

# #downwiththekids






**The millennial generation,  
now entering employment,  
will reshape the world of  
work. Get the inside track on  
who they are, what they want,  
and what organisations need  
to be doing right now to  
engage them.**

**50%**

of the global workforce will be Gen Y by 2020

Born from around 1980 – 2000, between the launch of the Walkman and the founding of Google, Generation Y (or Millennials) is the largest generation of youth in history. They are almost three times as big as Generation X before them.

They're the instant information, instant gratification generation with the world literally at their fingertips. Broadband, smartphones, laptops and social media are simply part of daily life. Their connection to technology sets them far apart from generations before them.

Media savvy to the power of 10, Gen Ys are immune to most traditional marketing ploys and sales pitches – Whatever  They've seen it all before, and been exposed to it all their lives. Conversely it's the Millennials themselves who are driving the brand agenda, both as consumers outside and employees inside. According to the IPA's "Future Consumer", **Gen Y expect brands to offer purpose and meaning in their lives beyond the material. Brands are responding by moving away from the business of being aspirational to the business of being useful.** There's a return to authenticity, empathising not just understanding. Sainsbury's is a good example of this with their 'Food Rescue' app which provides recipes and inspiration for using the food leftover in the fridge. Technology meets empathy. Inside organisations too, Gen Y are seeking greater meaning. **They need to understand their organisation's vision and how the work they do contributes to achieving it.**



They are a generation quite unlike any other with expectations and demands of their own. With Millennials estimated to form 50% of the global workforce by 2020<sup>1</sup> and the battle for talent hotting up across many sectors, workplaces need to be putting measures in place now to cope with this seismic shift.

Woodreed's been thinking about this. Our paper looks at this topic through the lens of Woodreed's STRIPES model, and within the context of Engage for Success's 4 enablers of employee engagement. In it we talk about the unique traits that define this generation and suggest how workplaces need to adapt today to best appeal to tomorrow's workforce.

<sup>1</sup>PWC Millennials at work



## Culture

### #withus

The culture of having to be seen at your desk 24/7 is disappearing forever. It's not that Gen Y has a poor work ethic – just a different one. They'd prefer a more flexible and enjoyable work life because they see life as the priority and don't believe in living to work. On the whole, they'd rather work at an interesting job for less money that doesn't tie them to their desk, rather than putting in 12-hour days for a six-figure salary.



### **It's also about working in an environment that's pleasant and positive; one that encourages collaboration and creativity.**

Comms agencies and youth brands lead the way, with open plan meet / work spaces and areas for creative collaboration and hot-desking the norm. Look at workspaces like Mindcandy, Innocent, Google and social network Badoo, whose office space has a huge chalkboard updated with invitations to parties and product news (social and business lives intermingling perfectly). It's not just the new kids on the block, progressive brands such as Virgin Money and First Direct excel in creating a stimulating environment for the people that work there. Made.com's even got an open door policy for dogs, as indeed do Woof, sorry Woodreed.

The digital revolution is already blurring the boundaries between work and home life, creating an 'always on' culture. As the Hay Group states in its 'megatrends' report:

**“There's an increasing convergence between private and working lives and a desire by individuals to integrate personal and professional goals.”<sup>2</sup>**

Gen Y responds well to this and the good news is that Gen X is catching up. Research by BAA amongst its employees at Heathrow found that 80% were happy to use their own devices to receive work related comms. Similarly, Woodreed's recent values engagement programme with Volkswagen Financial Services saw 45% of employees opting in to actively engage with the organisation through SMS chat out of office hours.

**45%**  
Employees opting in to actively engage with the organisation through SMS

<sup>2</sup>Hay Group Megatrends. Leadership 2030

**52%**  
Gen Z and Gen Y – honesty the most important quality for being a good leader

## Senior and line managers providing strong strategic narrative – Engage for Success 1st enabler

**64%**  
Millennials say it's a priority for them to make the world a better place

### #knowthescore

Millennials want a management style and corporate culture that is different from anything that has gone before. They've got an entirely more collaborative approach and are turned off by rigid corporate structures and information silos. As PWC says in its report 'Millennials at work':

**"They expect rapid progression, a varied and interesting career and constant feedback. In other words – one that meets their needs."**<sup>3</sup>

A study by the Intelligence Group found that 64% of Millennials say it's a priority for them to make the world a better place. This is where the importance of a strong strategic narrative comes in, setting out an organisation's ambition and purpose; where it's come from and where it's going. **Gen Y need to see how their work directly impacts the organisation's success, they believe that the work they do should have actual meaning.**



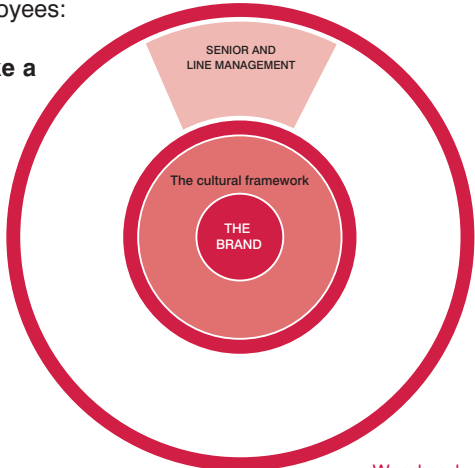
They look for greater fulfilment and prefer to work at places that provide this. It isn't a case of not being committed; it's a case of actually finding a purpose and working hard to accomplish it.

Gen Y can see right through leaders who talk the talk but don't walk the walk. Engage for Success's 4th enabler comes into play here (Organisational integrity – the values on the wall are reflected in day to day behaviours. There is no 'say –do' gap). One-half (52%) of both Gen Z and Gen Y state that honesty is the most important quality for being a good leader.

So trust is key for Gen Y, both as consumers and employees:

**"I would pay attention more if brands acted more like a trusted person in my life than a large company."**

**IPA "The Future Consumer"**



<sup>3</sup>PWC Millennials at Work

**43%**

Employees  
in the UK think  
their manager  
is ineffective

The **3rd enabler** is about engaging managers who focus their people and give them scope, treating their people as individuals, coaching and stretching their teams. The role of the line manager has always been pivotal, now having strong line managers who can mentor and inspire is more important than ever.

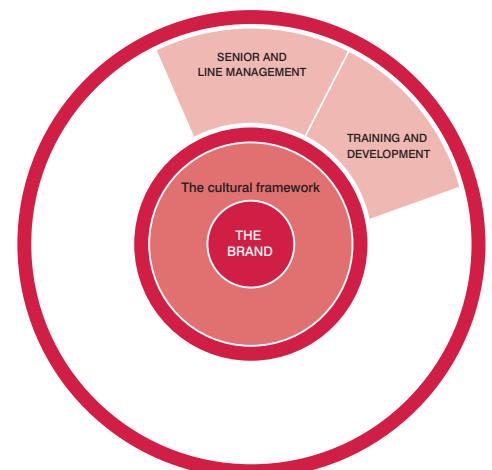
**“The most valued opportunity was the chance to work with strong coaches and mentors. Millennials relish the opportunity to engage, interact and learn from senior management. Mentoring programmes can be particularly effective and also help to relieve tensions between generations.”<sup>4</sup>**

A note of caution though: Latest research from Engage for Success suggests 43% of employees in the UK think their manager is ineffective.<sup>5</sup>

## Training and development

### #geton

The millennials’ desire to learn and progress is apparent in their view of the benefits offered by employers. When PWC asked which benefits they would most value from an employer, respondents named training and development and flexible working opportunities over financial benefits.



<sup>4</sup>PCW Millennials at Work

<sup>5</sup>[www.engageforsuccess.com](http://www.engageforsuccess.com)



## Recruitment

### #allaboard



If you want to attract the cream of the Gen Y crop, **make sure you're clear about your purpose as an organisation and the part your new recruit will play in delivering it.** According to a 2013 US study conducted by the York College of Pennsylvania's Centre for Professional Excellence, Millennials don't buy into the yada yada of corporate financial goals, market positions or growth strategies. For them it's about "societal goals, environmental practices, cultures and public missions"<sup>6</sup>. This means having motivating, credible values that are lived right across the organisation from the top down, creating a positive healthy culture of employees living the brand.

Unsurprisingly, technology leads the way again. Glassdoor is a prime example. With eight million anonymous evaluations of more than 400,000 companies, it allows job seekers to find out what it's like to work at a company before saying yes to a job. It's putting pressure on companies to change, says Samantha Zupan, Glassdoor's head of communications, "**forcing companies to deal with problems internally, before they become fodder for public discussion.**"<sup>7</sup>

Millennials are building, then leveraging social networks to find jobs that promise more independence and flexibility. They're also more than happy not to commit at all, with the independently-minded seeking out freelance work rather than being tied to a company. Don't expect them to stay long either. Put away that gold carriage clock as a staggering 91% of Millennials are only expecting to stay in a job for less than 3 years!<sup>8</sup>

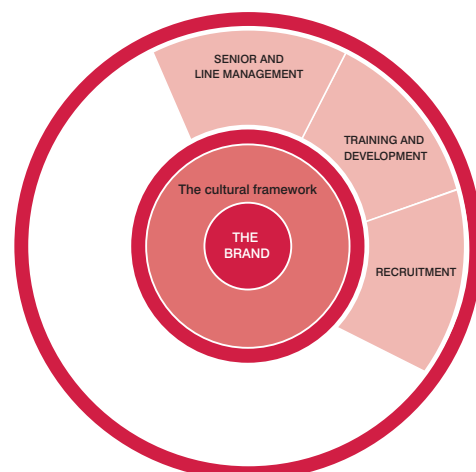
**91%**

Millennials  
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<sup>6</sup>LBV.com

<sup>7</sup>Wall Street Journal 16th June 2015

<sup>8</sup>Multiple Generations @ Work, Future Workplace



# Performance – reward and recognition

## #greatjob

Millennials are the instant gratification generation, and expect their recognition in the workplace to fulfil this. In a Facebook, Twitter and Instagram era where Millennials are hooked on the 'like' and the high of the 'share', organisations need to rethink how they motivate, recognise and reward their younger employees. The days of the annual employee evaluation, quarterly bonuses, employee-of-the-month awards or a round of applause at the bi-weekly sales team meeting are disappearing.

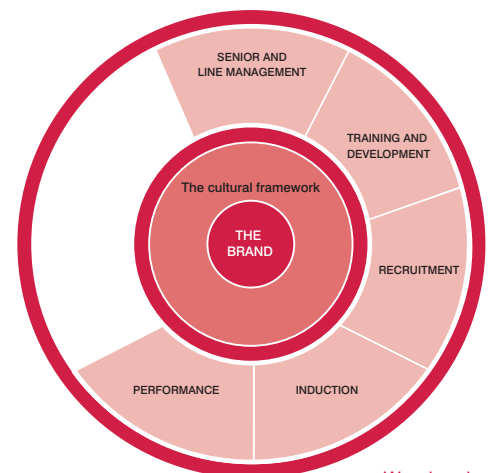


To keep Gen Y motivated technology platforms must be moulded into the workplace, allowing peer to peer interaction, keeping them informed, sharing goal management and best practice and providing a vital life support of regular feedback and recognition. As Jo Moffatt, Managing Director of Woodreed and Guru Group Engage for Success says,



**“ESN and intranets that fail to address the ‘what’s in it for me’ will fail to engage.”**

Giving them access to different technologies will allow them to maximize performance and creativity. Woodreed’s platform ChallengerA achieves all of this.







## Employee voice

### #haveyoursay

**Enabler 3** – for reinforcing and challenging views, acknowledge them as central to solving your business challenges and driving innovation.



**The myth of the Millennial is that they expect to be heard. The truth is, according to the IPA's Future Consumer, that they simply want the opportunity to provide input.**

Employers need to think outside the suggestions box when it comes to employee voice. It needs to be central to their engagement strategy, employees as central to solving business challenges and driving innovation. Technology comes to the fore here with many new platforms and tools available to gain employee voice and feedback. Woodreed uses an innovative platform Waggl to allow its clients' employees to be heard. Waggl lets employees share their views anonymously and vote on what everyone else is saying at the same time. It's quick, easy and fun and allows the best and most popular ideas to rise to the top. David Connell, HR Director UK Peugeot Citroën, used the tool recently to gather thoughts from across the organisation. He noted especially high levels of engagement amongst their Millennials. He says,

**"They were seeking me out and asking me when the next Waggl was coming."**

Generation Y have been brought up to ask questions when they don't understand. They are one of the most independent and outspoken generations and can come across as having little respect for authority. **The key for employers is realising that asking questions can often lead to answers and solutions that are actually more efficient and effective.**





## Synergy – one brand inside and out

### #joinedup

Millennials are attracted to brands as employers that they admire as consumers. The role of the brand takes centre stage inside with a credible tone of voice used in comms, treating people like, well, people. Emotional engagement, the kind of engagement brands generate, is four times more powerful than rational in behaviour change. **It's about losing the ubiquitous automated corporate tone and instead treating employees like individuals.**



The trend of employee as individual was identified in the Hay Report with Millennials demanding that employers take more notice of their individual needs and preferences. For employers, **it's about understanding the needs, wants, aspirations and lifestyles of employees in the same way as they understand their customer. It's about treating employees like customers too.**



Bear in mind that millennials suffer from information overload. Choose your messages and initiatives wisely and well.



## Conclusion

There's currently a disconnect between what Millennials want from the workplace and what they're experiencing. No wonder then that the average length of stay for Gen Y is 18 months. With this generation on the verge of making up half the workforce, we need to both understand them and take their needs seriously. There's little point simply paying lip service with wallpaper values and superficial mission statements.

**Organisations need to wake up, smell the fair trade coffee and start shaping their businesses for the unstoppable rise of Gen Y.**



## About Woodreed

Woodreed, founded in 1991, is a specialist advertising agency that puts brand at the heart of internal and external communications to engage employees and customers alike.

We help clients create cultures within their organisations that work to achieve their corporate and strategic objectives.

We believe that you should be one brand to customers and employees. People engage on a deeper level with brands than they do with dry rational information. As such we use the strategies, creativity and media used by consumer marketers inside businesses along with our proprietary model STRIPES.

Woodreed plans brands and helps shape company cultures using various research tools and methodologies and creates and runs employee and customer workshops and focus groups. Its in-house creative teams devise employee engagement campaigns using a range of media from film, social media and experiential, through to traditional print.

If you'd like to find out more about Woodreed's proprietary approach to building brand-hearted internal cultures, please call Jo or Charlotte on 01892 515025 or email [jo@woodreed.com](mailto:jo@woodreed.com)



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