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How to attract, retain Millennials



GETTY IMAGES: *Too many companies are trying to attract and manage millennials with a dated mindset that's simply not working, according to some human resource experts.*

Today's workplaces are the most demographically diverse in history but no generation has been as misunderstood as millennials. If you're an employer, it's important to understand how this connected and diverse group works and why so you can attract and retain them.

"They're a large cohort demographically and there will be a labour shortage, despite the fact that people are staying in the workplace longer," says Bill Pallett, founder and president of WJ Pallett & Associates, a talent strategy and human resources management consulting firm in Toronto.

Millennials are also future customers, so understanding their needs is crucial. But too many companies are trying to attract and manage them with a dated mindset and that's simply not working. "If you're refusing as an employer to be flexible in creating a talent culture, millennials are going to appear flighty to you," Pallett says.

"If you have a good talent strategy for millennials, they're not flighty." He offers 10 tips on how to attract and retain millennials and suggests the tips can also be used by jobseekers born in the '80s and '90s to determine if a prospective employer measures up:

1. Create an attractive millennial employer brand. Why would talent want to work for you? What's your brand and what does your organization stand for? Millennials care about corporate social responsibility and sustainability so it's not enough to say, 'We are who we are.'

2. Build a strong digital presence. The cat's out of the bag: millennials are digital so your company needs to go where they work and play, including Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube. What are current and former employees saying about your organization on sites like Glassdoor.com?
3. Tell your company's story right off the bat. "Millennials react to the ability to be emotionally engaged to a brand, so engage them." Provide a sophisticated onboarding process and make sure they know about opportunities for advancement. "They need a purpose in what they're doing and what the company is doing."
4. Deliver immediate, relevant learning. "They've come from helicopter parents and are eager to learn but also to get feedback." Assuring them they're doing a good job if they don't hear otherwise just doesn't cut it.
5. Provide development. Millennials need help visualizing their future and if they don't see a future with your company, they'll be heading out the door before long. They want to progress and grow, so ensure your organization has a formal leadership development program in place.
6. Be transparent, upfront. Keep millennials in the loop about what's happening in the organization and don't try to impress, confuse or placate them with double talk. "They want transparency. They've seen companies turf employees out the door... They're savvy. If you're not sincere and genuine, they know that right away... Authenticity is very important to them."
7. Give them a voice. Millennials believe innovation improves society, understand it's essential for business growth and say it's a critical requirement in choosing an employer. "Most describe themselves as innovative so creating a workplace that fosters innovation and involves them is important. Invite them to department meetings if only to observe or provide feedback."
8. Reframe leadership. Move from the boss/manager mentality to one of coach/mentor. Millennials thrive in inclusive environments so commit to their professional development and ensure they're involved.
9. Offer a 'total rewards package.' That includes a competitive salary, but also a promising future in your organization.
10. Create a flexible workplace. Millennials work to live, not live to work. Flexible working hours and workspaces, cash bonuses or incentives, and most importantly of all, learning and development, are important drivers. "What motivates one millennial may not motivate another. One size does not fit all. In the future, every individual could have their own contract with an organization."