Millennials
From Generational Differences to Generating Growth

Higher Growth, Higher Percentage of Millennials

- Aggressive Growth: 30%
- Cautious Growth: 25%
- No/Minimal Growth: 21%

Organizations’ Pace of Growth
Moving Up Faster

Aggressive-growth organizations, such as those in the high-tech industry, have a significantly higher proportion of Millennials* (30 percent) in leadership positions than organizations with cautious growth (25 percent) or no to low growth (21 percent). (See the illustration at left.) However, organizations that rely on a greater supply of younger leaders face unique challenges. Millennials report being less engaged in their roles within their organization. Also, they are more likely to intend to leave in the next 12 months than leaders in other generational groups.

Compared to those labeled Generation X, Millennials are less concerned with opportunities to provide feedback to their senior leaders about the organization’s strategy and culture, the organization’s communications about specific behaviors needed to succeed as a leader, and work-life balance.

Their preferences mirror those of other generations when using other methods for leadership development, such as formal workshops, training courses, online learning, and developmental assignments (e.g., special projects). Millennials also have a stronger preference for using social learning (e.g., social networks, wikis, and blogs) and mobile development (e.g., smartphones or tablets) for improving leadership skills than other generations, and they tend to learn from others more frequently. Given their preferences, Millennials may seek out more frequent opportunities to learn from others via social and virtual platforms, something organizations need to keep in mind as they work to design development efforts aimed at this generation.

Millennials also seem to receive a significantly higher percentage of promotions than do any other generation. This could be attributed to two factors: 1) They are starting at lower management positions with more opportunity for advancement or 2) organizations could be reacting to Millennials’ reputation for readily changing jobs. Either way, the good news is that they are stepping up.

* The generally accepted definitions of “Millennials” and “Generation X” are as follows: “Millennials” were born between 1982 and 2000; “Generation Xers,” between 1965 and 1981.

Now What

.01 The engagement level of this group can be raised by providing them with a greater understanding of their career path as a leader and improving their manager’s effectiveness.

.02 HR professionals can reevaluate their employee value proposition, especially as it relates to multiple generations. A flexible arrangement and offerings of value would support different employee needs and motivations. A career path framework would help younger employees understand available development opportunities to keep them engaged and remain with the organization.

.03 To implement leadership development initiatives that match Millennials’ preferences, integrate social and mobile learning into development programs. For example, build virtual learning platforms and provide opportunities to connect with others, both virtually and in person.