

# The Next Generation of Lawyers Is Here: Tips for Managing Millennial Attorneys

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Law firms (along with the rest of corporate America) have their sights set on Generation Y, the coming-of-age individuals who are today's most targeted consumer demographic and make up the youngest of the workforce population. Today's newly minted lawyers are coming from Generation Y, also called "Millennials." For those of us who focus on recruiting talent for a living, understanding the Millennial zeitgeist has become a priority.

## Summary

With the entrance of a new generation of lawyers into the legal industry, it is important to remember to remain calm and take it easy on the Millennials. The Millennial generation, defined as those born from 1981 to 1996, are now the largest generation in the workforce. This generational shift has led to a different approach to how the legal industry works and how firms should operate. The introduction of this generation has been met with both enthusiasm and skepticism, and it is important to consider the implications of this generational shift in the legal industry.

The Millennial generation is often characterized as tech-savvy, highly ambitious, and eager to challenge the status quo. As a result, this generation is transforming the legal industry by utilizing their technological know-how to create efficient legal processes and procedures, pursuing innovative legal projects, and pushing for increased diversity and inclusion in the legal field. While some critics have argued that this generation is unprofessional and lacks the necessary experience, the reality is that they bring an entirely different style to the legal profession that has the potential to open up new opportunities.

In order to ensure successful integration of the Millennial generation into the legal industry, firms should recognize their unique skills and abilities. This includes investing in technology and creating flexible work environments that can accommodate the Millennial generation's needs. Additionally, firms should strive to create a culture of learning and growth where younger lawyers can continue to hone their skills and build their knowledge base. With the right resources and support, there is no doubt that this new generation of lawyers can contribute to the success of the legal industry.

Millennial generation, legal industry, workforce, tech-savvy, ambitious, challenge status quo, efficient legal processes, innovative legal projects, diversity and inclusion, unprofessional, potential opportunities, recognize skills and abilities, invest technology, flexible work environment, culture of learning and growth, younger lawyers, resources and support.

## A New Generation of Lawyers Emerges

The Millennial generation of lawyers is coming of age and beginning to make an impact on the legal profession. As the oldest Millennials turn 40 this year, they are now filling the leadership roles of law firms, becoming judges and partners, and assuming important positions in government, in-house legal departments, and corporate America. At the same time, the next generation of lawyers, Generation Z, is coming of age and beginning to enter the legal industry.

## Generation Z Lawyers: What to Expect

Lawyers from Generation Z have grown up with technology and have a greater appetite for digital solutions. They are well-versed in the use of social media, and Gen Z lawyers are likely to be more comfortable with virtual courtrooms and remote hearings. Compared to Millennials, Gen Z lawyers are more likely to be nonconformists and prepared to challenge the status quo through a "work smarter not harder" mindset.

## Understanding Collaboration in Generation Z Lawyers

Generation Z lawyers are accustomed to open communication and collaboration. With the rise of social

media and technology platforms, Gen Z lawyers are able to share information quickly and work with colleagues located around the world. This makes them more open to collaboration and working in teams in order to achieve goals.

## Potential of Generation Z Lawyers

Generation Z lawyers are highly adaptable to new environments, technologies and workflows. As the legal industry continues to evolve, Gen Z lawyers are likely to be the first to embrace new technologies and processes. They are capable of quickly unlearning old methods and adapting to new approaches, making them the perfect candidates to lead the legal industry into the digital age.

Generation Y is the generation born to the Baby Boomers between 1980 and 1995, according to a November 2007 report on CBS News's 60 Minutes. 60 Minutes estimated that there are 80 million Generation Y-ers moving into their early years of gainful employment. Not surprisingly, Generation Y has been carefully studied for years by marketers and managers to best exploit the generation both as consumer base and workforce. In Generation Y spirit, I surfed the Internet to divine what characteristics conventional wisdom has assigned to our newest young professionals.

There were three common characteristics of the Millennials that I saw over and over. First, the generation is defined as the "Net Gen" who is always online and constantly multitasking. At ease with computers and mobile phones, Generation Y is technology friendly and highly networked. Social relationships develop with text messaging, Facebook, and MySpace -- uncharted territory for the rest of us. The Millennials never wistfully say, "Remember before we had cell phones?"

Second, Generation Y -- a significantly more diverse population -- is often defined as optimistic and volunteer-oriented. This is widely attributed to coming of age in a culture where self-esteem and a "you can do anything you set your mind to" attitude pervade. Many opine Millennials are used to praise and loathe criticism. Most relevant to employers is the generalization that Millennials are less likely to identify with an employer. Loyalty isn't a priority, but individualism is. Is Generation Y the death of the "company man"?

Third, the Millennials are far more casual in their interaction, favoring speed in communication over formality. If you don't know that "TIA" means "thanks in advance," you were probably born before 1980. Generation Y has been accused of dressing sloppily for work, being overly familiar with superiors, and being unwilling to pay their dues in the workplace. My research found this generation associated with the words "entitled" and "demanding."

In attempting to distill the popular characteristics assigned to this generation, I noticed another interesting theme in my research. Apparently, it is "us" versus "them." In December CNN.com published a CareerBuilder.com article asking, "Generation Y: Too demanding at work?" San Diego State Associate Professor Jean Twenge wrote *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled -- and More Miserable -- Than Ever Before* and explores whether this new generation is markedly more narcissistic than those that came before. I found one article on a website ([www.management-issues.com](http://www.management-issues.com)) titled "Surviving Generation-Y" with an introductory sentence that tells us that we "are just beginning to wake up to the havoc that the newest generation is causing." The New York Times (in an article published on July 26, 2007, and written by Lisa Belkin) described the integration (or lack thereof) of Generation Y into white-collar jobs as "When Whippersnappers and Geezers Collide."

It's getting a little too War of the Worlds for my tastes. Are we really being invaded by preening Internet celebrities who will chip away at the foundation of the business world?

Recently, I prepared for a speech I was giving to an audience of law students. I was reminded by several people that I needed to tailor my comments to the peculiarities of the Millennials. I wanted to talk about the economy, the credit crisis, and what I [expected the market for lawyers to look like in the coming years](#). But, it

was suggested, maybe I should spend my time reminding them that they are all special. Maybe Generation Y would like me to limit my speech to the pro bono opportunities of law firm junior associates.

Although I risked being pelted with iPods and flash drives, I delivered the speech I wanted to give. The information focused on the sometimes harsh realities of today's New York legal market and the [challenges of having a successful career in a law firm](#). I declined the opportunity to pander to the stereotypical student of this burgeoning generation. What I found was a thoughtful and appreciative audience. In fact, in speeches and meeting on a one-on-one basis, I find law students today to be a very goal-oriented, professional group for the most part.

When I do get seemingly nave questions about public interest opportunities in the corporate law firm environment or demands about quality of life, I can't say that this sense of entitlement (if you want to call it that) is anything different from what young associates always seem to focus on as they enter their professional years. I was optimistic and demanding too when I started out. Hopefully I still am.

Certainly, the newest generation is different. We Generation X-ers (barely grown-ups ourselves) did not grow up in the same highly tech-savvy Internet world of our younger counterparts. These differences absolutely warrant distinctions. I would never discourage an employer from understanding how to communicate with and integrate a new generation and the culture they bring in tow. But is it really us versus them?

I recall lots of talk when I was a young associate in a law firm about all the advantages I had that my partners didn't. I remember being teased because (along with my peers) I was focused both on a favorable work-life balance and on being well compensated. I heard a lot about the old days and how everyone who came before me walked uphill, both ways...you know the rest. I remember being called the instant gratification generation, and we only had dial-up! Now we're wagging our canes at the high-speed connectedness the newest and hottest generation enjoys.

Obviously, corporate culture as it exists won't dissolve when the Millennials report to work. Members of the "what's-in-it-for-me" generation will have to adapt to some of the non-individualistic realities of banks, law firms, and corporations as they mature in the professional world.

A friend of mine recently hired an assistant. Her assistant openly exchanges personal instant messages with her friends all day, every workday.

"So you fired her?" I asked.

She responded no, explaining, "She's the best assistant I've ever had."

Those multitasking Millennials. They may even teach us a few tricks.

***Interested in Learning More About Legal Hiring? Read the Definitive Guide:***

[\*How to Hire a Legal Recruiter for Your Law Firm: How Law Firms Recruit Attorneys Using Legal Recruiters\*](#)