

Training the Millennial Generation: Implications for Organizational Climate

Lindsey Farrell
Andrew C. Hurt

Abstract

As the millennial generation enter the workforce it is becoming increasingly essential that members of the workforce understand this generation. Understanding how the millennial generation learns can assist trainers and instructional designers in creating effective training programs. This article addresses these concerns through a review of current literature on training millennials. Two research questions were used to direct this inquiry. First, what are the learning characteristics of the millennial generation and what implications do these characteristics have on training development and design? Second, what are the risks of failing (or choosing not) to take the characteristics of millennials into consideration, in terms of training development & design? This review identified six characteristics of millennial learners. A discussion of these characteristics and suggestions for training development is provided. The article concludes with a discussion of implications for organizational climate, future research, and provides practitioners with key elements to consider when developing training for millennials.

It cannot be denied that the millennial generation is different than previous generations. As the millennial generation begins to enter the workforce in greater numbers it becomes increasingly essential that current members of the workforce understand the fundamental aspects of this generation, especially those aspects that may call for changes in the workplace.

The baby boomer generation, individuals born between 1946 and 1964, account for approximately 80 million members of the current U.S. workforce. Because of their age and relative status within organizations, individuals in the baby boom generation comprise the majority of high-level positions within most areas of business. However, as members of the baby boom generation begin to retire the next largest generation group to emerge in the workforce will be the millennial generation. The millennial generation, comprised of approximately 75 million Americans born between 1980 and 2000 will soon outnumber the baby boomers in the workforce (Bohl, 2008; Conner, 2010; Donnison, 2010; Feiertag & Berge, 2008; Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Skiba & Barton, 2006; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010).

If organizations are going to be successful in effectively managing the transition between members of the baby boom generation and members of the millennial generations, a clearer understanding of the training and design preferences of millennials is essential. This is not to say that a complete redesign or adaptation of training in the workforce is advocated or necessary; however, different generations have different preferences for training. In order to create a work environment that is compatible with multiple generations, a clear understanding of their preferences regarding training design is necessary.

As generational studies relate to training design and development, the most important area in which it is essential to be knowledgeable when developing and designing training is learning style. Knowledge of the preferred learning styles and learning methods of a generation has direct

application to development of workplace training and to Human Resource Development (HRD). Identifying and understanding the most effective methods through which members of the millennial generation learn can assist instructional designers in creating effective training programs that lead to a knowledgeable and productive workforce. Thus, the aim of this research is to answer two questions. First, what are the learning characteristics of the millennial generation and what implications do these characteristics have on training development and design? Second, what are the risks of failing (or choosing not) to take the characteristics of millennials into consideration, in terms of training development & design?

In order to answer these questions, this paper presents a review of current literature that relates to characteristics, workplace preferences, and learning style preferences of millennials. The current literature is used to address these research questions as they relate to training development and design. Finally, this paper concludes with a discussion of the implications for training and development, HRD, and future research on millennials.

What We Know About Millennials

This review of literature highlights several areas of knowledge related to the millennial generation and their learning style. The review discusses personality and work characteristics, learning style, and technology's role in learning activities of the millennial generation. Assumptions and extrapolation between personality characteristics and learning style are also discussed. Given that many in the millennial generation are not currently in the workforce, there is limited information specific to workplace training. Thus, given this scarcity, the authors have relied predominantly on academic educational studies and findings regarding millennials.

Utilizing varied databases including, Academic Search Premier (EBSCO), Business Source Premier (EBSCO), Wilson Business Abstracts, and Google Scholar, a breadth of work on the subject of the millennial generation, its characteristics, learning preferences, and learning style related to technology have been identified. The intent is not to create an exhaustive history, but to provide to the reader a summary of the characteristics, workplace preferences, learning preferences, and learning style of the millennial generation. This knowledge will be utilized to assist in answering the research questions posed above.

Characteristics of the Millennial Generation

As more members of the millennial generation enter the workforce, articles and books related to the characteristics, idiosyncrasies, virtues, and vices of this generation have become commonplace. Articles vary from singing the praises of this generation to predicting an imminent downfall of business as its members rise to power. Members of a *generation* are people that grew up during a specific period of history leading to members experiencing the same significant historical or social events during periods of critical development (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). These experiences become the foundation for the characteristics and values of the generation, which distinguishes its members from members of other generations (Twenge et al., 2010). For members of the millennial generation, a sampling of these significant historical and social events are the collapse of major due to ethical issues companies (e.g. Enron, TYCO, Arthur Andersen), the Columbine High School shootings, Desert

Storm in Iraq, the impeachment of United States President Bill Clinton, the 2001 terrorist attacks, and the continuing war on terror (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007; Twenge et al., 2010).

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the millennial generation as offered by 14 recent articles. Through examination and synthesis, six characteristics of the millennial generation are commonly found within Table 1. These six characteristics include: 1. ability to multi-task, 2. desire for structure, 3. achievement-focused, 4. technologically savvy, 5. team-oriented, and 6. seeking attention and feedback. Although surveys or studies are frequently cited when discussing millennial traits, sometimes no explanation is given as to how the data was obtained, leading to questions of the validity of these grand lists of traits said to define a generation. For the purposes of this review and subsequent discussion, recognized traits of the millennial generation will be limited to those six previously listed, as these traits show the most coverage and discussion in the literature reviewed, insinuating validity. It should also be considered that several of the reviewed works listed traits related to the increased diversity of the millennial generation. The diversity of the millennial generation should be considered when evaluating the generalizability of characteristics.

Table 1
Characteristics of Millennial Generation

Author(s)	Characteristics of Millennial Generation (summary)
Feiertag & Berge (2008)	Hypertext mindset, multi-tasking, lack of communication skills, graphically-oriented, expect immediacy, don't respond well to lecture, require tailored information, require technology
Shaw & Fairhurst (2008)	Most are technology literate, educated, most ethnically diverse generation, confident, independent, individualistic, self-reliant, entrepreneurial, socially active, collaborative, team-oriented, emotionally needy, seek praise and approval, results oriented, desire work and pressure, high external locus of control, high maintenance, value institutional learning, rapidly assimilate information, active learners
Meister & Willyerd (2010)	Attention sponges, need constant feedback, in a hurry for success, view work as a key part of life, want a personally fulfilling life, have high expectations of themselves and others, committed to community service, academic overachievers, live a mobile, collaborative, and immediate lifestyle
Bohl (2008)	Passive relationship to information, want instant gratification, expert multi-taskers, will block out information not seen as immediately relevant, not concerned with order or hierarchy, want mutual respect, strongly reject authoritarian teaching styles, self-perceived expert information gatherers
Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance (2010)	Technologically savvy, like informality, learn quickly, embrace diversity, need supervision

Skiba & Barton (2006)	Digital natives, fiercely independent, open about emotions and intelligence, inclusive, express views freely (often strong views), innovative, preoccupied with maturity, investigative, desire immediacy, sensitive to interests of others (especially employers), authenticate before trusting, close to parents, value intelligence, need group activities, multi-taskers, first person learners
Gorman, Nelson, & Glassman (2004)	Strong written communication skills, work collaboratively, gather information quickly, share information readily, respect diversity, value multiculturalism, resilient, easily converse with adults regarding intellectual topics (without reservation), may struggle if unsupervised
Monaco & Martin (2007)	Lack professional boundaries, entitled, lack critical thinking skills, unrealistic expectations, desire a “how to” guide for success, want to invest as little time/effort as possible to achieve success, think of themselves as special & winners, sheltered by parents, team-oriented, confident, highly optimistic, multi-taskers, desire immediacy, pressured, achievers, conventional
Wesner & Miller (2008)	Most educated generation, Equate more education to more opportunities, self-confident, embrace new technology, mobile, multi-taskers, not concerned with loyalty to employer, achievement-minded, want to contribute tangibly, desire meaningful work
Donnison (2010)	Confident, optimistic, self-assured, high self-esteem, informed, knowledgeable, experienced consumers, ambitious, success-oriented, goal-achieving, over confident of employability, skills and abilities, collaborative
Wilson & Gerber (2008)	Special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, achieving, pressured, conventional
Elam, Stratton, & Gibson (2007)	Hard working, extracurricular-focused, generous, practical, structured, goal achievement-minded, assessment-oriented, team-oriented, socially networked, close to parents, stunted interpersonal skills, possible lack of critical thinking skills, respectful, conventionally motivated, responsible, conscientious, structured rule-followers, protected, sheltered, cooperative, mutually inclusive, talented achievers, confident, optimistic
Glass (2007)	Patriotic, benefitted from technology, socially minded, confident, team-oriented, structured, high self-esteem, results-oriented, constant feedback
Partridge & Hallam (2006)	Achievers, team-oriented, strong emphasis on family, society and community oriented, collaborative attitude, Work to live – don’t live to work, pragmatic but optimistic, involved, tolerant, sheltered, structured, seek support, technologically savvy, desire constant stimulation, valued education, motivated, desire quick answers, multi-taskers, active learners

In Table 1 it is clear that there are several characteristic themes throughout the reviewed literature; however, but many contradictory statements are found as well. For example, Shaw and Fairhurst (2008) listed “self-reliant” as a trait of the millennial generation, whereas Gorman, Nelson, and Glassman (2004), Partridge and Hallam (2006), and Meister and Willyerd (2010) indicated that millennials need supervision or support to thrive. These contradicting statements

may be due to authors evaluating millennials according to varied definitions or within varied settings.

Millennial Learning Style

The millennial generation is decidedly comprised of active learners. Feiertag and Berge (2008) asserted that the hypertext mindset of the millennial generation allows for and leads to frequent activity changes, reducing the applicability of a lecture-style training format. Shaw and Fairhurst (2008) discussed the influence of technology on the learning style of millennials, finding that technology has increased the need for structured, hands-on, interactive assignments in the classroom. Bohl (2008) emphasized the need to engage millennials in the learning process – both in developing the process and learning the material itself. Bohl (2008) also found that millennials are less likely to internalize material presented in a lecture-only format and cited role-playing, externships, and clinical experiences as strong potential alternatives.

Skiba and Barton (2006) highlighted millennials' multi-tasking ability and propensity for innovation fueled by curiosity, discovery, and exploration as contributing factors of the millennial generation's active learning style. Monaco and Martin (2007) underscored the possibility of the hindrance of decision making skills through over-utilization of group activities as tenants of active learning but stressed the necessity of hands-on elements in order to appeal to millennials' team-oriented, collaborative learning style. Wilson and Gerber (2008) emphasized involving millennials in the learning process through providing choices and cooperative opportunities that allow students to create their own learning or meaning within courses, a form of active involvement through self-tailoring. Finally, Partridge and Hallam (2006) cited shorter attention spans and low boredom tolerance as factors leading millennials to an active learning style.

It can be observed that a considerable amount of literature exists supporting the idea that the recognized characteristics and preferences of the millennial generation align well with the utilization of an active learning style. No studies were found comparing the effectiveness of millennial learning utilizing passive techniques to active techniques. Further, none of the literature reviewed called for the utilization of passive learning techniques with the millennial generation. In fact, Partridge and Hallam (2006), Monaco and Martin (2007), Bohl (2008), and Wilson and Gerber (2008) all called for the dismissal of passive learning techniques, citing ineffectiveness and incompatibility with the current audience of generations.

Millennial Learning and Technology

Of the 14 articles summarized in Table 1, nine list a characteristic that recognizes the role of technology in the lives of the millennial generation. As a result, *technological savvy* has been recognized by this study as one of the six main characteristics of the millennial generation. The utilization of interactive technological elements in learning activities surely appeals to the millennial generation's active learning style and also aligns with the generational characteristic technologically savvy.

Technology-based learning activities can be implemented utilizing a variety of methods: computer-based activities, wikis, presentations, course websites, web-based interactions, videos, games, or research, are all strong examples (Monaco & Martin, 2007; Skiba & Barton, 2006; Wilson & Gerber, 2008; Bedwell & Salas, 2010). Utilizing technology-based learning techniques could create dissonance around the millennial characteristic of team-orientation, as many of the techniques listed above are being employed currently in a relatively basic format and frequently do not include interactive team or collaborative elements. Alternately, utilizing technology-based learning techniques aligns well with the millennial characteristics of multi-tasking, desire for structure, and attention and feedback seeking. This comparison suggests that the millennial generation would prefer sacrificing some (not all) interactivity or team-orientation of activities in order to utilize or participate in technology-based learning activities.

It is acknowledged that non-technologically-based learning activities may also appeal to the millennial characteristics of multi-tasking, desire for structure, and attention and feedback seeking, but the magnitude of technological influence in the lives of the millennial generation cannot be ignored. Those of the millennial generation who are described as *digital natives*, individuals who have never known a world without computers, often fail to separate technology from what that technology enables us to do. Digital natives are typically early adopters of new technology devices. They are often not concerned about the device itself, but rather what the device allows the user to do (Feiertag & Berge, 2008; Glass, 2007; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Skiba & Barton, 2006). This influence must be considered heavily when determining ideal learning activities of millennials.

The Millennial Generation's View of the Workplace

The workplace expectations of the millennial generation are typically in line with the previously discussed characteristics of the generation. It is apparent that the millennials relationship with technology fuels the majority of the seemingly glaring differences between millennials and previous generations (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Much research has been conducted and opinions offered on how to handle the millennial generation in the workplace, insinuating a great difficulty in doing so. Although the millennial generation may operate differently than previous generations, the actions of its members are often predictable and intelligently linked to the fulfillment or accomplishment of well-known characteristics and values of the generation (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Understanding these tendencies and preferences is paramount to the successful integration of millennials into an organization.

One of the most often discussed millennial workplace desires is that of acting as a change agent (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Epstein (n.d., as cited by Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), found in The National MBA Survey, which surveys more than 5,600 MBA students annually, that only 33% of Generation Xers (those born between 1965-1980) agreed with the statement, "I prefer a structured environment with clear rules," whereas 72% of millennials agreed with the same statement (Beekman, 2011). These findings support the inclusion of the characteristic "desire for structure" in the synthesized list of characteristics developed through this article.

The desire for a structured environment may first appear counterintuitive to the desire of millennials to act as change agents, but the utility of a structured organization is that the structure

creates a clearly defined picture of the organization. This clearly defined picture allows millennials to more quickly recognize reachable areas that could be improved and understand current, and potentially past, procedures. A clearly defined structure helps millennials to thoroughly evaluate potential improvements, and implications of such improvements, on the organization as a whole before recommending change. Communicating such improvements may come with difficulty to millennials, a generation where technology has effected face-to-face communication abilities. Those of previous generations often perceive millennials as *know-it-alls* due to their difficulty in expressing ideas. Although millennials may be focused on driving change, which may seem presumptuous in the eyes of previous generations, these change agents are typically doing so with the good of the organization and personal achievement in mind (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Millennials desire fulfillment, achievement, and happiness, and believe that these desires are achievable through work (Guillemette, 2009). Achievement is sought through work, whereas fulfillment and happiness are often sought through work-life balance or other off-the-job activities. In order to be self-assured and reassured that actions will lead to desired results, millennials require support and resources, sometimes more than managers believe is desirable or feasible (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Millennials do not necessarily believe that one must come to work with every necessary skill to be successful on the job. Millennials view work as a continual learning experience in which people collaborate in order to reach desired results. This heavy desire for feedback and attention has led many organizations to create mentor/mentee relationships that enable new employees to: receive the feedback and attention desired, learn from those more knowledgeable, and assist mentors in technology-related tasks that may be less than intuitive (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Although millennials desire structure, variety and flexibility are important workplace preferences of the generation (Beekman, 2011; Conner, 2010; Sujansky, 2009). Variety in the form of special projects or job responsibilities fulfills both millennial needs of attention and multi-tasking (Sujansky, 2009). Flexibility in any form, but especially work schedule, can create a sense of autonomy and empowerment in those of the millennial generation (Beekman, 2011). Variety and flexibility both allow for multi-tasking, a synthesized characteristic of the millennial generation.

Interestingly, actual changes of the neural circuitry of millennials have been detected, which could explain the tendency of many digital natives to succeed in multi-tasking, information filtering, and visual stimulation response while having difficulty with face-to-face interactions and interpreting non-verbal cues (Small & Vorgan, 2008). These changes in neural circuitry are suggested to be the result of technological skills being acquired and repeated (Small & Vorgan, 2008). This propensity for certain skills or traits not found in previous generations may be, at base, directly caused by brain alterations brought on by the millennials' unprecedented relationship to and with technology.

In Summary, What We Know About Millennials

Relevant literature related to commonly held beliefs about the characteristics of the millennial generation including the learning style of the generation and technology's potential role in learning activities targeting millennials has been summarized. By outlining a set of recognized

characteristics of the millennial generation, a framework has been created into which further exploration of those traits and learning preferences can be inserted.

Through this review, six synthesized characteristics of the millennial generation have been identified: 1. ability to multi-task, 2. desire for structure, 3. achievement-focused, 4. technologically savvy, 5. team-oriented, and 6. seeking attention and feedback. These six characteristics have carried through to a discussion of millennial learning style. It has become clear that the millennial generation most likely benefits from active engagement in learning events, especially those utilizing team or collaborative activities. At the same time, the millennial generation has also been shown to be unquestionably influenced by and immersed in technology, which, at present, frequently lacks active engagement when used in learning activities. Finally, workplace preferences of the millennial generation were discussed. The desire to act as change agents, for achievement, and for flexibility and variety are all supported by the six synthesized characteristics identified in this review. After having developed a base knowledge of the millennial generation in the workplace, it is important to determine what this means to those developing and designing training for this generation and how this knowledge could be implemented in organizations and within HRD.

Discussion and Implications

Through exploration of the characteristics, workplace preferences, and learning style of the millennial generation, it has become clear that serving an audience of millennials does have implications when developing and designing training. One of the most prominent characteristics having bearing on training development and design is that of the active learning style of the millennial generation.

Lecture-style training is common and in most instances not altogether avoidable (Blanchard & Thacker, 2010; Noe, 2010; Swanson & Holton, 2009). This is challenging because lectures are typically a relatively easy training style to implement and deliver, which leads to many organizations relying on this method of knowledge transfer (Blanchard & Thacker, 2010). On-the-job training, for example, which allows trainees to shadow established employees in order to transfer job knowledge, could easily appeal to the active learning style of the millennials. By allowing millennials to actively participate in the environment in which they will be working, effective knowledge transfer is likely.

Further, as McGuire and Gubbins (2010) argued, organizations that rely solely on antiquated formal/traditional learning styles are becoming outdated. New activity-based learning with a technical orientation is becoming increasingly important for a wide variety of stakeholders. Millennials are in part driving some of these changes in organizational learning. As the millennial population increases in the workforce, organizations and HRD will increasingly need to utilize these activity-based learning styles.

In addition to the active learning style of millennials, another characteristic that has undeniable implications on the development and delivery of training is the generation's experience with technology. As previously discussed, millennials are digital natives who have never known a world without email or the internet, are early adopters of technology, and frequently fail to

separate the physical technology from what it allows the user to do (Feiertag & Berge, 2008; Glass, 2007; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Skiba & Barton, 2006). This leads millennials to be largely unimpressed by traditional training techniques. Many traditional training methods fail to consider the active learning style of the millennial generation.

A focus on technology should be considered while developing and designing training whose audience will be mainly comprised of millennials. Technology oriented environments, such as virtual worlds, present a developing opportunity for training designers to utilize when constructing training for millennials (Li, D'Souza, & Du, 2011). Further, the emergence of virtual Human Resource Development (VHRD) provides an opportunity for training designers to understand how HRD could aid in improving training for millennials (McWhorter, 2010).

The constant feedback and considerable attention preferred by millennials should be addressed when developing and designing training for the millennial generation. This feedback and attention could be achieved in many ways. One example of a training design element that satisfies this tendency is personal feedback (Johnson & Aragon, 2003). Personal feedback provided by instructors/leaders of on-the-job training activities throughout the training process, encourages and supports the millennial trainee. Millennials prefer to receive feedback throughout a process to ensure that appropriate progress is being made. Post-training assessments alone are not an ideal personal feedback measurement for many millennials.

The millennial characteristics related to active learning style, technology, and attention and feedback have clear implications in the development and design of training. Although the specific implementation of training design elements aimed toward satisfying or maximizing these tendencies varies by organization and training needs, knowledge and consideration of these characteristics is a necessity.

The Risks of Not Considering Millennial Characteristics

Acknowledgment and consideration of the characteristics of the millennial generation is especially important due to perceived lack of company loyalty demonstrated by millennials (Wesner & Miller, 2008). If one company is not meeting the needs of a millennial, that millennial will most likely not think twice about finding another company that will meet those needs more effectively. Conversely, when millennials feel valued and appreciated, employers are typically rewarded with loyalty, passion, and enthusiastic work (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Organizations wishing to reduce attrition and turnover should consider training from the perspective of the millennial generation in order to assess the level of loyalty they are inspiring (or should expect) through training design.

If millennial characteristics and tendencies are ignored, organizations run the risk of training failing to effectively transfer knowledge to trainees. Without effective knowledge transfer, training concepts do not often survive the passage from classroom to workplace (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Understanding the needs of the audience, both in training content and design is paramount to the successful completion of training objectives (Blanchard & Thacker, 2010). Ultimately, if knowledge is not effectively transferred, trainees are not prepared to constructively contribute to the organization's goals.

Implications for Organizational Climate

With the addition of the millennial generation, the number of generations currently in the workforce now stands at four (e.g. Silent, Baby boom, Gen X, and Millennial) (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). Managers or those in supervisory positions should be prepared for issues related to the interaction of these widely varying generations. Although this research focuses on the millennial generation, it is important to remember that most training audiences are still comprised of several generations, and implementation of entirely millennial-preferred training design may not be appropriate. At the same time, the risks to loyalty and effective knowledge transfer must be considered. The loss of millennial employees because of a lack of millennial-preferred training design has the potential to significantly impact organizational climate, future growth and development of organizations.

One potential consideration for organizations would be to reframe the way human resource strategy is conducted by adopting a holistic lifecycle approach to employee development (Pritchard, 2008). In this approach, employees are not developed at one particular moment in time (i.e. at orientation, during training, annual performance reviews) but rather the entire employee lifecycle is considered as each employee develops; beginning with recruitment and ending with separation. Adopting this general approach to HR strategy could aid in improving not only millennial retention and commitment but also improve the broader organizational climate.

Taking this lifecycle idea one step further, Shah and Hurt (2014) presented a conceptual model for developing a differentiated lifecycle approach to HR strategy based on differences in generation. They argue that in order to holistically improve organizational climate an employee's generation should be considered when developing HR strategy. They present a conceptual model for how major HR areas might change their strategy based on different generations in the workforce. For instance, where a member of the Baby Boomer generation might be satisfied receiving an annual performance review; a Millennial, needing constant and transparent feedback, would likely not respond well to this length of time. Thus performance reviews for Millennials would be more climate-conducive if they were offered on a project-by-project basis rather than annually.

Areas of Future Research

Although evidence has been provided that characteristics of the millennial generation do have implications when it comes to training development and design and there are risks associated with failure to consider these characteristics in training activities, there are several areas where additional research could be beneficial to further solidify the case.

First, research specifically comparing the effectiveness of learning transfer by different training methods would help solidify findings regarding the learning style of millennials. The six millennial characteristics synthesized from Table 1, represent a summary of what the literature suggests surround characteristics on millennial learning style. Both qualitative and quantitative studies are needed to more clearly identify the role of these six characteristics within training design and development.

As millennials move forward in their careers, it may be beneficial to research the continuing effects on the nature of business and also training specifically. There are many questions that remain to be answered. As millennials begin to take the reins of business from current generations, how will the status quo change as a result of the millennial preferences? How will millennials change business, including training? How will the characteristics, including learning style, of the millennial generation influence how millennials chose to do business? Finding answers to these questions would allow future researchers to weigh exactly how influential, or not, the acknowledged characteristics of the generation have proven to be.

These are just a few areas of research that could fortify the knowledge base related to the millennial generation, its characteristics and tendencies, and how those attributes affect business and HRD, especially training development and design. As millennials continue to enter the workforce and eventually begin leading organizations at a higher rate, more opportunities for research will surely arise.

Conclusion

Through a review of the current literature and analysis, a succinct set of millennial characteristics has emerged. Millennials have been found to have a distinct ability to multi-task, a desire for structure, a focus on achievement, a technologically savvy, a team-orientation, and a strong desire for attention and feedback. Further, millennials have been shown to typically favor an active learning style and, in line with recognized characteristics, prefer structured and team-oriented learning with technological elements (Bohl, 2008; Feiertag & Berge, 2008; Monaco & Martin, 2007; Partridge & Hallam, 2006; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Skiba & Barton, 2006; Wilson & Gerber, 2008). Although current use and advancement of technology in learning and training does not lend itself well to an especially active learning style, the relationship of the millennial generation to and with technology is undeniable (Glass, 2007). Millennials have different workplace expectations than other generations who have come before them. Millennials aim to act as change agents and desire fulfillment, achievement, and happiness along with flexibility and variety (Beekman, 2011; Conner, 2010; Guillemette, 2009; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Sujanksy, 2009).

The implications of the characteristics on training development and design are considerable. In order to achieve effective knowledge transfer, training professionals must be knowledgeable as to the millennial characteristics in regard to active learning style, necessity of feedback and attention, and the generation's relationship to and with technology. The precise implementation of training aspects addressing these characteristics will vary, but consideration is essential.

There are risks associated with failure to consider the characteristics of the millennial generation when developing and designing training. The primary risks are to loyalty to the organization and effective knowledge transfer. With waning corporate loyalty, organizations must consider the level of commitment that is being inspired through corporate actions and organizational culture (Bunch, 2007). Millennials are not at all averse to leaving an organization where their value and appreciation, as indicated by the organization's consideration of millennial preferences and characteristics, is in question (Wesner & Miller, 2008). By failing to consider the audience, no matter who that audience may be comprised of, organizations run the risk of experiencing

reduced, incomplete, or ineffective knowledge transfer, which has clear detrimental organizational effects (Blanchard & Thacker, 2010).

Further research is needed in the area of millennial learning style, possibly through quantifying the effectiveness of knowledge transfer between different training methods, which would assist in solidifying qualitative findings related to learning style. As the number of millennials in the workforce increases, it may be beneficial to measure the importance of recognized millennial characteristics through analysis of changes to the business world.

Although this research specifically addresses the characteristics, tendencies, and needs of those of the millennial generation, it would not be prudent to implement entirely millennial-based training. In instances of mixed-generation training audiences, balancing and understanding the needs of each generation is paramount. However, in the future, when a greater majority of the workforce is comprised of millennials, more intense and widespread implementation of millennial-focused training activities should be considered. This is not to say that understanding of the millennial generation is not necessary at present. It is clear that this generation will and has already greatly impacted organizations. In order for organizations to maximize the contribution of millennials, understand where this generation fits into the workforce, and create an organizational climate that is co-beneficial for all generations, understanding of the characteristics, tendencies, and needs of the millennial generation is essential.

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