

11 Stereotypes about Millennials, Gen Z, and Gen X at Work

HR exchange Network | Francesca Di Meglio | May 25, 2023

During this historic period, when for the first time four generations, including Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers, are together at work, many people are experiencing misunderstandings. Unfortunately, tension rises when people consider different groups monolithic. Many young people at work feel like they are unfairly judged or misrepresented in the media because of the characteristics thrown onto their generation.

So, we asked HR and business leaders on Terkel.io to share the misperceptions about their generation that older people are getting all wrong. See the negative ideas people have about them in their responses below, and let us know what you think in the comments:

Millennials Set Too Many Boundaries

"Many say that Millennials' work-life balance is over the top. Millennial hires introduce workplace well-being into the office more than ever. They understand the importance of mental health and how a 30-minute break can impact your day.

The older generations are used to skipping their lunch break or working until the late hours of the night. However, Millennials set boundaries. They schedule their lunch break into their day and leave the office at an appropriate time. Without it, they're at risk of burnout and will be more frustrated than satisfied with their role. Millennials know when they've reached their limit and can prioritize their well-being before their work."-Christy Pyrz, Chief Marketing Officer, Paradigm Peptides

Millennials: Difficult to Work With

"As a Millennial at work, I have often heard people make sweeping generalizations about my generation. Some say we are entitled and lazy, while others think we are tech-savvy and innovative. I have even heard a few people claim that we are difficult to work with and lack loyalty to our employers.

But from my experience, these perceptions couldn't be further from the truth. As a group, Millennials are hardworking and eager to learn. We embrace new challenges and are quick to adapt to changing environments.

So why do these misperceptions persist? Perhaps it's simply a matter of generational differences and a lack of understanding. But regardless of the reason, I hope that we can all work together to dispel these myths and build stronger, more collaborative teams in the workplace."-Ranee Zhang, VP of Growth, Airgram

Discover Workplace Thought Leader and Millennial Money Witch Jessie DaSilva's preliminary reflections on what millennials really want out of their professional life.

Millennials Are Commitmentphobes

"As a Millennial in the workforce, I've noticed that one of the biggest misperceptions about my generation is that we lack work ethic and commitment. This couldn't be further from the truth.

One reason for this misconception is that many millennials prioritize work-life balance and may not sacrifice their personal lives for their jobs. However, this doesn't mean that we're not committed or hardworking. It simply means that we value our time outside of work and believe that a healthy balance between work and personal life leads to increased productivity and job satisfaction."-Span Chen, Growth Director, Notta

Millennials Are Selfish

"As a Millennial, I can confidently say that one of the biggest misconceptions about my generation at work is that we are lazy and entitled. However, this couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, according to a survey conducted by Deloitte, 75% of millennials believe that businesses have a positive impact on society, and we prioritize meaningful work over high salaries. Additionally, Millennials are known for being tech-savvy and adaptable, which are crucial skills in today's fast-paced work environment.

Real-time examples of Millennials debunking this misconception can be seen in the rise of young entrepreneurs, such as Mark Zuckerberg and Evan Spiegel, who have founded and led successful companies. Additionally, Millennials are the largest generation in the workforce, and their hard work and determination have led to a shift toward more flexible and inclusive work environments."-Himanshu Sharma, CEO and Founder, Academy of Digital Marketing

Watch this video with HR Thought Leader Mofoluwaso "Fofu" Ilevbare to learn her thoughts on how to help get the best out of those in each generation.

Millennials Lack Engagement

"I'm a Millennial! One of the biggest misperceptions about Millennials at work is that they are lazy and entitled. This is simply not true. Millennials are just as hardworking and dedicated as any other generation, and we are also more likely to be socially conscious and engaged in our work.

There are a few reasons why this misconception exists. First, Millennials have grown up in a time of economic prosperity. Second, we are more likely to be open about our feelings and expectations, which can sometimes be interpreted as entitlement. Finally, millennials are more likely to use technology in the workplace, which can sometimes be seen as a sign of laziness.

However, it is important to remember that we Millennials are still a relatively young generation, and we are still learning and growing. It is clear that we have a lot to offer the workforce. We are hardworking, dedicated, and innovative."-Brenton Thomas, CEO, Twibi

Gen Z Doesn't Want to Work

"As a Gen Zer, one of the biggest misperceptions about our generation at work is that we are entitled and lack work ethic. This stereotype is often perpetuated by older generations who

view our desire for work-life balance and our preference for a collaborative and inclusive workplace culture as a lack of dedication to our jobs.

However, this misperception couldn't be further from the truth. In reality, Gen Z is an ambitious and hardworking generation that values both personal fulfillment and professional success. We are passionate about making a positive impact in the world and are often drawn to careers that align with our values and allow us to make a difference."-Ajayi Ayomide, Growth Marketer and Writer, Howsociable

Millennials Don't Understand Older People

"As a Millennial, too often, I see older employees use "not knowing tech" as a reason not to do something. Growing up on social media, I understand that audiences exist on platforms that may have never existed in older generations. Too often, digital transformations are paused because higher-level managers do not understand the value or trust the numbers."-Ryan Igo, Revenue Marketing Manager, Surety Systems

Gen Z: Overdosing on Tech

"One of the biggest misperceptions about GenZ at work is that we are too reliant on technology. Although it's true that we have grown up in the age of technology and are very comfortable using it, we also value in-person communication and collaboration.

In fact, we often use technology to facilitate better communication and collaboration, not hinder it. So don't be quick to dismiss our reliance on technology as a negative—it can actually make us more efficient and effective in the workplace."-Anirban Saha, Founder, MrPlanter

Gen Xers Are Slackers

"I'm Generation X, and I feel one of the biggest misperceptions about my generation at work is that we are resistant to change and lack technological proficiency. This misconception may stem from the fact that Generation X came of age before the widespread adoption of digital technology, but in reality, many members of my generation have adapted well to the digital age and are comfortable using a variety of tools and platforms.

In addition, some people may assume that Generation X is less motivated or engaged in work than their younger colleagues, but this is also untrue. Studies have shown that Gen Xers are just as committed to their jobs and career advancement as any other generation and may even prioritize an excellent work-life balance more than previous generations.

Understanding these and other positive qualities of Gen Xers can help foster a more inclusive and productive workplace culture."-Shane McEvoy, MD, Flycast Media

Millennials: An Entitled Generation

"Millennials are seen as "entitled" by many. This misperception misrepresents the hard-working nature of millennials. Being told "follow your dreams" and "you can do anything you put your mind to" may sound like a recipe for disaster. For some, perhaps. For the majority of us, these mantras created highly driven, creative, thoughtful individuals who enjoy collaborating to do the best work possible.

Excessive encouragement from an early age may have inflated the self-esteem of some, but for so many Millennials, it created an impossible ideal that they could literally do anything. This causes us to feel like we have failed when we attempt things we are simply not cut out for.

Perfectionistic tendencies can lead to burnout. Maybe this is where the "entitled" label enters, as we may throw up our hands in frustration at overworking and working overtime without recognition or a successful outcome. Millennials appreciate praise when earned, but by no means expect it to appear out of thin air."-Colleen Sproull, Content Marketing Manager, Evinex

Millennials Are Lazy and Uninspired

"As a Millennial, I've heard a lot of misconceptions about my generation in the workplace. People seem to think that we're all addicted to our phones, overly entitled, and unwilling to put in the hard work necessary to succeed.

But the truth is that these perceptions are far from accurate. Sure, we may be more tech-savvy than previous generations, but that doesn't mean we're not willing to work hard and learn new skills. In fact, many of us are passionate about our work and eager to prove ourselves.

So, the next time someone assumes they know everything about Millennials in the workplace, maybe they should take a closer look and get to know us for who we really are."-Farhan Advani, Co-founder, Hair Extensions Advisor