

## 3/5 Millennials and leadership.

### Millennial Heartbeats.

Five explorations of the attitudes, abilities and potential of today's Millennial leaders.

The very talents that stand to make Millennials such outstanding leaders can also be their undoing.



**They are the leaders with all the gifts.**  
**On the face of it, Millennials should**  
**make brilliant 21<sup>st</sup> century leaders.**



**What's stopping**  
**your Millennials from**  
**becoming great leaders?**

## **It's too good to be true.** **Communication skills honed by social media,** **digital natives, naturally collaborative thanks** **to an upbringing attuned to the power of** **teamwork, and primed to multi-task.**

### **They are the leaders with all the gifts. And of course, it's too good to be true.**

Having watched many Millennials go through our development programmes, it's clear that each ingredient in that shopping list of desirable talents can just as easily become an unexpected item in the bagging area.

Millennials can indeed be amazing leaders - open, innovative, collaborative, inspiring. But there's nothing to say that just because of the age they've grown up in, those skills instinctively appear fully formed and fully functioning. Nor that the experiences moulding them may not equally be a force for bad as well as good without help.

Accepting that these are generalisations, there will always be exceptions (and that every generation of leaders has had its own demons to combat), what are those forces, and how are they acting?

Well, take social media. In our experience we've noted that the snappy and energetic nature of social media has made Millennials good at rapidly summing up the essentials of completing a task. However, the long form exposition needed to put those lists into action, and bring people on board with what needs to be done, can elude them. They're great at curating, not so strong at expressing.

While Millennials can maintain social media networks with populations in the hundreds or thousands, that doesn't automatically make them collaboration Einsteins either. True collaboration involves entering a discussion where the benefit of all comes first, and the benefit to me is a happy result.

Millennials do join that table more naturally inclined to collaborate than previous generations. Yes, it's a generalisation, and it's not a logarithmically scaled change. Nevertheless it is observable. It's something we and others have ascribed to a shift in the education system that helped put 'sharing learning' ahead of solitary study.

But exactly how they approach collaboration is interesting, and not uncomplicated. This is a strongly self-centric generation, and while it may be constantly sharing what it does with the world online, there is an element of 'like-me' in that process. Consequently we've noticed Millennials can confuse collaboration with negotiation - entering the conversation with 'what's in it for me' a little too front of mind.

**“For however innocent the Millennial obsession to share may appear, there is, just fractionally, a component of power to it.”**

For however innocent the Millennial obsession to share may appear, there is, just fractionally, a component of power to it.

In the 20th century power was easy; they called it 'knowledge'. In an age of democratised information, when knowledge is merely a 30 second re-route to Google, there's considerably less advantage to cramming your head with endless facts. The influence instead lies in networks, so it would not be surprising to find that while Millennials embrace collaboration as a benediction, they also wield it as a tool. "Whoever holds this conference call, if he be worthy, shall possess the power of Thor!"... Well, something like that anyway.

And lets look at that question of multi-tasking, which reflected in a darker pool, has a mirror image called 'not-having-the-attention-span-to-stick-with-one-job-long enough'.

**“The upside for business is that it can make them fast and fantastically responsive... but it’s a potential downside for leadership.”**

Mastering multiple-media streams and firing off instant messages to three people at once has certainly schooled Millennials in the art of divided concentration. The upside for business is that it can make them fast and fantastically responsive - virtuoso musicians of information who can glance at an orchestral score of data and shrink it to the dominant melody.

But it’s a potential downside for leadership. Deep-down human beings still require concentrated care. They want to be listened to in detail, not in passing, and when relationships are shortened to ones, zeros and emojis, something suffers.

And while Millennials may aver that they can handle this particular report/project/homework while simultaneously listening to Spotify, watching tv and hunting for a Bulbasour, pretty much every piece of psychological and neurological research on the subject says they’re wrong. Distractions are - did you just see that?

So what’s to be done? The very talents that stand to make Millennials such outstanding leaders can also be their undoing.

**“The very talents that stand to make Millennials such outstanding leaders can also be their undoing.”**

You could tell them. You could show them. Or you could help them to show themselves.

It’s one of the reasons we have extolled the power of experiential learning for so long. It just works. Our approach to developing leaders - any leaders, but especially Millennials - is to come up with provocations, then let people put their reactions to them to the test, in controlled circumstances.

We distract them like crazy, then we don’t distract them much, then we get them to focus like crazy. We set them challenges that can only be solved by true collaboration and genuine communication. We engage them in tasks that will succeed if they explain what needs to be done, and fail when they simply write down a list of priorities.

They figure it out. And then they find the best way forward for themselves, their organisation, and the leaders they want to be.

**In our next piece we’ll talk about how businesses can draw the talents they need from the Millennials they have, the leadership development that will help them do it, and the impact well-guided Millennial input can have on change, growth and success.**

**Millennials are on the verge of becoming the largest and most influential sector of the workforce. They are vital to business.**

**Developing them to become leaders needs a particular approach – but it can lead to spectacular results.**

**Speak to an expert.**



If you don't listen, you can't lead, so we place great importance on hearing what our clients tell us and adapting our approach, programmes or solution to suit.

For a free consultation contact us on [01989 767667](tel:01989767667)  
or email [info@leadershiptrust.co](mailto:info@leadershiptrust.co)