



# Understanding Millennials

For Better Leadership

by Vince Burruolo

703-399-4345

[practicalsaleswisdom@gmail.com](mailto:practicalsaleswisdom@gmail.com)

<https://www.practical-sales-wisdom.com>

Copyright by VBCS, LLC 2022





**Millennials.** The very word conjures a host of images. Currently, the largest generation, composing those born between 1980 and 2000, this group has a mixed reputation. For all the negative traits associated with millennials, they have much more to offer than we may have first given them credit. It is time for a second look.

Millennials are often characterized as entitled, impatient and thin-skinned. They expect instant gratification and rapid advancement opportunities. I believe that part of the negativity is in the mindset, which is different from other generations. This may be the cause of both the misunderstanding and the friction between the generations.

Many of us in the workforce prior to millennials had a different set of expectations. There are many advancements in today's world that we never imagined. This has certainly influenced how millennials think, and perhaps more importantly, how they feel. Rather than pushing back on their mindset, we need to open our minds to understand their perspective.

In hiring, teaching and coaching millennials I have learned a lot from the school of hard knocks. I now realize that my biased opinions were based on some of the preconceived notions previously mentioned. Because they were not like me or the other people I managed, I struggled to understand why they often appeared to be 'difficult' or 'obstinate.' The problem was not them; it was me. Here are a few things I learned that have helped me build a better relationship with them.

# RULE 1

**Rule 1: They do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.**

Somewhere along the line, a falsehood about business developed. A famous movie line by character Michael Corleone, “it’s not personal, it’s strictly business,” is totally wrong. It is personal – even if we wish otherwise. Millennials want to know that you care and will take an interest in their personal and professional development before they will trust and listen to you. You must be prepared to get to know them on a personal level and let them share details of their lives that others often keep private. To them, it is about their life, and you must take an interest in the whole person to build a true connection. This is the basis for developing a trusting relationship that will enable you to lead and for them to follow.



# RULE 2

**Rule 2: They learn differently – as we all do.**

We sometimes assume that everyone has the same method of learning new skills and developing proficiency. This is another misnomer that will do more harm than good. We need to understand how millennials learn, and on this point, everyone is different. Take some time to uncover how each member of your team, across all generations, processes new information. How do they learn and how can you deliver important concepts in a manner that fosters true understanding?

Forbes Leadership

While it may be easier to present information to your entire team simultaneously, some may find small group discussions or one-on-one learning events a more conducive and productive means of learning. This is where you will have to adapt to your team if you want them to really benefit.

I recently had a case where a team member saw me using some questioning and conversational skills we had previously discussed in action with a prospective client. It was not until they witnessed the interaction first-hand that they came back and said, "It clicked!" While I had taught them the skills deployed, it just did not register until they had the opportunity to participate in a real discussion. We all learn differently.



## **RULE** **3**

**Rule 3: They want to belong and contribute to something greater than themselves.**

Simon Sinek has done a fantastic job discussing the 'why' concept, and I encourage you to listen or read his work. Millennials, like everyone else, need a why. They want to understand their purpose and how they fit into the bigger picture. They want meaning in their life.

In some instances, this is more important to them than other material considerations in selecting a manager and company to join. It is your job as the leader to help them discover their why. It needs to be more meaningful. Each position in every organization offers this possibility if you take the time to look. I am fond of a story about President Kennedy, while he was visiting NASA during the race to the moon, asking a custodian he passed what he was doing. The man, to his credit, replied, "Working to put a man on the moon." Now that is a powerful why.

As with any group, be sure you do not allow your preconceived notions to cloud your judgment. Take a moment to open your mind to a new way of thinking and build bridges to form strong relationships. Millennials are here to stay and will be our future leaders. It is our responsibility, as the current leaders, to help them find and travel the right path for our mutual benefit.