



## THE Learning Advantage



### Three Mistakes Managers Make with Millennials

Millennials bring much to the workplace: curiosity about everything, strong technical skills, the ability to collaborate easily, and an acceptance of diversity as a fact of life. But too often their managers struggle to make the most of their abilities, leaving everyone frustrated.

Defined as people who were born between 1981 and 1996, Millennials today range in age from 25 to 40. However, the people who manage them tend to be Baby Boomers (born 1946 - 1964) and Gen Xers (born 1965 - 1980). Effectively managing the Millennial workforce requires avoiding three major mistakes rooted in these generational differences.

#### Mistake #1: Throwing Millennials in the deep end and expecting them to swim

People often manage — and parent — as they were managed. Many managers today came up in organizations where they were provided little structure or formal goals. They were expected to “figure it out” on their own, they prided themselves on being able to work through complex challenges with little direction, and they enjoyed ambiguity. Even as children they often had large blocks of free time and were left on their own to fill their playtime.

Millennials however have been described as the most structured generation. As kids, their days were programmed for them, going directly from the classroom to after-school activities. Their jam-packed days accommodated their working parents’ schedule, but it left little opportunity for freeform self-directed play.

As a result, Millennials need structure in their work assignments, leading some managers to complain about how time consuming it is to manage them. It can be frustrating to have to spell out exactly how to do something, especially when you’re barely conscious of how you do it yourself. But as a manager you want to help them learn to create their own structure and not rely on constant handholding. To help them devise an effective approach to assignments, outline how you structure tasks at a high level, integrating any ideas they have to make the process better. By collaboratively creating this template of the process, they should be able to use it to create their own structured approach to assignments.

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### Mobley's Musings: What is your love drug?

My colleague and author Scott Eblin wrote in his recent blog ([eblingroup.com/blog](http://eblingroup.com/blog)) that there are three big things teams will need as they enter another year of pandemic restrictions:

- Connection
- Optimism
- Positive Perspective

To connect with staff he recommends doing something uplifting that will release oxytocin. Oxytocin, known as the love drug, releases warm, fuzzy feelings and lowers stress and anxiety. He illustrated his blog post with a picture of adorable puppies. I don't think anyone can look at that picture and not say “awww” as a bit of oxytocin enters the bloodstream.

It made me realize that we all have something — maybe many things — that elicit that kind of response. Before COVID, seeing friends and getting hugs gave me a good dose of oxytocin. I needed to find something else to achieve that feeling. Yoga and dancing help, but arranging flowers is particularly good for me. The process of designing the arrangement is very satisfying, and looking at the finished version reminds me of how enjoyable it was to work with nature's beauty. When the flowers have a pleasant fragrance, I am even more delighted.

What does this have to do with connection? It turns out that empathy increases connection and oxytocin builds empathy. So take some time to figure out what will release oxytocin for you and for your team.

Sandy



### Ask Sandy

#### Overcoming “no”

Some clients tell me they “wish” they could be assigned additional resources, be given more responsibility, or be promoted. As strong as their wishes may be, their fear of asking for these things is stronger. This is not uncommon. Many people fear hearing “no” as if it were a life sentence. As a result, their wishes may never come true.

Another way to view a negative response is as an opportunity to ask someone else. In sales training, we were told it took nine no's to get to a yes and to view each no as being one step closer to success. Being told “no” becomes just a step along the process, not a dead end.

If you think of that “no” as one person declining your request rather than rejecting you personally, it takes away some of the sting. And being okay about the decline allows you to get creative and probe for more information. You might ask, “What would it take for you to say yes?” Or, “I understand your refusal. Can you help me strategize how else I might get my need met?” The key is to be able to hear “no” while keeping the relationship with the other person open and unemotional.

Imagine what might be possible if you had no fear or “no.” After all, if you never ask, the answer is always no.

**Learning for Leaders:** Recognize when you are reluctant to make a request. Then do it anyway.

**Coaches Corner:** Help your clients practice overcoming their “no” fear by asking them to make requests of you that you decline.

If you have questions, you'd like Sandy to address in future newsletters, email them to [sandy@learningadvantageinc.com](mailto:sandy@learningadvantageinc.com)

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