

Effectively Interviewing Millennial Candidates



Canadian Millennials, like any generational cohort, are not a homogeneous group. Within the Millennial generation there are individuals who hold diverse philosophies, skills, interests and career goals just as there are many Millennials also share similar philosophies, skills, interests and career goals.

According to the Stats Canada 2011 Census data 27.3% of the Canadian population are Millennials, while 28.6% are Baby Boomers, 8% are Gen X, and 21.9% are Gen Z. This equates to 49% of the population, over 16 million (9 million Millennials plus 7 million Gen Z, not all of whom are yet eligible for the workforce). This translates into a lot of interviews will Millennials over the next few years as organizations build their current and future team.

When it is time to recruit, interview and hire Millennials having insights into how their traits and tendencies might look different from previous generations is a necessary skill for any human resources professional. The ways in which Millennials think, respond and communicate may be different compared to previous generations, if you cannot shift the way you receive their responses you may miss out on great candidates.

Interviewing Millennials

It is not new information to say that Millennials approach to building their lives and careers has lead to some functional mismatches in the some workplace, although more workplaces are changing to address these mismatches. Millennials often seek to create more fluidity between their working day, volunteering, personal life and extra-curricular activities. Some may perceive Millennials as being less committed to their work or employer organization or even 'lazy', when they are actually differently committed. Millennials want their employer organization to value their lives and interests and allow for more integration.

Millennials are often mislabelled as entitled or self-absorbed as a result of their different ways of doing things, looking at things and communicating. Millennials often sound self-absorbed in an interview because they may talk more frequently about what they want, their interests, what they can do and how important they are. To the Millennial this does not seem self-absorbed, it is a function of their being an open book. By sharing they expect others to help them figure out what to do next. Many Millennials lead 'Constructivist's' lives, building and rebuilding who they are as time passes.

'Millennials are used to collaboration and mentoring while often playing a somewhat 'equal participant' role in projects, the desire to contribute and participate does not mean Millennials are not open to learning or taking direction'

Gauging Interest and Commitment From Millennial Candidates

The more interested a person is in an organization or role the more likely that individual is to work hard and stick around. This also true for Millennials but it can be difficult to gauge as they may have a different idea of what an interests looks like and what a commitment means.

Consider this question: ***"You are involved in many activities, including volunteering and working on with a new start-up, how will you find the time to commit to this new role?"***

This can be difficult for some Millennials to respond to as many have no intention of giving up or shifting their existing projects to 'make room' for their job. It is not uncommon for Millennials to declare in the interview stage that they are committed to spending x hours a month during the working day to a community project and would expect you would work around their schedule. For many organizations this may demonstrate an employee who is unwilling to put their new job first. Yet the fact that the Millennial is showing loyalty to a project they are committed to can demonstrate they are loyal to the things they are committed to.

To gauge how well the candidate might demonstrate commitment to your organization asks questions about their commitment to other activities. Ask them if they have been involved in projects, teams, volunteering and probe about if they stopped and why, how long they were involved, what they liked about the experience and how they plan to fit it into their commitment to your organization. Listen for both how well they demonstrate commitment and what it is that attracts them to the things they are interested in (people, goals, environment, impact and so on).

Probe With Why Questions

Many Millennials are quick to talk about their experiences and also position themselves as significant contributors, often sharing that they 'guided' older employees on what to do. This tendency should not cause you to discount the ability of a Millennial to make a contribution or cause you concern that the Millennial will be off-putting and disruptive in the workplace. To learn more you may have to probe and ask more questions about why the candidate did something and not just what they did. Sometimes Millennials fail to share the why of what they do as they relate the experience and details, just like sharing on in Social Networks. Asking them why they did something can bring out the information you need to gauge their readiness to do the job you need them to do.

Before you can successfully gauge if a Millennial employee will be a good fit for your organization you need to understand what you offer that will attract and retain a Millennial. You may not be a fit for all Millennial employees but you will be for the right ones. Assess your own organizations willingness and preparedness to engage and retain Millennial employees and be prepared to share these as part of your employer branding during recruitment and the interview process. The more you can make the interview a two way conversation the better

you will be able to gauge which Millennial is the right fit.