

The "Millennials" Are Coming

Morley Safer On The New Generation Of American Workers

Stand back all bosses! A new breed of American worker is about to attack everything you hold sacred: from giving orders, to your starched white shirt and tie. They are called, among other things, "millennials." There are about 80 million of them, born between 1980 and 1995, and they're rapidly taking over from the baby boomers who are now pushing 60.

They were raised by doting parents who told them they are special, played in little leagues with no winners or losers, or all winners. They are laden with trophies just for participating and they think your business-as-usual ethic is for the birds. And if you persist in the belief you can, take your job and shove it.

As **correspondent Morley Safer** reports, corporate America is so unnerved by all this that companies like Merrill Lynch, Ernst & Young, Disney and scores of others are hiring consultants to teach them how to deal with this generation that only takes "yes" for an answer.

The workplace has become a psychological battlefield and the millennials have the upper hand, because they are tech savvy, with every gadget imaginable almost becoming an extension of their bodies. They multitask, talk, walk, listen and type, and text. And their priorities are simple: they come first.

Just ask Marian Salzman, an ad agency executive at J. Walter Thompson, who has been managing and tracking millennials since they entered the workforce.

"Some of them are the greatest generation. They're more hardworking. They have these tools to get things done," she explains. "They are enormously clever and resourceful. Some of the others are absolutely incorrigible. It's their way or the highway. The rest of us are old, redundant, should be retired. How dare we come in, anyone over 30. Not only can't be trusted, can't be counted upon to be, sort of, coherent."

Salzman says today's manager must be half shrink and half diplomat.

What are some of the do's and don'ts in speaking to the generation of young workers?

"You do have to speak to them a little bit like a therapist on television might speak to a patient," Salzman says, laughing. "You can't be harsh. You cannot tell them you're disappointed in them. You can't really ask them to live and breathe the company. Because they're living and breathing themselves and that keeps them very busy."

Faced with new employees who want to roll into work with their iPods and flip flops around noon, but still be CEO by Friday, companies are realizing that the era of the buttoned down exec happy to have a job is as dead as the three-Martini lunch.

"These young people will tell you what time their yoga class is and the day's work will be organized around the fact that they have this commitment. So you actually envy them. How wonderful it is to be young and have your priorities so clear. Flipside of it is how awful it is to be managing the extension, sort of, of the teenage babysitting pool," Salzman tells Safer.

All of which has led, as you'd expect, to a whole new industry -- or epidemic -- of consultants, experts they allege, in how to motivate, train and, yes, sometimes nanny the extraterrestrials who've taken over the workplace.

Mary Crane, who once whipped up soufflés for the White House, now offers crash courses for millennials in, well, the obvious. "As to the tattoos just make sure they stay covered up within the office, especially if you are going to be meeting clients," she advises her clients.

"It's a perfect storm we have created to put these people in a position where they suddenly have to perform as professionals and haven't been trained," Crane says.

Basic training, like how to eat with a knife and fork, or indeed how to work. Today, fewer and fewer middle class kids hold summer jobs because mowing lawns does not get you into Harvard.

"They have climbed Mount Everest. They've been down to Machu Picchu to help excavate it. But they've never punched a time clock. They have no idea what it's like to actually be in an office at nine o'clock, with people handing them work. And oh, by the way, possibly asking them to stay late in the evening, or their weekends," Crane says.

She maintains that while this generation has extraordinary technical skills, childhoods filled with trophies and adulation didn't prepare them for the cold realities of work.

"You now have a generation coming into the workplace that has grown up with the expectation that they will automatically win, and they'll always be rewarded, even for just showing up," Crane says.

"To what extent are you having to tell the boomers, the bosses, the 50 to 60 year olds, 'The people who got to change are you guys, not them?'" Safer asks.

"The boomers do need to hear the message, that they're gonna have to start focusing more on coaching rather than bossing. If this generation in particular, you just tell them, 'You got to do this. You got to do this. You got to do this.' They truly will walk. And every major law firm, every major company knows, this is the future," Crane explains.

It's a future of sweet talking bosses, no more "Pay your dues just like I did." If this generation knows anything, it's that there are more jobs than young people to fill them.

"I believe that they actually think of themselves like merchandise on eBay. 'If you don't want me, Mr. Employer, I'll go sell myself down the street. I'll probably get more money. I'll definitely get a better experience. And by the way, they'll adore me. You only like me,'" Salzman says.

So who's to blame for the narcissistic praise hounds now taking over the office?

Wall Street Journal columnist Jeffrey Zaslow covers trends in the workplace and points the finger at the man who once was America's favorite next door neighbor: Mister Rogers.

"You have got a guy like Mister Rogers, Fred Rogers on TV. He was telling his preschoolers, 'You're special. You're special.' And he meant well. But we, as parents, ran with it. And we said, 'You, Junior, are special, and you're special and you're special and you're special.' And for doing what? We didn't really explain that," Zaslow says.

"But isn't this generation, particularly of middle class kids, really quite special? Aren't they, in some ways, much better than your generation, certainly mine," Safer remarks.

"Well, except, when we were younger, you had a piano teacher who expected you to practice your piano and work hard at it, and the parents expected it. And now, the parents say, 'Have fun, learn the piano, practice a little bit.' So, there's not the expectations that they will achieve and work hard," Zaslow says. "It's not the same work ethic."

Zaslow says that the coddling virus continues to eat away even when junior goes off to college. "I heard from several professors who said, a student will come up after class and say, 'I don't like my grade, and my mom wants to talk to you, here's the phone,'" he says. "And the students think it's like a service. 'I deserve an A because I'm paying for it. What are you giving me a C for?'"

Today more than half of college seniors move home after graduation. It's a safety net, or safety diaper, that allows many kids to quickly opt out of a job they don't like.

"There once was, if not shame, a little certain uneasiness about being seen to be living at home in your mid 20s, yes?" Safer asks Mary Crane.

"Not only is there no shame with it, but this is thought to be a very smart, wise, economic decision," Crane says.

"Well, that would suggest that they probably had pretty happy childhoods," Safer says.

"And who couldn't be happy when you're growing up in a world where there's no

failure?" Crane points out.

And dear old mom isn't just your landlord; she is your agent as well. "Career services departments are complaining about the parents who are coming to update their child's resume. And in fact, you go to employers, and they're starting to express concern now with the parents who will phone HR, saying, 'But my little Susie or little Johnny didn't get the performance evaluation that I think they deserve,'" Crane says.

"Our parents really took from us that opportunity to fall down on our face and learn how to stand up," says Jason Dorsey.

Dorsey and Ryan Healy both make a living advising their fellow 20 some-things on how to cope with work. Healy started a Web site for that purpose and Dorsey has written two how-to books for them. And while Dorsey admits his mother picked out his suit for his interview with *60 Minutes*, his generation is not going to make the same mistakes their parents made.

"We're not going to settle. Because we saw our parents settle," Dorsey says. "And we have options. That we can keep hopping jobs. No longer is it bad to have four jobs on your resume in a year. Whereas for our parents or even Gen X, that was terrible. But that's the new reality for us. And we're going to keep adapting and switching and trying new things until we figure out what it is."

And figuring it out takes time. Sociologists tell us most Americans believe adulthood begins at 26 or older and that having witnessed so many sacrifices by their parents to achieve middle class security has had a huge impact. Family and friends are the new priorities, while blind careerism is beginning to fade.

"We definitely put lifestyle and friends above work. No question about it," Dorsey tells

Both Dorsey and Healy feel that that's pretty much the way one should look at life.

"I remember my dad getting laid off and all these things growing up. And that's 'cause they sacrificed for the company. Well, the first knee jerk reaction from me is I sure don't want to do that. I'm going to be in it for me and I'm going to make it work," Dorsey says.

"Where does this fantasy about 'I'm going to find the dream job' -- there's no such thing as a dream job. I mean, a few of us like me happen to have it. But where does this fantasy come from?" Safer asks Dorsey.

"I think we were told when we were little, 'You can be anything you want.' And then they went on and on and told us this," he replies.

"Big lie, right?" Safer asks.

"Big goals are great. Selling a fantasy that everything's going to be perfect and peachy is

not," Dorsey says.

"I also think from, when you're in your early 20s and you're really not responsible to a family of kids, this is the time to find the best job, the best career. You know, what you really want to do," Healy adds.

And more and more businesses are responding, offering free food, fun and flexibility to keep their employees happy.

Online shoe retailer Zappos.com has found that the best way of keeping employees is giving them what they want. Actual work actually happens, despite goofy parades, snoozing in the nap room, and plenty of happy hours.

Motivational consultant Bob Nelson says companies like Zappos will avoid a looming demographic crisis. "It's harder to get people. There's gonna be fewer of them to get. And if you want to keep them and get the best out of them, you sure better know what presses their buttons," he explains.

Nelson, known in the trade as the "guru of thank you," believes that the teeniest rewards pay big dividends, regardless of age. And boss-abuse gets even bigger dividends.

"I've worked with managers that have, if we make this goal, they'll shave their head type thing," Nelson says, laughing. "Or they'll be in the dunk tank at the summer picnic. When a senior manager's willing to do that is, it says we're all in it together."

All that togetherness comes together every year at the Motivation Show in Chicago -- with acre upon acre of coaches, consultants, knickknacks and fancy stuff -- rewards for a job well done, and reminders to work harder.

"You think this would help motivate people to work harder?" Safer asks a masseuse.

"Oh it does," the masseuse says.

But for sure, there is an almost evangelical fervor about this work philosophy -- no stick, all carrots. And believe it or not, all this prodding, praising, peddling, cajoling and psychobabble is worth \$50 billion a year in business. Ain't America great?

Where else you find free back rubs for the deserving worker bee. What's wrong with a happy workplace and taking your time to grow up?

"Could this be that everything is being delayed so that adolescence ends at 30 say and middle age starts at 60 say?" Safer asks Jeffrey Zaslow.

"You can hope that's the case. But, while we're having this delayed adolescence, are we getting behind as an economy and as a workforce, because we're just all playing computer games at work while we wait to grow up?" he replies.

For all the complaining, Dorsey and Healy believe their generation will transform the office into a much more efficient, flexible and yes, nicer place to be. But until then, a message to bosses everywhere: just don't forget the praise.

"We want to hear it and truly we'd love for our parents to know. There's nothing better than Mom getting that letter saying, 'You know, Ryan did a great job. Yeah, I just wanted to let you know you raised a fantastic son,'" Dorsey says.

"Send it to grandma, too," Healy adds, laughing.

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