



# FINDING SUCCESS WITH YOUR MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES

As seen in AutoSuccess

How many times in the last week have you said something negative about millennials, young people or “kids these days”? Honestly, you were probably right about some of the things that triggered those negative comments. But did your reaction help your dealership’s younger employees improve or did it just alienate them?

Those millennials you’ve spent the last few years complaining about aren’t kids anymore — and they’re probably filling several key roles in your dealership. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, millennials are now the largest generation in U.S. workplaces, accounting for more than a third of the labor force. That group includes anyone who was between the ages of 21 and 36 in 2017 and was working or looking for work.

Generational gap issues are inevitable when people of all ages work together, but it’s critical that you adapt to your younger workforce, and especially your younger buyers, if you want your dealership to remain competitive and successful. Adjusting some of your own expectations and practices will keep your millennial employees engaged and moving in a positive direction.

Here are some ways you can help your millennial employees be successful.

## Get Over the Myths

You’ve probably heard some of these myths from your peers or even uttered them yourself. Millennials are lazy, feel they’re entitled to things they didn’t earn, can’t take criticism and need their hands held on even simple projects.

However, a different picture has emerged as millennials have started dominating the labor force. A study by workforce solutions provider ManpowerGroup recently revealed that millennials are not only working longer hours than most older generations, they feel positive about their current jobs and their prospects for finding another job quickly if it doesn’t work out.

Worldwide, 73 percent of millennials reported working more than 40 hours a week, with the average in America being 45 hours. In fact, 26 percent of millennials globally are working two or more paid jobs. Does that sound lazy? You’ve probably seen some of this firsthand since your millennial employees are used to long hours, including evenings and weekends, in the automotive industry.

Sure, you’ve probably heard your share of complaints and requests for extra time off, but it doesn’t mean they’re lazy. Those requests are actually more indicative of a general business trend that everybody is adapting to. In a survey of small business employees and owners, payroll service provider Justworks discovered

that employees, regardless of age, largely prefer flexible work schedules to unlimited PTO.

This means that your millennial employees are working harder and longer than you might expect, and some of their attitudes about work are simply indicative of larger trends not exclusive to them alone.

## Provide Evolving Training

Millennials aren’t just willing to put in the hours, they want to learn more, too. Job security is something everybody worries about, but millennials take a unique view on it. To make sure they can keep their jobs, they value having the skills necessary to do their jobs well and want training to achieve those skills.

This perspective could be a product of the fact that 40 percent of millennials entered the workforce with at least an undergraduate degree in 2016. By comparison, 32 percent of Generation X workers had college degrees in 2000. Continuing education is a trend among millennials that is carrying over to their post-college careers.

**93%** of millennials see ongoing skills development as an important part of their future careers.

The ManpowerGroup study revealed that 93 percent of millennials see ongoing skills development as an important part of their future careers. Many would even pay for it personally and give up their own time to get more training. So how can you tap into this desire to learn? First, you need to understand that millennials fall into three learning categories. The ManpowerGroup calls them High Learners, Potential Learners and Low Learners (because yes, there are still some millennials who don’t see learning as a priority).

I’m sure you’ve guessed by now that your best employees fit into the first two groups. The good news is that the vast majority of millennials already fall into those groups, too. If you want your millennials to buy into your dealership’s processes and keep improving, you need to teach them how.

High Learners are the cream of the crop. They’re optimistic, confident and driven. More challenging training that evolves with time keeps them interested.

Most millennials fall into the Potential Learners category. They also have a high drive for learning and, though they aren’t as confident and don’t create as many opportunities as High Learners, they’re still good employees. They might need a little more engagement to see the connection between training and career success, but they’re willing to get there.

Training is a crucial part of your younger employees’ continued development, and they’ll likely start looking for new job opportunities if they feel they can’t get anything more from your dealership. Whether it’s selling cars or working in F&I or the service department, all your millennial employees need to learn new skills that will help your dealership succeed.

## Keep Them Active and Give Feedback

While training is important for their growth in the dealership, what younger employees do day to day can be destructive to their productivity. If they feel their skills aren’t being applied properly or their activities feel tedious, they could mentally check out and be useless to you. Millennials need to feel like they’re making a difference for your dealership.

Consider working with them to develop new sales opportunities. Can they spend some time at a local mall talking to potential customers? Are you

involved in supporting local schools and athletic events? Let your younger employees interact with customers in those venues as well. Work environment is important to millennials, and keeping them engaged and active will help them see their own value.

Finally, make sure they know what they’re doing right and what needs work. Yes, I know this can feel a bit like you’re holding their hands. But these things can go a long way toward making your whole team work better together.

If you continue to berate millennials for the myths that follow them everywhere, you’ll have a hard time keeping them on board and helping them realize their potential. Focusing on continual training and finding the right ways to engage with them will help your dealership see continued success.

For more on millennials’ roles in your dealership, please email me at the address above. ○