

5 Ways Millennials Are Like No Generation Before Them

Millennials are changing the way we do business.

I'm no expert in generational psychographics, nor am I a fan of generalities. But in having worked with entrepreneurs across four generations, I have observed several differentiating factors in the [millennial](#) generation that I believe are already changing the face of business and will completely alter what we expect from our workforce within the next 10 years. More than that, the way these differentiating factors show up in this generation of entrepreneurs will revolutionize how we perceive and create value in the marketplace.

Here are the five ways millennials are different from generations before them.

1. They don't believe being shackled to tradition or location.

This generation didn't know a time without digital technology; they were weaned on it. They take for granted that you can put a playroom, a research library, a movie theater, and the yellow pages for the entire world in your pocket.

While farmers were shackled to their fields and pastures, the industrialists were shackled to their factories, and the "mad men" were shackled to their offices, while the office drones were shackled to their cubicles, *this* generation is shackled only to their devices and the reach of a cell tower or Wi-Fi signal. As cellular and Internet coverage spreads, and devices become more and more powerful and portable, those shackles are becoming less and less restrictive.

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This generation has been accused of being lazy. But what generation hasn't? What *I* see is that this generation believes in efficiency of effort for maximum impact. And they naturally use technology to achieve it.

I'm reminded of the story of "The Man Who Was Too Lazy to Fail," which was part of *Time Enough For Love* by Robert Heinlein. The enterprising hero of the story was charged with the milking of the cows. But he wasn't one to enjoy being up with the sun and he'd been told that was the time the cows required milking. He soon determined that the cows didn't give a fig about the time of day, they cared only about frequency and results.

That hero must have been a millennial ahead of his time. Because that's exactly how this generation seems to approach the demands of any business. They figure out the required outcome and how to get it on their own terms.

2. They don't believe in the inherent value of face time.

That isn't to say they aren't social. Nor is it to say they don't ever want to take meetings with clients. They just don't see why people get paid for showing up unless the job requires their physical presence.

Face time, to the millennials I talk to, is more valuable when there's less of it. When it's reserved for the really important pow-wows, or when it's a smaller portion of the day.

This is, of course, a direct consequence of technology as well, because that's what makes it possible. But it's also a recognition, I think, that the only way to have it all is to work at maximum efficiency when you work. For the millennial entrepreneur that means fewer face-to-face meetings and more emails, texts, video conference or calls. It means selling results, not hours on the meter or time in the building. The positive aspect of that is that this generation of entrepreneurs is also less likely to fall into the trap of selling their time or becoming a commodity.

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3. They believe in learning, not pieces of paper.

While my clients of other generations are likely to tell me about the degrees they've earned, or about the prospects or projects they're afraid they won't get because of the degrees they *haven't* earned, my millennials talk to me about what they'd need to learn in order to get the gig.

Which isn't to say this generation doesn't value a formal education or certifications. But when it comes to personal growth or qualifications they value knowledge and experience more. Time will tell, but while the previous generations seemed to expect that once you graduated your education was finished unless you decided to pursue another degree, the millennials seem to have a mindset of continual learning. And why not? With a connected device they can audit courses from the most revered universities or consult Wikipedia and countless other reference sites. If they need some practical how-to advice they can find a forum or a YouTube video. They can learn continually and cumulatively without compromising their work or lifestyle.

4. They believe in learning from someone else's experience.

In line with valuing learning over degrees, this generation is all about learning from anyone who has done something they want to do. They gobble up stories of successful trailblazers, they pick the brains of more experienced people in their industry, and they look to everyone from formal advisers to fictional characters as role models.

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5. They believe in life, not work-life balance.

I've always had clients ask me about work-life balance. Not my millennial clients. They want to talk about designing a life. That life includes their family and friends, it includes their hobbies and pastimes and it includes their business.

While many professionals in my generation are chanting the "what is the world coming to" mantra that sounds just like the one I heard from my parents, and is probably a lot like the one they heard from their parents, I'm excited. While others are saying "these kids have a lot to learn," I'm thinking these innovators have a lot to teach.