How millennial leadership is impacting the workplace

Millennial leadership already is changing the concept of "business as usual" and undoubtedly will impact the workplace even more in years to come. The group's sheer number makes them a force with which to be reckoned. Millennials comprise about half of the current American workforce, and forecasts show them as 75 percent of the global workforce by 2025. Their preferences, attitudes, and style can't help but influence the office environment.

Millennials also are moving into higher roles faster than their predecessors. Generation X has too few members to fill all the vacancies created by retiring Baby Boomers, so businesses call on talented millennial leadership to take on greater responsibility earlier in their career. Likewise, many organizations actively strive to put tech-savvy millennials into managerial positions to keep their company competitive and forward-thinking.

What might all this signal for 2020 and beyond? Here's a look at what millennial leadership brings to the table:

Less hierarchy

Formal chains of command generally don't appeal to millennial leaders. Instead, they tend to favor collaboration and believe good ideas can come from anyone regardless of position or title. By giving everyone a voice and actively seeking feedback from all employees, millennial leadership hopes to nurture passion and create a feeling of collective responsibility for company success. This openness also plays into the millennial ideal of corporate transparency through keeping everyone in the know, not just higher-ups.

Fewer rules

Millennials are quick to question policies they see as unnecessary or outdated. Why, for instance, shouldn't workers wear jeans if that makes them more comfortable and productive? Similarly, red tape frustrates millennial leadership because they like to take action on exciting new ideas. Expect their sense of urgency to change the need to go through multiple channels before decisions get made.

Greater contemplation of purpose

Yes, they still desire a good paycheck. However, passion and social responsibility play a significant role in the career choices this generation makes. Millennials want to know their work matters. As leaders, they'll try to motivate and inspire staff by showing how individual efforts fit into the big picture.

Similarly, millennial leadership may spend more time investigating how the company supports important causes. Actions might include finding ways to reduce the organization's carbon footprint, expanding recruiting efforts aimed at minorities and other underrepresented groups, or giving staff members time off to volunteer together.

More job hopping

"Lifers" are a dying breed. Workers in the 21st century often see their time with a company as the chance to gain the knowledge and experience necessary to seek out better opportunities. Thus, businesses may experience difficulty maintaining an internal pipeline of millennial leaders groomed to take over top positions. Also, millennial bosses themselves potentially will need to deal more often with turnover and retention issues on their teams than leaders did in previous eras.

More technology

It's no secret that millennials love technology. As they assume top roles, odds are high that they will make investing in it a priority. Likewise, millennial leadership likely will continue to find new ways to incorporate tech into company life, such as holding video conferences rather than on-site staff meetings.

But effective tech involves more than purchasing the latest and greatest. Millennial leadership will face increasing concerns about cybersecurity and be instrumental in how their company stores and protects information.

Increased acceptance of remote work

Technology has enabled many job-related tasks to be performed at any time from any place. Expect millennial leadership to embrace telecommuting and feel comfortable managing team members both on-site and off.

The expansion of worksite options puts millennial leadership at the forefront of dealing with the issues it creates. Modern bosses need to consider things such as what interview questions to ask candidates for remote positions, what communication methods will keep operations flowing smoothly, how to keep virtual employees engaged and in the loop, and what parameters to use to measure productivity.

A growing interest in work-life rhythm

Already known for their desire to pursue passions outside of work, millennials seem destined to continue to find ways to merge the personal and professional – especially as they have children or need to take care of their aging parents. Actions such as flexible work schedules and unlimited time off will help companies attract top millennial talent.

Blurring lines between work and private time, however, brings with it the danger of always feeling "on." Millennial leadership will need to be mindful of the stress created from actions such as sending emails at odd hours or texting someone during his vacation.

Adaptability

Finally, nobody needs to remind millennial leadership that it's a fast-paced, ever-changing world out there. They've seen how quickly an economy can turn or how a new invention can render today's hot item obsolete tomorrow. While superior leaders in past generations committed to lifelong learning and embracing change, adaptability is no longer simply a good trait to possess – it's a requirement for career survival.