

USING TECHNOLOGY TO ENGAGE & TRAIN MILLENNIALS



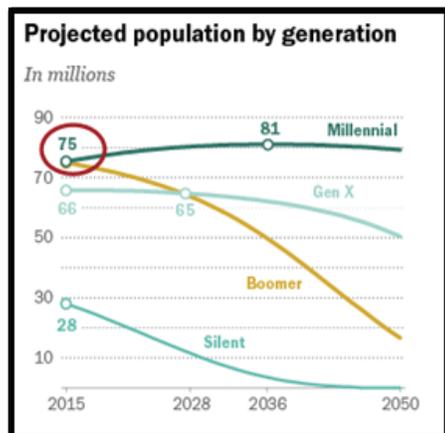
THE FASTEST PATH TO SAFETY
AWESOME

Millennial Workers Need & Want a Better Type of Safety Training

There seems to be a stigma around training millennials, those born between 1980 and 2000, give or take a few years. Millennials are thought to be hard to engage and even harder to keep interested because of their need for instant gratification and short attention spans. While this generation may be wired differently than earlier generations that did not grow up immersed in technology, it doesn't mean they are untrainable. **In fact, it may surprise you to learn then, that millennials WANT training from their employers.** Providing regular training is one of the best ways to reduce turnover and boost productivity in millennial employees. As with any group though, knowing your audience, tailoring training content and offering options when it comes to training delivery will lead to a more successful outcome.

Statistics

The focus in recent years on the aging workforce is now shifting to millennials in the workforce, and with good reason. Based on U.S. and Canadian census numbers and reports from the Pew Research Center and Environics Analytics, millennials are now the



	Millennials	Gen X	Boomer	Pre-Boom
Born	1981-2000	1966-1980	1946-1965	Pre 1946
Age in 2015	15-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Population in 2015	9.5M	7.2M	9.5M	3.9M
% of Population	27%	20%	27%	11%
% of Labour Force	37%	31%	30%	1%
Households in 2015	2.8M	4.1M	5.6M	2.1M
% of Households	19%	28%	38%	15%

Source: Statistics Canada (population) and Environics Analytics (households)

largest segment of the labor force in both countries.

Not only do millennials make up the largest percentage of the workforce now, it looks like that number is going to continue to grow. **According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2020, nearly 50% of the U.S. workforce will consist of millennials. In Canada, the forecasts predict millennials will make up 75% of the workforce by the year 2028.** The time to engage your millennial employees is now and one of the best ways to engage them is through the smart use of technology and online learning.

Let's start by taking a look at some key characteristics of millennials that will help you get to know your audience of millennials better.

Millennial Characteristics

1. **They have the technology and they aren't afraid to**
2. **Risky Business.** Want to

use it. Millennials have grown up immersed in technology. So not only are they tech savvy, they are used to finding what they want, when they want it and finding it immediately. This means being able to access content of all types, including training, on their own terms. Even more than just being tech savvy, millennials LOVE their technology. A 2013 study by Telefonica of over 12,000 millennials showed that in North America 71% of respondents own a smartphone and spend an average of 7 hours a day on it. Millennials are highly mobile and are comfortable accessing and receiving information, including training, through the use of technology and mobile devices. In fact, they expect to.

shake up your training routine? Millennials are up for it! Millennials are generally more risk tolerant than previous generations. This higher risk tolerance coupled with an entrepreneurial mindset also gives them a sense of confidence and a desire to make their mark at work and in the world. This makes them the perfect group to introduce new styles and methods of training to. If you aren't giving them the information and training they want, they will move on to the next opportunity to get it. So changing up your training can help reduce turnover and increase job satisfaction.

3. It's a big world out there. Finally, many millennials have a wide world view. Diversity in their work and personal lives is the norm rather than the exception. They also have a strong sense of social consciousness and want to work for companies that promote diversity, social causes, and good corporate citizenship. Globally, 40% of millennials believe they can make a global difference and in North America that percentage jumps to 52%. Training content must reflect this wide world view to engage and be meaningful to millennial learners.

Next we will look at ways to tailor training content for millennial learners.

Tailored Content

According to a 2012 study commissioned by Time Inc., millennials switch media types 27 times every nonworking hour. And make no mistake, just because they are at work does not mean they put down their phones or stop checking social media sites. So, it should come as no surprise that millennials are multi-focused and bounce from one device, media type and topic to the next quickly and often. They want information that is concise and available on demand and many are not linear learners; they simply aren't wired that way. In her



article, *Training Millennials in the Workplace? Teach them the Same way you Reach Them*, Julie Veloz noted,

“While we tend to think of these behaviors as culturally driven, academic researchers have determined that this is not only a cultural phenomenon, but is in fact an actual rewiring of millennials’ neurological pathways, meaning that millennials do indeed have shorter attention spans than that of previous generations. In other words, they not only prefer small packets of information, but they also need information to be presented in that way.”

Grab and keep millennials’ interest, enhance their learning and their safety by incorporating these techniques into your training.

Content That Counts

You have a limited amount of time to grab and keep a learner’s attention, especially a millennial learner. Focus on the essential information that will help the learner understand and do their job safely.

- **A great way to do this is through microlearning and microlessons.** Microlearning is not just watered down training or breaking existing training into smaller pieces. It is a focused microlesson on a specific piece of a larger topic. Each microlesson is part of a larger learning objective that can be taken on their own and in any order. This allows the training to shift from instructor driven to learner driven.
- **Microlessons are also a good way to build a foundation for deeper training to come.** Microlearning and microlessons can be

particularly useful for task specific safety training, post incident training and refresher training. It also works well for most learners and is ideal for mobile training. In the article, *The Advantages and Disadvantages of Microlearning in Online Training*, author Christopher Pappas further explores the pros and cons of microlearning.

- **Use real life scenarios,** stories and examples, but don’t forget to keep the material current. Millennials will have a hard time relating and staying tuned in to dated references and examples that don’t fit into today’s workplace. They want to look at material that is fun, interesting and high-quality. Dated videos and online courses will not keep them engaged.
- **Incorporate diversity into your training through the use of images, characters and narration that highlight a wide world view.** Use images that show workers from a variety of backgrounds and remember to represent both males and females throughout a course. Create or look for training content that uses different voiceover actors to add variety and interest.
- **As a socially conscious generation, millennials are much more likely to believe in, work for, and support socially conscious leaders and organizations.** Include a message about your organization’s values around the safety and welfare of employees and the community. A short video from the CEO discussing the

organization’s commitment to safety and health will stick with learners longer than reading it out of a new hire handbook.

Remember, learners of any age have a limited capacity for retaining information so keep their working memory in mind. Prevent information overload:

- Start with the basics of an idea and build on it in a way that makes sense.
- Limit yourself to one chunk of related information per screen.
- Use images, videos and narration to support and reinforce the information.

Gamification

Gamification is the use of common game playing elements, design and thinking to engage and motivate learners. Gamification’s presence in online training is growing and it’s a natural fit for millennials because it engages them and gives them some control over their learning. Here are six reasons why gamification works for millennials.

1. **Mission Possible:** Gamification allows learners to experience the consequences of their choices in a safe and constructive environment. One of the most engaging tools in the use of gamification is the creation of missions or challenges in the form of scenarios, spot-the-hazard activities, for a learner to complete as they go through a course. A benefit of online training is the almost endless possibilities for creating these types of activities. A basic example would be asking a learner to

identify four unsafe activities at a virtual construction site. They must complete the challenge before moving on. Feedback should be provided to enhance the experience and help the learner if they get stuck.

2. Fast and Frequent Feedback:

Speaking of feedback, well timed feedback is important in engaging a learner. Feedback can guide a learner's activities as they move through a training course and tell the learner they are either on the right track or about to derail. Onscreen notifications, pop-ups for definitions, a help button, or kudos for completing a task are all examples of feedback.

3. Progress Please:

Millennials want to know upfront how much time is involved with a task and how they are progressing towards a goal. A simple status bar showing the minutes left in a course or a tally box showing the number of items left to find in a challenge can alleviate the "when are we going to get there" stress that often comes with online training. For classroom training, email an agenda around in advance and have copies to hand out. Most importantly, stick to it and if there are changes, manage expectations and let your learners know what's going on.

4. Healthy Competition:

Competition can be a powerful motivator; whether it's competition with another department, location, or with yourself. A word of caution, setting the stakes too high can be counterproductive and encourage false reporting

of results and a misplaced focus on winning rather than learning. Keep the competition friendly and the value of the prize reasonable and related to the goal.

- 5. Go Team:** In the last 16 years I have worked with many companies that fostered teamwork by setting company, location and departmental goals related to safety and training. If an employee knows others are counting on them to reach a collective goal they are much more likely to do their part. Accomplishing a goal together brings the team a sense of pride and strengthens employee relationships. Sharing results and accomplishments puts people on notice to what others are doing and how well they are doing it. Sharing results throughout the organization also brings visibility to safety and accountability to everyone.

6. The Power of Change:

Lastly, gamification leads to a change in behavior. Gamification in learning increases retention and application of material which can affect a change in behavior long after the training is over.

Personalization and Involvement

If you want to make the content even more sticky to millennial learners personalize it and get their involvement. How?

- Get their input. What kind of topics are of interest to them? How do they want to receive the information? You can also ask them to get creative and participate by taking and sharing pictures and videos

of safety concerns, possible hazards, and even catching people in the act of doing something safely. This can then be incorporated into training.

- Answer the question "what's in it for me?" early and make training relatable and relevant. Show the real world application of what they are learning and how it applies to them. It sounds obvious but it doesn't always happen especially when it comes to safety, because we get in the habit of reciting statistics and regulatory jargon. Use images, characters and

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stories that are relatable and familiar to connect the learner to the material.

- Millennials are incredibly self-sufficient when it comes to getting information. So it makes sense to give them this same type of autonomy when it comes to accessing and taking training. One way to do this is through online self-paced courses. Online training also allows them to learn in a no shame/ no blame environment. A learner can take their time, repeat sections they don't understand or had trouble with, and refer back to the material at a later time. If they have questions or need help they can ask via text, email, instant messaging, or even face-to-face, as old fashioned as that might sound.
- Don't forget to provide coaching and feedback throughout the training. Most millennials crave feedback and advice. They appreciate and respond to coaching throughout a training event. In a classroom setting this may mean working with mentors or senior team members. In online training feedback can come from learning activities, quizzes and other test your knowledge activities. The use of instant messaging apps, "Ask the Expert" features or other help tools are additional ways to provide the feedback and engagement millennials seek.

Delivery Methods

What about the delivery of training content? Do you think a PowerPoint or overhead slides will keep millennials interested for

long? Absolutely not!

Millennials want and expect to receive training through technology; specifically mobile devices like tablets and smartphones. One of the benefits of microlearning and microlessons is the ability to take meaningful training on a smartphone or tablet. As much as millennials love their technology, can you imagine how tedious it would be to take an hour long course on your phone?

If a learning management system is used to deliver training the LMS should be intuitive and have an interesting look and feel. The home page, menu, icons, and navigation controls should be clean and fresh, not dated or busy.

Branding training materials and training delivery systems with your company logo and colors is another way to help learners connect to material while it's being delivered.

Conclusion

Millennials are tech-savvy learners that want to-the-point training that is both entertaining and relevant. Mixing technology, gamification, and instructional design fundamentals can lead to a more satisfying and meaningful training experience for all learners.

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