

Oh my gosh! She's a Millennial!

[Leadership Advance Online](#)- Issue VI Winter 2006

by Richard Gribling

While sitting in the parking lot of the local high school waiting on my fifteen-year-old daughter to finish basketball practice, I'm preoccupied with my assignment to write a website article on the Millennial generation. "Who are these Millennials?" I ask myself. Suddenly, my deep thoughts are interrupted when my daughter leans into my line of view and says, "Hey Dad, open the trunk, I've been standing here for hours!" She jumps into the car seat next to me and immediately begins a non-stop random dialogue. "Dad, oh my gosh, I really did well in basketball practice and I think I impressed Coach Dale on my jump shot. Oh yea, I got a 98 percent on my biology test but got two points off for something the teacher barely mentioned during the review session. Do you think that's fair? Oh my gosh, I really nailed my audition for the school musical. I think the fact that I take guitar and piano lessons helps in a musical, don't you think? Dad, oh my gosh, Libby and I are singing together at the student assembly. Everyone says we harmonize well. She's so cool." Exhaling briefly, she goes on. "Can I use the home computer tonight? I've got tons of homework and have to do some research on my botany project. And, oh my gosh, *Lost* comes on TV tonight." Then it hit me, my daughter is a Millennial!

The challenge for all future managers and employers, who will hire Millennials, like my daughter, is being able to harness the tremendous energy and excitement that Millennials bring to the marketplace. In her article *Managing Millennials*, Susan Heathfield offers these observations.

The Millennials joining your workforce now are employees born between 1980 and 2000....Unlike the Gen-Xers and the Boomers, the Millennials have developed work characteristics and tendencies from doting parents, structured lives, and contact with diverse people. Millennials are used to working in teams and want to make friends with people at work. They expect high standards from both themselves and their coworkers and see nothing wrong with multi-tasking both on and off the job (<http://humanresources.about.com>).

These Millennials offer unlimited potential for employers, but have certain expectations in the workplace: (1) harmony and structure, (2) up-to-date technology and (3) respect. Millennials thrive in a work environment that is harmonious. They have grown up in a globally connected world. They feel comfortable working in a "racially and ethnically mixed workforce" (www.educasuereview.com). But the harmony at work is directly connected to their family and leisure time as well. "Millennial workers will demand that employers adjust to the needs of workers who wish to build careers and families at the same time and to lead lower-stress lives than their parents" (www.millennialsrising.com). Additionally, these world beaters expect a scheduled work environment with proper supervision. This generation has grown up with well-managed time by their parents. "They were signed up for soccer camp, karate club, and ballet lessons-and their parents were called into service, shuttling them from one activity to the next" (www.generationsatwork.com).

This generation is also technologically gifted. Millennials have grown up with computers, cell phones and DVD's. They enjoy this technology but view these electronic marvels as tools. Further, they expect these tools to be present in any job they would want to pursue. They are capable of doing multiple tasks with ease.

Millennial employees are multi-taskers on a scale never seen before. Multiple tasks don't faze them. Talk on the phone while doing email and answering multiple instant messages – yes! This is a way of life. In fact, without many different tasks and goals to pursue within the week, the Millennials will likely experience boredom (<http://humanresources.about.com>).

Finally, Millennials are patriotic, admire heroism and they respect their parents. The terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 changed the way these young people view their country.

Millennials watched the reemergence of the American hero. Policemen, firemen, firefighters, and mayors were pictured on the front page of the newspaper and featured on TV....The Millennials were raised by active involved parents who often interceded on their behalf....Millennials like their parents. In a Generation 2001 Lou Harris survey, Mom and Dad were the most often named 'most admired' by this generation (www.generationsatwork.com).

Although this generation is both optimistic and hard-working, they still look to the employer for guidance and direction.

All Millennials have one thing in common: They are new to the professional workplace. Therefore, they are definitely in need of mentoring and they respond well to personal attention. Provide lots of challenges but also provide the structure to back it up. This means breaking down goals into steps, as well as offering any necessary resources and information they'll need to meet the challenge (www.abanet.org).

As I pulled into the driveway, I could tell my Millennial daughter was sorting out her priorities and looking to me to validate her concerns about a host of things spinning around in her head. I smiled and reassured her. As she got out of the car, she tuned, smiled and said, "thanks for listening. I love you Dad. Oh my gosh, it's almost time for *Lost!*"

About the Author

Richard Gribling serves as a colonel in the U.S. Army, Department of Military Strategy, Planning and Operations. He is currently pursuing his Doctor of Strategic Leadership degree from Regent University's School of Leadership Studies.