



# Are Millennials Just A Scapegoat?

by Ira S Wolfe, Guest Author

## Truth be told most Millennials get a bum rap.

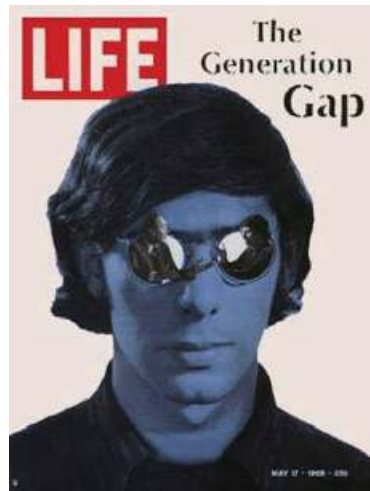
Recently I asked a group of managers to describe the young people showing up for interviews and work. The words they shouted out almost on cue a concoction of “privileged, narcissistic, entitled, spoiled, job hopping Trophy Kids” laced with “irresponsible, unreliable, unrealistic, rude, selfish.”

That’s not news. In fact many of you might even have a few additional descriptors.

What came next might surprise you. I pulled out and read an

article from a popular magazine describing this young generation. I heard some snickers and observed a few smiles. Almost verbatim to the managers’ list, it included similar descriptors. The group felt vindicated. They weren’t alone and just a bunch of old-fuddy-duddies. The whole world was on their side...at least the whole world of workers over 30 years old.

I then held up the magazine and shared the cover - Life Magazine, May 17, 1968!



“Compared to other generations, millennials tend to be more collaborative, are accustomed to working in teams & have a passion for pressure.”  
- Joanie Connell, Flying Without a Helicopter: How to Prepare Young People For Work and Life



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Yes, that's right folks. Nearly 50 years ago, one of the most popular magazines of its day introduced the "Generation Gap" to the world. But they weren't talking about Millennials. In fact, Millennial children and grandchildren were not even a blip on their future parents' radar yet. These "privileged, narcissistic, entitled, spoiled, lazy" young workers were the Baby Boomers - the same group who is currently doing a lot of griping about their employees.

Let's jump ahead about 20 years to the summer of 1990. Time Magazine runs a cover story about The Next Generation. It depicts this cohort of 20-somethings "lazy, entitled, selfish, shallow, unambitious shoe-gazers... [who] have trouble making decisions.

They would rather hike in the Himalayas than climb a corporate ladder. ...They crave entertainment, but their attention span is as short

as one zap of a TV dial. ...They postpone marriage because they dread divorce. They sneer at Range Rovers and Rolexes. What they hold dear are family life, local activism, national parks, penny loafers and mountain bikes. Again, Time Magazine wasn't describing the Millennials, but Generation X, the group of working adults (and parents) who are now 36 to 50 years old. With the exception of penny loafers, history is repeating itself in 2016.

Are you getting the picture? The group of managers and employees who question the ethics, values, and behavior of Millennials were once the source of the very same ridicule. Is frustration with Millennials just part of a rite of passage just as college students pledge fraternities and sororities?

Maybe so.

Plato was said to have complained that young people "disrespect their elders" and "ignore the law." Peter the Hermit griped that they "think of nothing but themselves" and are "impatient of all restraint." The list goes on...for centuries older generations have been reprimanding young workers about their lack of loyalty and work ethic. It seems that Baby Boomers and Generation Xers are just abusing the privilege of age as much as their predecessors have done.

## JEFF BLEACHER



*"We value the younger members on our team for the enthusiasm and fresh thinking they bring to the firm. It seems as though they do view work differently than our generation does, but I admire their dedication to have work/life balance and their deep commitment to their families. Here at RBF we have a family culture and I know that flextime and our team spirit means a lot to our younger team members."*

## KEN FALK



*"Ah, yes, I remember the days when our generation was the 'wild and crazy' generation that wasn't going to be responsible and never wanted to grow up. But, time changes all things and we find that the Baby Boomers did grow up and we changed the world in many aspects. I don't know if the Millennials will see as many changes as we've seen, but I'm sure they will do equally as well as we have. We love having younger staff members here and enjoy seeing their progress."*

"Ask one question:  
Would a Millennial (anyone  
born between 1980 and  
2000) look forward to  
working here?"

- Rex Miller, Sr.





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The truth is that although millennials may be the “selfie” generation, they also care about the world around them. They want jobs that affect social change, and they give what they can. Contrary to popular belief, millennials rate “contribute to society,” “correct inequalities” and “be a leader in the community” higher than baby boomers did when they were younger.

It's time for workers older than 35 to discount the myths about Millennials. The inconvenient truth is that our society and

*“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.”*

*- Morley Safer*

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our workplaces will never return to the way it used to be. Companies and workers can either fall victim to change or follow opportunity and adapt.

Technology, automation, and globalization have no innate bias. They target all people, regardless of age and without discrimination. Whether you belong to the oldest generation or the youngest, adaptation is necessary. To accomplish that, turn the generation gap into a competitive asset and advantage. Focus on commonality, collaboration, and communication between the generations.

Ira Wolfe will be sharing his expertise with the Millennials in the workplace in our next RBF CEO and Executive Peer Group on Thursday, March 10, 2016. For more information, contact Jeffrey Williams at RBF by email [jwilliams@rbfco.com](mailto:jwilliams@rbfco.com) or phone: 717-393-2700.

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## JEFF GROFF



*“Since I’m not a Baby Boomer or a Millennial I have a different perspective on the generations. One of the things we’re cognizant of here at RBF is that there will be a dip in the population when the Boomers retire and before the Millennials are in the full swing of their careers. That requires us to plan ahead for our staffing needs in a way that other generations didn’t need to consider. As a result, we do a lot of training and development for our team members and look to build a work place where they want to stay for their career.”*

## PATRICK GENDRUE



*“When I look back over my career and the opportunities that existed when I started in Accounting, I’m very grateful for the encouragement of mentors, the RBF Partners and our loyal customers. I see an erosion in the loyalty of companies to employees and employees to companies and I hope that the Millennials will begin to make longer-term commitments in their careers. I would also recommend to every Millennial that they find a mentor early on in their career, as it makes a big difference in your success.”*