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# Managing Millennials

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[WildernessAgency.com](http://WildernessAgency.com)





# What is a Millennial?

“ Even as I said  
it I knew the  
phrase ‘To make  
a living’ could  
have absolutely  
no meaning to  
these children of  
the affluent society.

- ERNEST FLADELL  
LIFE MAGAZINE

## The Entitled Generation

When we hear people talk about Millennials, we hear things about how lazy they are. They're entitled. They want everything handed to them. They should be putting more effort into advancing their careers.

For the majority of the last two decades, we've heard story after story after story about how an entire generation of Millennials will doom the future of the free world.

But here's the thing.

Generations actually do not exist. As a society, we made them up. Essentially, they exist just so old people can talk smack about young people.

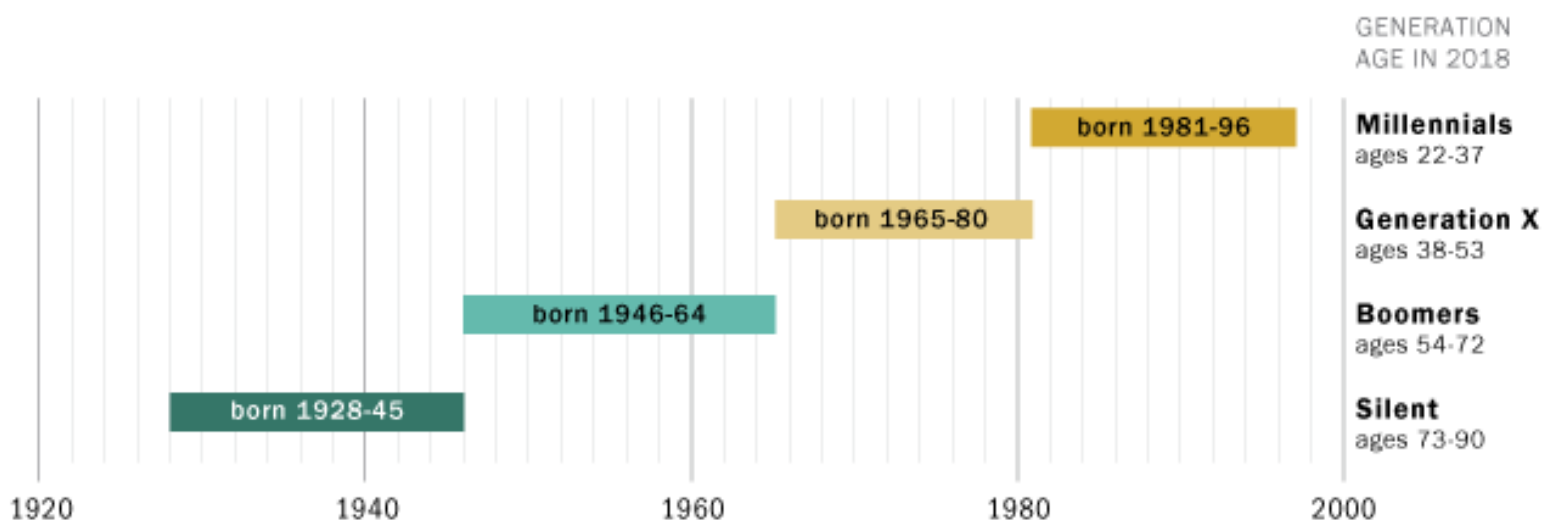
Older people have been complaining as far back as history goes. Literally.

We've been saying "when I was boy" since 650 BC, around the same time as Homer wrote The Odyssey. Hesiod, History's first economist, put down, the younger generation long before Millennials became a whipping boy of society.

"They only care about frivolous things. When I was a boy, we were taught to be discrete and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly impatient of restraint."

“ This is going to sound heretical coming from me, but **I don't think there is a Generation X.** What I think a lot of people mistake for this thing that might be Generation X is just the acknowledgement that there exists some other group of people whatever, whoever they might be, younger than, say, Jane Fonda's baby boom.

- RICHARD KAISER  
ATTRIBUTED TO COUPLAND



**The first thing you need to know is the idea of generations is a fictional one. Writers make up generations for one reason. To make money.**

In 1987, Coupland (who was born in 1961) wrote an article for Vancouver Magazine in which he lamented the lack of realization for people within his own birth cohort. A year later, he received a \$22,500 advance from St. Martin's Press to complete a handbook on the "generation" that he had outlined in the article.

*Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, published in 1991, is the first novel by Douglas Coupland. The novel popularized the term Generation X, which refers to those born from approximately the early 1960s to the early 1980s. It is a framed narrative, in which a group of youths exchange heartfelt stories about themselves and fantastical stories of their creation.

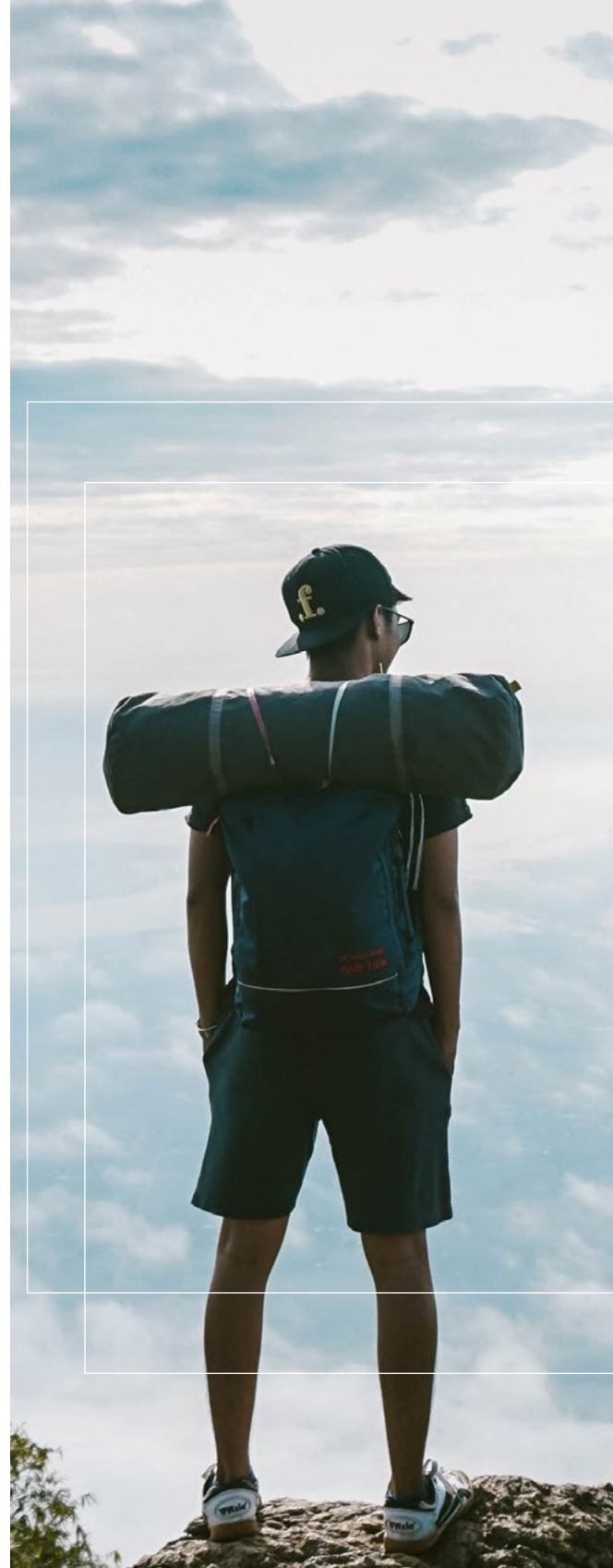
Despite requests to work as a consultant for marketing for Generation X, he would continue to assure people that he didn't really believe that there was such a thing.

So all of these other terms came out from people trying to cash in.

Echo Boomers, Next Generation, Generation Y, which seems like the laziest attempt. Generation Me, because we're evidently self centered assholes.

Neil Howe and William Strauss published multiple books including *"Generations"* in 1991, *"13th Gen"* in 1993 about Generation X which seems like they missed the mark, but only 7 years later these two strike gold with *"Millennials Rising"* and became millionaires by consulting with Best Buy, Myrille Lynch, the Coast Guard and other businesses about how to market to this crazy new generation.

## MILLENNIALS DON'T EXIST.



“ They only care about frivolous things. When I was a boy, we were taught to be discrete and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly impatient of restraint.

- HESIOD

HISTORY'S FIRST ECONOMIST  
(CIRCA 650 BC)



## Actual Title:

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### Managing Millennials

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Your understanding  
and expectations of

and the ridiculous  
misconceptions of the  
entitled generation.

This quote is actually  
about Baby Boomers.

“ Even as I said  
it I knew the  
phrase ‘To  
make a living’  
could have  
absolutely  
no meaning to  
these children  
of the affluent  
society.

- ERNEST FLADELL  
LIFE MAGAZINE  
(1968)



# Brain work

Generations are just a convenient lens to stereotype 45 million people worldwide.

And we really have to ask ourselves if this lens is helping or hurting our understanding of people.

The human brain is constantly focused on two things: Survival and conserving calories.

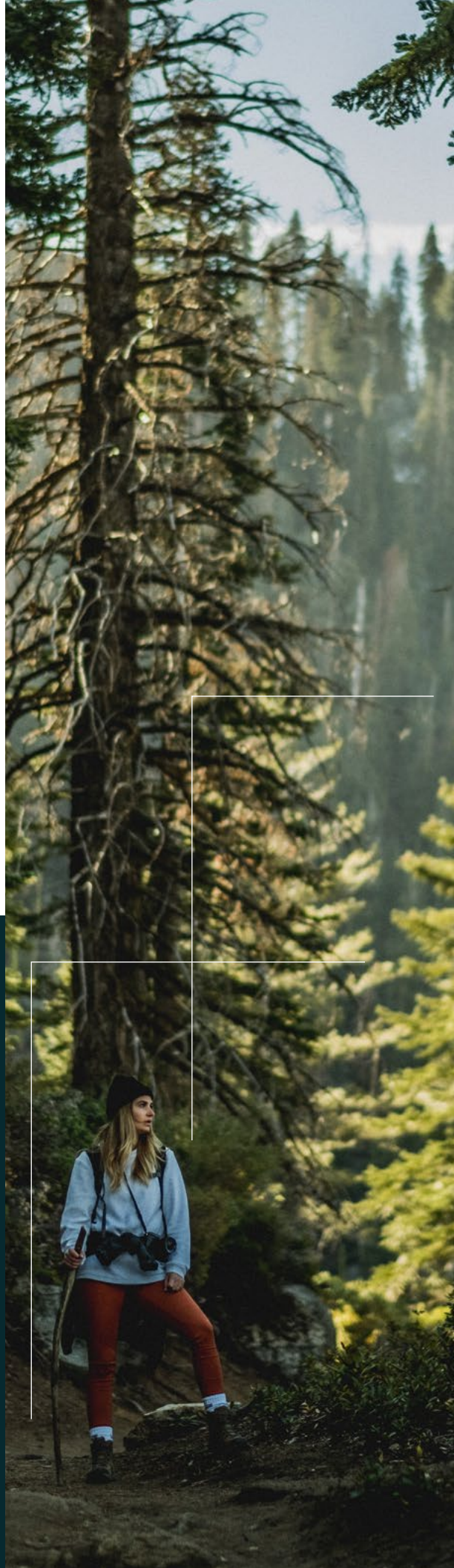
To survive, the brain is continually categorizing information into buckets of information that is necessary and information that is disposable. When you run into something new or different that your brain doesn't have a bucket for. It doesn't like that at all. We like things that fit nicely into buckets we already have. We especially like things that are like us. It's why married couples ask when you're getting married and why parents ask when you're having kids.

This is really at the root of where stereotypes come from. It's just our brains being lazy.

**Millennials don't  
fit so conveniently  
into one bucket.**

## THEY INCLUDE:

- 8 MLB pitchers throwing over 100mph fastballs
- 10 Millennials are on the Forbes Richest list
- The number of chess grandmasters has doubled
- Classical music pieces once thought impossible are played regularly by young performers





## Millennials managing debt

Over 44 million Americans collectively hold nearly \$1.5 trillion in student debt. That means that roughly one in four American adults are paying off student loans. To put that into perspective in July the federal government recorded a \$76.9 billion deficit.

Anyone who claims to have “worked their way through college” can keep that to themselves. The price of college is now insane. If the cost of college tuition was \$10,000 in 1986, it should now cost the same student \$21,500 if education had increased with the inflation rate. INSTEAD IT NOW WOULD BE OVER 60 THOUSAND DOLLARS, because the cost of a 4 year degree is over 2.5 times the inflation rate.

I think we can dispel the lazy stereotype right here unless a third of the working class is also spending 20 hours a week working for free.

While being laughably in debt, they are also earning less and seeing fewer financial promotions than previous generations.

**Millennials are the most educated generation in history, which equates to more debt. Despite this**

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**70%**

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**are already saving for retirement.**

**Millennials earn less than older peers did before the recession and have**

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**60%**

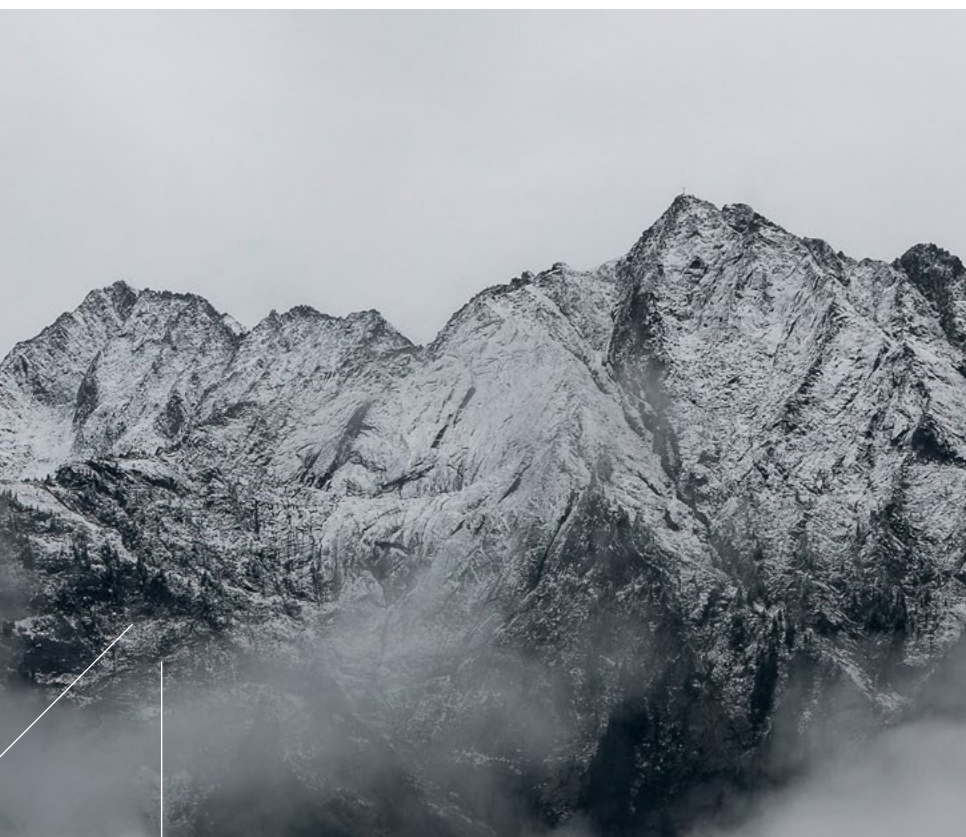
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**lower wage growth.**

**61%**

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**of graduates held internships. Half of those were unpaid.**



**Despite being the most ethnically diverse generation in history, their world views still align closely with the prior 2 generations.**

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**42%**

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**identify as non-white. This is 2x more than Boomers at the same age.**

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**15%**

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**are first generation immigrants.**

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**3X**

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**the population is identifying as hispanic.**

## **Believe it or not, Millennials need you. (And it's not their fault.)**

Millennials have grown up in a society filled with technology and encouragement on demand. Smart phones have given us all a connection to the world at the touch of a button.

Do you remember 10 years ago? You had to wait AN ENTIRE WEEK for a new episode of a show to come out. Now, you can binge watch an entire series of Netflix in one night. Anything you want can be ordered on Amazon and arrive at your house within two days (or sooner).

You're single? Well, you could go out to bars every night for 6 months and hope to eventually run into someone OR you can download an app where you can specify to the mile how far you would go to maybe have coffee with someone, then clarify the age range. And now you just have to swipe left or right to express interest. This is dating in America today.

Are you hungry? Well on DoorDash you could have a Cedar Plank Salmon with grilled vegetables delivered directly to your door. YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE TO PUT ON PANTS!

In a world where everything is available on-demand, how is it so hard to understand why Millennials are so impatient?





**They've been  
trained that  
they can have  
everything.  
Except job  
satisfaction,  
a sense of  
purpose, and  
a feeling that  
they're making  
an impact.**

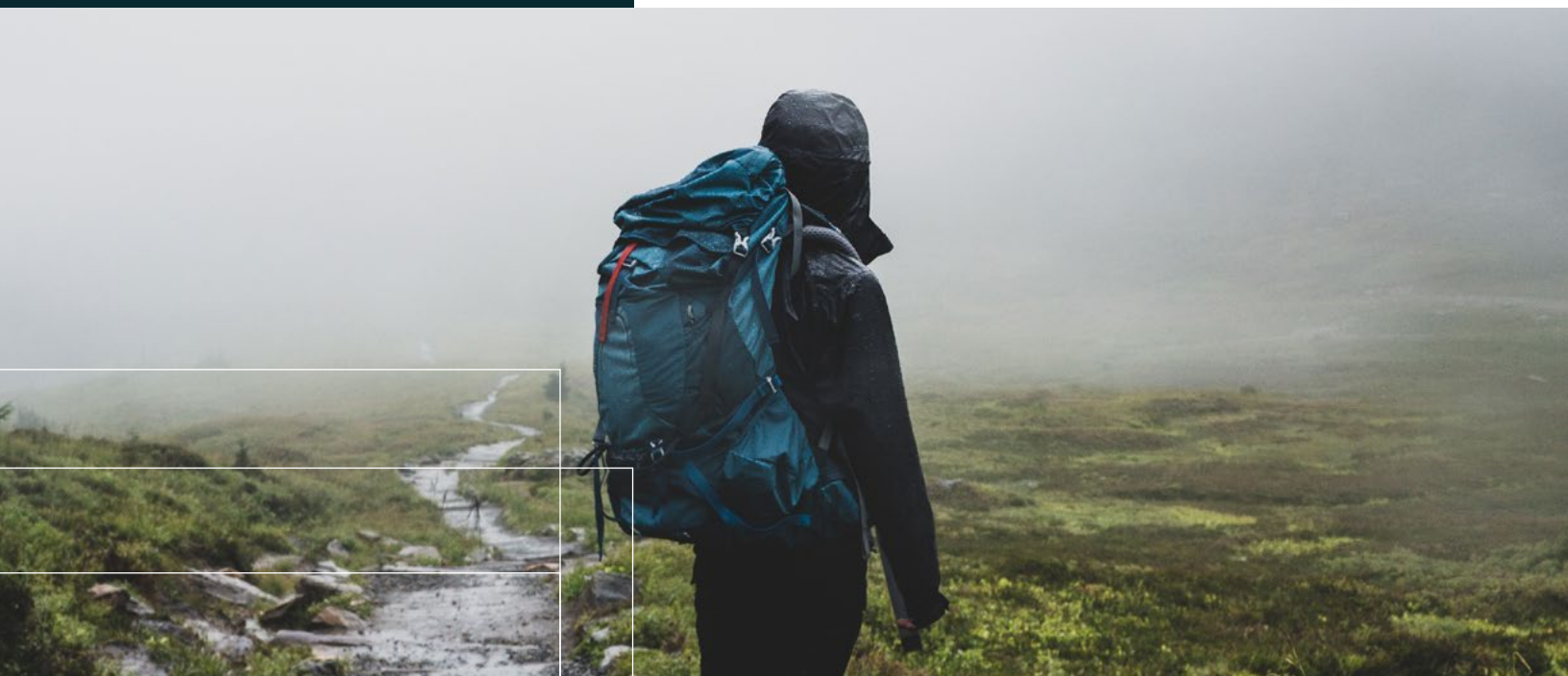
So there is this immeasurable disconnect. There's no patience, because other experiences aren't like this and no one told an entire generation. In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, Millennials are feeling like they must be doing something wrong.

They've been told their whole lives they are special and amazing and can do anything.

It's just not true.

In 2008, there was a fundamental break in the trust between employers and employees. There was a prevailing belief that the corporations were putting profits before people. There is a common theme among working people, although it is not widely studied or reported in reliable academic or journalistic sources, along the lines that firms were "using the recession as an excuse" to lay off, offshore, and demand more productivity out of those left behind.

It led to a shared understanding that retiring from GM was no longer an option. That ship had sailed. So, people started going from job to job like a series of one night stands.



## How to manage Millennials

We have an entire generation who doesn't trust their employers to put their well being above profits. And they are in roles where they don't feel that they are excelling through the ranks fast enough.

And they feel like it's all their fault.

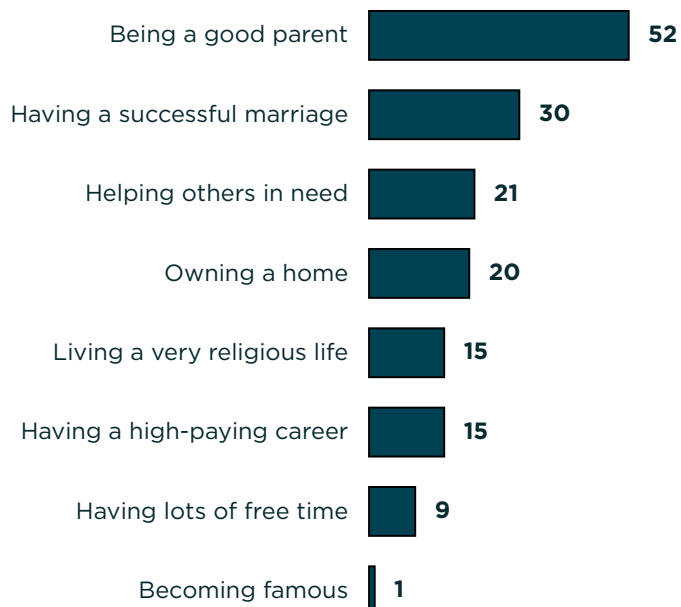
## So what do Millennials want?

When Millennials are asked what they want they want in their work and careers, they respond fairly consistently.

When asked by Pew Research, the entitled generation put money and free time WELL below helping others in need. And "Being famous" was WAY at the bottom.

### MILLENNIALS PRIORITIES

% saying ... is one of the most important things in their lives



Note: Based on adults 18-29

Pew Research Center

# 15 tips to get the best work out of your **MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES.**





A hiker with a backpack stands on a rocky cliff edge, looking down at a vast mountain valley. The scene is captured in a vertical orientation, with the hiker positioned on the left side of the frame. The background shows a steep, rocky mountain slope with patches of green vegetation and distant mountain ranges under a clear sky.

# T

**Get**  
**curious.**

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What is at  
the heart  
of the  
problem?

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Get curious. This is probably just good life advice. Whenever there's a problem or a breakdown in communication, it's good to pause and get curious.

What is at the heart of the problem?

Maybe this person isn't usually like this, maybe they've been up three straight nights with their child who is sick.

Maybe they are going through way more real shit than you are dealing with, and you might need to put immediate needs aside to talk through their issues if you are interested in making them feel heard and valued.

**Put yourself in your team's shoes.**

**Whenever  
there's a  
problem or a  
breakdown in  
communication,  
it's good to  
pause and get  
curious.**







2

**Ask.**

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Act on  
your curiosity.

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**“ Even if you think you know the answer, it’s a good idea to ask, because you may learn something you never thought about.**

**- JOHN THEOBALD**

This is probably seems so obvious, but you would be surprised how scared most of your teammates are to make recommendations for what they want. Part of my company’s strategy when branding a company is to ask client’s teammates what they think would be better. There is virtually always something from that tribal knowledge that we walk away with that is wildly helpful, but they were afraid to tell their managers.

**Ask your team more questions.**





# 3

## **Ditch the dockers.**



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It's a uniform.  
It's depriving  
people of  
expressing  
themselves.

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Seldomly, do you see people rocking khakis outside of the office. It's a uniform, and it's depriving people of expressing themselves. Stop it. No one is more productive in uncomfortable clothing. When you allow your employees the freedom and opportunity to wear what makes them comfortable, they are often more productive as a result.

If you have a culture built on trust and respect, let people choose what to wear.

**Relax your dress code.**

**“ We can't do  
our best thinking  
if half our brain  
is worried  
about the state  
of creases in  
our pants.**

**- JOHN THEOBALD**





4

# Work in the perks!

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Productive  
employees  
need to  
eat too.

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If you're going to keep the suits and dresses, then maybe think of other perks. Everyone is busy and if you can help your team save some time by.

## PROVIDING SOME INTANGIBLE BENEFITS LIKE:

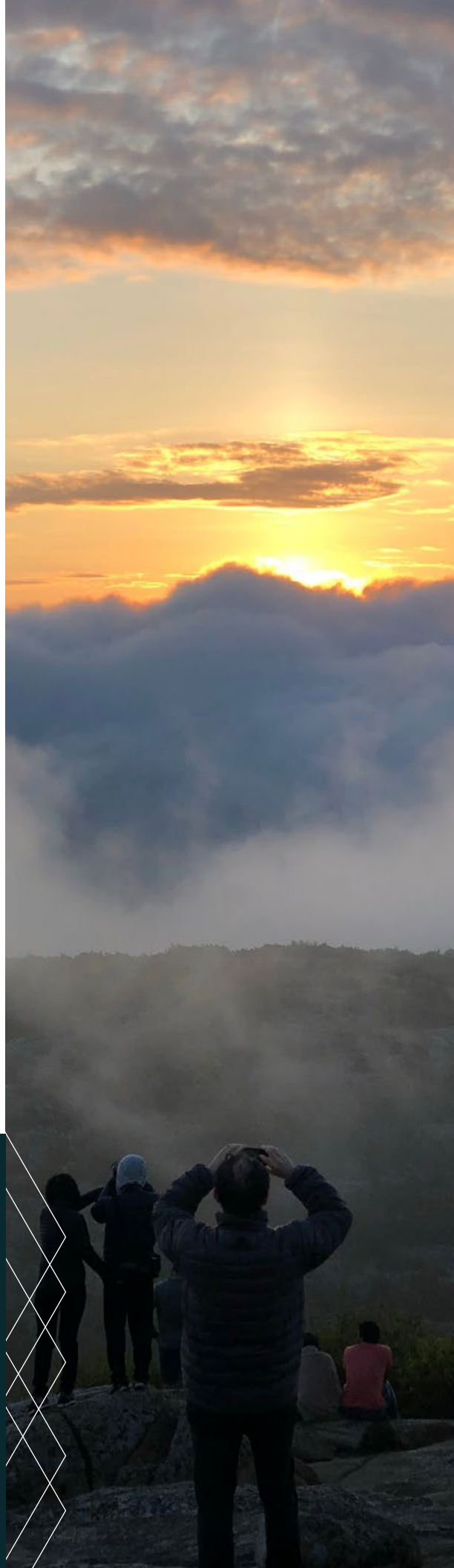
- Dry cleaning pickup
- Taking your vehicle for oil changes or cleaning
- Having someone in once a month to do chair massages

It helps you and them. They can pay for it, but make it easy for them.

**Add small perks to make a big difference.**

**“ Sometimes, the more important benefit is knowing your employer cares about you.**

**- JOSH MOODY**







# 5

# **Flex** **time.**

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Working  
from home  
can make a  
worker more  
productive.

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One of the most popularly cited studies is from 2014, in which the co-founders of Chinese travel website Ctrip allowed some of their workers to work remotely on a regular basis, and compared their productivity to their office-bound counterparts. With all other factors being equal, the remote workers ended up making 13.5 percent more calls than their comparable office workers, which is the equivalent of almost a full extra day's worth of work in a given week.

The bottom line is that working from home can make a worker more productive, but that isn't a guarantee. However, it's safe to say that, according to studies, as long as the job is one that can be performed from home, *most people are more productive when working from home*, but that productivity is strongly subject to the policies put in place by the employer.

**Be more flexible with required office hours.**

“

**It's safe to say that, according to studies, as long as the job is one that can be performed from home, *most people are more productive when working from home.***

**- RICHARD KAISER**



6

**Free**  
**snacks!**

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Don't roll  
your eyes.

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If you are pushing employees hard, sometimes people will have to work through lunch. If you are okay with pushing people that hard, then you need to be okay with coughing up some cash to keep some energy bars on site.

One company even took the leap to providing breakfast. For everyone. Every day. The five sales people took turns bringing in breakfast items. The allowance was \$20 per day. The total expense for the year was barely more than \$5k. When employees learned they were going to get to eat breakfast again, their eyes lit up as much as if they were just given a kitten.

**Feed the team.**

**“ You never know when hungry is about to turn into hangry, and having snacks, helps keep me going.**

**- MIKE ALVARADO**







# 7

# Stop buying birthday cakes.

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We all know  
that it doesn't  
taste that  
good and  
it is less than  
convincing  
that you  
really care.

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We've all had our fill of Kroger birthday cakes. They don't taste that good, and they don't actually convince anyone that you care.

If you're the CEO of a small business: Have lunch with each of your teammates once a month; if your team is too big for that, do it for their birthdays; if you're even bigger than that, take everyone with a birthday that month out on a long lunch and pick their brains. Ask them "How do we become better?"

**Listening is a better gift than cake.**

**“ I’m so tired of birthday cake**

**- SARAH MOODY**







# 8

**Give  
employees  
a lifeline.**

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Create a  
culture worthy  
of dedicated  
employees.

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## CREATE:

- direct access to company executives regardless of title.
- a culture where teammates have freedom to share opinion and respect for differing opinions.
- a family atmosphere that feels more like home than work.

Those are the people who bring work home and put in the extra effort. That aren't working for a paycheck, but because they feel they are part of a movement.

**Create an open  
(hierarchy) office.**






# 9

**Say,  
“Yes” to  
dogs.**

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Office pets  
make people  
deliriously  
happy.

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Can you have an open dog policy in your office?  
Or maybe just get one office dog?

Office pets make people deliriously happy. It's amazing. Talk to the Humane Society and let them know if you want a critter for the office.

**Give employees  
something to cuddle.**



**HUMANE SOCIETY OF  
THE UNITED STATES**

**202-452-1100 or  
866-720-2676**

1255 23rd Street  
NW, Suite 450,  
Washington, DC  
20037

**Talk to the  
Humane  
Society  
and let them  
know if you  
want a critter  
for the office.**





# 10

# Donate or volunteer.

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Screw it;  
do both.  
Tax write  
offs are cool.

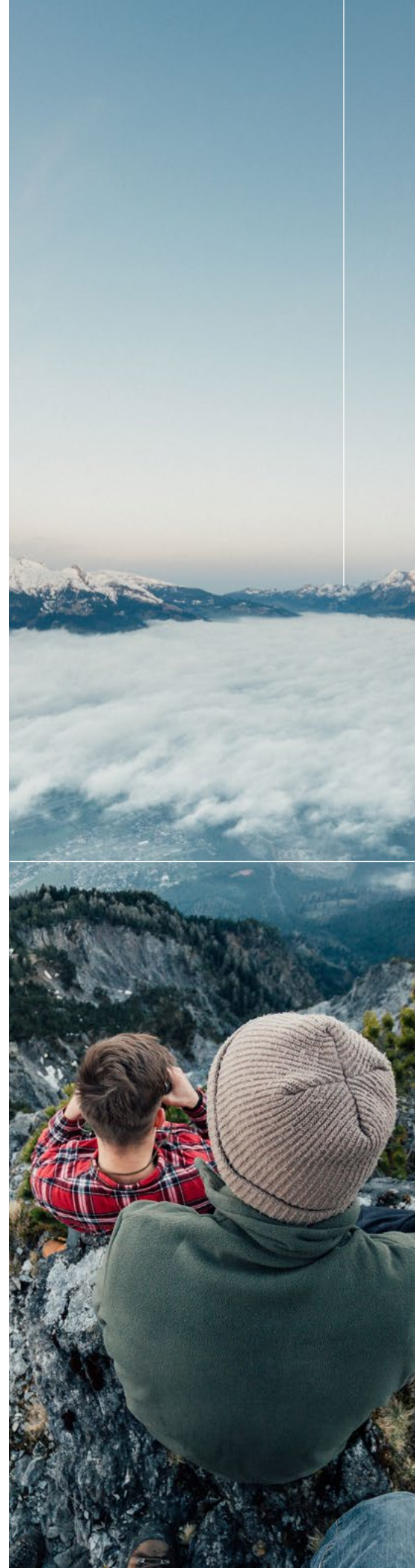
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Tax write offs are cool, talk to your CPA and ask how much you could be donating. Use that money to create a pool for matching employee donations to their favorite cause, OR if your cash position isn't that strong, try volunteering.

Team building usually happens outside of 9-to-5, and while it's easier to schedule a team trip to the local pub, maybe try to work in some trips to the local blood center to donate, or grab a hammer and spend a day with Habitat for Humanity.

**Find a cause you all believe in and work together to support it.**

**Talk to your CPA  
and ask how much  
you could be donating.**







11

# Cover the YMCA membership.

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Invest in the  
health of your  
employees.

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It's not that much and you could build in some fitness contests which encourage people to be healthier which leads to less sick days and you can probably save on your insurance as well.

## Start a wellness program.

### FITNESS CONTEST

encourages people to be healthier.

### BETTER HEALTH

leads to fewer sick days

### FEWER SICK DAYS

means saving on insurance





# 12

# Permission to fail.

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Too often  
we create  
environments  
where failing  
is fatal in  
corporate  
settings.

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Too often we create environments where failing is fatal in corporate settings. What we are actually doing is stifling creativity, because if teammates aren't failing it means that they are repeating the same tasks over and over, instead of thinking creatively about how they could solve a problem.

**Encourage  
experimentation  
by being open  
to mistakes.**

**NEVER...**  
**ever**  
**ever**  
**ever**  
**ever...**  
**EVER**  
**stifle**  
**creativity.**

**- WHITNEY  
MANFREDA**





# 13

**Mentoring  
is a two  
way street.**

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Keep a “Never  
stop learning”  
mentality.

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## 8 mentors everyone should have:

### The Coach

who is there to help you with the day-to-day blocking and tackling. As one of my mentors put it, “your mind is like a bad neighborhood, you shouldn’t spend too much time there alone.”

### The Cheerleader

who is there to keep you going through the hard times. Or as Winston Churchill once stated, “if you’re going through hell, keep going.”

### The Challenger

the person who will push you beyond what you preserve are your physical and mental limits.

### The Connector

who will introduce you to their network.

### The Educator

the wise old sage who gives you the tools to continue learning, because learning is true work of a lifetime.

### The Idea Generator

the one you drink beer with and work out your million dollar idea on the back of a bar napkin, pro tip: always carry a pen in your pocket.

### Relationship

because even if you’re a relationship blogger, you’re probably going to experience some serious shit in your romantic, family, and friendships. So it helps to have someone you can call on that has “seen this movie before.”

### Spiritual

arguably the most important. David Foster Wallace, my favorite modern author, once suggested that in the day-to-day trenches of adult existence, there is no such thing as atheism. We all worship. Whether it be JC or Allah, the Four Noble Truths or the Wiccan Mother Goddess, the fact is that anything else you worship will eat you alive.

## Go beyond business advice.

Mentorship programs in companies need to go beyond business advice, with a “never stop learning” mentality. Few of the most successful people would be where they are without their own mentors. It is an obligation to pay that we pay it forward.

**Decide how your employees can best benefit from your experiences, and share them.**





# 14

## Map the route.



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Give your  
employees  
something  
to look  
forward to.

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People are a whole lot more willing to follow you into the Wilderness if you show them where you are headed.

If you're not having regularly scheduled reviews with your team on how they can grow within the organization and the skills they need to develop, WHY THE HELL ARE THEY GONNA FOLLOW YOU?

That's not limited to Millennials, that's just solid advice for anyone on a team.

**Set and share the direction for your team.**

**“ One thing that I can tell you from years of camping as an Eagle Scout and even today, is that people are a whole lot more willing to follow you into the Wilderness if you show them the map.**

**- RICHARD KAISER**







# 15

## **Encourage feedback.**

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Evaluate  
based upon  
the criteria  
you view  
as most  
important.

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Rethink reviews. At Wilderness Agency, we worked with a lot of really smart people to build out our own internal review tool focused on the values that mean the most to our company and team.

**For us, the following values mean the most:**

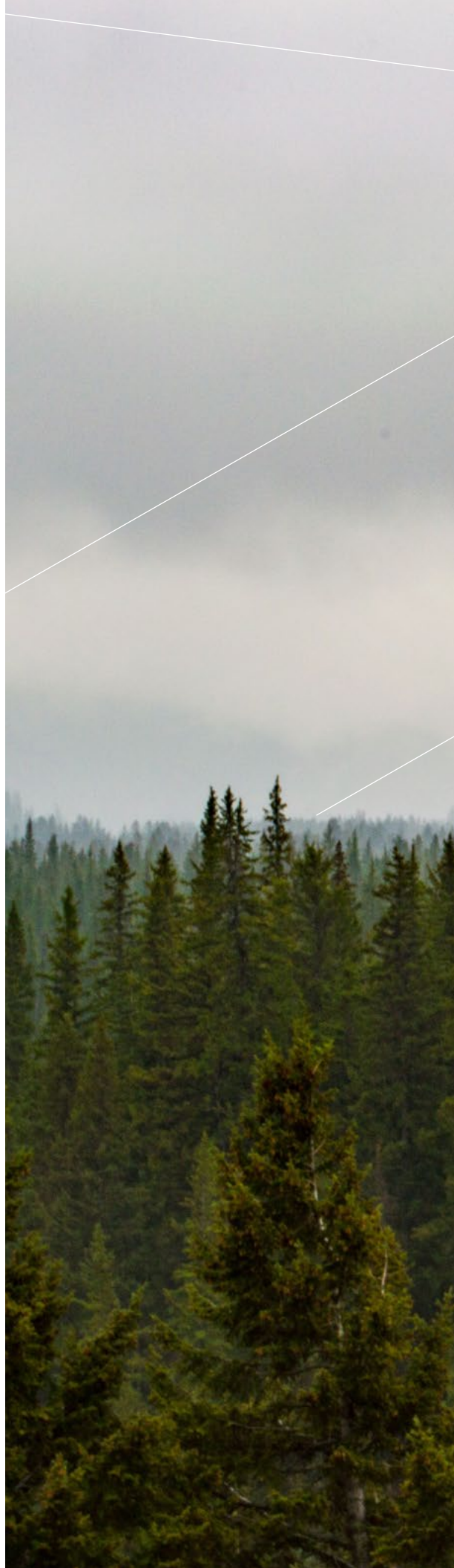
- **Communication**
- **Passion**
- **Autonomy**
- **Development (of themselves and how they are helping others)**
- **Organizational Awareness**
- **Innovation**
- **Agility**

In our evaluation process, they score themselves, then we evaluate them and discuss if there is any misalignment to make sure we are all on the same page.

Then we identify 3 things that they will work on developing in the next year and tactics to achieve those goals. Their bonuses are comprised of a weighted score, 50% on them achieving their goals and 50% on the company achieving its financial objectives.

Providing team members with encouragement and feedback helps more than anything in overcoming the struggles of growing into their roles.

**Evaluate your evaluations. Think about what actually matters.**







15½

**Millennials  
can help  
you.**

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Here's  
one way a  
Millennial can  
help to get  
the most out  
of you.

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## Try their tools

One of the things that we have helped companies to develop are online tools that help keep people connected. At Wilderness Agency, we have helped companies to build out intranet systems that look and feel like social media platforms. They provide access to documents, contact info, incentive programs, vacation requests, and more.

We have also helped organizations to gamify their career development. Through online learning portals, we have created classes, tests, and reward systems that help people to learn skills for advancement and soft skills that younger generations haven't developed.

**Sometimes, the way a Millennial approaches technology, can help you out of a rut.**

**“ My team pushed me for three years to adopt the program Slack for internal communication and finally one day I gave in. My email went from over 100 a day down to 25. And because everyone can see the communication happening, most of the time people are answering questions that I used to have to field.**

**- RICHARD KAISER**



Have a Millennial follow you around for a day and then ask them how you can save an hour a day by using better technology.

It works. From little tricks to speed up how you triage emails or communication tools to get the entire team working better together, they know some of the answers.

## So there is the real secret.

Millennials need your help to learn emotional skills and you DEFINITELY need their help to navigate technology. It can be a win-win.

“ There’s no  
benefit to  
creating false  
divisions,  
when it turns  
out everyone  
can actually  
benefit from  
everyone.

- JOSH MOODY



# wilderness

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