



Y-Size Your Business

How Gen Y Employees Can Save You Money and Grow Your Business

by Jason Ryan Dorsey
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Take-Aways

- Generation Yers want jobs in companies with defined missions.
- Gen Yers – also known as Millennials – offer impressive attributes, but they also display frustrating weaknesses.
- They are idealistic, optimistic, loyal and self-confident.
- Yet Gen Yers have minimal work skills. They handle criticism poorly, and they expect instant gratification.
- Millennials care more about their lifestyles than their jobs and need to have fun at work.
- They want to get to work late and leave early. And they do.
- To attract Gen Y job applicants, demonstrate that your company culture understands, appreciates and validates them.
- Motivate Gen Y employees by asking them what incentives they want and rewarding them accordingly.
- While most Gen Yers are not technology experts, they depend on and trust technology.
- Managed correctly, Gen Yers can become a tremendous asset to your company.

Rating (10 is best)

Overall
7

Applicability
7

Innovation
7

Style
8

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Relevance

What You Will Learn

In this summary, you will learn: 1) Who Gen Yers are and what makes them tick; 2) How to recruit, engage and retain Millennials; and 3) How “Y-Sizing” will benefit your firm.

Recommendation

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, born in 1984, is perhaps the ultimate member of Generation Y: people born between 1977 and 1995. Nearly 80 million strong in the US, Gen Yers – also known as Millennials, Echo Boomers and Net Gens – are joining the workforce in huge numbers. Whatever you call them, you have to understand Gen Yers as employees and as consumers. In his eye-opening report on how to adapt – or “Y-Size” – your firm, Jason Ryan Dorsey, a Millennial and a consultant known as the “Gen Y Guy,” describes his peers, covering what they want, how they think, and why they are narcissistic, entitled, blunt, fearless, optimistic, high-maintenance, high-performing and confident. While he may paint with a broad brush, he creates a multifaceted portrait. To recruit, retain and engage Gen Yers, and to mitigate conflict between them and the other three generations in your workplace, *getAbstract* recommends Dorsey’s information to all managers seeking perspective about the generations now in the workplace.

Summary

Generation Y

Gen Yers often drive older generations nuts. Their bright hair colors, tattoos, body piercings and relaxed dress styles turn off many managers. Gen Y workers arrive at the office late and spend too much time talking on their cellphones, listening to their iPods and surfing the web.

Simultaneously, Millennials also impress their managers and older colleagues with their idealism, optimism and entrepreneurial brio. Savvy management is critical to preserving harmony among the four generations now crowding into your workplace:

- **“Matures: born pre-1946”** – Also known as the Traditionalists, they have a strong connection to the military; many are veterans. They want to do good work. Traditionalists do not require immediate gratification. Gen Yers trust Traditionalists more than any other colleagues not from their own generation.
- **“Baby boomers: born 1946 to 1964”** – These hard workers – indeed, workaholics – arrive at work early and leave late. They measure their career commitment by the number of hours they spend in the office, and telecommuting doesn’t count. Boomers paid their dues and expect Gen Yers to do the same.
- **“Generation X: born 1965 to 1976”** – Gen Xers often feel frustrated. They can’t move up because baby boomers won’t retire, and Gen Yers are nipping at their heels. It’s a good thing these natural skeptics don’t mind job-hopping.
- **“Gen Y (a.k.a. Millennials): born 1977 to 1995”** – Millennials are extremely close to their parents, who guided them throughout their lives. Generation Y is the fastest growing American demographic. Members of this generational cohort believe that if you can think it, you can do it.

“Gen Y employees can add value to your company and its culture now and in the future.”

“Every new generation that enters the workforce causes stress, frustration and criticism from the generations already employed.”

"A 22-year-old with three tattoos who still lives with his mom could make a fantastic employee."

"Being welcomed by a peer is more comfortable for employees of all ages, but especially for Gen Y."

"Gen Y wants short bursts of information, followed by discussion and group participation, followed by challenges with tangible outcomes."

"Reposition big, boring monotonous tasks as bite-size performance challenges with near-term results."

Generational Clashes

Workplace conflict between Gen Yers and older employees is common. Senior staffers claim that Gen Yers are "out of touch," the exact complaint Gen Yers make about their elders. You can mitigate this conflict and manage Gen Yers more smoothly if you adapt or "Y-Size" your firm. Y-sizing matters for three crucial reasons:

1. **"The economic downturn"** – During these tough times, business costs are up, profits are down and growth is flat. Firms have to cut their expenses, and hiring Gen Yers is an effective way to do it. They often cost less in salary and benefits than older staffers.
2. **"Gen Y's fundamentally different attitude toward work"** – Members of this generation do not expect long-term employment. They will quickly leave employers who do not adjust to them and their singular work styles. Many executives who've been left in the lurch see Gen Yers as disloyal. This is not an accurate judgment. In fact, Gen Yers will readily accept pay cuts to support companies that earn their loyalty. At the same time, Millennials think that staying at one job for more than five years means their careers have stalled. They do not measure loyalty according to tenure. Gen Yers believe they are betraying themselves if they stay with an employer when they are unhappy in their jobs.
3. **"The multigenerational collision...in the workplace"** – Conflict stemming from having four different generations in the workforce can destroy morale, reduce efficiency and increase costs. Companies that eliminate this conflict can achieve their maximum potential and outdo their competitors.

Does working with Gen Yers mean you should coddle them? No. Coddling Gen Yers is counterproductive and will result in filling your staff with malcontents who will one day quit their jobs while requesting glowing references. Use the y-size process to recruit Gen Yers who are motivated to join you and succeed; those are the ones who will make a positive impact.

Gen Y Characteristics

Members of Generation Y feel entitled. They expect good things to happen in their lives because their baby boomer parents pampered them at every turn, doing everything to make life as easy as possible. Gen Yers want immediate gratification, which nicely corresponds with the fast-food "instant meals" they grew up eating and the instant message they carry out on their portable devices. They focus on outcomes over processes. Although most people assume otherwise, most Gen Yers are not technology experts. However, they totally depend on, and trust, technology.

Gen Yers' lifestyles matter more to them than their jobs. They are comfortable with diversity. They are entrepreneurial and prefer to work for themselves. They want to get to work late and leave early. For most Gen Yers, the first day on the job is critical. If it doesn't go well, they will begin immediately to search for a new job. Gen Yers are well-educated, with minimal work knowledge or expertise. Your challenge as an employer is to leverage these characteristics so Millennials become assets to your company.

Y-size your business to get Gen Yers on your side. Determine what your firm currently does right with its Gen Yers and what it does wrong. Focus on the problem areas, for example, recruitment and retention. Involve your senior management team in all of your y-sizing efforts.

"Gen Y can deliver tremendous workplace performance and loyalty at a substantial value – when managed correctly."

"A generation is not a rigid box that every single person of a certain age will fit neatly inside."

"Gen Y has a nose (sometimes studded) that can sniff out canned corporate branding a mile away."

"More than anything else, Gen Y applicants want to be seen as unique and one of a kind."

Recruitment Tips

When it comes to recruitment, take a tip from Cold Stone Creamery, a 1,400-store ice cream franchise operating in 12 countries. Understanding that Gen Yers see themselves as special, the company does not conduct standard job applicant interviews, at least not initially. Rather, it conducts "auditions" where job prospects perform to earn jobs as "ice cream entertainers." Gen Yers like Cold Stone Creamery – it aligns with their lifestyle and provides the elements they want in a job: fun, challenge, opportunity and mission. To recruit the most promising Gen Yers:

1. **"Make your website a Gen Y employment experience"** – Your company's online identity and functionality is the first thing Gen Yers check. First impressions count, so build your website with plenty of interactivity and a unique character.
2. **"Give applicants something off the page on the job application"** – Don't bore Gen Yers with standard paper or online applications. Add quirky, entertaining questions, for example: "One of our core values is creativity. Can you please make something creative with this paper bag?" This question appears on the job application at Amy's Ice Cream.
3. **"Provide Gen Y with the answers for your interviews up front"** – Gen Yers have minimal work experience. Many will not know how to handle themselves during the interview process. Help them out. State clearly on the application form how they should present themselves to earn a job at your firm.
4. **"Offer Gen Y more than money"** – Make your job offer intriguing. Send an official letter, maybe by overnight mail, from your firm to offer a successful applicant a job.

Position your firm as "the place" for Gen Yers to work. Develop a talent pipeline at local universities so the top graduates will think of your firm as the first place to apply for work. Develop a project-based internship program that offers more than shuffling paper. Give interns real responsibilities for actual projects.

Work closely with "young professional associations." Many Gen Yers will move to a city they want to live in before they seek out jobs there. Work with local community leaders to promote your city to out-of-town Gen Yers. Ask Gen Y employees to recruit promising peers on campus and elsewhere. Gen Yers' parents have great influence with their children, so include them in your outreach efforts.

Engage Your Gen Yers

When you hire new Gen Yers, ensure that their first day at work goes great. Otherwise, your new workers may spend the rest of the week using your computers to search for other jobs. Make sure new employees feel welcome at your firm. Introduce them to your culture and to at least one senior executive. Have new employees start work at 10 a.m. or so on any day of the week except Monday; your workers will be too busy on Monday to give new employees much attention. Assign only other Gen Yers to show new people around.

Conduct a formal job orientation and stress your organization's mission; Gen Yers align themselves with missions. Make the first few minutes of the orientation rich and compelling. Ask new employees to share with each other the reasons they chose your firm. Hand out free gifts to your new Gen Y workers. The goofier the freebies, the better the impression you will make. Prepare a "Top 30 Tips for Your First 30 Days" handbook for all new employees.

"Gen Y moves to a new city and then looks for a job."

"Many Gen Yers are bad at multitasking."

"Gen Y has largely come of age with cellphones as umbilical cords."

"Employee of the Month. Means you're a winner and a loser." (Gen Y joke)

Follow these three steps to engage your new Gen Y employees:

1. **Present tasks as challenges** – Gen Yers need to strive and grow in their work, so transform boring tasks into important achievements.
2. **Ask for opinions** – Don't tell Gen Yers what to do. Ask them to think creatively about what the company can do in the future to make their assignments more efficient.
3. **Avoid monotony** – Break big jobs into many smaller jobs.

Educate Gen Yers about your business operations and procedures. Stress that "good enough" is unacceptable and that they must always go all-out to do their best work.

Explain the professional standards you will demand that Gen Yers meet. Discuss ethics, dress and rules for posting information online. Train Gen Yers to make effective presentations. Institute a "Manager for a Day" program to help them learn about managing in your culture. Encourage Gen Yers to develop a strong knowledge base by reading business books and related materials. Implement a "Reading Pays" program and give Gen Yers bonus money when they read anything you assign to them.

Retaining Gen Y Employees

Motivate Gen Yers by asking them what incentives they want. A day off? Flexible work hours? A special assignment? Lunch with the CEO? Listen to their replies and reward them accordingly. Conduct exit interviews with promising Gen Yers who leave. Find out what they don't like about your firm and work to fix the issues they cite.

Gen Yers connect with their companies on an emotional level, not because of their salaries. To gain Gen Yers' loyalty, treat them as individuals. Always make them feel special. Communicate openly and honestly. Make sure your company's senior leaders interact with Gen Y employees to motivate them and increase their loyalty toward your firm.

Develop enlightened insights about Gen Yers and make a legitimate effort to accommodate them. This creates a win-win situation for your company and your employees. That is the heart of the y-size approach, something that costs little, is easily customizable and produces measurable, beneficial results.

While Gen Yers can annoy you, they offer impressive talents and skills. When managed correctly, Gen Yers will run through walls to ensure that your firm succeeds. Your company cannot fully leverage the strengths of Gen Y employees unless you champion them at work and adjust your operations to their needs and work styles.

Demonstrate that you value and endorse Gen Yers as individuals. They will work hard and talk up your firm in a positive way to their online and offline friends. Start now to engage and motivate your Gen Y employees. You will know that your y-sizing activities are on track when it becomes easier to recruit quality Gen Yers and the ones you recruit want to stick around.

About the Author

Jason Ryan Dorsey, a Millennial known as the "Gen Y Guy," is an entrepreneur and author. He wrote his first book, *Graduate to Your Perfect Job*, at the age of 18.