



## Building an Engaged Workforce for Millennial-Human Professionals

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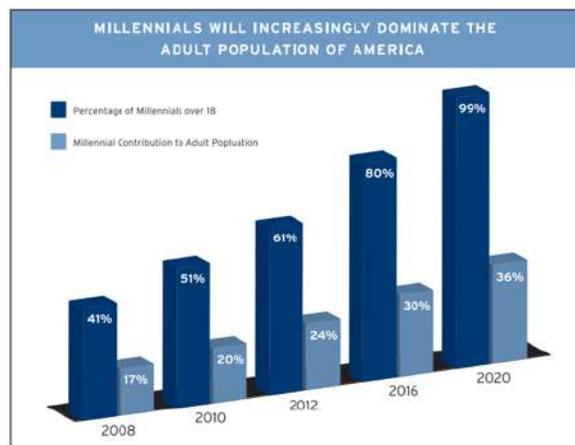
## Executive Summary

**M**illennials are professionals just like the rest of us, but have grown up amidst twenty-first century technology that has changed our everyday lives and how we work. As a result, a fundamental divide has grown between this group and the generations that came before them. This paper will take a closer look at the state of the current workforce and the friction which exists between generations. It will then debunk four common myths about millennials, highlight factors contributing to the generational issues, and reveal concrete solutions for employers and millennials to bridge the divide. Inspiring Capital believes we can use these strategies to create a more engaged workforce, not just for millennials, but all human professionals.



## Introduction

One in three U.S. adults will be a Millennial by 2020, and Millennials will comprise 75% of the American workforce by 2025.<sup>1</sup> Born from 1980 to 1996, this generation of approximately 73 million individuals<sup>2</sup> is incredibly diverse in and of itself, and has a notably different approach to work and life than previous generations.



Graph from U.S. Census Bureau<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Morley Winograd and Dr. Michael Hais, “How Millennials Could Upend Wall Street and Corporate America”, May 2014, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Brookings\\_Winogradfinal.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Brookings_Winogradfinal.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Amy Adkins, “Millennials: The Job-Hopping Generation”, May 12, 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/191459/millennials-job-hopping-generation.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Morley Winograd and Dr. Michael Hais, “How Millennials Could Upend Wall Street and Corporate America”, May 2014, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Brookings\\_Winogradfinal.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Brookings_Winogradfinal.pdf)

Stark differences between the generations have caused friction, and resulted in negative effects on employee engagement and productivity. However, there is no stopping the Millennials from charging full speed ahead to dominate and lead the workforce in the coming years. While some companies may be fearful of this new reality, embracing the next generation is the only way to succeed. The primary challenge is to re-imagine work as a more flexible, transparent, and meaningful endeavor, designed to engage and realize the full potential of each individual employee; no matter their age or generation.

In this paper, we will use insights gathered from Millennial professionals and their workplace leaders to look at the issue in more depth; diving into what the problem entails, the causes, and the impact it has on U.S. companies. Then, we'll share action steps on how to best engage and develop *humans* of diverse ages and identities in a rapidly evolving twenty-first century workforce.

Our recommendations are based on findings from academic research, thousands of hours facilitating learning and development programs, and topical focus group conversations (composed of Millennials and their employers) from diverse backgrounds and industries.

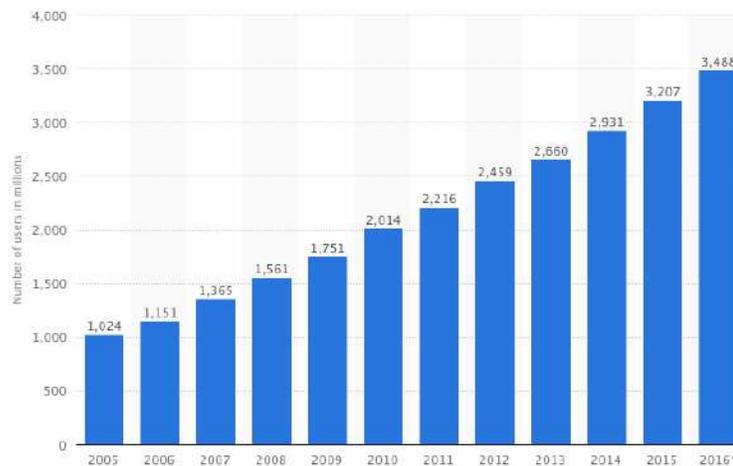
First, let's look into the current relationship between Millennials and older generations.



## The Friction Between Generations

**W**hile conflicts at work between people who have grown up during different time periods is not a new phenomenon, today's generational gaps are far wider due to advancements in technology.

**Number of internet users worldwide from 2005 to 2016**



Graph from Statista<sup>4</sup>

The rate of change and level of uncertainty that we're all living through is unprecedented. It is permeating all areas of life from technology and economics, to demographics and social politics. This

<sup>4</sup> Statista, "Number of internet users worldwide from 2005 to 2016 (in millions)", 2017, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/273018/number-of-internet-users-worldwide/>

ever-changing, uncertain context influences the workplace in many ways, and no working professional is immune.

However, Millennials are 'native' to these changes – they've never known any other reality and so their behavior, outlook, and life expectations reflect the current, changing context. Older professionals, on the other hand, came of age with a different and more stable set of best practices, expectations, and guidelines for success. Now the game has changed and their previous approach may no longer be effective (or even feasible).

From this view, it's not hard to understand why there would be tension between young professionals born in today's context and those who have 'played the game' to earn financial security and professional accomplishments. The latter group no longer have all of the technological skills, global literacy, or topical knowledge to continue their ascent, and also may not have the financial resources to retire as planned. This is both threatening and unsettling. It can cause a defensiveness that further isolates leaders from their new talent pipeline.

Millennials have inadvertently gained a bad reputation as they bring this new set of values, beliefs, skills, and ambitions to the table which are often at odds with the prior generations. Let's take a closer look at some of the common myths about them and evaluate if they are true.



## Understanding Millennials; Separating Fact from Fiction

**H**ere we'll highlight four common beliefs about Millennials which our work has proven to be myths.

### Myth #1: Millennials are 'flaky' job-hoppers and would rather work freelance than full-time.

**Truth:** The common assumption made about this younger generation is that they hop from job to job every year with no loyalty or thought of the consequences. However, a recent Deloitte survey<sup>5</sup> found that, in contrast, a growing number of Millennials want to stay at their current company for at least five years. Furthermore, while flexibility in how they work is very important, nearly two-thirds said they prefer full-time employment over part-time or consulting work.

The real challenge seems to be in finding a job that is engaging. A 2016 report by Gallup<sup>6</sup> found Millennials to be the least engaged generation at work, with only 29% reportedly engaged in their work, 55% not engaged, and 16% actively disengaged.

It's not that Millennials want to hop from one job to the next, but if they aren't engaged by their current job, they are open to offers which may end up being more fulfilling. Gallup also reported that Millennials changed jobs three times more often than non-millennials in the last year, 50% wanted to change jobs, and 60% were open to new opportunities.

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<sup>5</sup> Deloitte, "The Deloitte Millennial Survey 2017", <http://www.deloitte.com/MillennialSurvey>

<sup>6</sup> Millennials: The Job-Hopping Generation, May 12, 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/191459/millennials-job-hopping-generation.aspx>

In conclusion, Millennials are less reluctant to leave their current position in search of a job that provides a feeling of purpose and satisfaction. That being said, when possible, they prefer the security of a full-time, steady, and long-term job. In that light, both desires are reasonable and indeed, universal to all professionals.

## Myth #2: Millennials are carefree and whimsical

**Truth:** While often painted as a carefree or whimsical generation, Millennials suffer alarming rates of anxiety.<sup>7</sup>

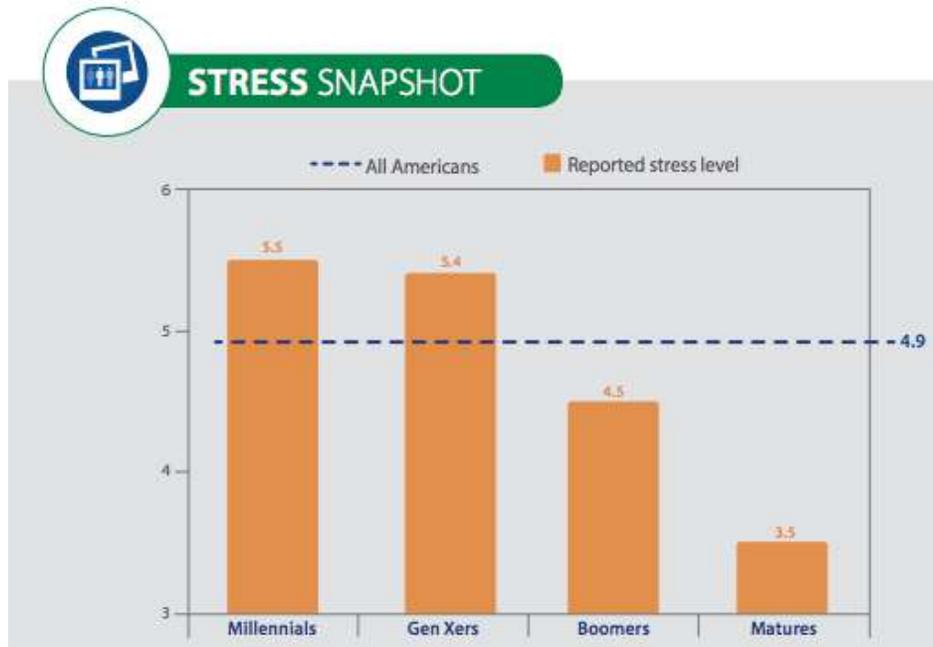


Chart from the APA<sup>8</sup>

When looking at the causes of this anxiety, money and work rank as the top two most significant factors.<sup>9</sup> These concerns further explain why Millennials prefer a steady and secure job.

Several other root causes can be ascribed to these growing mental health challenges, such as the overwhelming stress of social media, student debt, and too many career choices, in combination with an aggressive timeline for choosing their life path at increasingly earlier ages.

<sup>7</sup> Tom Porter, "Anxiety, Stress and Depression at All-Time High Among Americans: Study," *Newsweek*, April 18, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/recession-mental-health-depression-anxiety-585695>

<sup>8</sup> American Psychological Association, "Stress in America: Paying With Our Health". February 4, 2015, <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2014/stress-report.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> American Psychological Association, "Stress in America: Paying With Our Health" February 4, 2015, <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2014/stress-report.pdf>



### **Social Media**

Selective and curated profiles create the illusion that everyone you know – and those whom advertisers want you to know – are living a picture-perfect life. These idealized images of personal, professional, and emotional success lead to unrealistic expectations, internal doubt, and the “fear of missing out” (FOMO).

### **Student Debt and Pressure to Choose a Major**

In American culture, the road to college is widely considered the only road to success. Teenagers (with varying degrees of maturity and experience) are pressured into attending college directly after high school. Furthermore they are encouraged to choose a major incredibly early-on. This choice often occurs without the needed work experience or understanding of the careers that could follow from a particular degree or course of study.

Four or six years later, they emerge with a degree in a field they’ve learned they don’t actually want to work in. However, because of the large amount of student loan debt they’ve accumulated, they feel obligated to stay in that field.<sup>10</sup> This is a precarious and unsettling place to find oneself.

### **Too Many Career Path Options**

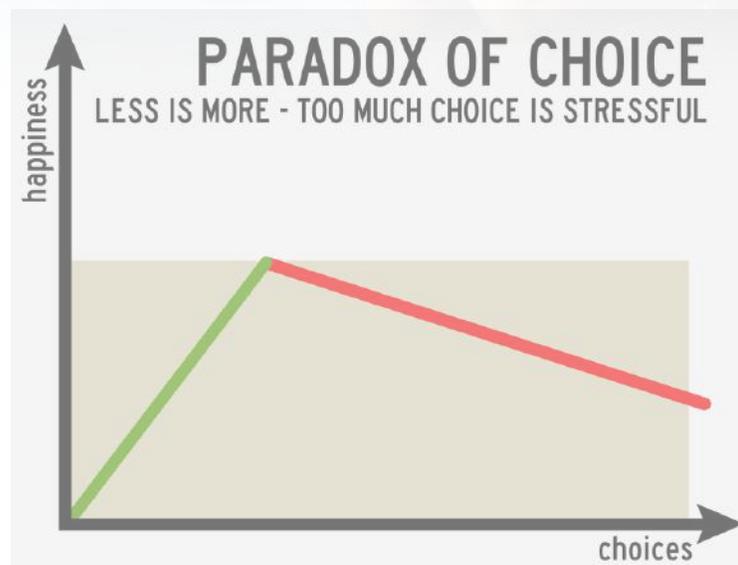
Lastly, there are unrealistic expectations put on young people by both parents and society. In a world with so many opportunities and possibilities, Millennials are taught that they can go out and be anything, even without a clear roadmap or the tools to achieve success.

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<sup>10</sup> Bill Burnett and Dave Evans, *Designing Your Life*, September 20, 2016, <http://designingyour.life/the-book/>



It's not surprising that many are facing the Barry Schwartz's *Paradox of Choice*; which basically means too many options results in the inability to make a decision.<sup>11</sup>



Graph by [Deluxe.com](http://Deluxe.com)<sup>12</sup>

These are just several of the potential causes contributing to anxiety in Millennials. They are not as carefree as many label them to be, but instead often experience challenges coping with their stress, uncertainty, and isolation.

<sup>11</sup> Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less*, 2004, <https://www.amazon.com/Paradox-Choice-Why-More-Less/dp/149151423X>

<sup>12</sup> Joe Swatek, *The Paradox of Choice*, November 24, 2014, <http://fi.deluxe.com/community-blog/performance-management/paradox-choice/>



### Myth #3: Millennials want different things from work than the previous generations.

**Truth:** Millennials are frequently discussed as a monolithic group with completely new, unrealistic, and entitled expectations from their work. They want raises and promotions every six months, complete flexibility as to when and where they work, autonomy, and involvement in strategic thinking for the entire company.

While Millennials may ask for things earlier, louder, or more often than previous generations, a study by the UNC Kenan-Flagler School of Business found that all three generations which are currently in the workforce actually want virtually the same things from employers.<sup>13</sup> These include:

- Challenging work
- Competitive compensation
- Opportunities for advancement
- Fair treatment
- Work-life balance

So why are they viewed as unrealistic in their expectations? It may be in the way they approach getting what they want out of their employers, which is based on different principles than the past generation. Let's take a closer look at some common governing principles of Millennials.

#### Immediate Gratification

Millennials have grown up with any fact, image, or object just a few clicks away. These technological advancements have enabled a faster pace of life and work that can lead Millennials to expect or hope

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<sup>13</sup> Marion White, "Rethinking Generation Gaps in the Workplace: Focus on Shared Values", 2011, <https://www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/executive-development/about/~media/C8FC09AEF03743BE9112418FEE286D0.ashx>

for a faster progression of their own careers. However, this can leave management feeling pressured to reward employees prematurely and Millennial employees disappointed when they do not understand their own path to success.

### **Flattening Hierarchies**

Millennials have also grown up in less hierarchical families, schools, and societies than earlier generations. In some extreme cases, ‘helicopter parents’ are seen to be at the service of their children, rather than authoritative elders to be respected. While this change can be credited with increased efficiency, innovation, and meritocratic promotion in the workplace, it can also ruffle feathers, offend, or upset the existing process of learning and earning progress. Millennials may lack the respect for seniority that past generations had.

### **Transparency**

In a hyper-surveilled, ‘ask me anything’ world, Millennials are more likely to ask questions that earlier generations might not have. Again, this can lead to creativity, innovation, and proactivity, but it can also look entitled at first glance. For example, one Millennial in our focus group saw asking for a promotion as simply a way to start a dialogue about their aspirations.

Participants universally agreed that they don’t expect to get a “yes” every time they ask for a raise or promotion. Nonetheless, if these requests aren’t properly framed they can seem unrealistic. Furthermore, if they are quickly dismissed, this can cause unnecessary strain on the budding manager/employee relationship.

In conclusion, this claim is simply untrue. In general, Millennials want the same things as previous generations, however, they do have different approaches to asking for them and high expectations for how their requests or questions will be received.

## **Myth #4: Millennials are naively idealistic and expect their companies to do the work of not-for-profits.**

**Truth:** The world is increasingly interconnected, and multinational corporations hold more financial, social, and political influence than ever before. With the visibility of war, terrorism, and political change across the globe, Millennials have come of age with a heightened awareness of income inequality, global hunger, and environmental and public health challenges.

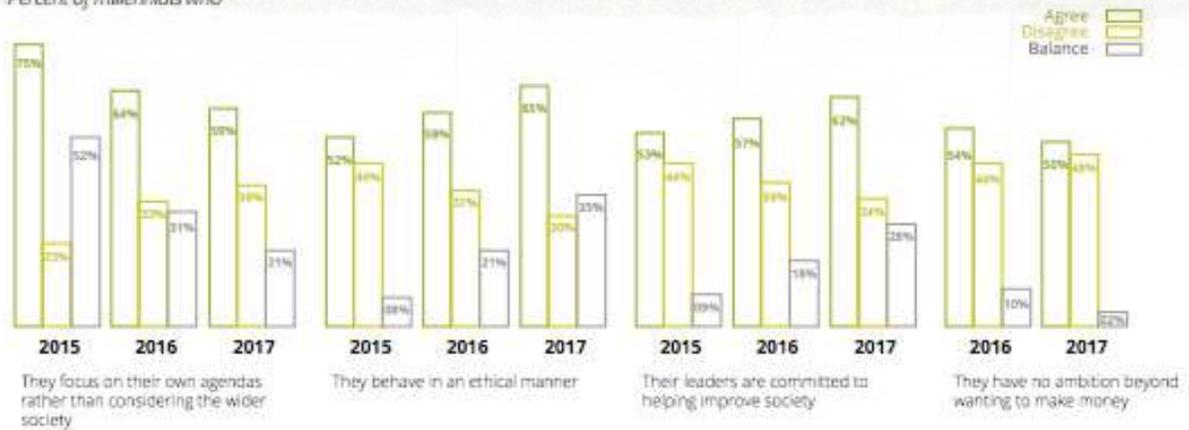
This may be why they rate their desire to have an impact through their work more highly than any generation before. They often care about the environmental and social impact of the products more than their elders; from the perspective of both worker and consumer. However, many doubt the genuine efforts of large companies to create real change.

The previously cited Deloitte survey found that Millennials believe most large, multinational companies only have social change initiatives in an effort to improve their reputations, rather than to do real good in our world, as can be seen in the chart below.



Figure 4. While millennials' view of business behavior continues to improve...

Percent of millennials who



Graph from Deloitte Survey

This perspective can be disappointing to those who feel they have the potential to make a real difference but lack the opportunity and outlet to do so.

In summary, Millennials do expect their employers to be more socially and environmentally-conscious. They recognize the distinction between corporate and not-for-profit actors, but believe that corporates should be doing more to support education, skills, and training, along with other issues, through not-for-profit partnerships.

Now that we have reconsidered the primary Millennial myths, let's look at a few of the factors contributing to workplace friction.



Figure 4. While millennials' view of business behavior continues to improve...  
Percent of millennials who

## Factors Contributing to the Workplace Divide

The following factors each play a role in perceived intergenerational tension in the workplace.

### Human Resistance to Change

We almost universally accept that change is difficult. Humans are wired to seek familiarity, and avoid or resist change.<sup>14</sup>

From an evolutionary perspective, this trait came in very handy, keeping us in the safety of our tribes and avoiding unfamiliar settings that could potentially cause our demise. The saying, “The devil you know is better than the one you don’t,” implies that even though we face ongoing challenges and routine problems, it’s better than facing the unknown.

This can be a factor for the older generation facing Millennials who bring a radically different approach to work. Gen X’ers and beyond know what has worked in the past and are skeptical of changing it up too much. They, and all of us, are hardwired to fear the unknown.

### A Lack of Management Skills

Another potential challenge with the effective integration and management of Millennials is the lack of well-trained, flexible leadership and supervision. Managers must lead the charge by identifying the best tactics from different generations and piecing them together effectively in order to guide their diverse team(s). There will be risk-taking involved, and managers won’t be able to make everyone

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<sup>14</sup> Chip Heath, Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard, February 16, 2010, <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/6763564-switch-how-to-change-things-when-change-is-hard>



happy all the time. However, if managers actively and exclusively avoid taking risks, it can hold back the business.

This risk aversion is particularly pronounced in middle management. Employees who have been promoted to middle management have earned status with superiors and become less willing to rock the boat.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, people often make it into their first years in management around the same time in their lives that they are starting families, investing in homes, and taking on other significant personal commitments. It can be difficult to manage these changing demands of two separate worlds that seem to be directly opposed.

Combined with these growing personal responsibilities, the responsibility of supervising, engaging, and developing other employees is particularly daunting if managers aren't adequately trained. Furthermore, they are expected to manage others amidst today's rapidly changing workforce, which lacks clear blueprints for the "right way" to achieve success and career growth. Individual professionals are encouraged to carve their own paths forward. This new reality makes it even more difficult for new managers to meet the divergent needs, desires, and personalities of their teams.

It is easy to see a situation where most managers care about their employees and want to do right by them, but feel pulled in too many different directions without a clear path to successful leadership. This lack of direction can make it nearly impossible for managers to set the right expectations with younger employees joining the company and looking to them for guidance and support.

## The Outdated Education System

Next, Millennials face additional challenges entering the workplace from the American school system and prevailing parental strategies. The current school system is a relic of the Industrial

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<sup>15</sup> Adam Grant, *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World*, February 6, 2016, <https://www.amazon.com.mx/Originals-How-Non-Conformists-Move-World/dp/0525429565>

Revolution.<sup>16/17</sup> As exemplified by the bells used to move students from class to class at prescribed times, schools encourage conformity and memorization. The current changes and challenges in the workplace require innovation and creativity like never before, and many new employees are greeted with a rude awakening when they transition from school to work and feel ill-equipped for this dynamic new environment in which they find themselves.

While children are generally born as creative, curious, risk-taking beings, the 12+ years of schooling to condition these tendencies out of students is (unfortunately) incredibly successful. Classes and grades come with a clear outline for success, and there is very little room for ambiguity. Students receive good grades at the determination of one parental figure, provided they work hard to meet the expectations set before them. The big picture and intricacies of company performance are not taught up front, which can lead to frustration and attrition among Millennials.

## **Economic Uncertainty**

Lastly, while the focus for previous generations may have been long-term security and a pension, the economic crises in recent history have taught younger generations that nothing is certain, not even the previously stable investment of real estate.

One participant in the focus group said she had observed her parents make all the “right moves,” yet they still lost everything when the housing bubble burst. This economic uncertainty creates a desire to enjoy the present moment, with less focus on delayed gratification and savings; again putting younger generations at odds with elders.

Now that you have a better understanding about the factors contributing to the problem at hand, let’s look at why making a change is so important.

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<sup>16</sup> Sir Ken Robinson, “RSA ANIMATE: Changing Education Paradigms”, October 24, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcdGpL4U>

<sup>17</sup> Todd Rose, The End of Average, January 19, 2016, <https://www.harpercollins.com/9780062358363/the-end-of-average>



## Why Increasing Employee Engagement Matters

**T**he powerful opportunity that we see coming out of this challenge is that a re-imagined version of work will better engage and unify ALL professionals, not just Millennials. Doing so addresses a major problem in our economy: specifically, the \$550 billion that American employers lose each year because their employees aren't engaged.<sup>18</sup> As you can see in the graph, increased levels of inspiration correlate with higher productive output.<sup>19</sup>

Dismal levels of engagement have been linked to sluggish productivity growth, stagnating wages, and increasing economic inequality.<sup>20</sup> It's not just in the U.S. either: engagement levels globally are even lower.

On the individual side, engagement is also critical because it leads to higher levels of life satisfaction and happiness. If we can reduce the friction within employer/employee relationships and channel that energy toward uniting toward a common goal, we can also create unprecedented progress toward solving the world's biggest problems. So, what can we do about it?

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<sup>18</sup> Susan Sorenson and Keri Garman, "How to Tackle U.S. Employees' Stagnating Engagement," *Gallup*, 2013, <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/162953/tackle-employees-stagnating-engagement.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> Eric Garton and Michael Mankins, "Engaging Your Employees Is Good, but Don't Stop There", December 9, 2015, <https://hbr.org/2015/12/engaging-your-employees-is-good-but-dont-stop-there>

<sup>20</sup> Andrew Soergel, "The Missing Piece in America's Growth," *US News*, August 6, 2015, <https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/08/06/productivity-a-missing-piece-in-americas-economic-growth>



## Ways to Better Engage Employees (of all generations!)

Is there hope for the future? Inspiring Capital believes so.

Based on our research and findings, progress to a more engaged twenty-first century workforce starts with authentic empathy and a shared vision for the Future of Talent. When all of us are aligned, across generations, we can collaborate to optimize our productivity as individuals, and then organizationally.

The primary challenge is to re-imagine work as a more flexible, transparent, and meaningful endeavor, designed to engage and maximize the potential of each professional working within a shared set of values and goals.

What are some actions you can take as an employer?

## Action Steps for Employers

### Connect to the Bigger Picture

Communicate that the company understands its social impact and environmental responsibilities. Show how they influence the current operations and plans for sustainable growth.

Explain how each person's work contributes to the larger shared goals of their team, and the success of the firm more broadly. Include the way each person's work contributes to positive social and environmental impact.

Transparently share the progress *and* challenges that the firm is making towards containing its negative side effects while creating a more positive impact on the communities where it operates. Engage professionals of all levels in the long-term vision of success as a purpose-driven firm (and ideation around how to get there).

### Teach Employees to Succeed

Appreciate that while they may be digital natives, Millennials are not corporate natives. New hires of any age need guidance and coaching about how to succeed at your firm. Teach best practices in communication, working styles, and other features of professional success that aren't taught in school and which might be unique to your firm.

Help employees learn how to learn, primarily by asking well-formed questions, and finding and leveraging available resources. Educate employees and managers about your firm's internal opportunities for learning and advancement.

Teach employees to make well-reasoned arguments for the things they want, using evidence about their own performance to soundly justify their requests.

### Challenge Employees, with Requisite Support

Recognize that younger employees have a true desire to learn and be challenged. While there are exceptions to every rule, most Millennials want to work hard so they can take pride in a job well done.

When there are gaps in the skills needed to take on a new role or task, offer training, shadowing, mentorship, or other support to help them rise to the challenge.

### Challenge Employees, with Social Impact

Provide Fellowship-style opportunities or temporary "impact assignments" to do pro bono work for not-for-profit partners of the firm. These external stretch assignments help employees grow their skill set without risks to the firm's core business, while demonstrating the firm's sense of purpose and commitment to positive change in their community.

### Provide Individualized Career Guidance

Educate students early (in undergrad and graduate programs) about the pathways to and through your firm, showcasing both 'traditional' and less linear pathways and career ladders that successful workers have taken. These should start with their studies and internships even before arriving at your firm.

Use peer examples, highlighted in Lunch'n'Learn discussions or online materials, to illustrate possible pathways through the company. Highlight the growth paths that could match certain skill sets, interests, and long-term goals, and help managers connect these stories to their direct reports' career paths.

Provide candid feedback when employees make an unrealistic request, explaining why it's unrealistic, whether because of timing, skill, effort, performance, or larger factors beyond their control. Be sure to provide a more realistic version of the request, or a clear explanation of what would be required to grant their request.

### **Address Anxieties and Use Empathy to Design Benefits**

Teach managers to ask questions and listen to what employees are curious, worried, or excited about. Provide support for managers to understand how those concerns and interests overlap with their employees' current roles, other activities at the company, or in the surrounding community. Retention will climb when managers are able to explain how employees' roles can allow them to explore those curiosities or address the concerns.

Provide benefits to address these anxieties and challenges, in cost-effective forms like Fellowship-style structured learning programs or peer coaching groups. Other benefits include external coaching or counseling services, student loan reimbursement, and help saving for major expenses (home purchase, births, etc.) should be considered.

Promote flexibility in work, in terms of hours and location. Help managers to understand how to lead high-performing teams without demanding high levels of face time in the same location.

Offer customized benefits that support healthy work/life balance whenever possible and connect work to a larger sense of purpose. Studies have shown that happy and engaged employees are good for the bottom line.<sup>21</sup>

### **Facilitate Creative Mentorship**

Provide readings and discussion questions about management best practices, and encourage employees to discuss the topics with colleagues above and below them in the organization. These informal conversations can become simple but effective ways to learn how to manage effectively, both up and down.

Facilitate reverse mentoring relationships. There's a lot to be learned from the digital natives in your firm, and they need to develop the wisdom of your senior employees. Providing opportunities for new and experienced colleagues to collaborate will help them to see the similarities between their expectations, concerns, and goals for their professional lives.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Andrew J Oswald, "Happiness and Productivity", February 10, 2014, <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/eproto/workingpapers/happinessproductivity.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Karl Moore, "Authenticity: The Way To The Millennial's Heart", *Forbes*, August 14, 2014, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/karlmoore/2014/08/14/authenticity-the-way-to-the-millennials-heart/#515e95ef4531>

## Action Steps for Millennials

Millennial professionals have the resources and ability to build a better twenty-first century workforce from their position as well, particularly as elder Millennials mature toward those critical middle management roles:

### Be Open to Learning from Existing Systems

Develop a curious appreciation for the status quo. Not every process is in need of a complete overhaul. Companies that have been around for decades are clearly doing something right. Learn the rules before you try to bend or break them.

### Find Alternative Paths to Learning

Be resourceful in finding courses, social impact volunteer opportunities, and one-on-one relationships to build the skills, visibility, and confidence you need to grow as a professional. If you look, and ask, you'll be amazed at the resources that emerge within your role, at your firm, AND in the surrounding community.

### Build Your Case

Share your goals with a colleague or mentor elsewhere in the firm to get feedback before asking your direct manager for a promotion or raise. Asking for input is a great way to gain an advocate to help you achieve your goals.

Ask for raises and promotions in a way that aligns your manager with your goals. Start the conversation early, asking what you can do in the next 6 to 12 months to be ready for a promotion.

Understand the big picture, including your manager's vision of success, as well as success for the firm beyond your team. Build the business case for your request, and show why it's good for your manager, team, and company, not just for you.

### Network

Connect beyond your immediate team. Get involved with cross-departmental projects, Employee Resource Groups, social impact initiatives, and other firm-wide initiatives that will expose you to other perspectives, skill sets, and colleagues.

### Work Hard

Work hard, and be awesome. Ask for feedback to be sure you're headed in the right direction, and document and share your progress along the way. Don't get discouraged if you aren't recognized immediately or to the extent you'd like to be, as long as you can see progress in your growth and understanding of what's required for next steps.



## Unifying Generations to Engage Our Twenty-First Century Workforce

**T**he most heartening finding from our research and focus groups is that members of every generation actively participated in the conversations that led to these insights and recommendations. While the differences in how we've each grown up may present misunderstandings, there are professionals of all ages looking to work together for the shared purpose of creating a more engaging and productive workplace.

Our recommendations to achieve that goal call for thoughtful investments: of time, candid and courageous dialogue, and pragmatic innovation, in greater measure than actual spending. Employers do need to refresh stagnating spending on professional development to accommodate the increasing rate of change in our economy. But just as much as larger budget sizes, what we need is more strategic and integrated initiatives to meet the needs and expectations of a workforce that has grown up with twenty-first century technology and all the capabilities it enables. Leading firms are already thinking about flexibility, social impact partnerships, and peer groups.

What's needed now is intentional, firm-wide strategies to integrate those emerging initiatives, so that they generate their full benefit to professionals and the firm. By leveraging the tools and realities of the twenty-first century context, as seen by Millennial professionals who are native to it, we can unlock the productivity of a more fully engaged workforce.

# Authors and Acknowledgements

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