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What Millennials Want from Work

How to Maximize Engagement in Today's Workforce

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

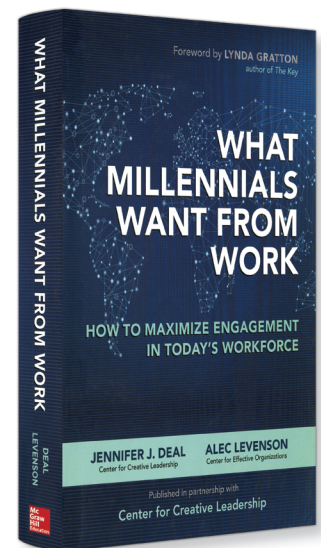
Millennials have been burdened with a reputation as spoiled, lazy and entitled, but the reality behind the stereotype is far richer and more complex. Who are Millennials, what do they really want, and what can you do about it?

Based on fieldwork and survey data from global research, *What Millennials Want from Work* paints a comprehensive, scientifically accurate picture of what really motivates Millennials around the world. Learn how to engage Millennials by improving workplace flexibility, because Millennials don't separate life and work; providing adequate support and feedback, because Millennials like to learn and grow; coaching, not micromanaging, because Millennials value autonomy; designing competitive salary structures, because Millennials know what's up; and providing opportunities to contribute to society, because Millennials care about doing good.

In this essential book, Jennifer J. Deal and Alec Levenson explain who Millennials really are, and offer practical advice to help those who manage, lead, and work with Millennials, to improve teamwork, increase productivity, strengthen organizational culture and build a robust talent pipeline.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Common misconceptions and realities about Millennials in the workplace.
- How Millennials can be both entitled and hardworking.
- The economic and social conditions that motivate and challenge Millennials at work.
- Practical tips for attracting, engaging and retaining Millennials.
- Important trends to help organizations plan for the future.



by Jennifer J. Deal
and Alec Levenson

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: WHAT MILLENNIALS WANT FROM WORK

by Jennifer J. Deal and Alec Levenson

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Introduction

So many generalizations about Millennials promoted by pundits, consultants and even some researchers are based mostly on anecdotes and not on rigorous data. Just as important, even when the conclusions are based on data, they typically focus on only one or two factors, not the complete package of who Millennials are and what they want. For example, Millennials have been described as needy and entitled. Their detractors say that is because life was easy for them when they were growing up, at least in comparison with their parents. On the other hand, many of their families experienced financial hardship as a result of economic and social shifts. So some people posit that these hardships make Millennials skeptical of organizations in general and authority within organizations in particular. They have been derided as disloyal, uncommitted and unwilling to work hard.

Those who work with and lead Millennials need an accurate picture of what the Millennials want from work and how organizations can benefit from that knowledge: a picture that is both nuanced and simple enough to be actionable.

This book introduces and explains the results of a series of projects conducted between 2008 and 2015. The data used are global and include a total of more than 25,000 responses from Millennials and more than 29,000 responses from older employees from 22 countries. The research included both surveys and fieldwork, numerous interviews and focus groups. Only those Millennials currently in the workforce were included, which means those born from 1980 to 1995. In addition, most stereotypes about the Millennial generation at work primarily

focus on a specific subset: people in professional, technical, managerial and executive positions who have college degrees (bachelor's or higher). The sample is not representative of all Millennials everywhere. It is, however, a very large sample of Millennials working in a range of organizations in professional or quasi-professional roles. This book speaks to the characteristics, behaviors, proclivities and desires of that group.

Fundamentally, Millennials want to do interesting work with people they enjoy, for which they are well paid, and still have enough time to live their lives as well as work. Everything you need to know about working with and managing Millennials follows from there.

You can provide an environment where Millennials can be both happy and effective without ruining your organization, if you focus on what actually is important to them. ●

Entitled and Hardworking

Most people have heard the complaint that Millennials act entitled. Many of the complaints about Millennials' sense of entitlement are focused in three areas:

- They want a life outside of work.
- They think they can say whatever they like.
- They don't want to do repetitive work.

Millennials Want a Life Outside of Work

A common reason Millennials are called entitled is because they want to have a fulfilling life in addition to work, and they want it now rather than some time in the future. More than half of Millennials say that their work



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often interferes with their personal lives in a way that makes it difficult to fulfill their personal responsibilities.

Part of the reason Millennials are so concerned about having enough time for their lives away from work is that they feel like they're never off the clock. The prevalence of smartphones and other devices means that employees can be contacted about work at any time — and often are. Millennials usually don't mind work interrupting their personal time, but if work is going to continue after hours, they expect to have enough time away from work demands so they don't have to postpone enjoying their lives now.

Millennials Think They Can Say What They Want

There has been a cultural change in the past 30 years in how acceptable it is for people lower in the hierarchy to express opinions directly to people higher up, and that includes younger people expressing their opinions to older people. Society in general is less formal today than it was a generation ago. People are much less likely to use formal titles when addressing each other. Within organizations there is a more open communication environment, fostered by encouraging lower-level employees to speak up, make contributions and point out problems to improve the business, regardless of their age or tenure with the organization.

Millennials reflect this cultural shift, with a strong majority believing employees should be able to disagree with their supervisor, even about something as sensitive as a performance appraisal. Millennials also believe that they should be able to be critical of their supervisor. Employees are more engaged with work when they are encouraged to contribute their ideas. These contributions are more useful when managers help employees learn how, where and when to speak up.

Millennials Don't Like Repetitive Work

While the majority of Millennials didn't say that their job was too routine, 20 to 25 percent of Millennials do believe that their jobs are too routine and don't have enough variety.

But the data show this is not simply a characteristic of Millennials. Nearly as many older staff believe that their job is routine (18 percent) or doesn't have enough variety (15 percent).

If being born Millennials does not cause people to think that their jobs are boring, what is the root cause? Data suggest that level within the organization is the root cause. The higher you are in the organization, the less routine

and lacking in variety your work is, regardless of your generation. Since Millennials are younger, they are more likely to be in lower-level jobs in the organization. The fact that Millennials in higher-level jobs are less likely than those in lower-level jobs to say that their work is repetitive is additional evidence for the point: thinking work is boring is not just a characteristic of Millennials; it is a characteristic of the work itself.

Entitled Doesn't Mean Lazy

Millennials may hold some expectations that cause people to accuse them of being entitled, but that doesn't mean they are lazy. In fact, Millennials as a group work very hard, are quite motivated and really want to contribute to their organizations. A study by Universum found that 39 percent wanted to learn new things on a daily basis, and 45 percent said they would spend time to learn new things if given the opportunity to prioritize.

Millennials work long hours: 56 percent work more than 9 hours a day, and 33 percent work more than 10 hours a day (the same is true for those older than Millennials).

More than half of Millennials said they were motivated to do their job because it would help them fulfill their career plans or because they enjoyed it. In addition, rather than perceiving themselves as being hired just to do a job, Millennials want to contribute to the organization as much as possible, even beyond the specific requirements of the job. They feel they should be speaking up and sharing their ideas, not only because it benefits them but also because it benefits the organization. ●

Needy and Independent

Many supervisors say that Millennials are needy because they want to know how they're doing all the time. They want to be provided with very specific criteria for success. They want a map to tell them precisely how to get from here to there (with here being their current state and there being nirvana, both personally and professionally), and when they don't get it, they are needy and clingy, wanting constant reassurance. At the same time, they are incredibly independent. They want coaching on how to achieve their goals, but they don't want to be told what to do (which is how they often perceive advice). Many of the complaints about Millennials being needy are focused in three areas:

- They want their parents involved.
- They want constant mentoring and assistance.
- They want frequent feedback.

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Do Millennials Want Their Parents Involved?

Parental involvement in one form or another is relatively common. Universum's global survey found that a quarter of Millennials surveyed said that they involved their parents in their career decisions, and a 2007 Michigan State University study found that about a third of large companies had witnessed parents being involved in their children's work lives.

The issue is really about the *level* of involvement. From what was found and heard during interviews, Millennials want their parents' help but don't want them closely involved. While there are many stories about parents helping Millennials find their first job, 90 percent of Millennials do not think parents should be involved in their child's job interviews, and 85 percent of Millennials do not think an organization should send parents a copy of their child's offer letter.

It is a good idea for organizations to provide information that anyone (including parents) can use to understand the organization. But it is not necessary — or even desired by most Millennials — for an organization to include parents in the hiring process and other aspects of the employment relationship.

While Millennials don't want their parents to take an active (interfering) role in their work lives, they do want support. Millennials perceive mentors as a support in their careers. They believe that a mentor will help them better negotiate the organization, plan their career, and open doors for them. Ninety-one percent of Millennials say they either have or want a mentor (the remaining 9 percent say they don't like their current mentor or don't want one). Millennials will be more engaged if they feel that they are getting enough mentoring in general, and enough support from their manager in particular.

Millennials Want Frequent Feedback

Millennials want to know how they are doing on a regular basis. This desire is following the tradition of Baby Boomers and Gen Xers, who challenged their bosses and organizations to provide more and better feedback for employees. It is consistent with Millennials' experience because many of them have grown up in a world where they received frequent feedback about how they were doing. While 54 percent of Millennials would like developmental feedback monthly or more frequently (daily or weekly), only 23 percent say they get feedback that frequently.

Managers should work on making sure that employees receive feedback at least every other week about the

work they are doing. The door should be left open for employees to ask for feedback about their work if they are wondering how something went. The feedback doesn't need to be extensive; often an acknowledgement of the work is enough.

Needy Does Not Mean Dependent

While Millennials want support, feedback, mentoring and appreciation, that doesn't make them dependent. They actually are being quite strategic. They think about what they need to be successful, and that's what they ask for.

Millennials believe that they have no choice but to be independent actors in their careers. Baby Boomers grew up watching their parents (the World War II generation) in a work world characterized by long organizational tenure, secure pension plans and organizational loyalty (employees staying with one organization for a long time were rewarded with steady, if slow, promotion). Millennials grew up in a different world altogether. They saw their parents (many of whom are Baby Boomers) deal with long hours, cutthroat competition, layoffs, wage stagnation and insecure retirement plans. They saw dependence on an organization as an invitation to be taken advantage of, rather than something that is rewarded. As a consequence, they are independent: They want control over their work, don't trust or defer to authority much and want their work to be flexible. ●

Do Good *and* Do Well

Millennials believe that their work should make a contribution to the world, not just make them money. Ninety-two percent say that making the world a better place is at least somewhat important to them. Eighty-eight percent of Millennials think that getting involved in community and charity efforts is at least somewhat important.

These percentages show that Millennials want to help; the question is why. A study published by the organization Achieve in 2013 found that Millennials gave a number of reasons they chose to volunteer. When asked, 79 percent of Millennials said it was because they were passionate about the issue, 56 percent said it was because they wanted to meet new people who were interested in the same issue, and 61 percent said it was to broaden their professional skills. So even when doing good, Millennials are thinking about how it fits in with their career strategy and how they as individuals can benefit from the volunteering.

Millennials don't want to help only as individuals; they think organizations should want to help their communities

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as well, and 97 percent believe it is important to work for an employer that shares their values. The good news is that the majority of Millennials believe that their organizations are socially responsible. In a 2014 study, Achieve reported that 92 percent felt they were working for “a company that was having a positive effect on the world.”

Doing Good Isn't a Higher Priority Than Doing Well

Yes, Millennials think doing good is important. However, it isn't their only — or even highest — priority. Ninety-two percent of Millennials believe their company has a positive effect on the world. On the other hand, only 34 percent say that they stay because of their company's mission. What that tells us is that doing good is important, but by itself it isn't a distinguishing enough factor for Millennials. Forty-three percent say compensation is extremely important, and 38 percent say it is very important.

This is definitely a “both/and” situation — Millennials want work that both enables them to contribute to society in positive ways and rewards them appropriately. One is not a substitute for the other. After all, most Millennials believe that their organizations are contributing, and they can move to other organizations that both make a contribution to the community and pay better. Therefore, emphasizing the organization's contributions to the community while being cheap on compensation isn't an effective strategy for attracting and retaining Millennials.

The primary reason Millennials are so focused on compensation is they have bills to pay. Debt is a significant concern. In 2013, 69 percent of Millennials graduating from university had student loans. For many Millennials in the United States, payments on student loans are their single largest monthly expense, so a primary concern for them is whether their compensation is high enough to live on after they have made their loan payments every month. ●

High Tech and High Touch

Millennials love their tech toys. They want the latest hardware and software. They have grown up with technology, starting at an earlier age than any previous generation. According to a 2010 report by the Pew Research Center, half of Millennials believe that new technology allows people to use their time more efficiently.

In some cases, what Millennials don't realize is that their tech “solution” is actually shifting the workload to others. So the high-tech solution that causes them less work

because they already know how to use the system causes more work for those who don't know the system or have to implement it. Managers need to explain the problem to Millennials if their preferred solution simply shifts the uninteresting work to other employees. Organizations and all employees will benefit if solutions can be found that reduce unnecessary drudgery.

Millennials Maintain Friendships Through Cyberspace

Perhaps one of the most hyperbolic stereotypes about the Millennial generation is that they are so connected to the Internet and social networking that they do almost all of their socializing that way. That of course is not true — most see their friends as well as texting, emailing and IMing them, rather than only interacting with them virtually.

But a 2010 study by the Pew Research Center reported that a majority of Millennials in the United States believe that new technology helps people stay closer to their friends and family. With the increase in global mobility, people are increasingly likely to live far away from their friends and family. Facebook, email, instant messaging, Instagram and Skype help them keep up with friends who are far away. Millennials say they are more likely to use phone, email and text messaging for connecting with friends they don't see very often.

Millennials report maintaining some social relationships almost exclusively through cyberspace. Twenty-nine percent say that they have friends they have met through the Web whom they haven't met in person, while 42 percent of Millennials say that they have friends they interact with only in cyberspace. This capacity will be an advantage to them in the long term, as organizations continue to become more dispersed. Organizations can leverage Millennials' ability to manage and maintain relationships through cyberspace by engaging in practices such as assigning them to work on geographically dispersed teams.

Millennials Are High Touch

One of the complaints often heard about Millennials is that they don't understand the importance of nonverbal communication in effectively understanding and communicating with others.

Data suggest that Millennials actually prefer face-to-face communication to other forms. In interviews, Millennials were clearly aware that they can have greater influence and improve the perception of themselves more through face-to-face interaction than through technology-mediated communication. When they think about how to communicate with others, they are balancing importance

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and expediency. If face-to-face communication will take substantially more effort than electronic, Millennials are likely to make a calculation about whether the importance of the communication merits the additional effort.

While technology is important, the human aspect of work is even more important. If Millennials don't feel emotionally connected to their workplace either through friends or team members or their boss, they are a flight risk. At work, they want friends, teams they feel friendly with, a boss who cares about them and an organization of which they feel part. Ninety-eight percent of Millennials say that developing close ties with co-workers is important to them. In fact, having friends and close co-workers at work is so important that it is strongly related to how committed a Millennial feels to the organization. Organizations benefit when they provide environments for Millennials that allow them to work with others on teams so they can develop the community at work that they need. ●

Committed *and* Leaving

Millennials are quite committed to their organizations. More than half say they are emotionally attached to the organization, about two-thirds say they enjoy discussing their organization with people outside it, and about two-thirds don't intend to leave. They clearly like the idea of a long, stable career.

One common complaint about Millennials is that they aren't driven, that they don't want to move to the top and run organizations. Research doesn't support that conclusion. A Pew study done in 2013 showed that 70 percent of Millennial men and 61 percent of Millennial women would like to be a top manager someday.

Committed Does Not Mean Stay No Matter What

Millennials may be committed to their organizations, but about a third say they are looking for other opportunities. Feeling overloaded is common among Millennials: 42 percent believe they can't get everything done on their job, and 49 percent believe that because of the workload, they cannot possibly do all their work well. Millennials are also very likely to say that they are looking to leave their organization if they believe (1) that there is a politically powerful group within their organization that no one ever crosses; (2) that it is easier to remain quiet than to fight the system; or (3) that pay and promotion are primarily based on organizational politics.

A majority of Millennials also think compensation is important and are dissatisfied with theirs. They think their pay and benefits are not fair recompense for the skills and effort they put into their work. Further, they believe they are underpaid in comparison with their peers within their own organization and in comparison with those at other organizations at the same job level.

Millennials will look for a new job that raises some aspect of their life to a higher level. They often look to improve their compensation, work-life balance, promotion and development opportunities or to find a sense of belonging to a community. Organizations that see retaining talent as a strategic advantage need to be aware of this desire to "level up" and provide options for employees that have this need. ●

What Millennials Want and How to Give It to Them

Millennials are remarkably similar around the world. They like their jobs and their organizations, and they largely want the same things: an interesting, high-paying, stable job and working with people they like, trust and feel appreciated by, in organizations that are socially responsible and value them enough to provide flexibility and opportunities for growth and promotion.

Many organizations have three primary goals for their talent management strategies for Millennials: attraction, engagement and retention. The three dimensions that help you achieve these objectives are

- The people (friends and mentors, team and boss);
- The work (interesting, meaningful and balanced);
- Opportunities (feedback and communication, development and pay).

The People: Friends, Mentors, Team, and Bosses

Friends. Organizations need to structure the workplace environment so Millennials can develop friendships with co-workers and have positive relationships with mentors, team members and their bosses. Create the conditions for friendships to flourish. Sports teams, interest groups and clubs are ways people with similar interests can get to know each other and perhaps become friends. Support community building at work.

Mentors. Set up formal mentoring programs, but encourage people to take on mentees outside of formal

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programs. Educate managers on promoting diversity and taking on mentees who are different from themselves.

Team. The team Millennials work with is incredibly important to them. They are the ones who, more than any others, can make or break Millennials' ability to get their jobs done right. Many effective teams are self-led. This does not mean zero supervision from outside the team. But it does mean that the leaders the team members report to need to create the conditions for the team to succeed, step in to help realign it as necessary, and get out of the way so the team can solve problems and resolve conflicts on its own as much as possible. Provide the resources the team needs to succeed, and hold everyone on the team both individually and jointly accountable for results.

Bosses. It is commonly said that people don't leave bad organizations, they leave bad bosses. This is just as true for today's Millennials as it is for Gen Xers and Baby Boomers. Don't just talk — listen, observe, and make sure Millennials know they are appreciated; trust and be trustworthy; set goals and hold Millennials accountable; provide mentoring and support; and be authentic.

The Work: Interesting, Meaningful, and Balanced

Interesting. There is no real substitute for interesting work. If the work is interesting, it doesn't require a lot of convincing or clever framing by management to make it palatable. Make sure Millennials are clear on the business reasons for the tasks they are given that they find boring, and show how what they do contributes to the organization's objectives. Outsourcing is an option to consider when Millennials complain about having too many routine and monotonous work tasks.

Encourage Millennials to provide ideas to improve work processes. Provide opportunities for Millennials to engage with the outside world (customers and stakeholders) through assignments in other locations (including overseas, if possible), task forces that enable them to interact with the community, jobs that expose them to different segments of your customer base and so on.

Meaningful. Broadly speaking, Millennials want to engage in doing work *they* feel is meaningful with organizations *they* believe are good corporate citizens. What precisely that means varies from one Millennial to another, but you can still implement strategies to meet their needs and create win-wins for both them and your organization. For example, connect the work the Millennials are doing to positive social outcomes. Offer company-sponsored volunteering. Do a better job of explaining

your organization's contributions relative to others in the same industry.

Balanced. If you pile so much work on Millennials' backs that they feel they have no time to live their lives, they'll do their best to get out from under the weight — just like the rest of your employees. Don't require face time for its own sake. Set up the systems so working off site is productive. Allow for flexible careers, and smooth out spikes in the workload.

Opportunities: Feedback and Communication, Development, and Pay

Organizations that want to attract and retain Millennials need to make sure to provide them with enough feedback, development and compensation for them to feel they are continuing to progress even as they stay with the same organization.

Feedback and communication. Millennials want to know what they need to do to be successful. At the same time, Millennials don't want to be micromanaged (who does?). So remember to approach them with guidance and coaching, not command-and-control dictates. Provide feedback as a normal part of the workflow, not as an annual event. Two-way communication is important. Help Millennials learn how to speak their truth, constructively. Have important career-related conversations with Millennials in person, and help Millennials learn to have conversations others consider to be important in person.

Career development. Provide Millennials with good development opportunities, or be prepared for them to go elsewhere to find them. Help Millennials realize that they'll learn the most on the job. Have a plan for developing them, and make it clear that development is about growing in position as much as it is about moving on to the next promotion. Also, don't ignore the B players.

Pay. The question is not whether Millennials will find information about their pay from nontraditional sources; it's what the sources of that information will be and how accurate they are. The more transparent you can be about your organization's pay practices, the better.

Understand that compensation first and foremost pays the bills and is also a measure of value and self-worth. You can underpay people you don't work very hard, and you can overwork people you pay really well. But you can't underpay *and* overwork employees for very long before they'll decide to go somewhere else.

Seize control of the conversation about pay back from the Internet. Pay transparency is increased by what's available online, but the quality of the information can be very

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poor. Also, for Millennials, compensation isn't just how much shows up in their pay packets every two or four weeks. It is also about their development, how appreciated they are made to feel through nonmonetary means, how much they are expected to work, how much flexibility they have, whether they see taking less now as paying back over time, and so on. ●

Looking to the Future

Current research and the past experiences of other generations suggest what organizations should be thinking about and planning for with regard to Millennials in the future:

Starting a career during a recession depresses total career earnings. A large part of the Millennial generation has come of age during an era encompassing two very different economic environments: the moderate growth of the early 2000s followed by the Great Recession of 2007, the effects of which will take many years to play out. The research on the long-term impact of starting work during an economic downturn indicates that people who enter the labor market during economic hard times make less than those who start during an economic boom for at least a decade, if not longer. In a difficult economy, there are fewer good jobs to choose from. The jobs that people are able to find when they enter the workforce don't pay as well or offer the same breadth of developmental opportunities as the jobs available in a growing economy. Therefore they start at lower pay in a less optimal job, and that starting point can affect the rest of their career.

Millennials will live longer and be less economically secure in retirement. Today in the United States, life expectancy for both men and women has increased, to age 84.3 for men and age 86.6 for women. The question currently being debated is how to pay for retirement, as there are concerns about whether the current programs are sustainable in the long run and at what level.

For most Millennials, there is not going to be a pot of gold at the end of the career rainbow. While global poverty has been reduced over the past four decades, the United States, the United Kingdom and many other industrialized societies have had increases in within-group inequality. This means that among groups of people who have similar education or who work in the same field or occupation, the differences between the winners and (relative) losers grew larger. The wages of college-educated workers also have been affected by the proliferation of the Internet and high-speed communications, which allow knowledge work that used to stay

within national borders to be shopped around the world to the lowest bidder.

The high cost of education reduces choices. In the United States, the cost of college continues to increase faster than inflation. As a consequence, Millennials are facing rising education costs and student debt in a labor market where they cannot be assured that choosing a historically lucrative occupation will provide them with the financial outcomes they could have anticipated in the past. This will increase strain on Millennials as they set up their households and move on to their midcareer jobs.

Millennials form families later, which impacts the timing of their career flexibility. In the United States, Millennials are getting married later, buying homes later and having children later. This results in increased flexibility in their early career years — flexibility to take more risks, work more hours, change jobs when they don't like them, take advantage of opportunities overseas, and so on. However, Millennials' increased flexibility early in their careers will be balanced by less flexibility later on. Organizations that want to keep the best and brightest Millennials must be prepared to be flexible in their career demands.

Greater connectivity in their personal lives may make employees more mobile for work. With technology more prevalent and able to help people keep in touch, it is easier to move to other cities, countries or continents and still keep up with friends and family. Millennials are particularly good at staying in touch with loved ones, even if they don't get to see them in person. This skill gives Millennials the flexibility to be highly mobile. The good news for organizations is that this fits well with a world where work is done ever more by people in far-flung locations who work together virtually.

Remember, the more solutions you can find that work for both employees of all generations and for the organization, the better off everyone will be . . . including you! ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *What Millennials Want from Work*, you'll also like:

1. ***The 2020 Workplace*** by **Jeanne C. Meister, Karie Willyerd**. Meister and Willyerd present a functional guide to help you and your organization create tomorrow's workplace of choice.
2. ***Leadership 2030*** by **Georg Vielmetter, Yvonne Sell**. Vielmetter and Sell present six converging megatrends that will reshape businesses by the year 2030.
3. ***Making Diversity Work*** by **Sondra Thiederman**. Thiederman provides managers with step-by-step strategies for minimizing conscious and unconscious bias and maximizing the ability to manage diversity effectively.