

# **The Next Great Generation? A Multi-Factor Comparison with the Greatest Generation: Insights for Management and Marketing Education®**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper will compare several business-related factors of the generation that has been termed “The Greatest Generation” to the Millennial generation. Much has been written about the Greatest Generation of America and about the Millennial generation. Both have or will make major impacts upon the United States. High expectations are part of this group’s acculturation. Much has been expected of them.*

*This manuscript analyzes several variables that influenced, and defines these generations. Those variables, which are education, economy, technology and workplace issues, lead to a heightened understanding of the Millennial generation as current and future manager. This reflects how they will change the landscape of business. Therefore, management and marketing pedagogy are affected by these generational factors and need to appreciate the responsibility that is involved in preparing the Millennial generation for business challenges. The insights provided in this manuscript are instrumental for those who provide management and marketing higher education, and for those who provide corporate training.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper will compare several business-related factors of the generation that has been termed “The Greatest Generation” to the Millennial generation (also Generation Y). Much has been written about the Greatest Generation of America and about the Millennial generation. Both have or will make major impacts upon the United States. High expectations are part of this group’s acculturation. Much has been expected of them.

This manuscript analyzes a number of variables that impacted these generations’ formation and evolution. Those variables, which are education, economy, technology and workplace issues lead to a heightened understanding of the Millennial generation as current and future manager. This reflects how they will change the landscape of business, and affect higher education management and marketing pedagogy. Little academic writing has analyzed these generational differences and similarities and explained how they impact business pedagogy.

The Greatest Generation, also known as the Veterans or Traditionalists (1922[00]-1943[45]) (Brown, 2005) is credited with establishing the modern day management model,

including corporate bureaucracy, policy and practices. During this generation's entrance and participation in the workplace, many of the Fortune 500 companies were born and grew to dominance. Jeffrey Madoff (*The greatest generation*, 2009) has noted that the greatest generation encompasses members of the traditionalists' generation, particularly those born between 1910 and the mid 1920s.

Demographers and marketers do not always agree about the time span that encompasses Millennials. The general consensus is that it is individuals who were born from 1981 to 2000 (Mello, 2011, p. 43). Some writers end the birth year at 1990 (Mathis and Jackson, 2009). Using the larger time spans, there are 85 million Generation Yers in the United States.

## **CHANGE IN AMERICA**

According to Brokaw (2004), the generation born in 1920 faced a paradoxical youth. In 1920, the U.S. population reached 106 million people, and society was changing rapidly from agrarian to urban, even though one in three Americans still lived on a farm. Women were gaining the right to vote with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. With economic decline and the stock market crash of 1929, this generation experienced first-hand financial hardship. "U.S. income was falling fast. Thirteen hundred banks closed. Businesses were failing everywhere, sending four and a half million people onto the streets with no safety net. The average American farm family had an annual cash income of four hundred dollars...By 1933, when the baby born in 1920 was entering teenage years, the promise of that early childhood was shattered by crashing world economies. American farmers were able to produce only about sixteen bushels of corn per acre, and the prices were so low that it was more efficient to feed the corn to the hogs than take it to market (p. 4-5)

The Veterans Generation experienced enormous change. In addition to the significant ramifications of the Great Depression on this generation, they saw the introduction and expansion of the radio as a source of information and common cultural experiences. The news of Pearl Harbor in 1941 was expedited through the radio. In 1937 Disney's first animated feature, *Snow White*, glued a generation together (*Is the Boomer/Gen-X WarOver?* 2000). They saw the technological possibilities of their era. In sharp contrast, World War II and the Korean War challenged the generation.

The mobility of the United States expanded through the increased use of automobiles and the development of a national highway system. Furthermore, as parents of Baby Boomers and older Generation X, they are said to have "invented" latch key kids. By 1946 some of the world's largest companies were growing in the United States. The idea of "home" began to shift with the building of Levittown, PA in 1946.

Correspondingly, the Millennial Generation has experienced enormous change thus far. The 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and the plane crash in Shanksville PA; the 2008 election of President Barack Obama demonstrating the electoral power of this generation; the 2007-2009 Great Recession; and the growth of solar energy have been among the major influencers of this group's common paradigms. The explosion of mobile technology including smart phones and electronic tablets have changed this generation's

perception of connectivity and the sharing of information. The growth of WalMart, a 24/7, multi-purpose retailer, as the largest civilian employer in the world reflects this generation's (and other generation's) buying power and value expectation.

## **EDUCATION**

Education has been a valued accomplishment in the United States for generations. The Veterans experienced a changing mindset that led to the growth of education. "For the generation growing up during the Great Depression, child labor was still a reality. By 1930 every state had enacted some form of child protection labor laws, and related public policies promoted the idea that children under 14 years of age-- and even those under 16 in a few states--- should spend a majority of their time in school, doing chores at home, or engaged in recreation, not as part of the paid labor force (Lindenmeyer, 2005, p. 49). Despite this progress, more than 650,000 people under 16 were working.

In 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act enforced restrictions on most children's wages through the age of 17. "The new American paradigm that children were best served being educated and protected from adult responsibilities through the age of 17 emerged." (p. 15). "By 1930, the census counted 95% of children age 6 through 13 in school full-time. Every state had enacted compulsory school attendance for youngsters in this age group, and a majority extended the requirement to 16 years old. But only 51% of 14 through 17-year-old remained in school beyond the elementary grades. That was an improvement over the 1920s figure for preteens that counted only 35% in school, but the 1930 figure did not meet the goals of education advocates" (Lindenmeyer, 2005, p. 111). For the Veteran generation, the GI Bill changed the educational landscape of America. Immediately after World War II, 6% of the United States population had a college degree. After implementation of the GI Bill, that number rose to 20% in the 1950s.

For the Millennial, the situation is much brighter. This generation is the most educated generation of workers today. College graduates in 2012 are projected to earn 75% more than those with only high school educations (Bednar, 2011). In contrast, a major concern for Millennials is the high school drop-out rate. According to the National Center for Education Statistics report (2011), the overall average freshman graduation rate was higher for the graduating class of 2007–08 (74.7 percent) than it was for the graduating class of 2001–02 (72.6 percent). However, from 2004–05 to 2005–06, the overall average freshman graduation rate decreased from 74.7 percent to 73.4 percent.

It is feared that these drop-out rates will lead to a generation in which the majority of workers of that age will have to support others of their age who are underemployed. Due to low education and a lack of the skills required to succeed in the business world, will this create resentment within the generation by those individuals who completed their education?

Ironically, many of the Millennial students who completed their masters degree immediately after graduation from college did so because of high unemployment. During the Great Recession, Millennials had the hardest time recovering from employment loss. Perhaps this situation influenced their college behavior. In 2012, the survey by USA Today of college freshmen found that this group was more studious than their counterparts of the past few years. More of them took notes in class, did homework, and took more demanding coursework as high

school seniors. Fewer of them showed up late for class. It was anticipated that these activities gave this college freshmen class a greater chance of succeeding academically. It is thought that this group of college freshmen is more serious about achieving in college. More students reported were spending six or more hours a week studying and doing homework than students in other survey years (Markelein, 2012). In 2011, there was an increased numbers of entering freshmen who said that getting a better job was a significant reason for going to college.

## **ECONOMY**

The economy is a significant variable that shapes a generation. A major economic event during the Greatest Generation's youth was the Great Depression. "Most American families were affected... 75% of Americans had household incomes of less than \$2000 a year, which would be viewed as less than \$30,000 in 2000. Between 1929 and 1933 the national average household income fell from \$2300-\$1500 (Lindenmeyer, 2005, p. 15). Although those born before the 1920s had several children, there was a "birth dearth" during the late 1920s and in the early 1930s. There was a high rate of immigration from Europe (mostly from Italy, Ireland, and Poland) during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and their stamp on the American workplace was unmistakable (Toosi, 2004, p. 42).

By 1931, there was a rise in relief expenditures to urban families of almost 90% in the first year after the stock market crash. Almost three quarters of the nation's workers were employed only part-time. 28% of USA households did not contain one wage earner. For older teens, it was very hard to find a job" (Lindenmeyer, p. 27).

From 1880-1940, the number of men employed in farms dropped by two-thirds. In 1935, Social Security was launched and provided benefits to workers starting at age 65. In 1942, the Wage and Salary Act froze wages in order to contain inflation. Companies then provided larger pension plans (so that by 1960, the number of employees covered by private pensions plans—mostly defined benefit plans—grew five times to 23 million workers). In 1950, Social Security benefits increased 77% (Kadet, 2012, p. 72). The perseverance and fortitude of the Veterans was tested and reinforced during these experiences.

The greatest economic downturn during the 21st century was the Great Recession that officially lasted from December 2007 to June 2009. The events surrounding this event changed the financial outlook for many Millennials. Due to unemployment and underemployment, Millennial found it very difficult to find full-time and part-time work. These hardships impacted their view towards the workplace and the ramifications are being seen. (More will be discussed about this aspect within the Management/ Workplace section of this paper. Millennial employees who were employed during the Great Recession slowed their movement from one company to another.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Every generation is impacted by the technology that evolves as it grows into adulthood. For the greatest generation the impact of radio upon them was significant. From the fireside chats of President Franklin Roosevelt, to the emergence radio shows, and the subsequent introduction of radio advertising, this generation was unified in a unique way through

technology. This was a generation of listeners and longer attention spans. They could focus on the words that an individual was delivering and make a judgment accordingly.

Although the Greatest Generation was already in adulthood by the time television emerged in most homes, the impact was still notable. In 1946 the United States had fewer than 17,000 television sets. In 1949 consumers were buying 250,000 television sets, and by 1960 three fourths of all families owned at least one television set. By 1965, as the sales aspect of marketing became more sophisticated, the average family wanted the newest technology and watched television four to five hours a day. Situation comedies like *I Love Lucy* and *Father Knows Best* shaped the American culture (The US Department of State, *The Postwar Economy: 1945-1960*) as advertisers sold “The American Dream”. Sophisticated advertisement for products impacted the generation’s view of materialism and what was needed for a “good life”.

Conversely, it has been said that the Millennial generation has experienced more technological change than any generation since the Victorian Era. The ability to quickly access information, to download new software, and to communicate instantaneously with friends throughout the world has impacted their view of what is possible. It has also solidified their perception of the importance of their voice and the need for it to be heard in a variety of media. Marketers knew the size and potential buying power of this group and sold them on their importance. The sense of entitlement for which Gen Yers are often maligned is partly the result of marketers probing for their interests and wants and then customizing products and services to anticipate future needs and to cater to existing needs.

Millennials have been criticized for being a self-centered generation, yet the TV and advertising firms’ attention to this major market has encouraged them to confidently state their beliefs from a young age. Millennials therefore bring this expectation for attention to the workplace. The confident, optimistic Millennials’ entrance into the workplace surprised Generation X, but not necessarily members of the Greatest Generation, who may have been the age of their grandparents, and the Baby Boomers, who may have been the age of their parents. The personal connections and networks of support with other generations greatly enhanced the Millennials’ movement up the corporate ladder.

## **MANAGEMENT STYLES / THE WORKPLACE**

The Greatest Generation, also known as the Veterans, is credited with establishing the modern day management model, including corporate bureaucracy, policy and practices. When “the great generation” entered the workforce, there were 7 million members of the labor force (*Generations in the workplace in the United States and Canada, 2011, catalyst*). The Veterans are undoubtedly significant contributors to the business world. They modernized business practices in a tempestuous time. Growing up, they experienced extremely difficult economic conditions. This created a paradox: individuals who were frugal with their personal finances and business executives who invested heavily in building large corporations with conspicuous consumption.

The Greatest Generation is credited with establishing the policies and practices that became the foundation for the growth of business in the United States. The G.I. Generation had a dramatic impact on corporate, social, technological, and political environments for 32 years (Howe and Stauss, 2000, p.325). Having seen the success of the military approach in WWII,

they continued to espouse the militaristic bureaucracy. In the workplace, the span of command was limited, the number of departments grew, and the corporate organization charts were expected to have several levels. Individuals would work their way up the corporate ladder with the understanding that they would remain with the same company throughout their careers.

The GI Bill increased the number of college-educated individuals in this generation and supported the growth of managerial ranks in United States. This generation taught their children, the Baby Boomers and older Generations Xers that a diligent work ethic and dedication to the corporation would reap monetary benefits. If the workplace was not always a satisfying environment, its workers' rewards could be found in rising pay scales, growing sophisticated benefit plans, and defined benefit pension plans. This was a pragmatic and optimistic generation. After World War II, the system of national highways, facilitated sophisticated, logistical movement of goods throughout the United States.

Through the influence of the Greatest Generation in the US business world, the period from 1945 to 1960 was one of prosperity. GNP moved from 200,000 million in 1942, to 300,000 million in 1950, to more than 500,000 million in 1960. More Americans considered themselves part of the middle class. Marketers began to refine how they niched their message to different economic groups. The automobile industry grew at a rapid rate between 1946 and 1955; there was a movement to the suburbs; and there was an increase in defense spending as the Cold War escalated. New conglomerates emerged and smaller franchise operations such as McDonald's, changed the business and marketing models. Additionally, large corporations developed locations overseas where labor costs were lower. This latter trend would greatly impact the business world Millennials find themselves in today (The US Department of State, *The Postwar Economy: 1945-1960*).

By 1956, a majority of workers in the United States held white-collar jobs, working in corporations as managers, teachers, and salespeople or office personnel. Some firms granted a guaranteed annual salary, long-term employment contracts, and other benefits. The suburbs grew as businesses moved into those new areas. The Veterans' leadership style was known as being fairer, consistent, direct, and respectful (Mello, 2011, p. 43).

The Great Generation gained much of their notoriety because of their heroic endeavors during World War II. Ironically, in 2011, the number one employer of the Millennial generation was the Armed Forces (Goudreau, 2012). The Millennial generation, which, depending upon how demographers frame the birth time frames, is the largest or second-largest generation in American history. They have been active, full-time members of the workforce for approximately 10 years. Additionally, as of May 2011, there were 37 million employees in the workforce (*Generations in the workplace in the United States and Canada, 2011, catalyst*). By 2025, it is projected that they will comprise 75% of the workforce (Goudreau, 2012). Therefore, it's relevant to compare the Greatest Generation's accomplishments and challenges at this point in their careers with those of the Millennial generation, which may be, according to Tom Brokaw, the next great-generation in America.

The Millennials' employment picture is paradoxical. On one hand, many business persons at the middle and higher end of this age span are being promoted over the older Gen Xers. Those individuals have bonded with the Veterans –almost as grandparent figures—and

with Baby Boomers –almost as workplace parent-child protective and mentoring roles. Conversely, since a growing number of Millennials are living in poverty or have dropped out of high school, a significant number of this generation is technologically behind some of their peers. Additionally, whereas Millennials have gained post-graduate degrees immediately after college more than any other prior generation, others of this generation are stymied by low education in a workplace where low-skilled jobs have been off-shored at record numbers. Is this generation prepared, as were the Veterans, to manage these significant challenges? Are they equipped to circumvent the obstacles that surround them and that they have created?

The very nature of jobs have experienced significant shifts from the entrance of the Greatest Generation into the labor force to those who have relatively recently entered the workforce. Much of the manufacturing base of United States has been outsourced as globalization has intensified. This has shifted the dominance of manual laborers to high tech, service, or computer-oriented positions.

Although the older Millennials have had limited time to demonstrate their managerial skills, certain characteristics have evolved. Except during the Great Recession, Millennials have shown no qualms about changing companies. They have seen many individuals affected by layoffs, and their sense of corporate responsibility and loyalty exists only during the timeframe that they are employed for a company. As soon as they are employed by another company, they shift loyalty, without ever looking back.

Generation Y will also be a challenge to its employees, because these managers want answers given quickly and efficiently. Unlike the Veterans, they may not always appreciate the time needed for an in-depth analysis (Beatty-Tinsay). However, given the desire by Millennials for frequent feedback and an openness to positive, constructive feedback (Generation Y revamping annual performance review, 2008, para 6), it is anticipated that they will do the same for their subordinates. In fact, in a recent survey of Millennials asking them why they worked in their company, 65% of the respondents said that “providing detailed guidance in daily work” was moderately or extremely important. Additionally, 85% of those employees said that their age group wanted frequent and candid performance feedback. (This Millennial response percentage was the highest of every generation surveyed.) The concern of Millennial managers is that they are more loyal to their career path than one employer (Ling, 2008). In contrast, another survey has found that during the Great Recession, a higher percentage of Millennial generation workers strove to impress their boss, arrived earlier and worked longer, and were more willing to take on extra responsibility than their older peers (Laff, 2008, para 2).

Millennials match the criteria delineated by Howe and Strauss (2000) for a “hero” generation. This criteria includes the following: a generation that fills a void left by the passing of an elder generation; and a generation that became the target of passionate adult efforts to encircle and protect the childhood world in order to promote childhood achievement. Additional criterion is that society attaches a new sense of destiny to the group, to which it responds by meeting and surpassing adult expectations. A hero generation is one that arrives just after an era of societal- wide upheaval in values and culture (p. 326, 327).

Millennials have been said to understand that much is expected of them. The very name of their generation tells the story that the first decades of this millennium will be shaped by their

actions. Furthermore, it has been said that Millennials are closer to their parents than any other generation in United States history. This situation perfectly prepares them to want to meet and exceed adult expectations for their generation. As the USA faces notable cultural shifts, this generation matches the hero generation criteria.

Given the technological change that has occurred during their lifetimes, Gen Yers realize that their work life is a 24/7 situation. The IMing and Facebooking of their teenage years evolved into the use social media for business purposes. As result of that change, unlike the pyramidal organizational structure of the Greatest Generation, Millennials work more in a weblike fashion. They understand that there are management levels --and they want to be part of that group-- however , they also understand that all employees need to be respected, their voices heard, and their opinions recognized. Despite the school violence, the Great Recession, and the wars that existed as they have grown, this is an optimistic generation.

Millennials have experienced the decline and rebound of the US automobile industry. To some degree, they are seeing jobs being in-sourced. They clearly see the connectivity between the American business world and the business world in other countries. Millennials realize that just as innovation positively impacted the growth of business for the Greatest Generation, that will be necessary for the growth of business during their generation's management of the business world.

Millennials are accustomed to processing great amounts of information. This asset will most definitely influence them as managers. In a world of the e-mail memo, they will process information faster, make decisions quickly, and rely upon their coworkers. This generation worked part-time jobs from the age of 13. They have been very involved in athletics and extracurricular activities, and therefore became capable at multitasking and balancing social with work activities. These skills sets will meet the needs of a fast-paced workplace. The connectivity of social media will strengthen the Millennial generation's ability to tie together the various members of their more egalitarian organizations. Unlike the Greatest Generation, which focused more on individual contributions at work, Millennials implement a collaborative environment that empowers individuals.

A recent survey noted that 75% of all American teenagers today have a cell phone, and 54% of them text daily. Therefore, it is very likely that Gen Y bosses will prefer electronic communication to face-to-face communication (Johnson and Johnson, 2010). This will be a challenge for their Veterans employees.

With a combination of individual recognition, along with a team-oriented atmosphere, the Millennials see the globe as their workplace, and will therefore be more open to interacting with individuals from other parts of the globe. Although they may be cavalier about learning another language, increasingly sophisticated translation software will facilitate them communicating with others in various countries. Corresponding to the expansion of domestic logistics during the Greatest Generation's 20-something years, the sophistication of global logistical systems is facilitating the movement of goods between the United States and other countries of the world.

A 2012 report noted that 2.5% of Gen Y workers are managers; the second-highest category for this group (only preceded by "servers" job positions). Correspondingly, the eighth-



highest ranked job was supervisor, employing 0.9% of Gen Yers. Therefore, although they are relatively new to management ranks, there is emerging evidence about how they perform as bosses. They are being cautioned to respect generational differences of those they manage. They are being reminded that they are young and relatively inexperienced. They are urged to use their teambuilding skills and to get to know each person who is on their team, and to appreciate how each person's different skills and abilities may be assets for the group. Furthermore, Gen Yers are guided to talk to each person on their team at least once a week about the work that each individual is doing. They need to adapt to each individual team member, and they need to be good at documenting (in a formal manner) work results. Millennials love to generate ideas; yet, they are being cautioned to respect those employees who also present new ideas. These new managers need to competently write proposals with a cost-benefit analysis, schedule goals and timelines for resource needs. This group, that is so good at networking, needs to find one person within their group whom they can share discussions with in a confidential manner.

The Millennial group has had need to attain goals because of academic, athletic, and extracurricular activity requirements. Therefore, they need to extrapolate that ability to ensure that their team succeeds and attains results. In this way, they can establish credibility despite their youth (Generation Y managing baby boomers: a good company?, 2012). This generation was frequently praised during their upbringing. Therefore, it is expected that they will implement praise at work, at the same time that they expect their bosses to praise them. They are more likely to accept praise as a group (Bednar, 2011).

The Millennial relationship with the generation immediately ahead of them, Generation X, has been analyzed in a variety of settings and sometimes leads to paradoxical results. On one hand, they share an appreciation for a balance between work and the rest of their lives. They both prefer a casual environment at work. Both generations want their voices to be heard. However, whereas many employees in Generation X did not seek immediate advancement, but preferred independent project work, the Millennials want rapid advancement. Furthermore, Gen Yers prefer smaller tasks that may lead to a large project's completion. Whereas Generation X has been called an isolated generation because they do not always interact with individuals from other generations at work unless those individuals are in their work group, the Millennials, being a social group, have sought relationships with their superiors. If Generation X superiors or coworkers do not welcome this type of interaction, the optimistic Millennials form those relationships with Baby Boomers, Traditionalists, and members of the Greatest Generation. These networks are built with individuals who are two or more levels above them in the organization.

Millennials crave the opportunity to broaden their skills at work. Therefore, they welcome training. It is anticipated that they will encourage their employees to take advantage of training and educational opportunities. A survey of 4200 young graduates from 44 countries, published in December of 2008, found that those individuals wanted many of the same things from work as previous generations including a long tenure with a small number of employers, and a willingness to put added time into work, if needed (Generation Y managing baby boomers: a good company?, 2012).

One downside to Millennials is that they can appear impatient. They want to achieve their career goals quickly, while receiving immediate and frequent feedback (Beekman, 2011). Therefore, they are challenging their superiors. Additionally, this impatience, if not positively channeled, could become a detriment for those supervised by Millennials.

On the other hand, Millennials have already proven themselves as being open to sharing their knowledge with others. They have instituted what has been called upward delegation by the introducing older workers to emerging technology and helping them to use it effectively. For this camaraderie, Millennials expect advancement (Beekman, 2011).

Millennials resent the command and control approach to management. That approach was formalized by many of the Greatest Generation; however, it is in the antithesis to collaborative managerial styles that Millennials prefer. Whereas the Greatest Generation believed that workers should be closely supervised and given clear directions, Generation Yers find that style restrictive and stressful.

Most of the managers from the Greatest Generation were men. Until the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, the American workplace showed little diversity at the managerial ranks. This was reflective of slowly changing views in society. During World War II the majority of black Americans lived in the states of the former Confederacy. African American men were drafted and placed in segregated military units (Brokaw, 2004, p.8).

Yet, the composition of the managerial labor force has shifted considerably since 1975. The women who became managers during this time mothered Millennials. Based upon a 2008 study by the Families and Work Institute, Millennial women have a desire to have a high-powered career, regardless of their parenting status. Additionally, Millennial men, particularly those raised by working mothers, are more likely than other generations' men to believe that women can work and be good mothers at the same time. These men are more interested in home and child care than their fathers were (McCausland, 2011, para. 15 and 16).

Millennials are the most diverse generation that this nation has known. One third of this generation was raised by single moms. Not only does it accept diversity, this generation expects diversity. This value will influence them as they become a larger percent of the evolving management ranks. Although they are known as being impatient, it is anticipated that Millennials will objectively evaluate their subordinates' results, based upon their performance of the workplace and their successful teamwork, more than previous generations have done.

## Exhibit 1

<u>Greatest Gen</u>	<u>Millennial</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workers should be closely supervised and given clear directions</li><li>• Managers= Men</li><li>• Hierarchy institutionalized</li><li>• “Traditional” families</li><li>• Work-life balance not a factor</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resent the command and control approach to management</li><li>• 1975 moms</li><li>• Women: Desire to have a high-powered career, regardless of their parenting status</li><li>• Men: Believe that women can work and be good mothers at the same time</li><li>• Men: More interested in home and child care than their fathers</li></ul>

**Managerial Expectations**

### COLLABORATIVE MILLENNIALS: FINDINGS

Millennials contribute much to the workplace. They have bonded with different generations at work. The older generations have fostered this networking because of a desire to mentor a younger generation and to share knowledge with co-workers who are receptive to learning. Since many of the Gen Yers have been promoted into supervisory and managerial positions over older employees, they are open to asking questions in order to improve their performance. They are more collaborative with colleagues. Unlike the generation immediately before them, they enjoy friendships at work. They prefer leaders who are positive, who mentor, who are motivational, and who are organized (Mello, 2011, p. 43). This collaborative spirit has been built throughout the GenYers’ education. McGlynn (2009) posits that “What we educators need to do is to capitalize on the strengths they bring to the classroom. If we recognize their strengths, we can create a classroom dynamic and use strategies that will effectively engage them. For example, this generation is the most socially connected of all generations” (para. 12).

For example, this author researched team development in a marketing course with 49 research participants. This research compared the learning needs of this generation with Millennials’ reflections about team-based marketing curriculum. Members of Generation Y prefer more self-control, more authority, and more discretion of how they spend their time. Yet,

they need guidance about what they can control at school and what they cannot. They are accustomed to and expect group, collaborative work, yet also individualized assignments (Ware, Craft and Kerschenbaum, 2007; Pozzi, 2008; Gloeckler, 2008).

Students’ development of team skills was analyzed by this author. “Numerous researchers have shown that the learning-by-doing approach of group projects results in active learning and far greater comprehension and retention of information, higher levels of student motivation and achievement, development of critical reasoning skills, improved communication skills, and stronger interpersonal and social skills than is found with traditional lecture-style teaching methods” (Hansen, 2006, p. 12). In assessing the student feedback information, there were several findings that emerged from the data. The professor confirmed the attainment of higher-level team-based skills. These skills positively contributed to the students’ demonstration of motivation, critical reasoning skills, stronger communication skills, and enhanced interpersonal abilities.

Students completed surveys at three stages of the project in the entry-level course: at the initial stage of team formation, at the mid-point time frame, and at the project’s conclusion. The mean changes and the mode of responses for six selected questions were statistically analyzed to provide insights into the teams’ evolution and growth throughout the semester. (The results are displayed in Tables 1 and 2.)

<b>TABLE1 Survey Results: Mean Responses on a scale of 1-5 (5 is strongly agree)</b>			
Initial Team Assessment Questions	Pre-Survey	Mid-Survey	Final Survey
As your work progresses, the group should become more cohesive.	4.45	3.77***	3.82
I want to feel proud of my group and I desire to work with people I highly respect.	4.63	3.86***	3.92[1]
What the group will try to achieve is valuable and important to me.	4.53	4.11*	4.08
The effort I exert will be instrumental in helping me obtain outcomes I want to achieve as an individual.	4.67	4.05***	4.00
I will exert a lot of effort to help the group achieve its goals.	4.61	4.14**	3.97
My performance as an individual is directly affecting how well the group as a whole will perform.	4.24	4.00	3.74

Significance in comparing prior survey to next survey: \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.001$ , \*\*\* $p \leq 0.0001$   
 [1]= Only one of the mean statistics was statistically significant.

<b>TABLE 2 Survey Results: Mode Responses on a scale of 1-5 (5 is strongly agree)</b>			
Initial Team Assessment Questions	Pre-Survey	Mid-Survey	Final Survey
As your work progresses, the group should become more cohesive.	5	4	4
I want to feel proud of my group and I desire to work with people I highly respect.	5	4	5
What the group will try to achieve is valuable and important to me.	5	4 and 5	5
The effort I exert will be instrumental in helping me obtain outcomes I want to achieve as an individual.	5	4	5
I will exert a lot of effort to help the group achieve its goals.	5	4	5
My performance as an individual is directly affecting how well the group as a whole will perform.	4	4	4

Analysis of the results for the team skills assessment survey relates strictly to the team process and its success in the courses studied. The team process that was the attention of this survey was primarily a marketing plan project, and, of lesser consideration, a marketing simulation assignment.

*“As your work progresses, the group should become more cohesive.”* Although the change of means from the pre-survey to the mid-point survey was statistically significant, the change from the mid-point to the final survey was not. This represents a more realistic view that most members of the team became more cohesive, but more students contributed to the final outcome than did at the mid-way point of the semester. As Zweig (2007) notes, expectation tends to be more intense than actual experiences. Therefore, although the most frequently stated response was agree for the mid-point and the final questionnaires, down from the strongly agree of the pre-survey, the students continued to be positive about the team’s cohesiveness. As the semester evolved, they realized that most students were engaged in the assignment, but a minority of the team lacked self-motivation in some cases. Team cohesiveness is an important factor for most Millennials and is being demonstrated in the workplace as well as in the classroom.

*“I want to feel proud of my group and I desire to work with people I highly respect.”* The mean declined during the mid-semester time period of the semester, and rose slightly by the semester’s close. Interim team disputes, tensions, etc., smoothed during the semester, but teams were more mature and realistic about the challenges of completing a significant task with members with varying work ethics. Yet, the mode shifted from strongly agree, to agree, back to

strongly agree during the semester. This accurately demonstrates the final pride that students felt by the assignment's conclusion. They had made a notable achievement that could not have been accomplished without a concerted team effort. Responsibility for a meaningful project with visible results is an important success factor for Millennials' teamwork. As noted previously, Millennial managers assess employees based upon the attainment of tangible results.

*"What the group will try to achieve is valuable and important to me."* The change of response means declined because some students rated their reactions in the disagree range. In reviewing the mode, though, it is evident that the majority of students always saw the project's value. Indeed, hesitant students who were hovering around the neutral range at mid-point believed the assignment was very valuable by the conclusion of the endeavor. Millennials typically prefer realistic assignments with tangible outcomes. Therefore, the Plan project fulfilled the Millennial students' preference and prepared them for these types of assignments at work.

*"The effort I exert will be instrumental in helping me obtain outcomes I want to achieve as an individual."* The mean change was a statistically significant decline by the mid-point, yet the change moderated by the semester's end. The majority of students still expected much from themselves throughout the semester. Indeed the strongly agree response was the one most often recorded by the project's conclusion.

*"I will exert a lot of effort to help the group achieve its goals."* Although the change of means from the pre-survey to the mid-point survey was statistically significant, the change from the mid-point to the final survey was not. Streamlined procedures and class time for the work contributed to the mode shifting from strongly agree, to agree, back to strongly agree. Millennials accept constructive criticism for change. The professor and the students developed more effective team development techniques. This observation can be relevant to implementation of this team formation tool in other institutions, including those in education and business sectors.

*"My performance as an individual is directly affecting how well the group as a whole will perform."* A sense of individual accountability was demonstrated by the consistent means and the mode scores throughout the semester. This outcome contrasts with the aforementioned Millennial weakness of possible avoidance of individual accountability.

Variances of the means in this author's research were analyzed for all questions to investigate team-oriented pre-knowledge, interim knowledge, and post-knowledge. The Brown-Forsythe technique was utilized because it is suitable for complex comparisons, unequal n's, and when unequal variance is not assumed (Cooper and Schindler, 2003). Importantly, none of the variances recorded for the questions that assessed the following factors, group cohesiveness (all time frames); student pride (mid-point to final); individual impact on desired outcomes (pre-to-mid); the project's value (all time frames); the importance of individual efforts towards team goals (pre-to-mid); individual impact on desired outcomes (all time frames); and the importance of individual performance for team success (pre-to-mid) was statically significant. Despite some variation discussed above, overall, the students remained as positive and committed to the project near its completion as they felt at the beginning of the endeavor. Students knew the significance of their team's factors for success. This level of engagement is one sought by

educators of millennial students. This level of engagement will prove crucial for Millennial success at the workplace.

Variance was statistically significant for the questions that assessed the following factors, student pride (pre-survey to mid-point survey); individual impact on desired outcomes (mid-to-final); the importance of individual efforts towards team goals (mid-to-final); and the importance of individual performance for team success (mid-to-final). As discussed above, students initially experienced some disillusionment when they realized that not all teammates were driven to achieve high results. Students realized their individual impact on the outcomes and goals of the project. Increasingly, they knew the importance of each individual's contribution to the overall team success. A paradox of the Millennial Generation is their enjoyment of team endeavors along with their desire for individual recognition. This paradox will influence their expectations for reward structures related to corporate performance management.

This generation judges coworkers not so much by how they do their work as much as by their accomplishments. Although they were a generation that was given awards regardless of achievement, they are realistic enough to know they cannot do that when managing others. Therefore, these managers will conduct performance appraisals, and will hold their employees accountable (even if the Millennial manager was not always held accountable as he/she moved up the corporate ladder). They recognize the need for individual accountability at the workplace. This "ownership" of one's results leads to business rewards.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING EDUCATION**

Educators were in a unique position after the introduction of the GI Bill to raise the knowledge, skill, and abilities' level of the "greatest generation". The dramatic increase in college-educated veterans gave the nation the needed competency to become a global leader. Those academicians taught the Greatest Generation how to build a successful business system.

Today, educators are in a unique position of directly influencing the knowledge, skills and attitudes of Millennials. As the academic discipline of management education has evolved, business professors also study the best ways to manage and motivate Gen Yers in the classroom. Professors proactively work to develop business leaders who can manage the challenges ahead. Not only do today's business professors teach this generation how to design effective and efficient "best practice" business systems; they also adapt to the GenYers' learning styles. Furthermore, undergraduate business and MBA professors teach Millennial students how they can learn from successful Millennial managers and leaders currently at the workplace.

Given the Millennials' desire to learn, which has been ingrained in them by their relatives, corporate training endeavors are welcomed. The shift to educating and training individuals who paradoxically want real-time, face-to-face interaction, and remote connectivity via mobile devices challenges higher education management and marketing curriculum delivery and management training. This situation is complicated by Millennial students who come into college with sub-par computers skills. The university where this author teaches has recently implemented new online and face-to face computer training for first-year students (and other interested individuals) on a variety of topics to develop required computer competencies in a timely manner.

The emerging relationships of marketers with generations, and the attention that marketers have given Millennials since their youth may be a significant factor that influenced the youth's self-esteem. The expectations of micro-customization, rapid response, and customer-focused corporate decision making are common descriptors of GenYers. Therefore, there is a symbiotic relation between the educator and the student which is unique. Given the nature of Millennials who expect that their voices will be heard, and the growing customer-centricity of education, professors focus on methodology relevant to this generation at least as much as content and new research.

Millennials are creating new norms of effective management. They are the changes occurring in new managerial ranks. A paradigm shift is being driven by the Gen Y managers. Therefore, business academicians are not only teaching these future and current leaders management history and theories, but when teaching common or best practices, the educator will increasingly refer to the actions of current Millennial business people as classroom examples. For instance, the bureaucratic change being driven by a collaborative style, and the technology that the Millennials' embrace are influencing how management professors teach these topics. The power of Millennials as consumers influences how marketing professors, in particular, demonstrate the power of marketing to influence culture.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Much has been written about the Greatest Generation. Much has been written about the Millennial Generation, including authors studying them as members of the work force. However, little if anything has been written directly comparing the two generations using various variables as presented in this manuscript. There is no doubt that the Greatest Generation gave significant contributions to society, including the workplace. By looking at the achievements and concerns related to the Millennial generation, it appears that they are contributing positively to the workplace. They are dedicated, innovative, and accustomed to decision-making in a fast-paced environment. Although they are relatively new to the managerial ranks, Gen Yers appear open to being educated and trained in effective managerial styles that are relevant to the current challenges in the business world.

In a relatively short period of time, Millennials have expected much of their superiors. Unlike the Greatest Generation at work, they want engagement, responsibility and -- at young age -- fast advancement. It appears that if they receive these things, they reciprocate by supporting a team-based, collaborative, energetic environment. They have aligned themselves with members of the Baby-Boom and other older generations. They will need to engage members of Gen X more deliberately in order to succeed at the workplace. Millennials are a realistic group, because of the various wars and tragedies that they've witnessed. Therefore, it appears logical to expect that they will rise to the challenges of engaging all generations at the workplace in order to obtain results.

Academicians who study the Greatest Generation can analyze and project the impact that Millennials are making and will continue to make in the years ahead. By studying both generations through a comparison of various relevant factors, educators can gain insight for teaching the emerging and future managers of America. The opportunities and challenges that exist influence teachers' curriculum content and design. By analyzing the impact of the Greatest



Generation and the striking similarities of the Millennial generation, business professors can recognize the enormous responsibility that they hold.

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