

Hanging On To Career Shifting Millennials



The Millennial generation has been slowing hitting their career stride for some time, albeit at a much slower pace compared to previous modern generations. Many of the Millennial generation, in particular those who graduated college during or just after the Great Recession have experienced what has been dubbed an “extended adolescence.” Their careers and lives in general have been slower to launch as many remained unable to find good career opportunities or were unwilling to leave the safety of the comfort zones they had created while in their late teens and early 20’s. As a result more Millennials had been at best content to just have a job. However, as the Millennials get further along in their careers their comfort in their previous comfort zone careers has begun to shift.

A Millennial Career Path Profile

The first phase of the Millennials began their careers at the tail end of the mini economic bust, precipitated by the tech bust, at the end of the 1990’s, although that economic bust had little impact on them. What did impact the first generation of Millennials was the career gold rush between 2001-2007, where many career opportunities soared, as they were wooed and recruited by organizations who saw only unlimited economic growth ahead (and a tsunami of departing Baby Boomers on the horizon).

The Millennials who graduated or began their careers during or just after the Great Recession had a very different experience. Many of their careers were quickly stalled, in some cases before they even started, leaving them working jobs they either did not enjoy or they could not really progress in.

As with every generation there is a lot of diversity within the Millennial generation. Today the age range for Millennials is between 15 – 35 years of age (generally, depending on who you ask, Millennials were born between 1982-1984 and 2002-2004). The majority of the Millennial generation are in their 20s and early 30s, meaning most are fully immersed in the labour market. Indeed, in Canada Millennials now account for half of the general workforce and soon will represent half of the professional workforce.

The Great Career Disappointment

On one hand many Millennials have come to hold reduced expectations when it comes to their career aspirations. Partially because their experiences with lack of career progression left some dissatisfied with their experience in the workforce. On the

other hand many Millennials are optimistic generally about their futures.

According to a new survey conducted by ADP Canada, 55% of Millennials (aged 18-34) surveyed indicated they would change the course of their career this year. The most common options they indicated were a new job, going back to school or starting their own business.

It is important that HR not only understand the desire of their Millennials, but that HR try to understand what Millennials are looking for in order to remain. In the ADP survey the Millennials were asked what work or career-related resolutions they had for 2016. According to the results Millennials' responses were fairly consistent with what you would expect to hear when you asked the question generally.

Better Work/Life Balance 39%

Flexible hours 15%

Work Less 14%

Work remotely 8%

Unpaid time off 3%

Career Change/Planning 38%

Find a new job 27%

Start my own business 11%

Go back to school 10%

Advance in my Career 36%

Get a raise 25%

Take more responsibility 14%

Get a promotion 12%

Manage people 5%

Professional Development 32%

Learn a new work-related skill 18%

More training 15%

Get a certificate, degree or diploma 11%

Job shadowing 4%

For respondents between the ages of 18 to 44, 46% were focused on career-building activities, such as getting a raise, taking on more responsibility or getting a promotion, the survey found. Among the oldest Generation X and Baby Boomers, 45 and up, only 26% were focused on career-building activities.

Organizational Take Away – Talk, Listen and Collaborate

To recruit and retain Millennial employees organizations will need to embrace Millennials' desire for flexibility and also their need for direction, support and changing opportunity. Often Millennials don't ask for what they want, they just start looking for a new opportunity and jump ship when they find it. As a result organizations will have to ask questions and point their Millennials in the right direction to obtain the information and opportunities they seek.

Millennials bring both wonderful strengths and frustrating weaknesses to the career table, but the reality is organizations must embrace Millennials and find ways to bring out their best because Millennials, including immigrant Millennials, are a big component of the way ahead to success for most Canadian organizations.