Chapter 67
Technology, Learning Styles, Values, and Work Ethics of Millennials

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ABSTRACT

The widespread availability of the internet and digital technology tools since the 1980s has created a "tech-savvy generation" of people called the Millennials, who quickly adopt the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) as soon as they are available. These new ICTs are changing the learning styles, values, and work ethics of Millennials who represent the latest generational cohort to join the colleges, universities, and the workplace. Born between 1981 and 1997, the Millennials in US. constitute about 30-35% of the population and represent the majority of the workforce. In USA, Millennials have now surpassed the Baby Boomers (ages 52 to 70 years in 2016) and constitute the nation's largest generation segment. The universities have to update their teaching styles and student services and the corporations have to make changes to organizational practices to resonate with the Millennial generation. This chapter explores the technology, learning styles, values, and work ethic of Millennials.

INTRODUCTION

Millennials represent people who were born between 1981 and 1997. In 2017, they are 20 to 36 years old. The Millennials are also called "Y" generation, digital natives, "net generation" or "me generation". At present, the Millennials are university students and are entering the work force. The evolving technology has shaped their learning styles, values and work ethics. This chapter summarizes the influence of technology on learning styles, values and work ethics of Millennials. Implications of the different learning styles of the Millennials for the instructors' teaching style, leadership style of university administrators and student services are discussed. The work ethics of Millennials are explored and implications for managerial and mentoring practices are discussed.

BACKGROUND

The entire adult population can be viewed as four generational cohorts – Silent (1928-1945), Baby Boomer (1946-1964), X (1965-1980), Y (1981-1997). The numbers in the parenthesis represent the range of birth years. There are slight variations in the birth years among different researchers (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Each generation has different values and viewpoints, which were shaped by their social, economic and political environment when they were growing up and their current level of responsibility. Different generational cohorts have different perceptions of each other and have different expectations. These perceptions are sometimes based on positive and negative stereotypes reported in the popular press. These views are often not subjected to objective empirical scrutiny and there are variations within a generation (Macky et al., 2008). This generation gap can be a source of conflict and misunderstanding at the work place (Meriac et al., 2010).

TECHNOLOGY, NARRATIVE ABOUT MILLENNIALS, AND THEIR VALUES

Some of the major influences in a person's development include peers, parents, popular culture, major political and social events. The differences in the social context and different shared life experiences of different generations lead to different beliefs, values and attitude towards work. The conventional view of the Millennials as narcissistic, self-absorbed, distrustful, anxious, cynical and lonely in the current competitive job-market may not be correct. There is no empirical evidence that the Millennials have a bad attitude. The Boomers' perception of Millennials may reflect the old guard's bias to new generations (Kowske, Rasch and Wiley, 2010). It may be that Millennials are adapting to the changing world that other generations are trying to resist (Ellin, 2014).

A lot of narratives about Millennials come from other generational cohorts and may reflect the biases of that generation (Twenge, 2009). The parenting styles, political events, social and cultural trends, technology and economic events during the time a generation is growing up contribute to the evolution of the psychosocial characteristics of a generation (Strauss and Howe, 1997; Howe and Strauss, 2000). The differences in the social context and different shared life experiences of different generations lead to different beliefs, values, expectations, and attitude towards education and work. The popular press has both positive and negative stereotypes about Millennials, Table 1.

Millennials use texting more than e-mail as a regular mode of communication. They are comfortable with a wide variety of media including blogs, reviews and social networks to openly express their interests and feelings (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010). The Millennials watch less television and are not unduly influenced by the mainstream media. They are much more resistant to advertisements than previous generations (Ciminillo, 2005). Millennials are constantly adapting to the new forms of social media. The e-mail and Facebook may have become the grandpa's social media as the Millennials switch to Instagram. Millennials multitask using different technologies. Their multi-tasking behavior includes communicating with many people while playing Xbox (Putre, 2013; PwC, 2013). They are more connected digitally but may be socially isolated.

In today's hypermodern times, assembling sociality has become more challenging (Warde, 1999). The Millennials use social media to coordinate, stack or shift their social interactions to coordinate with

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