

# How is Your Millennial Employee Training Going?



In many Canadian workplaces Millennial employees not only constitute the largest portion of new hires but in some organizations they constitute the largest portion of employees.

In fact, over at the well-known global consultancy organization PwC 80% of their workforce is under the age of 33, with 27 being the average age of PwC's more than 200,000 employees worldwide.

A digital native workforce (both Millennials and Gen Z) have a lot to offer an organization but they also have a lot to learn. If your organization is going to transition successfully and take advantage of your emergent Millennial employees, employee training not only needs to begin on day one, it also has to function effectively to teach and engage your new workforce on an ongoing basis.

## **Different Brains – Different Learning**

Training in today's workplace may begin with the new employee orientation and include training on internal systems, technology, processes and procedures but it cannot and does not stop once the employee has been onboarded. Not only does the rapid pace of organizational and technological change mean more and more frequent training you also need to train everyone on how to work effectively together on an ongoing basis as more people do not "speak the same language" and learn in different ways.

Whether new employees or existing employees, orienting and training Millennials can be a challenge for many organizations. This is not because your Millennial employees do not want to learn. In fact, your Millennial employees are constantly learning. The challenge results from the fact that this digital native generation has different brains compared to their older co-workers, brains that learn differently. Research continues to show that digital natives gather, process and retain information differently and this impacts how well they learn and how they apply what they are learning.

If you have read any information on neuro-plasticity you have read about the brain's ability to be re-wired through training and with repetition, this allows new brain pathways to emerge and change the brain throughout life. However,

unless you are willing to invest thousands of hours in brain training and neuro-feedback you are not going to successfully change the millennial employees brains to fit with older generations learning styles, nor would you necessarily want to. Today your organizations will benefit by adapting to the learning styles of Canada's most populous employees.

## **New Training For New Employees**

To design effective training for your Millennial employees you will need to adapt both your training material and your training methods to meet their learning and engagement style.

In some areas your Millennial employees already come to the table with some better skills to function in the workplace compared to their older colleagues. In addition to their technology and information gathering skills they are able to adapt quickly and work well in collaboration. By building on their strengths you can help your organization innovate and stay on top of trends.

To understand how to train your digital natives consider first how they learn. The digital natives in Canada and in many other parts of the world have developed brains that:

- ***Process and scan information much more quickly*** – they can scan and analyse volumes of information for you, even summarize it and in some cases detect patterns in the data quickly.
- ***Have briefer attention spans in that they require more and varied stimulation to hold their attention*** – which means they can function well in stimulating environments, which is a good trait when responding to volumes of people, information or requests.
- ***Have less retentive memory and more reactive memory*** – they see or find information quickly, which is useful in situations where you need them to react quickly to information. However, the downside is they may not remember information as well without having the information stored and available for electronic or manual retrieval.
- ***Needs frequent feedback and affirmation*** – they need to have their brains feed with information and positive and reinforcing feedback – this is useful in situations where working together in teams and receiving training and mentoring or social/group affirmation is part of the workplace.
- ***Are wired to share*** – they will share not only their ideas but also their preferences, needs, opinions and perspective including wherever and whenever they feel comfortable (if they like people or situations) – which is useful when you are trying to adapt to them but only if you are willing to listen.

If you want your Millennial employees to learn, understand and stick around your organization will need to re-think and relearn yourself, and change the how, how often, when and where you are training them.

## **5 Effective Digital Native Training Tips**

1. ***Multi-sensory inputs*** – Video, visual, social, auditory and interactive are keywords to remember when designing materials for teaching digital natives. Learning should take place in different media, on different devices in addition to in interactive, in-person settings. Record training and play the training as a way to teach and also as a way Millennials can go back

and access the information they missed or did not retain.

2. **Frequency and brevity** – Millennials learn in sound bites, this includes gathering information and taking awhile to process and understand it. If you want them to learn provide brief information frequently. Instead of a 1 or 2 day training session think in terms of 10-15 minutes a couple times a day over a few days and ongoing. Follow this up and support it with the next three points.

### ***Millennials Think Better Together***

3. **Collaborative – Peer-Leadership** – Millennials think better together and not just with other Millennials. Training that includes and involves others including social learning where they can share and discuss learning can help Millennials absorb and understand and be motivated to continue learning. This does not mean you need to train all the Millennials at the same time in one large group. You can train some Millennials (and other employees) in small groups and allow them to become the subject matter experts on a new topic and then let everyone know they are the go to people for that information. This can also include on-line subject matter discussions using Facebook groups, Whatsapp or other social collaboration tools.
4. **Affirmation and Feedback** – Millennials process and accept information quicker and smoother when it is positive and includes the opportunity for them to 'Check-in' on what they have learned. Training co-workers, supervisors and managers on the value of affirmation and feedback can be important. Some members of older generations may not want to 'hand hold' or parent their younger co-workers so find way to reward them and get them on board in this process.
5. **Anytime, Any day learning** – Millennials learn in the moment it is relevant and useful for them, they are quick to get on their mobile devices and find answers to their question or learn how to do something. By providing so training and information that is accessible 24-7 you provide them with the opportunity to learn on the go and sometimes from anywhere.

The training and development needs of Millennial employees in many ways mirrors the needs of your organization to adapt and learn. By working with Millennials and adapting your training you can also adapt your organization to be better prepared to grow and innovate as your Millennial employees begin to take over.