

## **Working With the Millennials – Why all the fuss? (part 1 of 3)**

I was recently was working with a group of Fortune 500 Human Resource professionals and during a break I curiously asked them, "Tell me, what are you seeing in your workplace that is driving you nuts?" Without hesitation, or even looking at one another, in unison they answered, "The new workforce, our new recruits - they sure are different!" Their answer didn't surprise me – talk about the "Talent War" and emerging workforces has been commonplace in business publications since entering the new millennium. What did surprise me, however, was their apparent hopelessness in dealing with the challenges of this new workforce – and no talk of seizing the opportunities. What about you? R U ready for the Millennials?

Today's workforce is changing and it is as diverse as it has ever been. Four distinct generations are working side by side and their approach to work is as different as the experiences that made them who they are today.

### **The Greatest Generation**

Fighting two world wars and surviving the depression built the "greatest generation that ever lived" called the "Traditionalists". These workers marveled at the efficiencies created by the wide spread adoption of the telephone and automobile. They went to work carrying a metal lunch box as they worked toward their career goal of a gold watch commemorating their legacy service to one company.

### **The Baby Boomers**

The Traditionalists raised the "Baby Boomer" generation; born between 1946 and 1964 they watched the cold war develop on their black and white TVs at home and carried leather brief cases to their jobs. During their peak career years their goal was to climb the corporate ladder and experience a standard of living far beyond their parent's wildest dreams (do you remember the "Yuppies"?).

### **Gen X**

The approximately 76 million Baby Boomers gave way to 50 million members of "Generation X" who were born between 1965 and 1980. As the cold war thawed, Gen X was turning up the heat as they entered the workforce, adapting

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and leveraging technology under their arm (the laptop computer) and in their pocket (the cell phone). Their career ambitions were catching the next IPO or developing a business without walls that could tap into the vast online marketplace that was now only a click away.

### **The Millennials**

Today's "twenty somethings" were born between 1981 and 1999 and are called the Millennials (and sometimes Gen Y) because they are the first generation growing up, being educated and working in the new millennium. Simultaneously they listen to their favorite tunes, instant message a friend and surf the information highway from hand held devices that have more computing power than most Fortune 500 companies had just 25 years ago. And, as anyone who has worked with Millennials can attest to, the differences don't stop with technology.

To be fair, every generation has looked at the younger generation, scratched their heads and said, "Where did they come from?" Fortunately, predictions of the end of the world were greatly exaggerated by those wagging their fingers at Elvis' hips, the misguided Volkswagon bus driving Hippies and the "I wish they would do something productive for society instead of just playing with their computer games" generation of Steve Jobs and Bill Gates. However, this Millennial generation, like the generations before it, are different and today's workplace is a mosaic of all four – Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers and Millennials – all working together. Each with different expectations, goals, methods, communication, styles, attitudes... - welcome to the workplace of 2008!

In the next installment of "Working With the Millennials" we will discuss "The Good and the Different" of what the Millennials bring to the workplace – you might be pleasantly surprised!

To compare and contrast these four generations you can view "Workforce through the Ages – A Timeline Perspective" by following this link to our website: <http://www.tomhorvath.com/resources/TomHorvath.com-WorkforceTimeline.pdf>

"Working With the Millennials" is presented as a keynote speech or a comprehensive Executive Education training class – contact us to determine which would best meet your learning needs.

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