



# The Well-Practiced Manager

Professional Development  
Resource for  
Boston College Managers  
and Supervisors

Fall 2015

## From the Director:

### Dear Colleagues,

The year is off to a great start and we are looking forward to the coming months with many programs to support your work.

In this newsletter, we're talking about Millennials, the younger generation that is the most rapidly growing portion of our workforce. At Boston College, there are 517 millennials according to our latest count, representing approximately 15 percent of our staff.

With the availability of the digital tools that have shaped this generation, it has been studied and dissected more so than any other. As a group, they certainly have distinct characteristics that set them apart. As such, we should consider how our traditional workplace practices foster their best work or hinder their efforts.

This should not be about simply catering to or placating a newer generation. Rather, it's an opportunity to evaluate what changes we might make that would be beneficial to all. It's also important to keep in mind that the studies reveal generalities and are indicative of the population as a whole. They do not define individuals. We need to avoid the trap of making assumptions about co-workers because of their age and peers.

We hope you find this newsletter useful in launching and continuing the discussion around how we can foster a supportive, effective and efficient workplace.

Sincerely,

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## The Rise of the Millennials: A New Generation Brings a New Perspective to the Workplace

We reached a significant tipping point in America this year. **Millennials** have become the largest generation of Americans in the workforce. They have outnumbered the Baby Boomers for two years and now have surpassed the Gen Xers.

This younger cohort of workers has brought with them new attitudes and expectations that baffle their older counterparts. They approach the working world differently, which doesn't always mix well with the traditional ways of doing things. Common descriptions include self-absorbed and spoiled. There is a sense that their expectations are out of line with reality, which can breed resentment. And yet, this group has also been praised for its innovation and adaptability in a rapidly changing tech-driven world.

### Born Into a DIGITAL AGE

Every generation is collectively influenced by the character of their parents combined with world events. This group, a collection of nearly 80 million people age 18 to 34, were born into a rapidly changing world that fostered new attitudes and expectations.

Their parents were more involved with their activities and decisions, more likely to be their chauffeurs and generous with praise. Children were rewarded for participation more than individual achievement. They grew up in the shadow of the Great Recession and the devastation of September 11. They've seen massive corporations fail and watched the erosion of job security. They've also grown up with technology that has shaped their world view as well as how they interact.

As a result of these combined factors, they don't do things quite like their parents and grandparents do.

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## 2 What do the generations think of themselves?

The Pew Research Foundation asked each generation to rate their peers. The younger generations are far more likely to use negative descriptions. Researchers said this may be due to age and that could change as they mature.

### Would you describe your generation as:

#### Responsible?

- Millennials: 24%
- Gen X: 43%
- Baby Boomers: 66%
- Silent Generation: 78%

#### Hardworking?

- Millennials: 15%
- Gen X: 27%
- Baby Boomers: 45%
- Silent Generation: 61%

#### Willing to Sacrifice?

- Millennials: 15%
- Gen X: 27%
- Baby Boomers: 45%
- Silent Generation: 61%

#### Entrepreneurial?

- Millennials: 35%
- Gen X: 33%
- Baby Boomers: 35%
- Silent Generation: 32%

#### Idealistic?

- Millennials: 39%
- Gen X: 28%
- Baby Boomers: 31%
- Silent Generation: 26%

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## Expectations of a New Generation

The Millennials are more likely to live at home longer than any previous generation. About one-third still live with their parents. The last time anything like that happened was during the Great Depression, when one-quarter of that age group stayed with their folks.

Only half of the Millennials recently polled by Bloomberg News expect to have a higher standard of living than their parents. The last census showed that their average net worth is \$2,000 lower than their parents at the same age. They are overall more educated, but have larger student loans than previous generations and lower hopes of homeownership.

Half of this generation describe themselves as political independents and 29 percent are not affiliated with any religion. Despite reporting less attachment to traditional political and religious institutions, they are connected to large personalized networks through social and digital media.

They also have different priorities for work. Pay is important, but less so than with older generations. They place a greater value on flexibility, being a part of something important and having a sense of accomplishment. They want responsibility and autonomy and yet want collaboration and team work.



## Working with the Millennials

- Managing a generation with a vastly different approach to work and life creates additional challenges. Managers need to maintain the standards and high expectations of the workplace and yet find ways to take advantage of the strengths of these younger workers.

- This can be done by recognizing the strengths and benefits younger workers can offer with their new perspective and applying the good practices that have already been developed to support workers.

- Set clear expectations:** Be specific about job requirements and responsibilities.

- Provide feedback:** Let staff know what is working and what needs improvement.

- Keep open lines of communication:** Talk with individuals about their expectations and goals and offer guidance on how to reach them.

- Emphasize mission:** Talk with staff about how the department and their work fit into the bigger picture of institution.

- Be inclusive:** Provide opportunities for staff members of all levels to offer input and insights.

- Be flexible when possible:** Some people work better early in the morning, others would rather work later. Consider whether a varied schedule is possible as long as the work gets done.

- Encourage autonomy:** Once you've defined what needs to be done, give staff the room to come up with solutions.

## What's in a Generation?

The Silent Generation came of age after World War II. The Baby Boomers represent a surge in population and emerged during a time of relative economic abundance. Gen X grew up with emerging technology and economic uncertainty. The Gen X were the first graduates of a new century. Where do you fit?

The Millennial Generation	Generation X	The Baby Boomer Generation	The Silent Generation	The Greatest Generation
<i>Born:</i> 1981 to 1997	<i>Born:</i> 1965 to 1980	<i>Born:</i> 1946 to 1964	<i>Born:</i> 1928 to 1945	<i>Born:</i> before 1928
<i>Age in 2015:</i> 18 to 34	<i>Age in 2015:</i> 35 to 50	<i>Age in 2015:</i> 51 to 69	<i>Age in 2015:</i> 70 to 87	<i>Age in 2015:</i> 88 to 100

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