Work

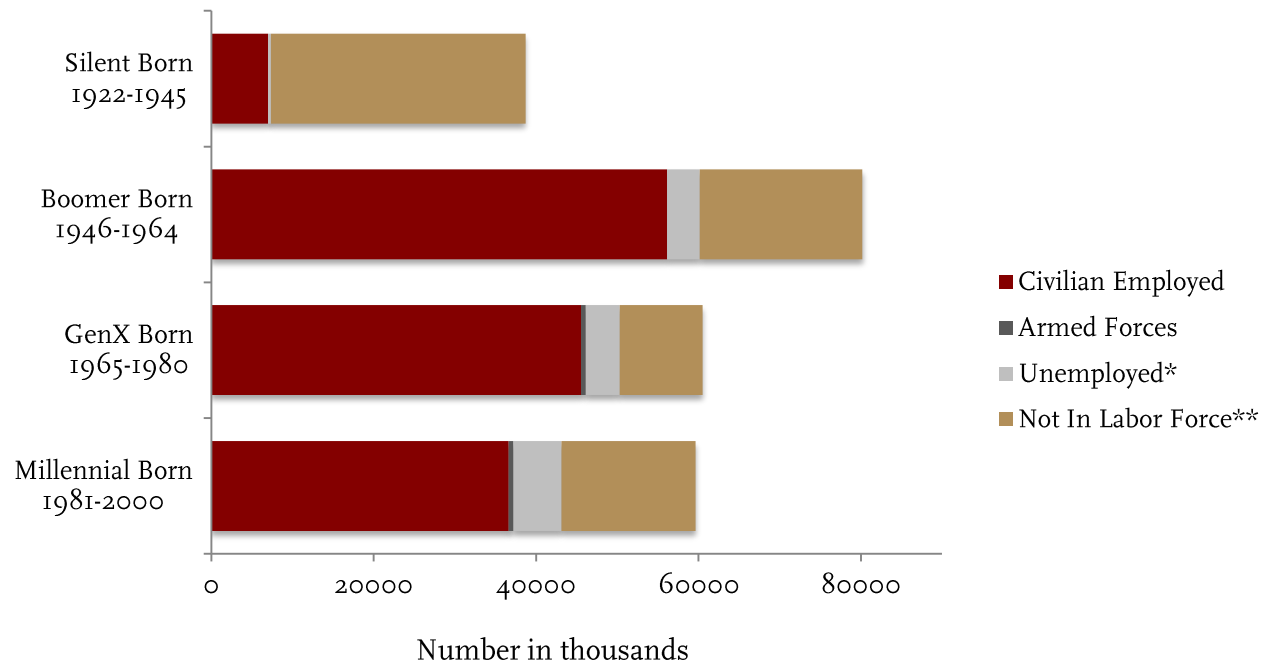
Percent of Millennials who strongly/somewhat agree that an employer should provide:



Source: Smith, 2010

# The Multigenerational Workforce

## Labor Force Status by Generation, 2009-2010



\* Percent of the population that is unemployed

\*\* Percent of the population that does not work and is not looking for work

Sources: Pew Research Center, 2009; US Bureau of Labor Statistics

# Millennials & Work-Life Integration

*“Coming of age in an era of more fluid marriages, less stable work careers, and profound shifts in mothers’ ties to the workplace shaped the experiences of a new generation”*

*Source: Gerson, 2009*



# The New Dad

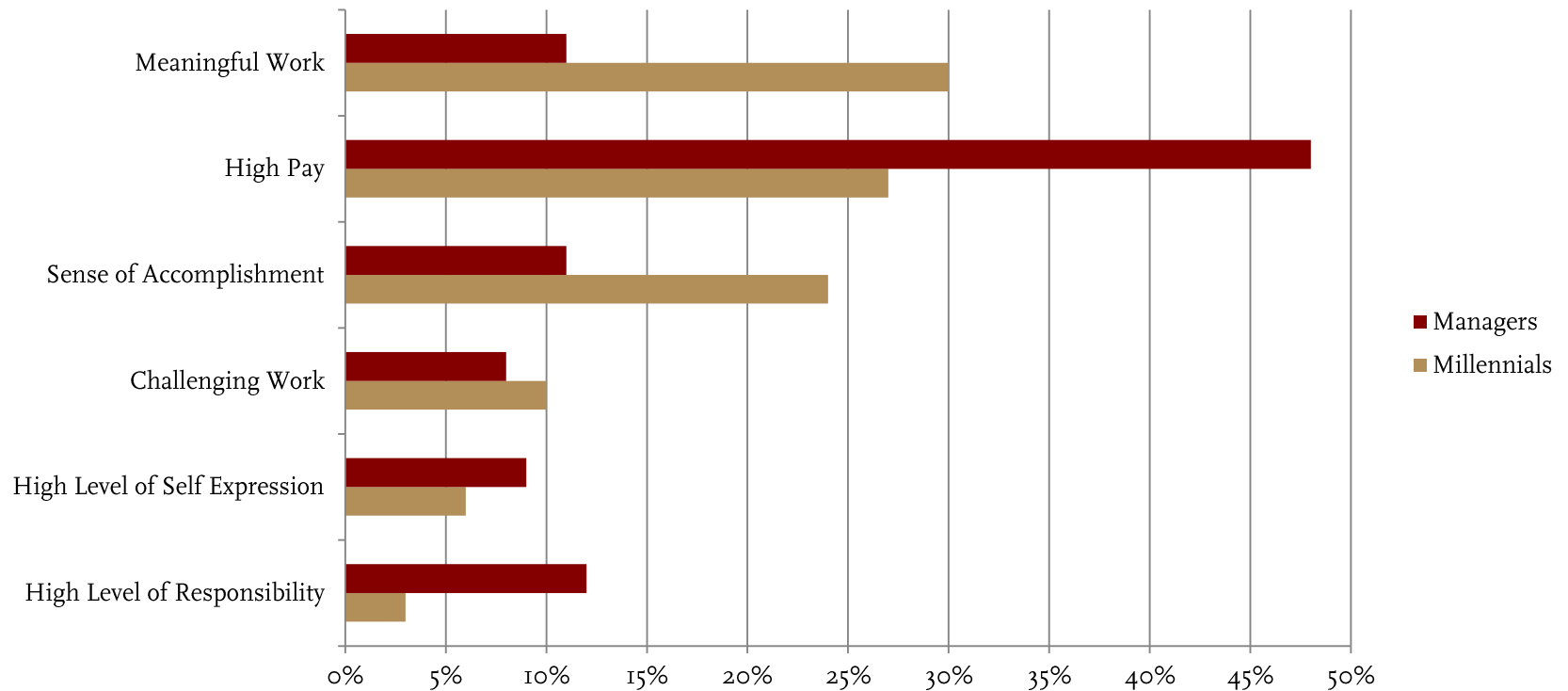
*Even as fathers aspire to be equal caregivers at home, there is a gap in the actual achievement of that aspiration*

*Source: Harrington, Van Deusen & Humberd, 2011*



# Managers and Millennials

Managers' and Millennials' view of the most important factor that indicates career success to Millennials



Source: Levit & Licina, 2011

# 8 Characteristics of the Millennials as Future Leaders

1. Active Attention
2. Transparency
3. Relevancy for Others
4. Relevancy for Oneself

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# 8 Characteristics of the Millennials as Future Leaders



5. Passion
6. Accountable Leadership
7. Autonomy Through Flexibility
8. Self-Care as a Reflection of Organizational Health

# Tips for Developing Millennials into Leadership Roles

Initiatives to foster mutual support and understanding between Millennials and their managers can be advanced through training:

1. Training on *intergenerational dynamics*

- Offers concrete strategies to build a better sense of community within teams

2. *Soft-skills training* for Millennial hires that helps them to:

- Assimilate into a new workplace culture
- Work with team members
- Receive and process feedback
- Approach a supervisor
- Combat misperceptions about Millennials

(Levit & Lecina, 2011)



# Tips for Creating a Thriving Workplace Where Millennials can Learn to Lead

1. Communication and Transparency
  - Open and honest communication
  - Two-way feedback
2. Management Style
  - Be intentional about leadership development
  - Two-way mentorship programs
3. Appreciation of Diversity
  - Embrace differences in how tasks get done
  - Foster intergenerational collaboration and learning



# Conclusion

- There is a clear **workplace imperative** for business organizations to support Millennials in their growth and development as future leaders
- **Hallmarks** of best practices for Millennials include **career development, social interactions, volunteerism, and technology**
- Encourage your own internal look at ways to support Millennials on their path to **future leadership**

# Best Practice: Northrop Grumman

*ConnectING* is a Northrop Grumman program that provides non-traditional avenues to help develop and engage new employees. The program is operated “by employees, for employees,” and aimed at retaining recently hired and highly skilled engineers. Volunteer teams organize social networking, community outreach, and professional development activities across 26 geographic regions.

# Best Practice: Sodexo

- Sodexo's *i-Gen* employee network group offers social media training, networking with colleagues about intergenerational workforce challenges and successes, an online *Generations in the Workplace* training, and intergenerational mentoring roundtables.
- The *Emerging Leaders* program helps employees develop strategic leadership skills.

## **Best Practice: The Hartford**

The Hartford implemented a “**social media reverse mentoring**” initiative with a dual agenda of helping senior management better understand the uses of all types of social media and to provide high potential Millennial employees with professional development opportunities.

# Questions and Discussion

Please share your thoughts and ideas regarding how to develop the next generation of leaders.

# Managing a Multi-generational Workforce Workshop

- The Boston College Center for Work & Family has developed the *Managing a Multi-generational Workforce Workshop*. These workshops will stimulate innovative ways of thinking, enabling your employees to develop effective strategies that can ensure successful inter-generational teamwork and promote continued institutional excellence.
- Please contact Jennifer Fraone for additional information at [jennifer.fraone@bc.edu](mailto:jennifer.fraone@bc.edu) or (617) 552-2862

# Thank You!



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