

Sharpen Your Tools

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LEADING WITH PURPOSE ENGAGES MILLENNIALS

How to create a culture that goes beyond generational differences

According to the Pew Research Center's evaluation of the U.S. Census data, millennials now make up 35 percent of our country's work force. They have surpassed Gen Xers and baby boomers. It is projected that the millennials population will continue to grow to a peak of about 75 million people. With more and more baby boomers retiring, jobs for this generation should be plentiful.

Today's restaurant organization is likely comprised of a variety of staff that spans generations. Engaging each generation effectively requires more than a cursory online management course, but rather a deeper dive into what makes each one thrive. Mastering your management skills is critical to driving employee engagement and retention. Having a company culture that reflects the beliefs and values millennials hold dear is a key factor in gaining their long-term commitment to their employer.

What Do Millennials Want?

Known as the "Giving Generation," millennials have expressed a strong desire to work for companies that have an authentic social impact program. However, they seek organizations that do more than write a check once a year. Here are a few examples of what they are specifically looking for:

- Paid time-off for volunteering
- Matching gifts to meaningful non-profits
- Benefits and perks that reflect their values

While some of these desired benefits match those of other generations, companies are stepping up their game to adjust potentially outdated policies and employee perks that will attract these desirable 18- to 35-yearold workers searching for positions in the restaurant industry. Additionally, many are dusting off aged company cultures that don't reflect the desires of this newer generation.

Purpose Above the Perfect Job

Millennials are not the only people who expect companies to do more than turn a profit. According to the 2018 Cone/Porter Novelli Purpose Study, 70 percent of Americans believe companies need to make a positive social impact and 66 percent are willing to leave their familiar brands in the dust in favor of companies that are purpose-driven.

For example, many Americans are frequenting eating establishments that thoughtfully source their food items, minimize food waste or give back to their communities. Organizations that have a formal and public sustainability program will secure extra kudos from an increasingly discerning clientele, both in and outside of their restaurants.

Likewise, millennials will opt to leave an organization if it does not deliver upon its purposeful commitments. In fact, according to a survey by Calling Brands, millennials rank a company's "purpose promise" higher than salary and benefits when evaluating their employment choices. They will even forgo promotions and the perfect job to support a company's higher, inspired purpose.

How to Lead Your Entire Team with Purpose

When we set out to create our #BeBetter culture, we did more than simply paste a fancy quote on our office walls. We dug deep to ensure that everything we offered, including our employee benefits, training and team-building activities, sent a clear message that we are a purposeful organization dedicated to improving the lives of our employees, customers, partners and community. Here's how to incorporate a similar approach at your organization:

1 Re-define your company purpose.

It may be tempting to simply tweak a pre-millennial company culture document by changing language or adding a social impact program. However, this is a shortsighted approach, and keen-eyed millennials will see right through the lack of authenticity.

Revising your company's vision, purpose, mission and values will take time and several iterations. However, in the end, you will be assured of a solid cultural foundation that will stand the test of time.

If there are resource constraints, consider hiring an outside firm to guide you through the

process. A third party may be just the ticket to providing an objective view into what's working and what can be adjusted or improved.

2 Secure alignment across all stakeholders.

Conducting workshops and one-on-one meetings with your team, your customers and even your vendors will provide a plethora of creative insights into the perceptions each has of your company's business operations and existing culture. Having these workshops led by an outside party removes any stigma of sharing open and honest feedback.

If you have an existing partnership with a non-profit organization, ask them to join the conversation. Their vision and strategic goals will play a critical part in your culture as you work together to do good in your local community.

3 Integrate the culture with business operations.

As stated, millennials are not looking for companies that have a one-and-done approach to their social impact program. Therefore, finding a way to integrate your program into your daily business operations will show them that this is an ongoing commitment and that their role is directly tied to its success.

For example, if you have a "time and materials" function in your organization, like customer service or tech support, you might consider transforming these tasks into a specified time for volunteering. Another option might be if sales or customer satisfaction goals are met or exceeded, employees can select a volunteer project as a team-building exercise.

4 Keep your culture alive every day.

The key to your cultural transformation success will be in developing creative ways to keep it top of mind for your team each day. Whether you choose to have a fun screensaver or a rewards program for those who exemplify your core values, you should demonstrate that you are a company that is committed to purpose beyond profit. Millennials will repay such organizations with their loyalty and their best efforts.

Our managers have gone through an extensive training program in which they have fine-tuned communication and coaching skills. This training has resulted in enhanced relationships and increased team engagement. Millennials crave a deeper relationship with their managers than prior generations. Fostering regular, positive communications with actionable feedback is the ticket.

Additionally, we developed and implemented meaningful team events such as Habitat for Humanity Build projects. This year we implemented a Days of Purpose program in which we compensate employees for their volunteer time, whether completed during office hours or on their own time. Lastly, we developed a weekly #BeBetter Values Campaign. Each Monday morning, our team receives an inspirational email. The program has been well received and was easy to implement.

Engaging Restaurant Facility Managers

No restaurant organization is too small to implement a clearly defined vision and purpose to attract millennials into the growing facility management industry. From franchises to full-fledged, five-star restaurants, all companies can showcase a dedication to enhancing the lives of employees, customers and partners and reap many benefits, including attracting talent and enhancing brand reputation.

However, this is only the beginning. Facility managers at all levels need to understand the inner-workings of millennials to retain them beyond their typical three-year employment commitment. Turnover is prevalent across many industries, and the restaurant facility industry is not immune.

We've instituted a variety of management skills-building programs to cultivate deep, professional relationships between employees and their managers, such as:

- Regular check-ins to discuss progress against deliverables
- Ongoing skills-building training
- Awards programs to recognize work and volunteer contributions

As a facility manager, it is up to you to know what makes your team thrive. Keeping your eyes and ears open is a great first step. However, keeping an open mind is even more important. Millennials can spot a lack of authenticity from a mile away, so backing up words with actions is vital.

Michael Kurland is the Co-founder and CEO of Branded Group. He is an entrepreneur who mortgaged his life savings to launch his first company in 2014 with a sincere desire to #BeBetter. He believed he could better serve customers while making a social impact. With more than a decade of experience in the retail and supply industries, Kurland knew that his

expertise in client communications and building mutually beneficial relationships would provide a solid foundation for the company's growth.

