

CONNECTING THE DOTS: A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING MILLENNIALS

Ten insights into what motivates and inspires millennial employees.

BY HEATHER PEFFLEY AND AMY KLINK

Millennials are regularly described as a tech-savvy, somewhat introverted, and self-absorbed age group who do not possess the work ethic of previous generations. Don't be fooled. Millennials—defined as a person born between 1982 and 2000—are hard workers and will provide the backbone of the workforce for many years to come.

Most sources agree that millennials represent approximately 35 percent of today's workforce, a percentage that is expected to grow to 75 percent by 2025. As the millennial generation continues to expand its influence on the workforce and business in general, it is highly recommended that practices make every attempt to understand what motivates and inspires them. Practice management must learn how to reach millennials in language and incentives that they understand.

CONNECTING WITH MILLENNIALS

In short, millennials are here to stay, and appropriate investment into their development will prove exceptionally beneficial to your practice in the long run. The 10 insights listed below will help you connect with millennials on your staff and turn them into dynamic, meaningful members of your team. To get the most out of your millennials, it is important to understand that this generation:

1. Views technology as its first language. Millennials are engaged in the newest technology. They grew up with laptops, internet, smartphones, and social media. It is what they understand. Use this secret weapon to your advantage. Millennials can assist you with your social media campaigns, act as aesthetic trend content experts, research the competition, and create/manage in-office media campaigns such as waiting room loop videos and iPad before-and-after photo presentations.

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2. Embraces sharing. Patients value practices that support the local community, and posting about your involvement may encourage your patients to visit the practice more often, as well as participate in community events. Why not use your millennials to share practice involvement with a popular community event such as the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life or the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure. Maximize your participation in these events by utilizing your millennials to post about your participation and add photos to your website and/or social media channels.

3. Understands marketing. Millennials have become savvy to traditional marketing tactics, and they understand how to market to their own generation. They could very well be the key to this untapped market. This new reach could provide you with an influx of new aesthetic patients.

4. Is not afraid of hard work. Millennials aren't lazy, and they like to be held accountable. They are motivated by achieving the bigger picture and are dedicated to doing so. Provide your high-performing millennial employees with real-time, candid feedback, and they will be happy to continue to achieve practice goals. Annual reviews are great, but make sure millennials know they are appreciated on a much more frequent basis. Employee turnover is a given, but with small adjustments in style, a practice can easily incorporate this new and important working group.

5. Has good ideas. Include staffed millennials in your practice plans. Invite them to join a half-day roundtable discussion, and solicit valuable marketing, practice building, promotional, and patient experience ideas to continually improve your practice. Think big picture when possible, and challenge this young creative and energetic group to come up with new ways to streamline processes. With the time gained by creating practice efficiencies, your millennial staff is able to focus on additional important projects.

6. Wants to be included in practice plans. This is a group that desires to be part of the bigger picture. Allow them to play a role in your annual strategic planning process. Utilize their big-picture thinking to enhance your mission and vision statements. Be open to ideas that may be different from the "way things used to be done." Millennials do not need to know specific or confidential details, but they do want to participate in helping the practice reach its stated goals and objectives.

7. Sees managers as mentors. They respect their managers and continually want to learn past initial training in order to play a more valuable role in the practice. Rather than directive management, provide continual coaching and act as a knowledgeable resource to millennials throughout their career at the practice. You may want to consider offering distance learning courses or a stipend toward additional college or vocational courses and/or seminars. Then, reward the employees in some way for their interest in career growth at your practice.

8. Is motivated by job flexibility. This doesn't mean they are lazy; rather, they thrive on job diversification. Consider cross training your millennial staff members not only to motivate them, but also to benefit your practice. In addition to their main role at the practice, consider a rotational assignment with another employee or a physician mentor. This can include managing your social media pages or being in charge of taking before-and-after photos for your website. Benefits to the practice include a cross-trained, motivated, and industry-educated employee.

9. Is motivated by results. In general, millennials are motivated by outcomes. Therefore, it will behoove you to determine what motivates your millennial staff members to put forth their best work. This practice can be applied to all employees. Consider distributing an internal employee questionnaire or survey to discover what motivates individual staff members, or perhaps conduct brief one-on-one meetings. Try incorporating a "How I Want to be Motivated" or "How I Like to Work" document in the practice, which allows you to further identify the ways / means to energize your millennials to be most effective in the practice.

10. Enjoys celebrating. Once short- and long-term goals are achieved, reward the team. Like all employees, millennials love to celebrate. It doesn't have to be extravagant; simple things can make a huge difference such as coffee for the staff. Additionally, team incentive plans, additional job titles, catered lunches on long work days, offsite team-building events, or service and/or product rewards go a long way to making millennials—and all staff members—feel appreciated and valued.

WIN-WIN SITUATION

If you implement some or all of the above pointers, your practice will be successful in incorporating millennials as well as utilizing them to the practice's advantage. Adopting a culture that embraces the values of the millennial workforce will not only help you with your short-term employee retention, but also your future recruitment efforts. Understanding your millennials is a true win-win for everyone — employees, management, practice, and patients. ■



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