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## Managing Millennial Workers: A Multigenerational Approach

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Katherine Beckner

First Place Winner

Short Essay Category

2018 Emerging Writers Contest

### Managing Millennial Workers: A Multigenerational Approach

The millennial generation has a bad rap. Born approximately between 1980 and 2000, millennials are often seen as “[e]ntitled, lazy, narcissistic and addicted to social media” as described by Landon Dowdy of CNBC. The stereotypical millennial would rather get a gold star for doing a job well done than waiting patiently for a raise as recognition for a strong work ethic. In reality, millennials want to be recognized for the work that they do as they do it; they want to feel valuable as a member of a team. As older generations complain that millennials are apathetic and unprepared for “real challenges,” the divide between generations grows wider, prohibiting millennials from simply having the chance to advance in the business industry. Both “Here’s How To Deal With Millennials,” an article written by Susanne Goldstein, and “Managing Millennials: Embracing Generational Differences,” an academic journal article written by Jeannine S. Stewart, Elizabeth Goad Oliver, Karen S. Cravens, and Shigehiro Oishi, attempt to solve the millennial workforce dilemma. Goldstein attempts to provide solutions to various problems millennials face in the business industry and ends up creating a heavily opinionated diatribe while Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, and Oishi provide a more effective argument as they discuss the value of multigenerational millennial engagement through sound rhetorical strategy and credible statistics; together, however, the two sources emphasize the importance of multigenerational cooperation in helping millennials succeed in today’s workforce.

In “Here’s How To Deal With Millennials,” Goldstein describes millennials as parent-dependent group-thinkers. Beginning her article with the popular “trophy argument,” she explains that “[y]ou don’t get a trophy for not getting your work done,” and generalizes that all millennials expect some sort of reward for being lazy and unmotivated. Goldstein presents two main reasons for the millennial “I deserve a reward” mindset: helicopter parenting and the inability of millennial independent thinking. Eventually, Goldstein provides a list of three major problems millennials face in the workforce while also providing company and millennial solutions to these problems. However, she is much more respectful addressing business owners than millennials. Goldstein also fails to cite any information within her article, diminishing the credibility of her piece. Although the foundation for an effective article is present, Goldstein bases her writing on her opinions rather than fact. In “Managing Millennials: Embracing Generational Differences,” a scholarly journal article from textbook *Business Horizons*, Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, and Oishi take a less condescending point of view by acknowledging that “popular media and scholarly literature have painted the population of younger workers in an uncharitable light” (45). They differentiate between the millennial generation and those prior, emphasizing the value in understanding the unique motivations, attributes, and tendencies of the different generations as a means to unify them as a whole. While using an impartial, scholarly tone, the authors propose possible changes businesses can make that will benefit not only millennial employees, but also older employees. The journal article’s credibility can be attributed to the use of statistics and reference to other sources. Though both pieces discuss the same issue, Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, and Oishi are more effective in their argument because they respect the millennial generation’s differences from previous generations instead of blatantly attacking them for being lazy, narcissistic, and insecure like Goldstein.

Although Goldstein makes an attempt to advise millennials directly, her abrasive tone and pessimistic attitude make her argument ineffective. She shows a lack of respect towards the millennial generation by patronizing them throughout her entire article. When discussing the need for mentoring in the workforce, she addresses millennials directly, saying, “[w]e all know that you are socially-minded world changers who want to see things happen at warp speed.” The tone in this specific sentence is extremely sarcastic and ultimately makes her argument ineffective as her wording has the potential to turn off millennials from seeing the point she tries to make. She fails to understand that although the millennial mindset is in fact different from previous generations, not everything about millennials is awful. Goldstein also assumes that all people that happen to be born from 1980 to 2000 fit the millennial stereotype; she generalizes that all millennials “need to feel heard,” and “are not good at accepting criticism.” Without evidence to back her claims, these statements do nothing but detract from her argument. In an attempt to use statistics to explain her idea that because millennials are so close to their parents they cannot function independently, she explains that “90% of people born beginning in the late 70s claim to be ‘extremely close’ to their parents,” yet fails to give any information as to where these numbers came from. Not citing the source from which she got these numbers undermines the credibility of her argument. However, even if readers knew where the information came from, the claim that people born starting in the late 70s are extremely close to their parents is not specific enough come to the conclusion that millennials “haven’t been given a chance to learn how to do things by themselves.” Although Goldstein has a basis for good advice for millennials, she fails to reach them as an audience because she makes broad assumptions and blunt comments. Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, and Oishi, on the other hand, successfully express their ideas without berating millennials in the process.

Through the use of rhetorical devices and credible statistics, the authors of “Managing Millennials: Embracing Generational Differences,” develop their argument successfully without disparaging the youngest generation in today’s workforce. Immediately, readers understand why their research is important when the writers state that “[t]he topic of the Millennial Generation in the workplace drives much business conversation, as members of this generation form a growing percentage of the employee base” (54). Like Goldstein, the authors are from an older generation; however, Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, and Oishi are college professors who deal more directly with millennials, allowing them to have a better understanding about millennial attitudes and opinions, strengthening the journal article’s credibility. Another aspect that correlates to the journal article’s credibility is the consistent reference to sources throughout the work. To begin their paper, the writers discuss the “[d]istinctiveness of the [m]illennial [g]eneration,” and explain that “[e]mployers who embrace the change represented by their youngest recruits may find opportunities that will offer competitive advantages” (46). Already, millennials reading this article will be intrigued because they are not used to being cast in a positive light. Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, and Oishi appeal to logos throughout their entire writing by rationally dividing their paper into eight organized sections, allowing readers to see the flow of reasoning from one thought to another. In their section entitled “Turning a negative stereotype into positive performance” (50), the authors propose an appraisal process that would benefit not only millennials, but also workers from other generations. They say that “[w]hen employees from any generation see how their contributions are valued, they are more open to commit to an organization” (51). Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, and Oishi proceed to elucidate how companies can allow millennials to work up to their fullest potential, for example, by forming “close relationships with open communication in a team environment” (52). Giving specific instruction

on how to better engage millennial workers is an extremely important strategy as it explicates what businesses can do to help millennials prosper in the workplace instead of making broad statements regarding what millennials are doing wrong.

The way in which an author decides to write something can make or break his or her argument. Goldstein's "Here's How To Deal With Millennials" attempts to solve the problems millennials face adjusting to the workplace. Although her ideas are reasonable, the way in which she goes about presenting those ideas is ineffectual. She asserts that millennials are more of a problem than a whole generation of people with limitless potential. On the contrary, "Managing Millennials: Embracing Generational Differences" written by Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, and Oishi successfully utilize rhetoric and statistics to develop their argument. Instead complaining about millennials, the authors accept the fact that they were raised in a different time than their younger coworkers and believe that the generational rift can be fixed by implementing changes that all generations can benefit from in the business world. Conclusively, in order to successfully integrate millennials into today's workforce, all generations must cooperate with one another. Soon, the millennial generation will make up the majority of the workforce; something must be done to prepare them for success in the business world. By advocating for appraisal processes, communication strategies, and performance evaluations, not only will millennials succeed in the workforce, but those from prior generations will flourish as well.

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