IT SEEMS THERE IS a shorthand for every generation. Baby Boomers are idealistic. Generation X was defined by MTV; Generation Y by the Internet. But then you come to the Millennials, and the shorthands fall away.

Millennials believe that work should be fun and that dues-paying is for suckers. They are willing to sacrifice confidentiality for social connection. Although they can seem shallow, noble causes motivate them. And despite the fact that some (generally older) people may be tempted to label them the “Slacker Generation,” they have a clear and purposeful sense of how they want to live their lives.

Understanding Millennials requires getting comfortable with conundrums and paradoxes, and being willing to accept that opinions Millennials hold may seem initially to be in opposition.

If you really want to understand Millennials, you need to allow your mind to freewheel. Be like the inventors of vaccines, whose breakthrough came in the form of a paradoxical concept: The way to prevent an illness is to expose people to it. Or think like the people charged with protecting the homeland, who realize that in order to devise effective safeguards against terrorism, it’s necessary to accept that terrorists are willing to die for their cause.

In the case of Millennials, the realization required is equally fundamental, especially for a Baby Boomer like me. And it’s this: Millennials don’t want to be like us.

They do not strive for the things we have accepted as gospel. That everyone wants to get ahead at work. That work, in fact, is the means to a better life. That privacy is something to be held dear. It can be very hard, but understanding Millennials requires parking these preconceptions—and many more—at the door.

This is a cohort worth getting to know, if for no other reason than the numbers: In Europe alone, some 51 million Millennials are expected to join the workforce in the next ten years, while 48 million Baby Boomers will retire. Beyond the numbers, however, it is the fundamental complexity of Millennials that makes them so interesting.

So set your personal worldview aside, temporarily remove the phrase “but of course, everyone wants X” from your vocabulary, and get ready to take a deep dive into a generation that defies a shorthand. —GARY STOCKMAN
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GENERATION
WHAT?
You’ve heard of Baby Boomers, you’ve heard of Generation X, and you’ve probably heard of Generation Y, increasingly known as Millennials. And if you have a questioning attitude, or have tried to dig deeper, you may have wondered: Do these generations really exist as distinctive cohorts? Or have sociologists, marketers and journalists conspired together to create something to talk about?

In some cases, identifying a generation is easy. Take U.S. Baby Boomers. More than 15 million American servicemen returned from the Second World War in 1945, and sure enough, there were 399,499 live births in October 1946, compared to 222,721 in January of that year, according to Wikipedia. By decade’s end, about 32 million babies had been born, up from about 24 million in the 1930s. Annual births surpassed 4 million in 1954, and that rate lasted until 1965. By then, 40% of Americans were younger than 20.

Although Baby Boomers are typically defined as adults born between 1946 and 1964, generations tend to blur from one to the next. In the post-war United States alone, people talk of Boomers, Generation Jones (a.k.a. late Boomers or Tweeners), Generation X, Generation X/Y Cusp (a.k.a. the MTV Generation or Boomerang Generation) Generation Y (a.k.a. Millennials, Echo Boomers or Generation Next), Generation Z and Generation I. That’s seven generations in just over 60 years.

Identifying a generation is meant to make it possible to understand what common influences shaped them and how those influences translate into their attitudes, behaviors and preferences. So are those seven generations in the United States, or comparable generations in other countries, truly distinct from one another? Do they have consistent attitudes and behaviors? Or do region, education level and socioeconomic status blur the differences?

What’s sure is that Millennials are a demographic bulge, not just in the U.S. but throughout the West. In Europe, Millennials (defined as people between the ages of 14 and 31) number more than 186 million, compared with 160 million in Generation X (ages 32 to 43). In the UK, Gen Y is 16 million, compared with 13 million in Gen X. The difference is most pronounced in the United States, with more than 75 million in Gen Y and about 40 million in Gen X. What’s also sure is that they’re different from their predecessors in significant ways.

Some of those ways are increasingly consistent across national borders. As Western culture and values are spreading around the world, and as the middle class grows in countries like China and India, we’re seeing Millennials everywhere adopting the same traits. Some young adults in these rising economies are starting to display a sense of entitlement, technology savvy/dependency, an expectation of instant gratification and admirable social activism.

In traditional societies, this is an especially radical change.

But the full effects this bulge will have on corporate and consumer culture are yet to be determined. Millennials are blurring the boundaries between public and private, personal and professional, work and play, and reality and virtuality. Will things return to business as usual as the Millennials mature? Is this new, casual attitude toward formality a passing fad? Or are we on the verge of a paradigm shift? We don’t know—no one does, really. But we do know that we should be fostering Intelligent Dialogue by asking smart questions.

This white paper poses five central questions about these newest entrants into the workforce and includes perspectives from their managers, their Gen X colleagues and Millennials themselves, as well as a list of top tips for managing these workers. It explores the factors that have shaped a generation of young people, the ways those people are increasingly making their professional marks and what it all might mean for workplaces in the years to come.
Millennials are the children of Baby Boomers, a generation whose attitudes toward life were deeply influenced by events of the 1960s: Civil Rights, Women’s Lib, the rise of rock-and-roll and its rebellious icons, and widespread questioning of established authority. Baby Boomers were going to make the world a better place and fix human beings. Their children were part of the project, even if Boomers occasionally got distracted by themselves. (Remember: Tom Wolfe’s seminal essay “The Me Generation and the Third Great Awakening” was published about them in 1976.)

Millennials grew up surrounded by technology and entertainment. Even more than with previous generations, screens have been (and continue to be) one of their main ways of interfacing with their world: TV and movie screens, but also game consoles, computers and mobile phones. Millennials came of age at a time when fun and media savvy were becoming mantras for marketers, educators and anyone in the business of influence. They were also the first generation to see widespread consumer adoption of time-shifting devices—voice mail, VCRs—that splintered the shared cultural “moments” of the Baby Boomers and ended the era of shared adult/child entertainment experiences such as Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In and Hawaii Five-O.

Perhaps more significant, they were growing up as prosperity was spreading and globalization was kicking in. The Berlin Wall came down in 1989, and the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991—just as Millennials were becoming aware of current events. The capitalist-communist division of the world was disappearing fast. This, coupled with technology, meant that products, media, ideas and money were moving more freely across borders. Brands and the multinational corporations that own them were going global, riding and helping to sustain a wave of prosperity and plenty that continued with barely a blip for nearly two decades.

Pearl Harbor, McCarthy, JFK, nuclear winter, the Munich Olympics, Watergate, Berlin in 1989. What seems to set Millennials apart is that the events coinciding with their coming of age, such as 9/11 and the Second Gulf War, failed to produce a fundamental philosophical divide about the kind of world they want to live in and how to get there, compared to the landmarks for previous generations. In some difficult-to-define sense, the ramparts for Millennials lie within, erected to cope with social and personal undercurrents—growing up with divorce, redefining personhood and purpose without the guard rails of gender-based and prescribed relationship structures. Sometimes this seems to present as narcissism or self-involvement. Should we be surprised?

—Peter Hirsch, Global Corporate Affairs Leader, New York
decades—a wave that meant an entire generation that has known nothing but good times and is accustomed to getting what they want.

How independent are Millennials?

In the 1960s, “Don’t trust anyone over 30” was a popular slogan. Teenagers and early 20-something Baby Boomers portrayed parents as uncool objects of scorn. They challenged authority. And some of them are still challenging figures of authority, but now they’re doing it as parents, on behalf of their children. Colleges, universities and even employers are reporting an increasing prevalence of “helicopter parents” who hover over their grown children.

A certain amount of this protectiveness might be expected in academic institutions; the students may be in their late teens or early 20s, but they’re still in school and happy with being treated as “adultescents.” Hyperinvolved parents are calling professors to complain about their children’s grades and pestering administrators about their living arrangements. With mobile phones, parents are always at hand (literally) to console, reassure and even to fight for their child against faculty or other students.

What’s more surprising is how this is continuing into the workplace. Betty Smith, a university recruiting manager at HP, told USA Today that parents are contacting the firm directly and asking about issues such as benefits on behalf of their adult children—and their children aren’t embarrassed by it. HR departments and managers are increasingly confronted with parents’ opinions about everything from career progression to business trips.

Dr. Paul Redmond, head of the careers and employability service at Liverpool University in the UK, wrote an article about helicopter parents for the Guardian early this year. He reported that British universities have hired “family liaison officers” to help parents “settle in.” And the hovering continues after graduation: “Several high-profile graduate recruiters have reported incidents lately where parents have contacted them to negotiate a son or daughter’s starting salary. Others have had parents contact them to complain about a ‘child’ who has been overlooked for promotion.... Bob Athwal, graduate recruitment manager at RWE npower, says: ‘Once an offer of
MILLENIALS say

I think older managers need to realize that we are used to doing a lot at once. We really have mastered multitasking. Many of us went through school texting/talking online with friends while studying for exams.... Our generation really is full of excellent communicators. We have all grown up using AIM, e-mail and cell phones with texting. There isn’t a day for most of us where we aren’t using these tools to communicate with friends and family. At PN I noticed that teams use AIM to communicate with one another. Personally, I found this to be an excellent use of the tool to work with associates quickly. I also think it saves time and helps work to get done faster. —NICOLE OSUCH, Intern, Cabrini College, class of 2009
Smart Talk

Millennials are very different, especially vs. Boomers but also different vs. Gen X’ers. Whereas many Boomers and Gen X’ers live an “it’s all about me” existence, Millennials are more about building things up and not tearing them down; more about unification than an “I win, you lose” approach to life, politics and work. Interacting with each other defines this generation vs. the Boomers, who are more heads-down in the workplace, positioning themselves for the next big opportunity. The collegial approach we are seeing from many Millennials is extremely refreshing.

—Jim Barbagallo, Partner, Managing Director, Boston

One corollary of this extended parental involvement is that Millennials are more likely than other generations to need (or at least respond to) “parenting” by employers and managers—coaching, mentoring, encouragement and lots of praise. According to Mary Crane, who specializes in helping Millennials adjust to the conventions of the non-Millennial world: “The Boomers do need to hear the message that they’re gonna have to start focusing more on coaching rather than bossing. With this generation in particular, if you just tell them, ‘You got to do this, you got to do this, you got to do this,’ they truly will walk. And every major law firm, every major company knows, this is the future.”

How significant is the digital factor?

Since the end of the Second World War, there has been no single event that impacted and shaped a whole generation on an international scale. But there’s one massive, if gradual, change that has arguably created a generational chasm around the world: the arrival of digital interactive technology in the mainstream.

It’s hard to pinpoint the date when digital interactive technology became the norm, because it’s been infiltrating for the last three decades. The first compact discs carrying digitized music were released in 1982, and by that decade’s end, they had become the dominant medium for music. (At least until MP3s came along in the late ’90s.) Video games hit the mainstream in the 1980s. Personal computers (PCs) have been a fixture of everyday
life since the mid-’80s, and Time magazine named the computer its Person of the Year for 1982. A decade later, many millions of ordinary people were dialing up Internet connections and toting mobile phones.

The digital interactive tipping point, if there was one, was probably in the early 2000s, when mainstream consumers adopted and integrated the technologies into their life: broadband Internet, MP3 music, digital cameras and smart phones (BlackBerries et al.). People of all ages use these technologies now, but Millennials, who’ve never known life without them, use them “natively.”

Do Digital Natives think differently?

There is a certain irony that while many Millennials need parental hand-holding in the real world, in the digital world it’s Millennials who tend to do the hand-holding. These Digital Natives grew up using digital technology, and they’re often acting as guides for Digital Immigrants—people who entered the digital world as adults. While they may be adept at using technology, they resemble immigrants who learn the new language but keep traces of their mother tongue and culture.

While there are exceptions, in general, Digital Immigrants seek text before images, video and sound, while Natives seek images, video and sound before text. Digital Immigrants like their information delivered in a linear, logical sequence, but Digital Natives prefer random access to hyperlinked information—and in some cases have a difficult time constructing a rational chain of consequence. Immigrants are prepared to accept deferred rewards, while Natives expect instant gratification.

Danny Devriendt, a director at Porter Novelli Brussels, has taken a special interest in the divide between Digital Immigrants and Digital Natives. He says, “Lots of clients struggle to deal with the Digital Natives among their own workforce and struggle even more to communicate with the Millennial communities that are slowly becoming their new customers.”

Peter Hirsch, head of Porter Novelli’s Corporate Affairs discipline, based in New York, cautions that, “I do not think we really have the faintest idea what the actual implications of the Native/Immigrant divide are. What we do know is that Millennials have spent a lot more time than Baby Boomers interacting with devices that are very stupid relative to human beings. You have to be very literal with devices to make them work for you, and this leaves very little room for nuanced interaction. Devices also don’t have emotional/psychological reactions—it is an “affectless” transaction. Does this change the way Millennials communicate with actual people?”

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**SMART TALK**

I’ve seen that Millennials are quite different from our generation (I’m 42) both on a personal and on a professional level:

- Their long-term planning is really a short-term scope of vision, most of the time several months, one year at most.

- It’s a Me, Me, Me generation, where the most important target is themselves in all aspects of life, including time management, spending and overall priorities. The sense of belonging is very important if they choose to belong to a certain group or tribe.

- Friends are one of the most important influences Millennials have, and being “cool” is a must, understanding “coolness” as an attitude that reflects lack of complications, “traveling light” through the journey of life.

- Millennials do not believe they need to start at the bottom of the pyramid and work hard to earn a better position. They believe the organization owes them more and more over a very short period of time: better positions, better salaries, more responsibilities and LOTS of recognition. Millennials need and expect far more recognition than our generation.

- Millennials have very little tolerance for frustration.

—Sandra Kleinburg, Managing Partner, Martec Porter Novelli, Mexico
**Millennials** say

Our generation grew up with encouragement and that is what the young adults of this generation expect from their working environment. Companies need to focus on creating a healthy working environment, one that does not overly criticize, but that gives constructive criticism and recognizes achievements. —Shoshana Hochdorf, Intern, University of Florida, class of 2009
1. Demonstrate (frequently) how what they’re doing contributes to a larger mission and adds value. Reinforce their need to have a sense of purpose, to make a difference. —Wendy Hagen, Partner, Director, Planning & Integration, Washington DC

2. Millennials believe they can run the show better than you can. Great! Harness their belief in their ability to lead by giving them projects they can run with. Empower them to take it where they think it should go—or at least to put their own personal imprint on it. They’ll feel like they’re a critical part of the mix and will be more likely to push themselves to deliver the very best they’ve got. —John Hollywood, SVP, New York

3. The Millennial lifestyle feeds off constant communication. Managers need to stay connected with Millennials by providing regular direction and on-the-spot feedback so they feel a strong bond with the manager and the team. —Albie Jarvis, SVP, Boston

4. Don’t fall into the “parent trap.” A wise mentor beat into me that work is not the same as group therapy. If you treat people like children, you get what you deserve. Everyone, regardless of age, needs to know what is expected of them, and what the consequences of not doing it will be. —Michael Ramah, Partner, Director of Strategic Planning, New York

5. Meet face-to-face when giving an assignment and set clear expectations of when the next checkpoints will be—literally putting them in your calendar with them in the room. Knowing when feedback will come seems to help a great deal. —Angie Schneider, SVP, Seattle

6. Give them plenty of committees and teams—they are very social, like to work with “friends” and place great stock in sense of community. —Linda Hadley, EVP, Erica Swerdlow, EVP, Charlie Simpson, SVP, and Wendi Taylor Nations, EVP, Chicago

7. Know your audience (that is, your team member)—and that means get to know them, their motivators and their goals so you can provide guidance, projects and feedback that is meaningful to them. —Lisa Davidson, Partner, EVP, Health Care, New York

8. Give them room to stretch beyond their job specs. Remove some of the traditional boundaries to higher-level performance opportunities. —Bill Schreiber, Managing Director, Sacramento

9. Be patient with the iPod/earphones multitasking. It’s the Millennials’ way of life, and they are much better team players than we ever were. —Ellen Field, EVP, Health and Social Marketing, Washington DC

10. Work has to be engaging, fun and flexible. It should not be overly repetitious and must allow for work-life balance. We need to regularly celebrate modest, as well as big, successes. —Marion E. Glick, SVP, Health Care Media Relations, New York

11. Be prepared to explain that success and privileges will not happen overnight; add that you know this is frustrating but it’s the way business works. —Sandra Kleinburg, Managing Partner, Martec Porter Novelli, Mexico

12. Millennials want responsibility. Give it to them, along with the permission to fail, but make sure they know they have you (their manager) as a safety net. —Mike Gallagher, SVP, Creative Director, Washington DC
13. Working below and above your title is not only good for business, it also shows that no job is beneath anyone. If paying dues is an issue, seeing a senior staffer stuff media kits can be a good reminder that with client service, hard work at every level is key. —Trevor Campbell, President, Porter Novelli Canada

14. Nurture the Millennials’ confident self-image. Encourage their “conquer the world” approach to life. Put challenge after challenge in their path. —Jim Barbagallo, Partner, Managing Director, Boston

15. Acknowledge and harness the benefits of Millennials’ tendency toward somewhat impulsive action (or immediate fix): Assign projects that involve overlapping multitasking skills and consider tighter deadlines so they don’t get distracted. —Betsy Stephenson, SVP, Washington DC

16. The boundary between professional and personal doesn’t exist. Get to know the Millennial personally without falling into the “friendship trap.” —Peter Hirsch, Global Corporate Affairs Leader, New York

17. This is a bright, fearless generation. They’re technology savvy and used to a 24/7 environment. Use their strengths to the agency’s competitive advantage by providing them with compelling challenges, clarity and regular feedback. —Chris Bailey, Creative Director, London

18. Get comfortable with Instant Messaging. Millennials may take hours to get back to you via voice mail, but will respond instantly to IM. —Christine Gerstle, SVP, New York

19. Millennials have heavy school debts to repay. They respond well to money! —Pam Maddalena, SVP, Talent Acquisition, Boston

20. Consistently look for and provide opportunities for learning and growth above and beyond the everyday assigned work. —Lisa Dieter, SVP, Health Care Practice, New York

21. Millennials love to ask “Why?” and work most productively when they fully understand the end goal of a project. Millennials seem much more engaged and deliver a better product when they clearly see how assigned tasks contribute to accomplishing a larger goal, especially if it is one they personally believe in. —Carolyn Tieger, Partner, Managing Director, Washington, DC

22. Set them free: Career tracking is about building a meaningful portfolio of professional experiences for them, and at the speed of light. Lose the rhetoric about how to progress through the organization. If a Millennial needs to take a detour to build that portfolio, embrace that—even facilitate it. The dividend will be more enriched “boomerang” management candidates down the road. —Julie Winskie, President, Chief Client Officer, New York

23. Remember to jolt them out of their default world of electronic communication from time to time. It’s great to see the realization among Millennial colleagues about how much more can be gained from a well-planned face-to-face meeting as opposed to a series of e-mails or IM exchanges. Our business is about relationships, the richer the better. —Neil Bayley, Director, Porter Novelli UK, Banbury

24. Respect and value the fact that Millennials come to the workforce with real experience and genuine content knowledge garnered from their long résumés filled with travel, internships, community service and, of course, from their constant interaction with digital devices and media. Give younger workers a real seat at the table by actively seeking their input and giving meaty assignments. —Suzanne Gabriel, Partner, Deputy Managing Director, New York
BIG QUESTION

WHAT HAPPENS TO CONFIDENTIALITY IN AN AGE OF RADICAL TRANSPARENCY?

SMART TALK

Millennials are different from the X generation: 9 to 5 mentality, social life is important/work-life balance, high salary demands, management demands (coaching by the best senior people) and constantly looking for new challenges.

—Frank Peters,
Managing Partner, Amsterdam

Two defining and mutually reinforcing characteristics of Millennials are their focus on friends and their intense use of digital interactive technology to stay in contact. In the pre-digital era, people relied on letters, telephone calls and face-to-face meetings to stay in touch. These took time and effort, and were limiting in place. Now people (especially Millennials) have a much bigger range of options that are instantaneous, very easy and independent of location: mobile phone calls, text messages, Instant Messaging, social networking sites, e-mail, blogs, Flickr and Twitter.

These new communications technologies have two other characteristics that may be less beneficial: They can be reproduced and spread rapidly and widely, and their content can hang around a long time. This means that hastily composed e-mails, rashly expressed blog posts or Facebook photos of drunken indiscretions may turn up on hard
drives, servers and caches years later, at an inopportune moment.

In other words, the more people interact on the Internet, the more risk they’re exposing themselves to—especially if they’re using anything less than a lawyer’s discretion. Faced with the prospect of being revealed to anyone and everyone, some people adopt a deliberately low-profile “stealth” approach. But that’s much rarer among Millennials. They grew up with US Weekly and TMZ—they’re used to warts-and-all celebrity coverage—and with web passwords rather than padlocked diaries. Millennials consider it normal to be “real” on the Internet, even if, according to a Pew survey in the U.S., 72% think that their generation posts too much personal information online.

Millennials have grown up in an era of radical transparency. The nature of digital content, and the deep reach of digital media, makes it virtually impossible for anything in digital form to be kept private. Whether or not they are concerned about their own online activities catching up with them, Millennials are less likely than previous generations to be shocked by other people’s online behavior. (Besides, after the online exploits of Paris Hilton, Tila Tequila and lonelygirl15, what could be shocking?)

How does employees’ online behavior affect employers?

More than any of their forebears, Millennials live out a significant part of their lives online or through digital interactive technology. For them, the line between private and public is increasingly blurred. This raises a number of concerns for employers—and for the employees themselves. If they look hard enough, they’re almost certain to find things out about current or prospective employees.

In pre-digital days, would companies have run exhaustive and intrusive background checks on prospective employees? Probably not. Yet now they can sniff around without much effort. In a growing number of industries, googling a job candidate is de rigueur, as is viewing his or her MySpace and Facebook pages. Should employers dig up this online dirt on potential hires? Well, if they don’t, chances are someone else will. In any case, employers would be wise to assume that sooner or later, delicate information will turn up. Consider the case of Jessica Cutler (a.k.a. the Washingtonienne), a 26-year-old Congressional aide who was fired in 2004 after blogging about her simultaneous affairs with other Hill staffers and a chief of staff at a federal agency and gleefully asserting that some of them paid her for sex.

What are the ramifications for professional confidentiality?

Employees’ personal revelations and transparency in the digital media space may be their own business. But what happens if they bring the same spirit of radical transparency to their work?

Gossiping about coworkers in a bar is one thing, and people have done it for decades. Discussing them online is another matter; now, for the first time, there’s a virtually permanent,
**Gen X’ers say**

I think Digital Natives can process a lot of information from dozens of sources at a time, but at the same time, I think they can be (for lack of a better term) a little ADD. Digital Natives, particularly in PR, should be leveraged for knowledge of emerging technologies/techniques of communication. These things are moving so fast now: Friendster in—Friendster out; Facebook in. It feels like overnight. Texting. IM’ing. Twittering. YouTube. Hulu. BlackBerries. iPhones. It’s just SO fast.  

—Amy Inzanti, Senior Strategic Planning Manager, New York
endlessly forwardable record. Yet for Millennials, the distinction isn’t so clear. To them, digital technology is just another way of hanging out with their friends; on the new continuum of personal communication, there aren’t separate rules for in-person and online exchanges—even if there are sometimes separate consequences. As reported in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, Heather Armstrong was fired in 2002 after blogging about her superiors and her “attempts to slack on the job,” setting a precedent for others to be terminated for online misbehavior and coining a new verb: to dooce, meaning fire an employee because of his or her blog.

She has lots of company. According to a 2007 survey by the messaging security company Proofpoint, as reported in blog post (what else) on *Wired.com*, “Nearly ten percent of companies have fired an employee for violating corporate blogging or message board policies, and 19 percent have disciplined an employee for the same infractions. Almost a third of companies ‘employ staff to read or otherwise analyze outbound email.’... A quarter have fired an employee for violating corporate email policies. Twenty percent of the companies and almost thirty percent of companies with more than 20,000 employees had been ordered by a court or a regulator to turn over employee emails.”

Intellectually, Millennials may well understand that the prevailing business world expects employees to treat certain business matters as confidential and handle others with discretion. But can that override the instinct for transparency?
**MILLENNIALS say**

Older managers should not be afraid to show a more affable side to their employees. This will allow their young talent to be comfortable in contributing to the team from the very beginning. A younger employee who can feel a certain sense of comfort around his or her older managers is happier and ultimately more productive, while still respecting the manager's position and authority.

—KEYA RAHNEMOON, Intern, State University of New York–Binghamton, class of 2009
Similarly, employers may well expect employees of any age to treat their work confidentially. But how realistic is that assumption when younger employees’ conversations are held in the (semi-)public digital space, and when this rising generation of workers expects to have no secrets? Should corporations try to prevent employees from doing anything in their private lives that might discredit the organization, or should they try to build employees’ loyalty by better aligning the workplace with workers’ private lives. This is a fundamental conflict, and they can’t have it both ways.

How can employers harness Millennials’ online habits?

The world is increasingly going digital and interactive, and that’s the “language” that Millennials “speak” fluently. Any brand or corporation that wants to stay connected with the world needs to learn that language, too. One of the best ways for any business to get up to speed is to put its own Millennials close to the heart of the digital action.

For hiring, too, corporations need to hang out and connect where their potential new employees are hanging out and connecting—online. For example, in the United States, AT&T recently added a “Work With Me” Facebook application (in which the company uses its employees’ Facebook networks to push jobs), and plans to launch a new recruiting website with animated navigation, employee video profiles and a preview of the company’s new products. “Some 74% of U.S. Internet users view video online, and we’ll tap into that interest to give prospective job candidates a glimpse of what our jobs entail,” says Scott Smith, VP of staffing for AT&T. “Our online recruitment strategies are rapidly evolving, and there is no question that we will continue to see increased use of these types of tactics as we, out of necessity, become more creative in how we attract talent.”

Even the most careful online participant leaves an easy-to-follow trail of activities that are accessible by friend and foe alike. There’s a two-sided debate going on, in particular in Asia: portability of information from one social networking site to another vs. privacy concerns. The issue will not be resolved quickly, and there will likely be a radical, divisive split between those who want mobility and those who want confidentiality. This could result in two different social networking models—one for each camp, with the Millennials falling to the side of transparency, for better or worse.

—Ed Dixon, Managing Director, Porter Novelli Singapore
One of the Baby Boomers’ legacies is the notion that any activity should include some fun and entertainment. This line of thought is a standard ploy in marketing, with “fun-size” packages, entertaining advertising and high-touch retail concepts. It’s mainstream in education, started by Sesame Street and present in thousands of interactive learning games; it’s a must-have in cars, with on-board computers, DVD players and TV screens for the kids. (Even New York City taxis have TVs these days!) Even more serious segments of journalism are feeling increasing pressure to include lively graphics, mood music and dramatizations; it can sometimes take a second to discern whether you’re watching CNN or MTV.

In Silicon Valley, the American heartland of the Millennial generation, companies have to compete for Millennials’ typical talents: digital smarts, creativity and a “random access” hyperlinked approach to projects. And tech companies are at the forefront of snagging talent by offering Millennial treats in the workplace: casual dress codes, massages, ping-pong tables, putting greens, games facilities, bean-bag corners, in-office happy hours and regular social events.

Typical of the Valley ethos is Smugmug, a successful subscription-only photo-sharing site now in its sixth year. The privately owned site, founded and run by father-and-son team Chris and Don MacAskill, prides itself on its fun approach. Staff still work in cubicles, but they’re given an allowance to decorate them any way they want—a growing trend. The effort of Smugmug staffer Mark MacAskill won the 2008 Coolest Cubicle Contest run by the tech blog Lifehacker. Commenting on his cubicle, which he decked out with camouflage, like a military bunker, he told Lifehacker: “The war on terror is second only to the war on boredom. And my cube was
Digital Natives can be a challenge to managers because the ease with which work can be done digitally can instill a particular laziness that arises when tangible work needs to be done. This could mean that nondigital work is done slower than it should be done or that there is a resentment and lack of motivation when doing tangible work. Digital Natives are a managerial opportunity because when digital work is required, it can be completed extremely efficiently and with the least possible error. Digital Natives can best be leveraged for their ability to rapidly communicate and acquire information. Also, they can be a good internal resource by teaching those who are not Digital Natives how to feel comfortable with all things digital. —CASSIE DURAND, Intern, Wake Forest University, class of 2008
How does Millennial employees’ need for fun impact more traditional businesses?

Fun and play are conducive to learning and creativity. Upping the fun quotient makes sense for businesses where creativity is high in the mix, such as technology, media, fashion and entertainment. But what about industries where method, process and rigor are more important? How comfortable would you feel knowing that your defense attorney, surgeon or air traffic controllers have a lot of fun at work? If you’re much older than 30, you may not feel all that great about it. At the very least, you may wonder whether it’s appropriate. If you’re a Millennial, you’re more likely to wonder why anyone would object to people having fun at work.

Is creating more fun for Millennials at work a cop-out, or is it a way to harness untapped smarts?

The traditional command-and-control approach to work certainly got things done for decades. But did it make the best of employees’ capabilities? Or did it fall short in harnessing their capacity to learn, innovate and make valuable contributions?

These questions are the subject of much debate. A segment last year on the American TV program 60 Minutes, titled “The Millennials Are Coming,” prompted a flurry of heated online exchanges. One post made this comment about the old style of business: “Grandpa’s work ethic was to keep the assembly line running regardless of reality. Chrysler filed bankruptcy under that work ethic—200,000 finished cars rotting at the end of an assembly line going full-speed, 3 shifts. Great work ethic—bust your butt to crank out automobiles that will rust in inventory."

By contrast, engineer-turned-entrepreneur David Hall, chief executive of HFL Ltd. in the UK (and a Boomer), believes that playfulness and creativity have a vital role in the workplace, even when it comes to serious businesses. He took a British government-owned laboratory with a monopoly in drug-testing racehorses and turned it into an innovative and award-winning private company. Along with his “day job,” he consults widely on fostering playfulness and creativity to generate moneymaking innovation.

Smart Talk

Having fun together is one of the Millennials’ objectives, so “management by fun” is clearly essential. Employers are paying more attention to location: Is the place central? If not, employers have developed a range of services to facilitate life in the workplace. PN in France is opening a sun bar—a “luminotherapia” area where people are going to be able to have a break and take their daily quota of “sunlight” even in winter. Music has also entered the office with the Internet and iPods. Nevertheless, having fun at work is not something you can demand or even advise. It’s only something top management can facilitate, sometimes provoke, and for sure let spread by itself.

—Christelle Coche-Dupeuble, Managing Director, Porter Novelli France
**MILLennials say**

When managing younger people, it is vital to remember what competencies we bring to the table. I have felt at many jobs that my abilities are greatly underestimated and that older managers do not realize the full potential of their younger counterparts because they are so far removed from their own experiences at that age. Today an internship is not the only means to experience valuable work; in the classroom, applicable projects, including those interacting with real business clients, are available. Older managers must realize that there are many students and recent graduates that can be made useful and can be relied on for important accounts and client work. Though it is important to gauge younger interns and employees to their skill level and work with them to better their abilities, the majority of students have much more experience in their specialized field than managers realize, and in some cases, older managers fail in their attempt to find out just how worthwhile interns can be.

—BLAIR RILEY, Intern, Virginia Polytechnic Institution and State University, class of 2008
WHAT DOES THE WORLD OF WORK AND BUSINESS MEAN TO MILLENNIALS?

Each generation has its own distinctive perceptions of work and business. People who lived through the Depression were glad to have a job. Most hoped that their jobs would be stable and long-term; they gave their loyalty and diligence in return for lifetime employment.

The Baby Boomers had a more complex set of attitudes. As adolescents and young adults, many of them were rebellious with liberal/left-wing tendencies and questioned the norms of business. Yet many turned out to be hard-driving workaholics—it was this generation who earned the nickname “yuppies.” And some notable business icons, such as Richard Branson and Steve Jobs, mixed both elements.

Generation X grew up in the shadow of the Boomers and initially rebelled against their hard-driving ethos. In their formative years they were seeing businesses shedding staff to raise profitability and drive up shareholder value. Looking for their first jobs during the recession of the early ’90s, while at the same time confronted by increasing globalization and competition from lower-cost countries, many adopted a nihilistic attitude. (Remember Reality Bites?) But as they matured, Gen X buckled down and ramped up their work ethic—or at least adopted a defensive, political approach in hopes of surviving any layoffs that may be in their future. They gave up on the idea of having one job for life.

Millennials grew up in a time of prosperity—and in many cases grew accustomed to their parents making and spending lots of money—but are entering the workforce at a time when the global economy seems to be losing its footing. Work now often means long

SMART TALK

Millennials don’t see people in the workplace as aspirational—they don’t aspire to be anybody other than themselves. Thus the coaching a manager provides is often less about them and their actual work than about their lives. It’s often less about the “workplace us.”

—Lisa Davidson, Partner, Head of New York Health Care
hours and uncertain long-term prospects for most, and Millennials are struggling with the conflict between their expectations of easy money and the realities of entry-level jobs circa 2008.

Now they’re also increasingly confronting the specter of outsourcing. New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman wrote in 2004, “When I was growing up, my parents used to say to me: ‘Finish your dinner—people in China are starving.’ I, by contrast, find myself wanting to say to my daughters: ‘Finish your homework—people in China and India are starving for your job.’”

In any case, the traditional career path increasingly looks like a road to nowhere. In the past decade or so, Millennials have also seen a few unorthodox, relatively young entrepreneurs strike it very rich, not by climbing the corporate ladder but by setting out on their own with a big, bold idea (Larry Page and Sergey Brin of Google, Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook). Millennials have also seen other young hopefuls competing against each other for high-powered jobs in shows such as The Apprentice and pitching business ideas in Dragon’s Den, both of whose formats are widely franchised around the world.

These role models never (or briefly) paid their dues in an entry-level job, and Millennials often assume they shouldn’t have to either. “Give me more responsibility” and “Let me work up to my abilities” are common refrains from young employees. At the very least, they want to understand the big picture. A recent LeadershipIQ article dubbed them Generation Why, explaining that they grew up with parents who encouraged questioning and now “want to know how they, as well as their work, fit into the whole. They want to know how the tasks they do affect the department, organization, field or world as a whole. They’ve grown up wanting their lives and work to be meaningful, and they want to see how meaningful it will actually be. Generation Y workers have little patience for tasks that are rote and, as they see it, meaningless.”

To Millennials, the world of business means boredom, captivity. I think a lot of Millennials want very little to do with the world of business. Thus the onus is on organizations and managers to ensure as challenging and interesting a workplace experience as possible for Millennials, for as long as they care to work with us.

—Helen Ostrowski, Chairman, New York

It’s difficult to find a balance between the staffing needs of a company and the personal needs of a Millennial. They also are very impatient, and many are focused on status—we actually had a Millennial (an account manager with four years’ experience) leave because he wasn’t promoted to account director in six months and “wasn’t consulted on the strategic direction of the agency.” Those who have strong accomplishments (or the communications skills to make you believe) have power and find it very easy to find a new, though from a traditional perspective not necessarily “better” (more pay, higher position), job within days.

—Balázs Szántó, Chief Operating Officer, Noguchi Porter Novelli, Budapest
Gen X'ers say

Younger people are looking for mentors and coaches, not necessarily bosses. Also, it is of critical importance that managers have integrity and follow through on commitments. Younger people enjoy working with their peers, not entirely losing the hierarchy of the traditional work environment but creating more opportunities for cross-team or intra-level project work. Finally, younger people are focused on a career path--they want projects that are challenging or contribute to their development. Of course, not every project is "challenging," and there are often ones that are outright boring (the "pay your dues" type) but still necessary. Younger people aren't interested in paying dues, so it's the older manager's job to present this assignment in a way that aligns it with the younger person's development goals.... —TEGWYN COLLINS, Vice President, New York
What do Millennials see as the “deal” between them and employers?

A few decades ago, the deal was mutual commitment for the long haul, with no big surprises and no great expectations. Is there such a thing now as a “job for life”? Does any employer dare to offer such a thing? And do Millennials even want it?

Millennials grew up with a surfeit of options—everything from cable channels to Starbucks beverages—and they expect ever more choice. They’re accustomed to being wooed by brands. They’ve seen that things change fast, and that once mighty businesses can quickly decline. They know that employees expect to change jobs many times through their careers. And they know that in many sectors of many developed countries, there are more jobs than people to do them.

The result is that many employers find themselves adjusting to a new range of attitudes among their younger employees. One of the most important differences between them and their live-to-work predecessors is that they expect to have a life outside work; in fact, some expect their work to accommodate the timetables of their personal life.

They also want their work time itself to be pleasant. A 2006 survey of 1,250 executives in 16 European countries conducted by Forrester Consulting found that “Some of the key elements that Millennials are looking for at work that will allow them to be most productive include:

- A flexible work environment and work schedule, one that allows for work/life balance.
- Teamwork and a collaborative culture.
- Up-to-date technology.
- A forward thinking, responsive, and innovative company.
- Streamlined business processes.”

Sometimes they want a lot more than that. While stereotypes and generalizations are specious, media depictions of Millennials are telling. In the most extreme cases, Millennials are portrayed as spoiled prima donnas who expect to be praised and appreciated just for showing up—a
legacy of the noncompetitive, “everybody’s a winner” environment of 1980s and ’90s childhoods. The most controversial reports describe them as needing managers who are able to nurture them and act as a surrogate parent at times.

According to Porter Novelli CMO Marian Salzman, speaking on 60 Minutes, “You do have to speak to them a little bit like a therapist on television might speak to a patient. You can’t be harsh. You cannot tell them you’re disappointed in them. You can’t really ask them to live and breathe the company. Because they’re living and breathing themselves, and that keeps them very busy.... These young people will tell you what time their yoga class is and the day’s work will be organized around the fact that they have this commitment.... How wonderful it is to be young and have your priorities so clear. The flipside of it is how awful it is to be managing the extension, sort of, of the teenage babysitting pool.”

Less controversially, there’s no doubt that Millennials expect to learn at work. They know that things are changing fast, especially technology, and that continuous learning is essential. More than any earlier generation, Millennials have had nurturing parents, and they expect that nurturing, and the personal growth that results, to continue. They seek the “three C’s”: change, challenge and choice. They want to be closely mentored and to be given opportunities to develop new skills. Many watched their parents remain loyal to a company only to be made redundant in the 1990s recession. They’re eager to make themselves employable and multiskilled.

Today’s work environment looks a lot different than what it was 20 years ago, and today’s employers are making the necessary adjustments. Back then, going to work meant getting to the office by 8:30 a.m., working in an office with basic furniture in satisfactory condition and mingling with colleagues at the lunch table, holiday parties or summer outings. Today, going to work means getting to the office without an exact start time, working from a space addressed to your needs (e.g., adequate lighting, comfortable chairs and cool architectural design elements to inspire creativity) and socializing with colleagues at impromptu happy hours, team-building events and elaborate holiday and summer parties. Employers are responding to two key challenges: recruiting and retaining talent and scheduling more fun and entertaining activities to foster a collaborative work environment.

Technology is great, but we rely on it too much when colleagues who sit near each other communicate via e-mail. Twenty years ago, you used to see a lot of people around the watercooler catching up on current events, but today you’re lucky to run into one person getting a cup of coffee or water.

—Sandy Chun, Senior Vice President, Director of Administration, New York
Millennials say

I feel that most "older managers" just accept the fact that the standard for young people is to not stay in a particular job for very long. However, they don't realize that one of the main things that young people are after in the job market as well as in life is long-term stability and that we can be extremely loyal when these objectives are met. We want to be assured that we are on the right path and that "paying our dues" will eventually lead us to an opportunity to grow and prosper. There are many things that managers can do in order to make my generation content enough to stay loyal to a particular company or job. I know from personal experience that relationships between managers and young talent are key to successful growth in a job. Also, work-life balance is extremely important to most young people. Being able to work through telecommuting, flex days and having a manager who understands that you have a personal life and obligations will contribute to a much better work environment. —JILL SPIRITUS, Research Assistant, New York
WHAT STORIES ARE MILLENNIALS TELLING TO MAKE SENSE OF THEMSELVES AND THEIR GENERATION?
Millennials may feel bad about themselves when they hear about how previous generations had to make do with less, work harder or be more independent earlier, and how earlier generations were more respectful, adventurous or appreciative. But they feel a certain pride at being adept with all things digital. Other generations respect their technological smarts, even if they may complain about how Millennials are too reliant on gadgets. Millennials are also aware that they are much more adept at multitasking and pulling together information from diverse sources.

However, for the moment, it seems that the stories they are telling about themselves and their generation aren’t yet properly formed and articulated; they’re more likely to play back what others are saying about them. As a prosperous, relatively content generation growing up close to their families—and often still living with their parents—they haven’t yet completely differentiated themselves from other generations. As a Pew survey on Generation Next in the United States put it, “While most Gen Nexters see themselves as part of a unique generation, they are hard pressed to come up with a word or phrase to describe their generation. In fact, they had an easier time describing their parents’ generation than they did their own.”

The big role of technology in Millennials’ lives has prompted concerns that it’s making them lazy and too accustomed to instant, effortless gratification. The problems could go deeper. British neuroscientist Susan Greenfield told the Sunday Times of London that she’s concerned that Millennials risk the “Nobody Scenario,” in which they don’t develop a clear sense of identity. “By spending inordinate quantities of time in the interactive, virtual, two-dimensional, cyberspace realms of the screen, she believes that the brains of the youth of today are headed for a drastic alteration,” the article said, and went on to quote her saying: “They are destined to lose an awareness of who and what they are: not someones, or anyonees, but nobodies, eh!”

One positive consequence of Millennials’ online socializing is that their friends are no longer limited by geography. Young adults today interact with people all over the world in their social networks, and they take diversity as a given. Whereas young adults 20 years ago were impressed enough by images of multicultural youth that Benetton was able to build a successful ad campaign around them, today’s young adults increasingly take those sorts of scenes for granted. They want a diverse workplace (and White House, as evidenced by the strong youth support for U.S. presidential candidate Barack Obama). This isn’t just a function of living in the digital world but a reflection of the real world as well; populations everywhere are becoming more mixed.

Are Millennials the first Environmental Natives too?

The environment has been a growing concern since the ’60s but for most of the past four decades it’s been the domain of “tree huggers.” That’s changed, of course, in the past few years, as the worrisome findings on climate change have become impossible to ignore. The environment

SMART TALK

Millennials in China—the one-child-per-family digital princes and princesses who grew up being given everything their families can afford—have evolved in an unexpected way. They enjoy great freedoms unimaginable to their parents and grandparents: relatively high disposable incomes, an avalanche of international brands to buy, an explosion of media channels, numerous interactive relationships around the world and a sense of political openness and change. Given these freedoms, they have created an unusual social model—brand-literate consumers with a strong sense of national pride and unity. This has been demonstrated in recent months with the response to international criticism of China’s attitude to Tibet and the Olympic torch relay, and to corporate and national reaction to the Sichuan earthquake.

China’s Millennials have responded not to criticism of the Chinese government but to criticism of the nation and people of China. These new digital patriots turn their fire on anything that offends their sense of new China-ness—and they have become world leaders in turning Net fury into action on the street, as shown by recent boycotts of the French retail chain Carrefour, Sharon Stone at Cannes and companies and countries seen to be miserly in their donations to earthquake relief. These are lessons to be learned by the world’s big brands—and they must be learned quickly.

—John Orme, President, Shunya International, Beijing
became the cause du jour just at the time many Millennials were arriving on college campuses—historically centers of activism.

There they were able to persuade administrators to take all kinds of green actions: replacing plastic utensils with ones made from corn, abolishing cafeteria trays so students wouldn’t be as likely to take more food than they could eat, developing recycling programs, constructing environmentally friendly buildings and purchasing renewable energy. Why would anyone expect that spirit of advocating for change to end at graduation?

As Business Week put it in an article last year, “businesses that want to attract the most qualified candidates say they must appeal to students’ environmental sensibilities. ‘They’re the future leaders of our company, the future investors, and future consumers,’ says Lorraine Bolsinger, vice-president for GE’s Ecomagination strategy. ‘Gen Y folks think that the environment is twice as important as the economy. We absolutely have to think about their concerns.’”

The environment has become a mainstream concern and hot political issue at a time when substantial numbers of Millennials are making their presence felt. Could it be that the environment will be at the heart of the story that Millennials increasingly tell about their generation? Will active, mainstream concern for the environment be the issue that defines Millennials’ sense of identity?

It’s not just the environment that motivates Millennials. Having grown up in a rampantly interconnected world, this generation has a higher awareness, and concern for, others around the planet. They care about social responsibility, whether that means buying fair-trade coffee or, in come cases, seeking employment that will do good.

An article on Millennials in the April issue of the journal Science discussed these high ideals: “Compared with previous generations, ‘they are driven and motivated by different things. It’s not money and material things like a car,’ agrees Avril Henry, a human resources management consultant in Rozelle, Australia. Rather, ‘the sense of doing something worthwhile, [or] a noble cause, motivates them,’ [Paul] Redmond [head of the careers and employability service at the University of Liverpool in the UK] says. Consequently, ‘employers realize that if they want to tap into the talent, they have to tap

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Millennials will change the business model of Internet commerce. Today’s business model is oriented from business to consumer. The Millennial generation will turn it opposite. They will group themselves with others with similar buying interests and create a model from consumers to business, which will be beneficial for both parts of the transaction—better prices for consumers and better forecasts for suppliers. They are more technologically savvy, more ecology aware and more family oriented. It is very hard to get their interest. There is a lot of stimulus around them, so they try to use technology for organizing their life more effectively and rely on family to guide them through the emotional feedback labyrinth that’s created by their addiction to iPods, Xboxes, Facebook...

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INTELLIGENT DIALOGUE: MILLENNIALS

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SMART TALK

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STEFAN VADOCZ, Managing Partner, Neopublic Porter Novelli, Slovakia
Digital Natives are a managerial challenge because face-to-face communication has become almost extinct. We rely completely on technology to communicate (texting, Facebook, e-mail) and therefore may lack interpersonal communication skills. Digital Natives are a managerial opportunity because they can teach older company members the tools to becoming more technologically savvy. Digital Natives can best be leveraged by utilizing their strengths, technological know-how, as well as providing the tools to stay connected with today’s global world. —ANDREA BRANCHEAU, Intern, Michigan State University, class of 2009
into corporate social responsibilities promoting their values.”

Similarly, global research completed last year by the Kenexa Research Institute in the U.S. found that corporate social responsibility is a strong motivator for workers in Brazil, China, Germany, India, the UK and the U.S. “Participating in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities provides more benefits to an organization than just giving back to the community and ‘doing the right thing,’” Kenexa announced in a press release. “The latest research suggests that an organization’s active participation in corporate social responsibility efforts has a significant influence on employees’ engagement levels and views of senior management. Among the six surveyed countries, the research indicates that working for an organization where employees positively view CSR efforts has a significant, favorable impact on how they rate their pride in the organization, willingness to recommend it as a place to work and overall satisfaction.” The geographic differences are noteworthy, with older employees in China and India having the most favorable views of CSR and younger employees in Germany, the U.S. and the UK valuing it the most—a useful reminder that Millennials are not always the same the world over.

SMART TALK

Millennials are committed to doing something meaningful, making a difference—because it’s important to them personally, not because it’s important to the company they work for. Teach for America saw a big spike in applicants this year. Millennials are more comfortable with technology as a utility or like oxygen—it’s no big deal; they take its presence and functionality for granted.

—Wendy Hagen, Partner, Director, Planning and Integration, Washington DC
Gen X’ers say

I wish older, more traditional managers would understand that the rules have changed. We need to adjust our management and workplace to meet the needs and desires of Millennials. If we keep doing things the same way we did 5, 10, 20 years ago, not only do we get stale in business but we won’t have any junior employees. This younger generation is dedicated, hardworking and driven like none other, and we should embrace and learn from them. —SHERRY GOLDBERG, Vice President, New York
Millennials say

I think there's a real need to recognize talent for what it is, and not "by numbers." What I mean is that the playing field is changing and team players are judged on experience, ability and attitude. This goes across the board, though, so older folks won't just get respect because they're older--they'll need to earn it! If younger people feel they are being treated "like a kid" as a result of their manager talking about "how long they've been in the business yada yada," then they won't perform as well. In today's workplace, age is just a number. —SHILPA SAUL, Associate Director, London
There’s no doubt that Millennials are shaping the way business is done. Their disinterest in professionalism and expertise, their loss of faith in certifications and, perhaps most significant, their lack of interest in privacy are not trivial matters. While some employers and senior colleagues may hope these changes are temporary, there’s no denying that at least some will have lasting effects. The question is, Which ones?

It’s possible that Millennials will call the shots from here on in. Throughout the developed world the demographic bulge of Baby Boomers is moving into retirement, and Millennials will be taking their place. In Europe alone, 51 million Millennials are expected move into the workforce in the next ten years, and 48 million Baby Boomers will retire.

In many sectors and many regions, there are now more jobs than people to fill them. This balance of supply and demand makes it an employees’ market, and the prospective employees are, increasingly, Millennials. Employers may not like this situation, but they’d be wise to pay attention to it. Now the message from employment consultants and HR specialists is that employers will have to adapt to meet Millennials’ needs, or else they’ll walk out and find other jobs.

As Porter Novelli senior vice president Iya Davidson puts it, “Unlike the ‘me’ generation prior, they strike me as the ‘you for me’ generation. In other words, I feel they put a lot of onus on us to create conditions and accommodations that make them comfortable and fulfilled.”

Perhaps the most significant problem is a lack of understanding all around. The Forrester Consulting survey cited above reported, “Strong differences exist between the responses of older and younger [European] executives regarding their understanding of the Millennials and what they think their companies are doing to encourage productivity and information sharing.” Specifically, the research found, “Ninety-one percent of executives across Europe said that they recognise the different working styles of the new generations, and 73% said their company had responded to these requirements. However, of the small number of respondents who fell into the Millennial age group, only half thought the company they worked for had responded to their needs.”

In the spirit of Intelligent Dialogue, we believe the best course for navigating these new intergenerational waters is communication and questioning. We—employees and employers, subordinates and managers, Millennials and Boomers—should be asking ourselves and each other smart questions. What can we learn from one another? How can we work together to create an environment in which everyone thrives and business gets done? Rather than resorting to snap judgments and generalizations, we believe ongoing conversation—sometimes even debate—is the basis of understanding.
WHAT PORTER NOVELLI UNIQUELY offers can be summed up in two words: Intelligent Influence. The basis for Intelligent Influence is Intelligent Dialogue. As yesterday’s mass media morph into today’s interactive media, people expect to talk back at journalists and opinion leaders. Yesterday’s way was set-piece monologues broadcast to passive audiences by powerful brands and media owners. Today’s way is fluid, evolving dialogues conducted across multiple, linked channels. Ongoing dialogue is now possible and is truly the best basis of dynamic long-term relationships. Easy sound-bite answers are seductive; they give a comforting but illusory sense of resolution. Instead, we need to cultivate open, questioning minds that ask smart, creative questions. Smart questions spark Intelligent Dialogue, open up thinking and tap into the power of many minds.

PORTER NOVELLI was founded in Washington, D.C., in 1972 and is a part of Omnicom Group Inc. (NYSE: OMC) (www.omnicomgroup.com). With 100 offices in 60 countries, we take a 360-degree view of clients’ business to build powerful communications programs that resonate with critical stakeholders. Our reputation is built on our foundation in strategic planning and insights generation and our ability to adopt a media-neutral approach. We ensure our clients achieve Intelligent Influence, systematically mapping the most effective interactions, making them happen and measuring the outcome. Many minds. Singular results.

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