



# DEPAUL INSIGHTS

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## ***WANTED: Motivated Millennials For Team Environments***

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# WANTED:

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## *Motivated Millennials For Team Environments*

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Numerous articles, documentaries, films and books have examined the Millennial Generation. Uncovered within these works is an unusual paradox. While Millennials are often labeled as “high maintenance”, they also have potential for high performance. Millennials are entering their careers with more information, greater technology savvy and a firm desire to connect to work and society. Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? In addition, Millennials have high expectations for themselves. They expect and rely on their employers to offer constructive and timely feedback. Millennials see effective evaluation as a way for them to improve their own performance as well as their teams.

In customer management today, companies rely on employee teams to actively develop relationships with customers. Strong customer relationships often lead to more profitable and effective business relationships. These teams may be directly or indirectly connected through a myriad of organizational design and management systems.

Baby Boomer or Gen X generations may recall attending training sessions focused on building, managing and motivating teams. These courses were designed to improve or create unity as well as learn how to share and define success in terms of the entire team. While previous generations have had to undergo training to learn

how to effectively work as a team, Millennials are already highly focused in this area. Today's educational system revolves around the importance of teamwork. Teamwork and collaborating toward a mutually beneficial outcome is as natural to the Millennials as downloading songs to an iPod or programming a Blackberry.

Many current employees of sales organizations recoil at the idea of another task force or team to solve problems. However, Millennials look upon this as an opportunity for connecting with peers and other departments. Teamwork is considered a natural way to learn, problem solve or be heard throughout the organization.

Millennials have grown up collaborating, voicing their opinions and using technology to stay connected. This can be a win-win for sales organizations hunting for talent.

The average Millennial spends 72 hours per week using electronic media, i.e.; cell phones, internet, music and video games according to a 2006 study.<sup>1</sup> This time spent networking has created the most collaborative and team-oriented generation the world has seen in decades. “There is an intense focus on openness, sharing information, as an ideal and practical strategy to get things done,” explains Mark Zuckerberg, the founder and CEO of Facebook.<sup>2</sup>

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Millennials place a strong value on being heard due to their team orientation. They can act as each other's resources or peer mentors, providing feedback quickly and effectively to each other, rather than waiting for a monthly or yearly review.

To better understand Millennials and their value to sales organizations and customer teams, a few myths and realities need explanation:

MYTH: Millennials are not competitive.<sup>3</sup>

REALITY: They have not grown up with the zero-sum game where in order for someone to win, someone has to lose. Millennials are more interested in beating their own game, so feedback and keeping score are important. They are motivated by team oriented outcomes that allow them to collaborate instead of compete.

MYTH: Millennials are slackers.<sup>4</sup>

REALITY: Motivated differently than previous generations, Millennials value relationships over money and status. If they believe their work is valued and appreciated, they will work hard to make relationships happen. Millennials do not want to disappoint their teams or those with whom they have developed a personal connection.

MYTH: Millennials lack communication and interpersonal skills.

REALITY: Because they maintain larger and closer networks than previous generations, Millennials tend to have an abbreviated etiquette for communication. While they may gloss over some niceties and are not known for superlative table manners,

they have a genuine concern and respect for people.

MYTH: Millennials are hard to train.

REALITY: Millennials are not interested in textbooks, company manuals or classroom-type training. They prefer to learn on the job through experience, similar to how they play video games. Millennials learn very quickly from mistakes and are natural problem solvers. They believe in testing a system or process for failure. This allows Millennials to effectively find hidden solutions or efficiencies in business processes.

These realities are all great news for sales organizations and customer teams.

With these skills and their desire to always be learning, Millennials have much to offer sales organizations. In return, they ask for teamwork, constructive feedback, a sense of collaboration and the organization's willingness to think differently about their generation. It is important and necessary for organizations to embrace their ability to network and develop relationships as a highly valued resource. Companies willing to give this generation an opportunity to work with customer teams will experience a strong competitive advantage in the future.

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<sup>1</sup>Tesser, Tom, "Generation Now", Conscious Choice July 2007: 53-55

<sup>2</sup>ibid

<sup>3</sup>Degraffenreid, Scott (2008) *Myths and Realities About Millennials N2Millennials, Inc*

<sup>4</sup>ibid

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