

mfrtech blog submission
By Dan Campbell, CEO of Hire Dynamics

Millennials & What They Bring to the Manufacturing Table

Young professionals of the Millennial generation haven't been jumping at the chance for a career in manufacturing. Their parents and society at large have played a role in that. Attending technical school to learn the skilled trades has been waylaid by the promise of repute and riches following a turn at a four-year college or university. The prevailing stigma of jobs in manufacturing and other skilled trades have carried over into the last two generations, but these views are very clearly outdated.

Manufacturing isn't the "dirty" job of old, but rather quite the opposite as there is a real opportunity to educate Millennials on the increasingly innovative environment of manufacturing and the role they can play in driving the industry forward. In fact, we are currently undergoing a "manufacturing renaissance" as more companies look to produce on American soil again. With that, an urgent and growing need now exists. While the number of job opportunities continues to increase, we are battling archaic ideas alongside a current skilled labor force that is drastically aging out. According to 2013 [reports](#), for every four trade positions professionals retire from, the industry is producing only one replacement.

Our current workforce has thousands of open trade jobs and we can look to the millions of jobless Millennials, who are facing an unemployment rate that is double the national rate, to fill those ranks. As an industry, we can promote the *appeal* – innovation, cutting edge-technology, a strong industry culture, and refute the *negatives* – unclean environment, "old school" thinking, close-minded culture with little room for growth, to attract a new generation of workers.

What makes them tick?

If there isn't an active strategy in place to increase the number of Millennials employed within the manufacturing industry, we will miss a valuable and important opportunity to improve our workplaces and cultivate new ways of thinking. This generation is one that seeks to apply creativity in all facets of life, especially at work where they feel they can truly make a difference. Their fresh perspective empowers their work and that of the team, and is reflected in an organization's bottom line and future prospects.

"Despite what you might have read about Millennials in the workplace, as a generation they genuinely believe they can change their communities for the better, and the entire world for that matter," says workplace generation expert and president of [Growing Leaders](#), Tim Elmore. "Even today, as our economy continues to struggle and unemployment remains high among this group, these young professionals remain optimistic about what they can and will do to fix it all."

Millennials may experience difficulties integrating into a workforce dominated by more mature workers, but as a group, they are known to work and play well with others. Often referred to as the "[We Generation](#)," we can capitalize on their heightened sense of community and peer-to-peer relationships to update workplace cultures. In terms of group collaboration, Millennials welcome the opportunity to work alongside Boomers and undergo the necessary knowledge transfer from those on the cusp of retirement. When expectations are clearly articulated, they can generally assimilate well making on-the-job-training less costly and more efficient.

Attracting them to the jobs

With the misconceptions surrounding work in manufacturing, our Millennials are clearly missing the fact that these jobs entail highly sophisticated and specialized work. Further, these careers often offer immediate opportunities, continued growth and job security. It's important that we change their perspective by revamping industry and company cultures and the way we present our job opportunities.

In a 2013 global generational [study](#) by PwC, Millennials agreed that a strong, cohesive, team-oriented workplace culture and opportunities for interesting work are important. Placing such a high priority on culture and a desire to work in an environment that emphasizes innovation, it's apparent that the manufacturing jobs of today would make ample culture fits. But there isn't a natural inclination to think of this type of workplace experience in relation to a manufacturing job when contemplating their next career move.

We can take a lesson from other industries and companies for how they attract and retain Millennials. For example, DreamWorks offers recreational learning opportunities to employees including painting, karate and sculpting – 450 of 2,200 employees are Millennials and the company has a 96 percent retention rate. Google, Zappos and Procter & Gamble have designated nap rooms where employees can take 30 minutes to reboot. While these workplace [ideas](#) would have been considered absurd years ago, more businesses are now warming up to the idea.

There's no reason to turn a business on its head to turn the conference room into a yoga studio. Start small – have team contests for restaurant gift cards or an extra hour of paid time off. Perhaps offer half-day Fridays during a down season or the option to implement other flexible work options. Let Millennials know that [social media](#) participation is encouraged both during and after work hours by introducing and supporting online communities, chat rooms and virtual resource groups. But also, make clear the parameters set forth by the company in terms of its online code of conduct.

Hiring Millennials is a way to bridge the growing skills gap, balance the staffing equilibrium, and fill the demands of an ever-evolving workforce. And if you still aren't convinced, examine the success of others who are tapping into the Millennial generation talent pool. They are some of the most creative organizations; they are also leading change and the competition.

Dan Campbell is founder/CEO of Hire Dynamics and 2014 chairman of the American Staffing Association. Hire Dynamics is an industry leading staffing provider for contact/call centers, manufacturing facilities, supply chain, e-commerce operations and corporate offices, and has been recognized by Staffing Industry Analyst's list of "Best Staffing Firms to Work For" and Inc. Magazine's 500|5000, among others. More information may be found at hiredynamics.com, on [LinkedIn](#) and on [Twitter](#).