

Referral Recognition

A very special thank you to the following individuals who introduced us to new clients in 2016! We always appreciate our clients and friends sending us new business referrals.

A special congratulations to Lars Leafblad, Ballinger Leafblad, Inc., who was randomly selected from the pool of referrals as the winner of the \$1,000 donation to the charity of his choice. Lars has chosen to donate the \$1,000 to Pollen. Thank you, Lars!



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Chad Simons
The Leadership Lodge
on Sugar Lake

We asked each of our referrals to share a piece of wisdom on integrating next generation skills and talents into what previous generations have built. Please visit our website to enjoy their wisdom.

No Photo Available: Erin Aberg, Ovative/group; Patrick Alderdice, Pennington & Company; Eric Crowell, UnityPoint Health; Brenda Devlin, Harris Companies; D. Scott Erickson, D.S. Erickson & Associates, PLLC; Dr. Kevin Ferdinandt, Saint Agnes School; Tim Foster, Foster Klima/The Partners Group; Michael Happe, Winnebago Industries, Inc.; Michael Hoffman, The Toro Company; Randy Morgan, Christensen Group; Wendy Mortimer, Portico Benefit Services; Tricia Nissen, Goff Public; Tom Pohlrad, Murphy Pohlrad Asset Management; Wendy Porter, Wendy Porter Events; Kimberly Rynders, Tandem; Wayne Serie, Vistage Minnesota; Doug Wilke, Valley Queen Cheese Factory

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Millennial Magic

As I started writing my intro this quarter, one of our millennials suggested "in true millennial fashion, everything should be 140 characters."

Game on, I'll give it a shot.

TWEET #1: Please sign up now for our **L3**, Cohort 2, starting August 7, at The Leadership Lodge on Sugar Lake, Grand Rapids, MN. Leading Self, Leading Others, Leading the Business. Cohort 1 was a huge success.

TWEET #2: Looking for a **keynote speaker** for an upcoming leadership/strategy conference? Check out Sam Smith at <https://goo.gl/JiXwi4>. Helpful, inspiring, fun.

TWEET #3: We're excited to add the **EOS/ Traction** process to our strategic planning practice. Ideal for companies with 10 to 250 employees. Andrea West is leading the charge, and doing beautiful work.

TWEET #4: Our team of 15 departs June 21 for our **2017 STRETCH Expedition**, high-adventure kayaking and backpacking near Stavanger, Norway. Watch our Facebook page for photos/videos along the journey.

TWEET #5: As a young 23-year old at Pricewaterhouse Coopers (1980), one of the Partners reminded me of the **10/80/10 rule**. 10% make things happen, 80% watch what happened, 10% have no idea what happened.

TWEET #6: It seems that every generation thinks they "**worked harder**" than the "younger generation." And yet, we continue to field very talented Olympic teams. We continue to create exciting new companies. We continue to be, I believe, the best place to live in the world.

TWEET #7: I like the mantra, "*If I succeed in business, and fail at home, I have failed.*" Be a **top ten percent**, at home and in business. It's possible.

TWEET #8: Enjoy this newsletter. Some thought-provoking ideas from **our next generation leaders**.

Respectfully tweeted,

Jeff Prouty
jeff.prouty@proutyproject.com

"C" NOTE QUOTE:

"To me, business isn't about wearing suits or pleasing stockholders. It's about being true to yourself, your ideas, and focusing on the essentials."

Know the quote?

If you know who said this quote, please send an email to: melissa.gennert@proutyproject.com or call 952.942.2922 by **Monday, May 1**; one guess per person. If we have more than one correct answer, we throw those names into a hat and draw the winner of a \$100 gift card.

Last issue's "C" Note Quote winner is...

Deb Edwards, Positive Coaching Alliance

Deb knew that Kent Bowen, the founding scientist of CPS Technologies, said the following: "**The insights required to solve many of our most challenging problems come from outside our industry and scientific field. We must aggressively and proudly incorporate into our work findings and advances which were not invented here.**"

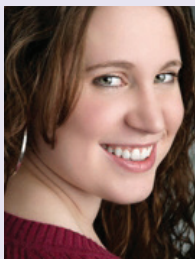
Congratulations, Deb!

Deb says, "I plan to use the gift card on my upcoming cruise. I'm turning 40 this year so my husband and I are headed to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands on a weeklong cruise. The gift card will come in handy for a few cocktails and souvenirs!"



Deb Edwards

A Word From Our Millennials



Christine Devine

When I hear the word Millennial, I tend to cringe a bit. It feels like it's a dirty word. Born in 1988, I am a Millennial. I am formed by my experiences and by my accessibility to technology, to peers, to information. The world I was born into and grew up in shaped me the way it has shaped every generation before me. How can it not?

But I am more than my birth year makes me. I am more than a generational moniker. I am driven. I am detailed and thoughtful. I am loyal. I am a problem-solver. I have opinions. I want to learn from those around me. I don't think I'm special or deserve a trophy because someone told me so as a child. I am no longer a child. I work for my accomplishments and take pride in the work I do. So challenge me. Engage me. Utilize me.



Kristin Jonason

Millennials have been a hot topic of discussion ever since I graduated from college and entered the workforce in 2014. Everyone has differing thoughts and opinions about Millennials and what they do (or don't) bring to the table, as well as different definitions of Millennials. Some people think we're tech-savvy, some think we're dependent on our phones. Yes, I can maneuver my cell phone and laptop faster than my parents, and no, I can't get anywhere without Google Maps. Some say Millennials value having a purpose and passion for their jobs, and others say all we care about is getting promoted. Some value Millennials for standing up for what we believe in, others call us entitled. If being a Millennial means being part of a generation that places high value on happiness, that thinks experiences are more important than money, and appreciates the different perspectives and opinions of others, then I am proud to be one.



Jayna Wallace

I was born on the front end of the Millennial Generation with my childhood consisting of pogs, trolls, and beanie babies. During middle school, I had a Discman that skipped only on the major bumps in the road. And, in high school the sound of dial-up connecting me to my America Online (AOL) account was music to my ears. It wasn't until undergrad that my mind was blown with unlimited texting and of course, www.thefacebook.com.

I think I have a unique perspective as an "early Millennial." I got a taste of the Gen X world of playing countless hours of Oregon Trail AND now I find myself having an entire conversation via Snapchat. Neither world better than the other; just different.

Before we assume that Baby Boomers don't know how to use a cell phone or that Gen Xers are cynical or that all Millennials need a participation trophy, let's remember that every generation has something to offer. And, the power lies in seeing how we utilize each other's strengths to achieve what each of us want out of life. No generation is better than the other; we're all just different.

So, what does the word Millennial mean to me? It means another generation of people that have the ability and technological resources to think faster and bigger than ever before and build upon the strong foundation laid by generations before us.



The Head, Heart, and Hands of Leading Across Generations

It's Bigger Than Millennials

The people in your organization born between 1982-2004 are not unique, special, or valued because they associate with the Millennial Generation. They are unique, special, and valued because they are individuals and they are part of your organization. Regardless of the generation(s) you find yourself leading, it's about engagement and engagement encompasses the head, the heart, and the hands. Here are three directives to keep in mind on your leadership journey.



by: **Sam Smith**
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THE HEAD: Leverage Mindset

Think about the realities you grew up with that have influenced your mindsets and the way you view the world. Now consider the realities experienced by Millennials. A few assumptions this generation may have developed based on their experience. First, the entire world is and should be connected in real time. Second, on-demand services exist for close to everything you can imagine. Third, we are the media. You can produce and distribute your own print (blog), radio (podcast), and television channel (YouTube) and you can do it relatively free. This is a radical departure from the experience of previous generations and yet, we are all in this reality together now. The difference is we don't all understand or trust the principles of this new world. Herein lies a huge opportunity to leverage mindset and fan the flames of creativity. Consider the areas of your business that could benefit from reversing assumptions and setting a team loose to create what's next? If you're willing to provide the context of your business along with clear parameters and expectations, the members of any generation will be willing to ask "what if" and "why not" to drive meaningful innovation. How are you empowering them with what they need to be successful?



THE HEART: Provide Purpose

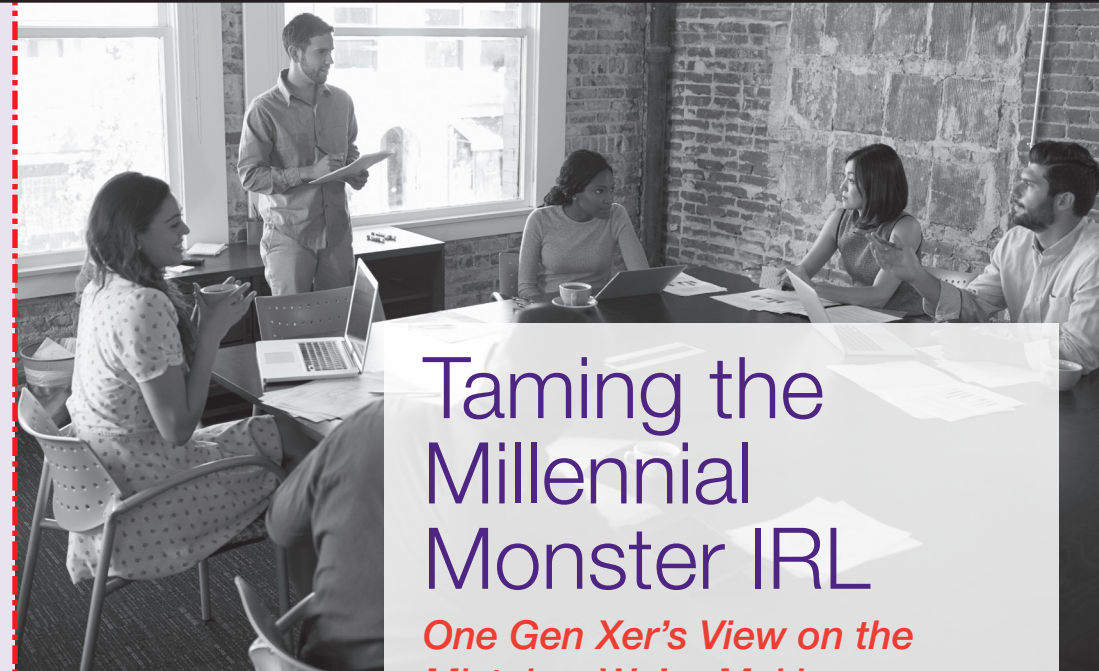
Millennials are often tagged as the generation "wanting purpose in their work." Newsflash, we all want purpose in our work! The difference I often see is that many in this generation are more vocal about the importance of connecting work to purpose. How fortunate we are that this conversation is receiving so much attention because it's absolutely essential for the greatest level of engagement. I also see Millennials missing the reality that work often precedes the discovery of purpose. While members of other generations have perhaps settled for work not aligned with a greater purpose, Millennials are at risk of viewing any work not aligned with a greater purpose as meaningless and unworthy of pursuit. Provide purpose to those you lead by helping them understand that purpose is not defined by work and true purpose can be lived out and further discovered through even what seems to be meaningless work. A word to all in search of purpose: Don't settle for less than alignment in the long-term and don't shortcut the discovery process in the near-term lest you risk losing significant learning experiences. How well are you connected with your "Why" and living that out in your work? What about your organization? Is there a shared understanding of why your company exists? Do people have line of site to connect their work to the bigger picture?



THE HANDS: Invest Time

One assumption you may hold is that "those Millennials" think they have all the answers and don't need the "old guard" to help them succeed. Don't underestimate the desire of those you lead to learn from you, understand the history of the organization, and your vision of the future. To a greater or lesser degree, upcoming generations have always demonstrated a "we got this" attitude. It's your job to embrace, challenge, fuel, and direct that energy. While some may look at Millennials as a group who "doesn't get it," we could also falsely assume this generation has all the answers to questions involving technologies we didn't know existed. Both views are limiting. When you invest the time to share the history of success and failure in your organization and help Millennials put that history in the context of their experience and share their perspectives, you will discover great insights. What are the top five historical milestones that have shaped the company? What are the stories which should transcend time? What's your vision of the future and how do you see those you lead playing a part of making it a reality?

As you consider how you may elevate your leadership effectiveness, consider the underlying truths that define great leadership for any generation. At the same time, recognize the realities of the times that shape each generation and most importantly, the unique experience of everyone you lead. Practice genuine curiosity to understand the needs, wants, and desires of each valued team member and seek to create an environment in which they can fully engage their head, heart, and hands. If you want to discuss these concepts and principles further and what you've experienced, we'd love to talk.



Taming the Millennial Monster IRL

One Gen Xer's View on the Mistakes We're Making

Millennials are the largest share of the American workforce today, according to the Pew Research Center.

The gifts, talents, perspectives, and attitudes every person brings to an organization often defy labels.

They may also be the most challenging to work with, according to how older generations (my own Gen X included) describe them. Entitled. Narcissistic. Lazy. Relating better to technology than to people. Expecting a trophy just for participating. In a word, Millennials are a problem. Especially for employers.

I'm going to go out on a limb here, and possibly invite some critical emails. (You can blame my "cynical Gen X" ways for the Jerry Maguire diatribe that follows.) But what if we've yet to solve the Millennial "problem" because we old folks are so focused on the problem we've forgotten to be the solution?

We've done a great job shaming and blaming the younger generation. We're brilliant at coming up with labels, stereotypes, and theories about what's not working. We're fantastic at reminiscing about how things were in our day. And we're skilled at venting about how kids today "just don't get it," and "need to be taught some lessons."

We've done a less than stellar job sharing responsibility, focusing on the great qualities Millennials do possess, and working to bridge the gap.

In reality, we are each impacted by the environment in which we grow up. And as a result, every generation brings its own strengths and limitations to the workforce. According to a 2013 EY study, Millennials were perceived as tech savvy and adaptable, but not the best team players. Gen Xers were ranked as being entrepreneurial and great at problem solving, but not as gifted with executive presence or being cost effective. And Boomers were seen as loyal, hardworking team members, who don't adapt very well and aren't as collaborative.

Perhaps instead of adhering to our own view of the world and creating labels for each other, it's time for everyone to practice a little empathy. It's time to stop feeding the monster.



by: **Andrea West**
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The solution we're all seeking, starts with understanding—understanding the context from which Millennials are operating, and understanding our role as leaders of the upcoming generations.

While management and leadership must go hand in hand, the sad truth today is that many organizations are creating only managers. Managers maintain. Leaders develop. Managers control. Leaders inspire. Managers drive a team toward a goal. Leaders empower and elevate others to make even greater contributions.

Bridging the generational divide requires more leadership.

The first step on that path requires managing the expectations of the older generations. When we talk about Millennials, let us not forget they have not lived through what we have. We can't expect them to come pre-loaded with our wisdom. And it's not fair to freeze them in one moment of their development and think we've got them pegged for all eternity. Time changes everything. Our own values, focus, and expectations have evolved since we were their age, and they will continue to do so thanks to our lessons and mentors along the way. Can we not grant Millennials the breathing room to follow a similar path of self-discovery and evolution?

Other steps toward forging the great divide can be equally simple if all generations start from a place of compassion and understanding. Here are just a few ideas to get us started:

1. STOP THE STEREOTYPES

Let's just say, for argument's sake, that it is possible for everyone born within that 17-year Millennial window to share attitudinal characteristics. Don't we still have a responsibility to avoid using those generalizations to pre-judge people? Not all Millennials are tech-centric narcissist any more than Gen-Xers are flannel-wearing, Nirvana-loving cynics and Boomers are materialistic ladder-climbers. The gifts, talents, perspectives, and attitudes every person brings to an organization often defy labels. In my experience, the Millennials I've managed have yet to live into their more commonly heralded negative traits. And if they did, it was usually because I failed to lead and mentor them appropriately.

2. KEEP IT IN CONTEXT

Millennials are the most educated generation in the modern era. With that oversupply of advanced degrees came record levels of student debt, unemployment, and underemployment as they started their careers. And, let's not forget a slew of Millennials were just entering the workforce during the great recession. (With that in mind, can we really question why they are so eager to take on more responsibility and ask for bigger salaries?) This is also a generation

that grew up in a high-tech, Instagram world where instant gratification was the norm and everything could appear perfect online even when it wasn't in reality. According to the American Psychological Association and Psychology Today, with more choices and competition through comparison, Millennials are facing higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression than any generation before them. And since many were raised by well-intentioned snowplow parents, who removed the majority of the obstacles they faced, not all Millennials are entirely equipped to deal with this. Rather than placing blame, we have an opportunity to share the wisdom we've gained to help them thrive in this rapidly changing world.

3. TURN TO THE X-FACTOR

Gen X has grown up to become leaders revered by both Millennials and Boomers alike, and as such are an important bridge across the generations. As the middle generation in the workforce, we are more equipped to see the truth from both sides. We've walked the path of being stereotyped as a generation. And we've lived long enough to face significant trials to help us respect the traditions and work ethic held by Boomers. If we can allow our Gen X managers to emerge as leaders, translators, and peacemakers, their ability to walk the line can bring tremendous value for all involved.

4. BE REAL

Connecting with Millennial employees isn't about beanbags, office toys, and kombucha. It's about creating an environment where they can better themselves while contributing to the organization. Given the right tools, affirmation, and quality time, Millennials learn at an insane rate and can be extremely driven. They are, in fact, seeking wisdom and mentoring through the very real challenges of life. Rather than complain about their entitlement, we can teach them the progress and empowerment that comes from failure, and the significant joy and fulfillment that comes from working diligently for something that was at first unobtainable. Rather than complain about their laziness, let's help them to understand why their work matters, why we are giving them an assignment, and why a project takes a certain amount of time.

In the end, taming the Millennial monster starts at its origin: the previous generations. The worst things we can do is cling to blame and take a headline, one-size-fits-all approach to leading and managing. Instead, every leader has a responsibility to build future leaders by nurturing critical skills, inspiring desired results, and celebrating the possibilities. And we can all embrace this time-tested approach regardless of age or position in the company.