

ENGAGING MILLENNIALS WITH A YEARS OF SERVICE PROGRAMME

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Every business leader, across every industry in nearly every country, has had a serious discussion about the millennial workforce. The questions are wide-reaching and the answers can get a little convoluted. What does this demographic of workers mean for legacy programmes, corporate structures and overall business?

At Power 2 Motivate, we have been thinking a lot about how shifting employee priorities call for some serious changes in workplace recognition - particularly Years of Service programmes.

But before we delve into how things will need to change, let's take a closer look at millennials. Who are they, what do they look for in employment and how are they motivated?

MILLENNIALS 101: THE DEFINITIVE BREAKDOWN

Millennials are defined as the generation born between 1980 and 2000. They are often characterised as tech-driven, fast-moving professionals with less workplace loyalty than any generation before.

This cohort has grabbed the attention of leaders everywhere because they are increasingly becoming the predominant demographic in the global workforce. According to a recent PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) report, millennials will make up 50 percent of workers across the world by 2020. They are the future (and present) of the business landscape. Understandably, businesses are putting considerable effort into understanding this demographic.

As a starting point, it's useful to begin clarifying what millennials are not. By and large, this demographic has been pinned down by some pretty negative stereotypes. It's not uncommon to hear words like "entitled" and "lazy" attached to any conversation about millennials.



To tap into this level of productivity, leaders need to understand the motivators for this age group as well as their leading characteristics.

PWC IDENTIFIED SOME DEFINING TRAITS:

- An aversion to fixed corporate structures
- A need for ample communication and feedback
- A desire for accelerated career progression
- An extreme preference for flexibility and autonomy
- A preference for rewards beyond financial incentives

Even this short list of general characteristics represents a considerable change from past organisational structures. Millennials crave more openness in the workplace, they want to connect, they want to excel and they want to do so for more than just a bigger paycheck.

In order to truly engage millennials you must create systems and programmes that align with their priorities. The characteristics mentioned above should help guide the revisions to your current Years of Service framework.

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THEN VS. NOW: THE EVOLUTION OF TRADITIONAL YEARS OF SERVICE PROGRAMMES

Years of Service programmes were created to recognise employees for their longevity or tenure within an organisation.

These awards or acknowledgements materialise in a wide range of formats depending on the company. However, before the onset of millennial workers, there was generally a standardised time frame for recognition. Leaders would present workers with their Years of Service gift after a major tenure milestone was hit: 10, 20, even 30 years of employment.

Recognition itself is still of massive importance, however, the timelines and incentives are shifting. With millennial workers staying in their positions for much shorter time frames, recognition programmes need to follow suit.

The PwC report found that 54 per cent of millennial workers expect to have between two and five employers over the course of their professional careers. A quarter of respondents expect to have six or more.

As such, Years of Service models should work within a tighter time frame. Dole out recognition in smaller batches, recognise the one year mark but reserve the gifts for the three year anniversary. Revising your previous time frames is a big step toward catering to a millennial workforce.

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COMMUNICATE RECOGNITION

Another major differentiator with millennials compared to past generations is their desire for vocal and well-communicated recognition. Whereas older generations may have been shy about accepting pronounced praise surrounding their work milestones, millennials actually prefer it.

There is a social aspect to recognition for millennials and Years of Service programmes should reflect that. For these workers, praise and acknowledgements take on a heightened meaning when they are recognised by their superiors in front of their peers. Leaders should take the time to remember exact work anniversaries and be prepared to celebrate them within the office.

Lastly, their preferred incentives are worth factoring into revised models. Millennials are not as motivated by financial rewards as past generations of workers. In fact, there are a lot of things they would prefer over additional money.

On a smaller scale, workers would prefer development opportunities and more flexibility in their work arrangements. According to PwC, when millennials were asked what they prefer as a form of reward personal learning and development and work location flexibility took the top spots respectively with financial rewards coming in third.

For bigger incentives, the type that usually are tied to bigger milestones, modern employees value experiences over money - particularly travel.

A recent report by the Incentive Research Foundation found that incentive travel investments are on the rise because experiences are the new currency. In fact, a majority of participating respondents preferred travel over financial incentives

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When revising Years of Service programmes, or recognition programmes as a whole, leader should keep these preferences in mind. Instead of writing a check, try providing your millennials team members with options like travelling to an industry conference, the opportunity to create a work from home schedule or simply a vacation. Award these incentives within more realistic time frames and make the recognition prominent across the office.

HOW P2M HAS ADAPTED THEIR YEARS OF SERVICE PROGRAMME ACCORDINGLY

Millennials or not, recognition plays a critical role in the motivation of your team. From engagement to productivity, acknowledging the work of your staff plays a big part in overall engagement.

Power2Motivate has been in the field of employee incentives for years and our methods for motivation have been proven to work time and time again.

We have worked hard to tweak our previous Years of Service model to better reflect the reality of recognition with a strong millennial presence in mind.

From notifications about work anniversaries to our considerable reserve of reward options for your team members, P2M has got you covered. To learn more about our Years of Service offerings contact one of our P2M reps today.

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