

Does the New Millennium Generation Think You Are A Lousy Leader?

By Meagan Johnson

I am a Gen Xer. (Gen Xers also known as Generation X are people born between 1965-1980.) My generation is the smallest generation. We are the “middle child” in the generational lineup. If this were the 1970’s hit TV show *The Brady Bunch*, Gen Xers would be Jan. Like Jan, who was stuck between her cute baby sister Cindy and her more popular sister Marsha, Gen Xers are squeezed between two behemoth generations: Baby Boomers and the New Millennium Generation.

As a past Gen X employee and now a Gen X business owner, my belief has always been “no news from management is good news.” I always felt, along with many of my Gen X peers, “just tell me what you want done, give me the tools to do it and then leave me alone!” The less I saw or heard from my team leader the better.

As a Generational Speaker and Humorist and as an employer of New Millennials, I have discovered the Gen X, Lone-Wolf leadership style does not often resonate with the New Millennium Generation (NM Gen).

The NM Gen is the 80 million people born between 1981 and 2002. Their numbers have surpassed the mighty Baby Boomers and they are expected to represent 40% of the workforce in five short years.ⁱ They continue to baffle organizations and turn “the way we have always done it” on it’s head.

Leadership is no different. The NM Gen is reinventing leadership and demanding the corporate world does the same. Does this mean we sacrifice the multiple generations in the workforce to meet the demands of the younger workforce? No, what it does mean is we all have to challenge our own leadership styles to help everyone reach a little higher and achieve success.

What is the New Millennium Generation Looking for in a Leader?

The NM Gen does not judge a leader in the traditional sense. My leaders, when I first entered the corporate world, practiced a top-down approach. Their style was, to say the least, autocratic. They did not appreciate having their expertise questioned and they definitely had zero interest in my life outside of work.

Today the NM Gen describes a good leader as: approachable, authentic and a team player. According to Deloitte’s fourth annual Millennial Survey: “greater than 65% of the NM Gen feel a good leader’s focus should be on interpersonal skills, strategic thinking and inspirational qualities vs. financial results.”ⁱⁱ Moving forward, successful, multi-generational leaders will be a hybrid; a coach, mentor and a leader all rolled into one.

What can you do today to lead the NM Gen?

Give them an opportunity to participate ASAP. The NM Gen has been participating in family decisions and has had tremendous influence over household spending from an early age.

In 2002, when the 20 somethings and early 30 somethings of today were in their early to late teens they influenced 300 to 400 billion of the family spending. They influenced over 80% of the family apparel purchases and over 50% of the family car choices...this was often before they could drive.ⁱⁱⁱ

Baby Boomers brought teamwork and consensus building into the family and encouraged their NM Gen children to participate. They took part in family discussions that ranged from dinner plans and vacation destinations to technology choices and what kind car the family purchased.

In school the NM Gen experienced a greater emphasis on group projects and team-oriented tasks compared to older generations. This has given the NM Gen not just an expectation they will hit the ground running but also a genuine interest to engage and a real talent for collaboration. (This is really good news!)

As a leader, the more involved you can get the NM Gen in projects, discussions or meetings the better. Do not let your perception of the NM Gen's greenness keep you from allowing them to engage early on.

Matt Khair (NM Gen) began working at CRBUSA, <https://www.crbusa.com>, an engineering, architecture and construction firm, before he graduated from college. He was offered a full time position following graduation and has been at CRBUSA for over nine years, much longer than the average 3 years a NM Gen stays at one place of employment.

Says Matt, "What surprised me the most going from a full-time college student to a FT employee @ CRBUSA was the culture of responsibility. CRBUSA's culture does not let age or experience determine how much responsibility you will be given. Early in my career I was given responsibility my peers at other organizations were not given until later in their careers.

One of the projects I was given was creating a business plan, presenting it to the Core Team Leaders and receiving feedback. I was 21years old, a recent college graduate and I was in a meeting listening to what the company leaders were discussing. I was floored! I thought I should not even be in this meeting!!"

Matt Khair

CRBUSA recognizes the importance of getting the NM Gen involved quickly. CRBUSA also does not allow age or job tenure to influence the level of responsibility they bestow upon their young talent. This does not mean the company disregards seniority. The organization successfully gave Matt an immediate sense of purpose at the company and gave him an opportunity to learn from senior management.

Recognize my existence.

The NM Gen is a more transient generation than previous generations. Very few will experience lifetime employment with a single employer and as stated earlier, the average NM Gen job

tenure is three years. There is a misconception that the NM Gen's migratory nature has led to a deterioration of the importance personal relationships have at work.

According to LinkedIn, greater than 55% of the NM Gen feel buddies at work increases happiness and 50% believes it improves motivation. On the flip side, Baby Boomers feel friendships at work do not impact happiness or motivation.^{iv}

When it comes to friendships at work, there is an obvious generational divide. As a leader it is not your job to be everyone's friend. As leaders of the NM Gen, however, it will behoove us to demonstrate some interest the lives of our young compatriots.

Malika Coleman, NM Gen, is an ISD Analyst at Navy Federal Credit Union. <https://www.navyfederal.org>

After earning her series 7 license at JP Morgan Chase, Malika moved to Navy Federal CU because she felt more connected to the credit union's vision statement, "*Be the most preferred and trusted financial institution serving the military and their families.*"^v

Malika describes her boss at the CU in the following way; "I love my boss. She is open-minded and really took me under her wing. In the beginning, my boss and I met once a quarter. I felt disconnected, meeting with such infrequency. I discussed it with her and now we meet once a week. I admit that sometimes I feel needy but I want to build a relationship with the people I work with. My work will not suffer if we spend some time learning about each other. I want to know your kid's names and what you like to do when you are not at the office. It is a two-way street."

Malika Coleman

A good leader is not the NM Gen's next BFF. A good leader does however make time for conversations with their younger co-workers that go beyond a text and delves deeper than just market share.

Treat them like a leader too.

The NM Gen perceives themselves as leaders and they want their careers to include leadership roles.

According to training company Virtuali over 70% of the NM Gen regard themselves as a leader even if their title does not reflect a leadership position.^{vi}

The NM Gen has not only experienced a life of collaboration and consensus building, they have also had a powerful voice from an early age.

Social Media has given the NM Gen the voice and the ability to take the imitative, lead change, lead frequently and get big results often all before getting out of bed in the morning. Via Social Media, the NM Gen can fund a start-up, popularize a new restaurant or find a bone marrow match for a sick friend.

As leaders themselves, the NM Gen wants to help others and make an impact. According to The Millennial Leadership Study, close to 50% of the NM Gen describe leadership as “empowering others to succeed” and greater than 60% want to imbue people with a “sense of purpose and excitement.”^{vii}

How do you help the NM Gen further develop and nourish the leadership skills they already possess?

1. Give them a variety of opportunities with in the organization.
Colorado Police Chief John Camper rotates his detectives and officers into different departments or positions. Some rotations are every few years; some rotations are as short as a few months.
2. Encourage the NM Gen to take on leadership roles in their volunteer organizations.
When it comes to volunteering, NM Gen wants to donate their time and use their skills. Greater than 75% of the NM Gen will volunteer if their skill set benefits a cause.^{viii}
3. Tell them about your past mistakes.
Transparency is a vitally important trait to the NM Gen. (read past post <http://meaganjohnson.com/failed-to-be-transparent/>) Deloitte’s global study found that the NM Gen feel “openness” is one of the top traits they look for in a leader.^{ix}

“My boss told me about a situation where she had made a mistake. I really value the fact my boss will share with me on a case-by-case basis her past successes and failures. Those discussions are more helpful, insightful and inspiring than any online-course.”

Malika Coleman

Navy federal credit union

No matter where we fall on the generational time line, we all have a responsibility to be conscientious leaders. The beauty of the NM Gen is they want to learn from our past stumbles, tell us who they are and lead us all to a changed future.

Meagan Johnson

Generational Expert, Speaker, Author

Meagan is the co-author of the bestselling book *Generations Inc., From Boomers To Linksters Managing the Friction Between Generations at Work*.

Known as the Generational Humorist, Meagan has entertained and educated thousands of audience members from all around the globe. Amongst her many satisfied clients are organizations like SHRM, Dairy Queen, Burger King, Cadillac, American Express, Harley-Davidson, Monster.com, and the CIA (although the work she did @ the CIA is classified!)

A third-generation native of Phoenix AZ, Meagan lives with her tall husband and four dogs that have a total of 15 legs (not including the husband) ... you do the math!

Want to know more? Call 1-800-759-4933 or visit www.MeaganJohnson.com

Meagan@MeaganJohnson.com

ⁱ **Louis Efron**, Why Millennials Don't Want To Work For You, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/louisefron/2015/12/13/why-millennials-dont-want-to-work-for-you/#34583e0c3ed4>, 12/13/15

ⁱⁱ Smykal Emily, *8 Stats on Millennials and Leadership in the Workplace*, <https://www.jibe.com/blog/8-stats-on-millennials-and-leadership-in-the-workplace/#sthash.WkePi4uS.dpuf> , 8/26/15

ⁱⁱⁱ **National Retail-Federation Conference**

^{iv} Evans Lisa, *How Important Your Workplace Friendships Are Depends on Your Age*, <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/236884> , 8/28/2014

^v <https://www.navyfederal.org/?cmpid=PPC%7CGOOGLE%7C%7C%7Cnavy%20federal%20credit%20union%7C%7CBRANDACE%7CEXACT%7C>

^{vi} Brousell Lauren, *How to Help Millennials Prepare to Be Successful Leaders*, <http://www.cio.com/article/2843113/careers-staffing/how-to-help-millennials-prepare-to-be-successful-leaders.html>, 11/4/14

^{vii} Morgan Hannah, *What Kind of Leaders Are Millennials?*, <http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2015/07/22/what-kind-of-leaders-are-millennials>, 7/22/15

^{viii} REBELL BOBBI, **Millennials Are Eager To Donate Their Biggest Asset: Time**, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/millennials-are-eager-to-donate-their-biggest-asset-time_us_5661a464e4b072e9d1c5b68a, 12/4/15

^{ix} **Bersin** Josh, Millennials Will Soon Rule The World: But How Will They Lead?, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/joshbersin/2013/09/12/millennials-will-soon-rule-the-world-but-how-will-they-lead/#2af3f2d12d7b> 9/12/13