



Workplace Priorities, Beliefs & Practices: A Generational Snapshot

By Julie Winkle Giulioni
& Olivia Gamber

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Executive Summary

Over the past several years, much has been written about generational difference. Numerous reports have been published suggesting that Millennials have different priorities and wants when it comes to work compared to other generations. However, these studies have failed to delve into differences in beliefs that influence these preferences. So, we commissioned our own study with a professional research firm, The Insight Advantage, from December 2015 to January 2016, focused on identifying differences in beliefs and preferences across generations and around the world.

Ultimately, the study dispels some of the conventional wisdom and perceptions about Millennials and the significantly different preferences and beliefs they hold about work and their career. In fact, the current study identifies more similarities than differences in:

- Satisfaction with career development
- Career priorities
- Career beliefs

Survey Methodology

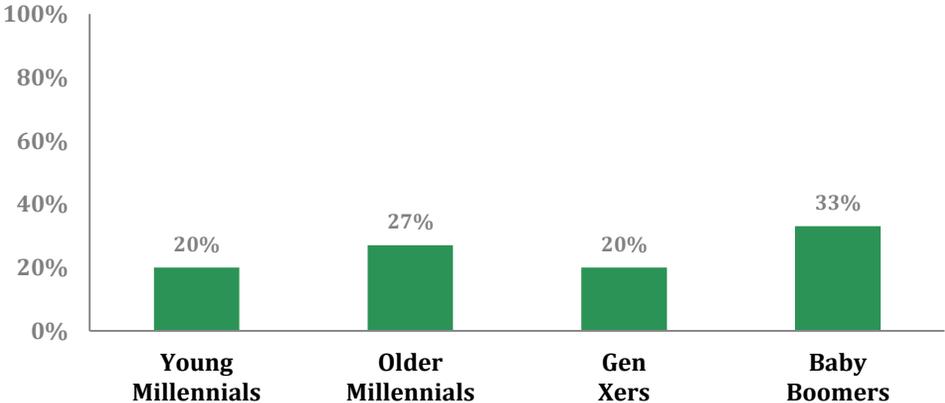
We conducted a web-based survey that was distributed via personal and professional connections as well as through a variety of social media channels between December 7, 2015 and January 13, 2016. We offered an incentive drawing for one of three \$100 USD Amazon gift certificates to encourage participation.

Participants rated their career beliefs and priorities, and answered open-ended questions to provide their insights about a range of workplace and career issues. Appendix A contains the entire content of the web survey.

We received 779 responses from participants in Asia, Europe and North America. The study included respondents distributed across four generations:

- Young Millennials (18 – 26 year olds)
- Older Millennials (27 – 34 year olds)
- Gen Xers (35 – 50 year olds)
- Baby Boomers (51 – 69 year olds)

Distribution of Participants



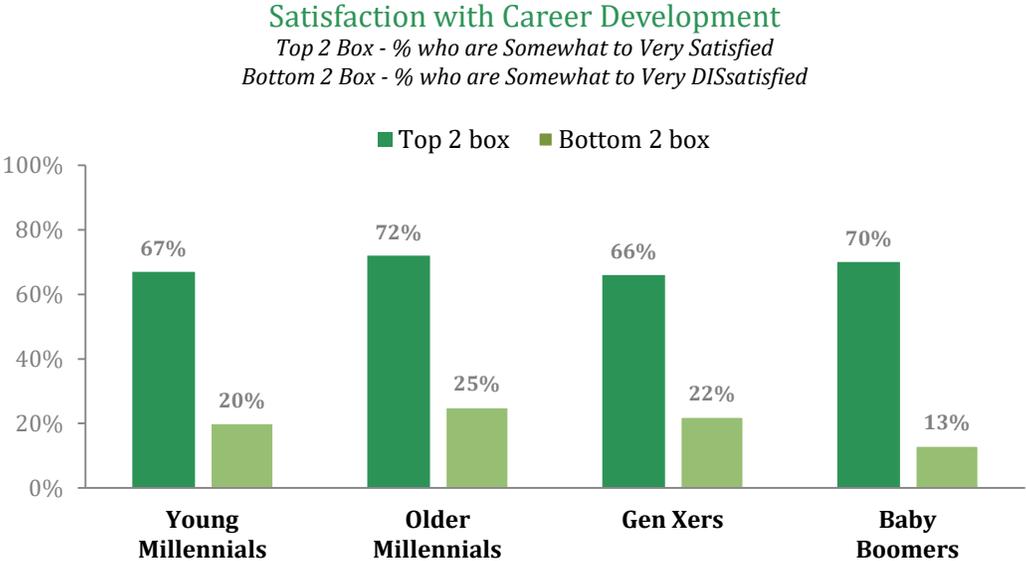
Our analysis of the data focuses entirely on North American respondents, allowing us to focus on age differences only vs. potentially mixing in the impact of geographical/cultural differences also.

See Appendix B for more information about the demographics of the North American respondents. Throughout this report, we use the term ‘significant’ to refer to statistically significant differences. While some results may not be statistically significant, they are notable. Additionally, some elements are identified as ‘surprising’ because they challenge conventional wisdom about generational differences at work.

Survey Results

Satisfaction with Career Development¹

There is **no significant difference** in the level of career development satisfaction of workers based on age. The percent that are ‘somewhat’ to ‘very satisfied’ range from 66% and 72%; and the difference in level of dissatisfaction with career development is insignificant. . There is no shift here when input from Young Millennials and Older Millennials is combined into an All Millennials total.



Career Priorities²

A set of 15 career priorities was presented In the study and respondents were asked to indicate how important each one was to them.

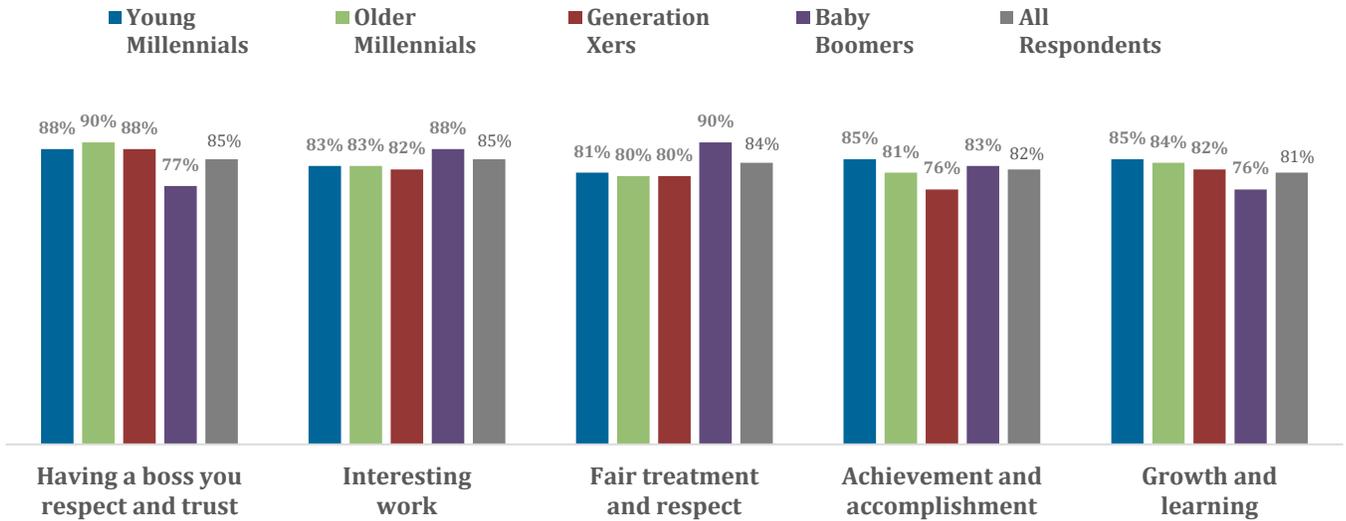
See below for details on the items that were rated as most important overall and see Appendix C for details about the Top 2 Box ratings for each of the 15 career priorities.

¹ Based on the following question: “How satisfied are you with the career development available to you in your current role?”, 5 point scale: Not at All Satisfied to Very Satisfied.

² Based on the following question: “How important are each of the following relative to your career/work?”, 7 point scale: Not at All Important to Very Important.

Top Five Priorities

Top 2 Box - % who rated each item as Somewhat to Very Important



Young Millennials – Highs and Lows

Most Important Priorities

Top 5 – decreasing in order of importance

- Having a boss you respect and trust (88%)
- Achievement and accomplishment (85%)
- Growth and learning (85%)
- Interesting work (83%)
- Fair treatment and respect (81%)

Least Important Priorities

Bottom 5 – increasing in order of importance

- Promotions (52%)
- Appreciation (52%)
- Empowerment (60%)
- Compensation (63%)
- Job flexibility (63%)

Older Millennials – Highs and Lows

Most Important Priorities

Top 5 – decreasing in order of importance

- Having a boss you respect and trust (90%)
- Growth and learning (84%)
- Interesting work (83%)
- Achievement and accomplishment (81%)
- Fair treatment and respect (80%)

Least Important Priorities

Bottom 5 – increasing in order of importance

- Promotions (49%)
- Security (59%)
- Coaching/mentorship (60%)
- Compensation (67%)
- Empowerment (73%)

Gen Xers – Highs and Lows

Most Important Priorities

Top 5 – decreasing in order of importance

- Having a boss you respect and trust (88%)
- Open/transparent communication (84%)
- Growth and learning (82%)
- Interesting work
- Fair treatment and respect (80%)

Least Important Priorities

Bottom 5 – increasing in order of importance

- Promotions (47%)
- Coaching/mentorship (55%)
- Security (57%)
- Compensation (67%)
- Empowerment (73%)

Baby Boomers – Highs and Lows

Most Important Priorities

Top 5 – decreasing in order of importance

- Fair treatment and respect (90%)
- Interesting work (88%)
- Opportunity to make a difference (88%)
- Connections and relationships with others (87%)
- Open/transparent communication (83%)

Least Important Priorities

Bottom 5 – increasing in order of importance

- Promotions (28%)
- Coaching/mentorship (46%)
- Security (52%)
- Compensation (66%)
- Empowerment (74%)

Surprises and Observations of Interest

Similarities overwhelmingly outweigh differences across the generations relative to both what's most and least important to people.

Promotions, Compensation, and Empowerment show up in every age group's bottom 5 priorities.

No significant difference exists in the importance of **Fair Treatment/Respect** or **Interesting Work** among age groups and it's of high importance to all.

While it's of lower importance to all, **Empowerment** is even *less important* the younger respondents.

Opportunity to Make a Difference is *significantly less important* to All Millennials than it is to older segments. In fact, it's of high importance only to Baby Boomers.

Open/Transparent Communication is *less important* the younger the respondent.

Security is more important the younger the respondent, reflecting low importance for everyone except Young Millennials.

Connections and Relationships with Others is *more important* to Baby Boomers than to any other group.

Appreciation is significantly less important to Young Millennials than to Gen Xers and Baby Boomers. It appears to become increasingly important with age.

Job Flexibility is less important to Young Millennials than to all others, appearing in the bottom 5 only for Young Millennials.

Coaching/Mentorship becomes increasingly important to the younger the respondent.

There's little difference in terms of the top priorities of the Younger and Older Millennials with both sharing the same top five priorities.

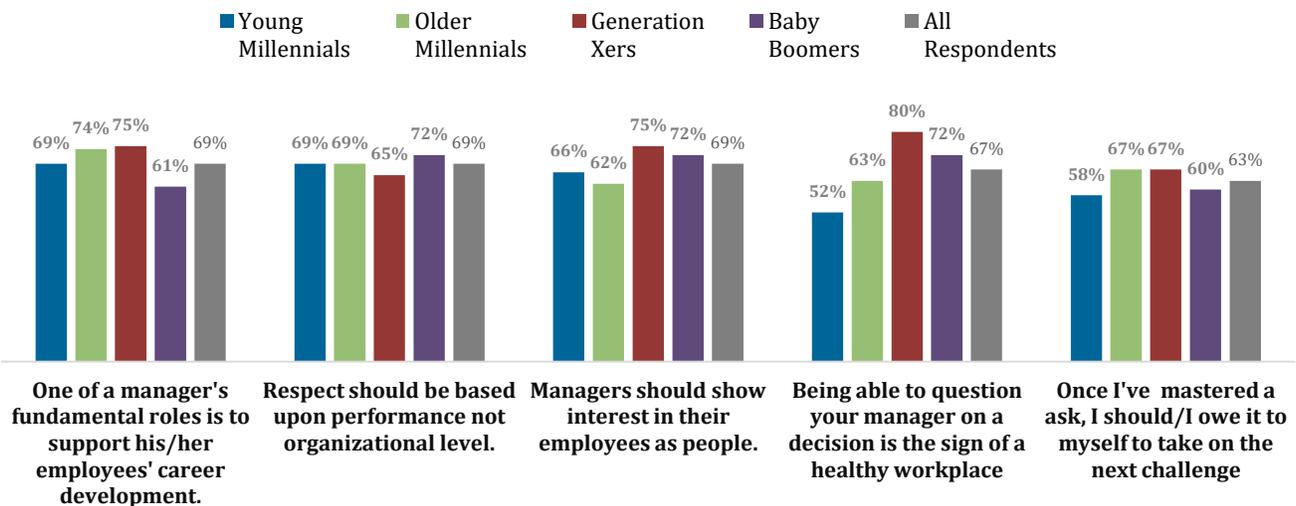
Beliefs About Career/Work³

Next, respondents were asked to gauge their agreement with a series of 14 career beliefs; and again, similarities outweigh differences.

See below for details on the beliefs that were most likely to be held across all respondents and see Appendix D for details about the Top 2 Box ratings for each of the 14 career beliefs.

Top Five Work-Related Beliefs

Top 2 Box - % who Highly or Totally Agree with each statement



³ Based on the following question: "To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?", 7 point scale: Completely Disagree to Completely Agree.

Young Millennials

Strongest Beliefs

Top 5 – decreasing in order of importance

- One of a manager’s fundamental roles is to support his/her employees’ career development (69%)
- Respect should be based upon performance not organizational performance (69%)
- Managers should show interest in their employees as people (62%)
- Everyone with the capacity to contribute should have a voice in key decisions that affect them (60%)
- Once I’ve mastered a task, I should/I owe it to myself to take on the next challenge (58%)

Weakest Beliefs

Bottom 5 – increasing in order of importance

- Work is meant to be a way to express one’s authentic self (15%)
- Individuals should put their career development above the needs of an organization (27%)
- The ability to access information and learn is more valuable and important than experience (33%)
- Companies should provide career paths that allow for rapid career growth for employees (37%)
- Time in a role/seniority has no impact on ability to lead (37%)

Older Millennials

Strongest Beliefs

Top 5 – decreasing in order of importance

- One of a manager’s fundamental roles is to support his/her employees’ career development (74%)
- Respect should be based upon performance not organizational performance (69%)
- Once I’ve mastered a task, I should/I owe it to myself to take on the next challenge (67%)
- Managers should show interest in their employees as people (66%)
- Being able to question your manager on a decision is the sign of a healthy workplace (63%)

Weakest Beliefs

Bottom 5 – increasing in order of importance

- Individuals should put their career development above the needs of an organization (14%)
- Work is meant to be a way to express one’s authentic self (27%)
- The ability to access information and learn is more valuable and important than experience (34%)
- Time in a role/seniority has no impact on ability to lead (43%)
- Supervisors should act as supportive peers vs. authority figures (47%)

Gen Xers

Strongest Beliefs

Top 5 – decreasing in order of importance

- Being able to question your manager on a decision is the sign of a healthy workplace (80%)
- Managers should show interest in their employees as people (75%)
- One of a manager’s fundamental roles is to support his/her employees’ career development (75%)
- Once I’ve mastered a task, I should/I owe it to myself to take on the next challenge (67%)
- Respect should be based upon performance not organizational performance (65%)

Weakest Beliefs

Bottom 5 – increasing in order of importance

- Individuals should put their career development above the needs of an organization (8%)
- Work is meant to be a way to express one’s authentic self (27%)
- Companies should provide career paths that allow for rapid career growth for employees (27%)
- The ability to access information and learn is more valuable and important than experience (41%)
- Time in a role/seniority has no impact on ability to lead (43%)

Baby Boomers

Strongest Beliefs

Top 5 – decreasing in order of importance

- Respect should be based upon performance not organizational performance (72%)
- Managers should show interest in their employees as people (72%)
- Being able to question your manager on a decision is the sign of a healthy relationship (72%)
- Work should be a way to improve conditions beyond an organization’s bottom line (67%)
- One of a manager’s fundamental roles is to support his/her employees’ career development (61%)

Weakest Beliefs

Bottom 5 – increasing in order of importance

- Individuals should put their career development above the needs of an organization (9%)
- The ability to access information and learn is more valuable and important than experience (16%)
- Companies should provide career paths that allow for rapid career growth for employees (25%)
- Work is meant to be a way to express one’s authentic self (27%)
- Once goals are clear, employees should decide how to do the work (39%)

Surprises and Observations of Interest

The following beliefs had the *lowest* level of agreement from all respondents, regardless of age group:

- **“Individuals should put their career development above the needs of an organization.”**
Regardless of age, there’s a sense that we’re at work to make a contribution to the organizations and that career development must fit within that context.
- **“Work is meant to be a way to express one’s authentic self.”** While we may want to find meaning in our work, we understand that work doesn’t have to define us.
- **“The ability to access information and learn is more valuable and important than experience.”** Experience is alive and well and valued across generations.

No significant difference exists among age groups relative to:

- **“One of a manager’s fundamental roles is to support his/her employees’ career development”** as it appears as a top 5 belief across generations.
- **Managers should show interest in their employees as people”** as it appears in the top 5 for all age groups.
- **Respect should be based upon performance not organizational level”** as it appears as a top 5 belief for all age groups.
- **“Companies should provide career paths that allow for rapid career growth for employees.”** It appears as a bottom 5 belief for all but Older Millennials.

The older the respondent, the *higher* the level of agreement with: “Work should be a way to improve conditions beyond an organization’s bottom line” (with it appearing in the top 5 only for Baby Boomers.)

The younger the respondent, the *lower* the level of agreement with: **“Time in a role/seniority has no impact on ability to lead,”** In fact, it’s in bottom 5 for everyone but Baby Boomers, suggesting that experience may be more appreciated and honored than conventional workplace wisdom might suggest.

In a similar vein, Millennials have *lower* agreement than Gen X or Baby Boomers with: **“Being able to question your manager on a decision is the sign of a healthy workplace”**, suggesting a level of respect for authority that doesn’t garner much attention in the popular media.

Additional Perspectives⁴

In this same study, we asked individuals to respond to several open-ended questions. And even when they share thoughts in their own words rather than clicking multiple-choice answers, the similarities among Millennials, Generation Xers and Baby Boomers are striking.

When asked about the biggest issues they have with the career development that’s available to them, the overwhelming and most common response for each generation revolves around the lack of opportunities for growth. New entrants to the workforce, mid-career professionals, and those who are edging toward retirement all share a deep need to continue developing.

And when asked about the most powerful and helpful things a manager or supervisor has ever done to support their career development, respondents shared very similar thoughts.

Young Millennials	Older Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
<p>Offered opportunities</p> <p>Set goals</p> <p>Helped me learn</p>	<p>Offered opportunities, experiences, and projects</p> <p>Made sure I kept learning</p> <p>Provided support and encouragement</p>	<p>Offered opportunities, challenges, and projects</p> <p>Provided support</p> <p>Ensured ongoing learning and skills development</p>	<p>Ensured ongoing learning, training, skills development</p> <p>Offered opportunities, chances, challenges, and tasks</p> <p>Provided support and encouragement</p>

Color key to themes in the table above:

- Opportunities
- Goals
- Support and encouragement
- Learning and development

⁴ Based on the following questions:

“What are the biggest issues with the career development current available to you?”

“What is the most powerful thing a manager/supervisor/mentor has ever done to support your career development?”

“What are the most pressing reasons you have had/or could have for leaving a job or organization?”

About the Authors



Julie Winkle Giulioni has spent the past 25 years improving performance through learning. She's partnered with hundreds of organizations to develop and deploy innovative leadership training solutions that are in use worldwide.

Prior to co-founding DesignArounds 15 years ago, Julie was director of product development for AchieveGlobal, one of the world's largest commercial training companies. She also held multiple training leadership roles and was a department chair and professor at the Southern California university.

Julie was named one of Inc. Magazines top 100 leadership speakers and holds the Global HR Excellence Award for Strategic Leadership from the World HR Congress.

She is the co-author of the Amazon and Washington Post bestseller, *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go: Career Conversations Employees Want*, a respected speaker on a variety of topics, and a regular contributor to many business publications.

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She is the Founder of [Occupational Olivia](http://OccupationalOlivia.com), where she helps professionals explore innovative approaches to advancing their career. Olivia is a career acceleration expert, industrial/organizational psychologist, and career coach.

She has experience leading teams in recruiting and talent development for Fortune 500 and mid-sized organizations.

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APPENDIX A: Web Survey Content

Thank you for taking this survey to provide your perspective on various career issues. This information will be used to write an article early in 2016.

Upon completing this brief survey, you will be entered in a drawing for one of three \$100 Amazon gift cards.

Q.1 What is your current employment status? *(check all that apply)*

- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time
- Self-employed or contractor
- Student
- Military
- Unemployed/not looking for employment
- Unemployed/looking for employment
- Retired

Q.2 How satisfied are you with the career development available to you in your current role?

- Not at All Satisfied
- Somewhat Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

Q.3 What are the biggest issues with the career development currently available to you?

Q.4 Career/Work Priorities - Part I

How important are each of the following relative to your career/work?

	1 Not at All Important (-)	2	3	4 Neutral/No Opinion	5	6	7 Extremely Important (+)
Achievement and accomplishment							
Appreciation							
Having a boss you respect and trust							
Promotions							
Coaching/mentorship							
Compensation							
Connections and relationships with others							
Empowerment							

Q.5 Career/Work Priorities - Part II

How important are each of the following relative to your career/work?

	1 Not at All Important (-)	2	3	4 Neutral/No Opinion	5	6	7 Extremely Important (+)
Fair treatment and respect							
Growth and learning							
Interesting work							
Job flexibility							
Opportunity to make a difference							
Security							
Open/transparent communication							

Q.6 Your Perspectives on Work - Part I

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?

	1 Completely Disagree (-)	2	3	4 Neutral/No Opinion	5	6	7 Completely Agree (+)
Work is meant to be a way to express one's authentic self.							
Once I've mastered a task, I should/I owe it to myself to take on the next challenge.							
Work should be a way to improve conditions beyond an organization's bottom line.							
The ability to access information and learn is more valuable and important than experience.							
Time in a role/seniority has no impact on ability to lead.							
Everyone with the capacity to contribute should have a voice in key decisions that affect them.							
Supervisors should act as supportive peers vs. authority figures.							

Q.7 Your Perspectives on Work - Part II

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?

	1 Completely Disagree (-)	2	3	4 Neutral/No Opinion	5	6	7 Completely Agree (+)
Respect should be based upon performance not organizational level.							
Once goals are clear, employees should decide how to do the work.							
Individuals should put their career development above the needs of an organization.							
Being able to question your manager on a decision is the sign of a healthy workplace.							
Managers should show interest in their employees as people.							
Companies should provide career paths that allow for rapid career growth for employees.							
One of a manager's fundamental roles is to support his/her employees' career development.							

Q.8 What is the most powerful thing a manager/supervisor/mentor has ever done to support your career development?

Q.9 What are the most pressing reasons you have had/or could have for leaving a job or organization?

Q.10 ABOUT YOU:

Gender

- Male
- Female

Q.11 Age range

18-26
27-34
35-50
51-69
70 or older

Q.12 Which of the following best describes where you live?

Africa
Asia-Pacific
Europe
North America
South America
Other

Q.13 How would you classify yourself?

Asian
Black
Caucasian/White
Hispanic or Latino
Indigenous or Aboriginal
Multi-racial
Decline to answer
Other (please specify)

Q.15 Highest level of education you have completed

High school graduate
Some college credit, no degree
Trade/technical/vocational training
Associate (2-year) college degree
Bachelor's (4-year) college degree
Master's degree
Professional degree
Doctorate degree

Q.16 Role/title

Executive
Vice president or director
Manager
Supervisor or lead
Individual contributor

Q.17 Do you currently manage other people in your job?

Yes

No

Q.18 What's the longest time you've spent in a job?

- Less than a year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11 or more years

Q.19 Thank you for your input!

Please check all that apply:

- I'm interested in being entered into the prize drawing
- I'm open to being contacted for a follow-up conversation about my input
- I'd like to receive a link to the article when it is published
- None of the above

Q.20 Name:

Q.21 **Email Address** (required if you would like to be entered in the drawing and/or receive the article):

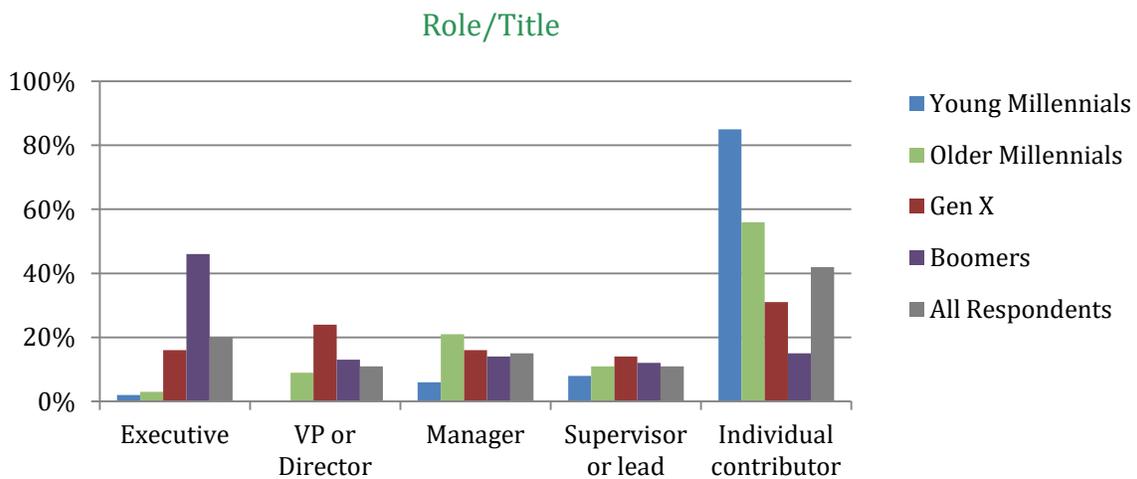
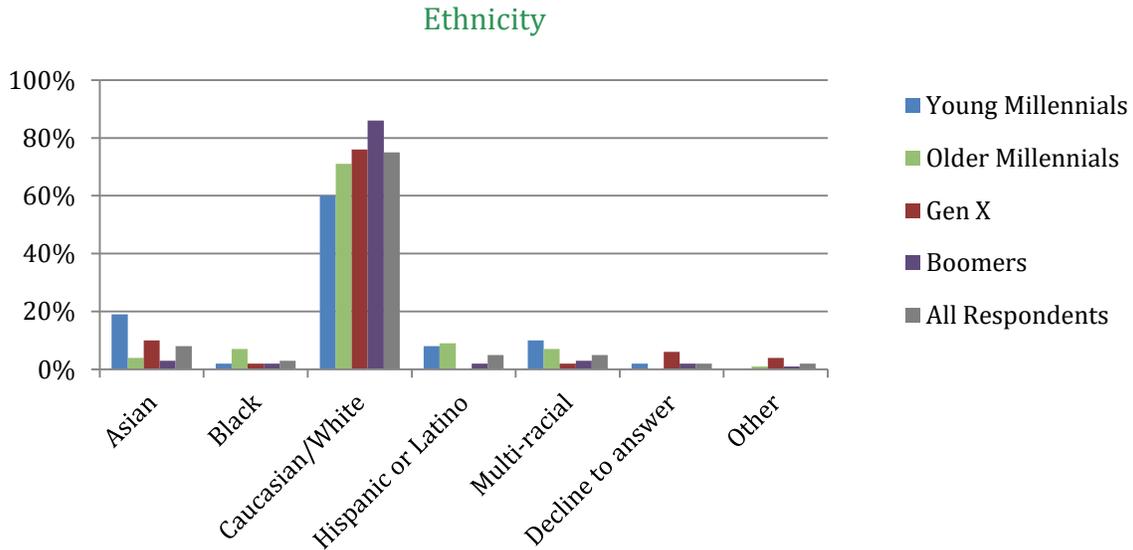
Q.22 **Phone Number** (optional):

Thanks again for your input.

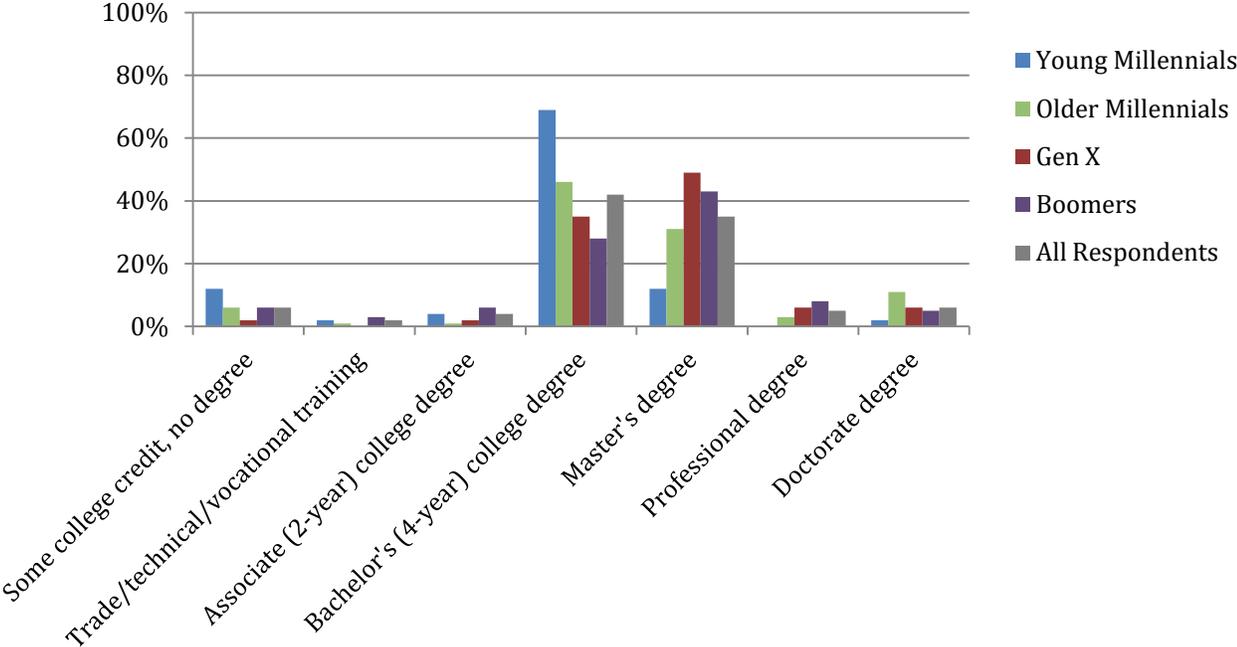
If you one of the 3 winners of the prize drawing, we will notify you by January 15, 2016.

APPENDIX B: Respondent Demographics

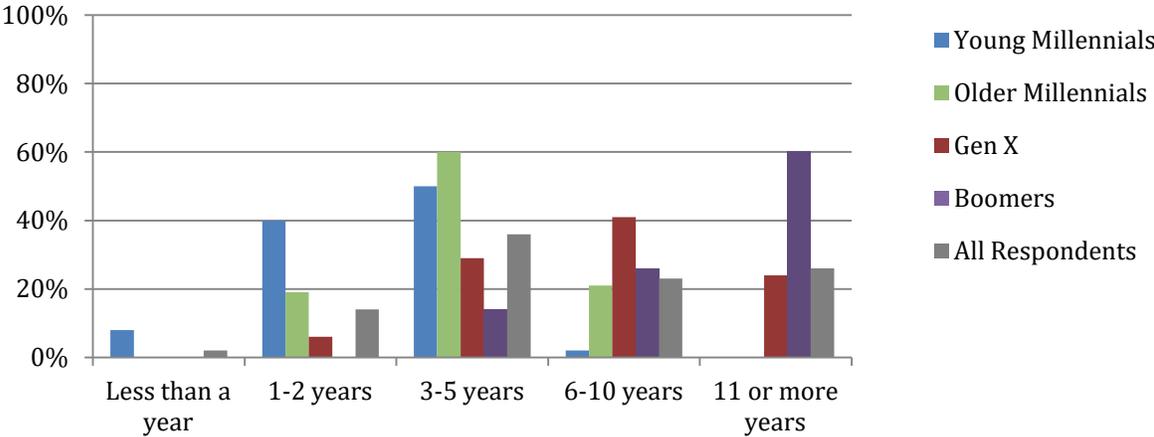
See below for the demographics of North American respondents:



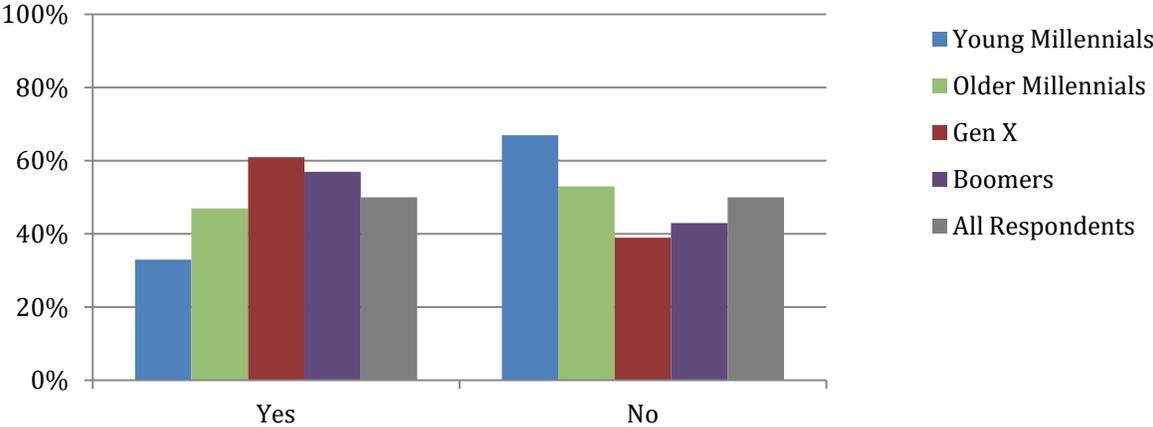
Highest Level of Education



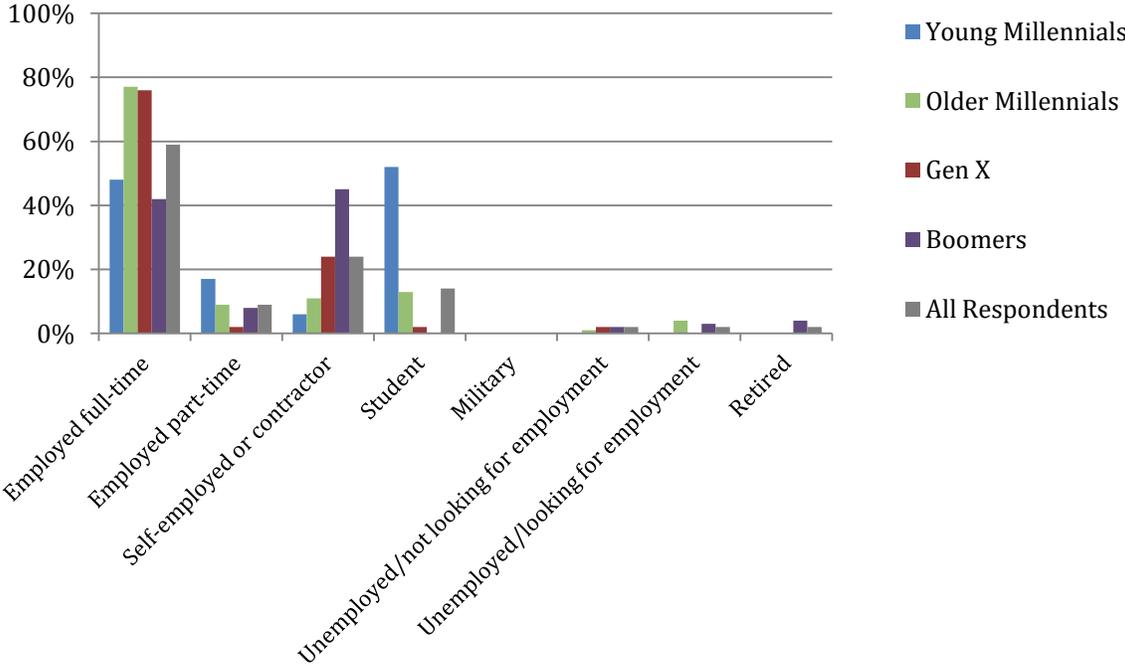
Longest time spent in a job



Currently Manage Others?



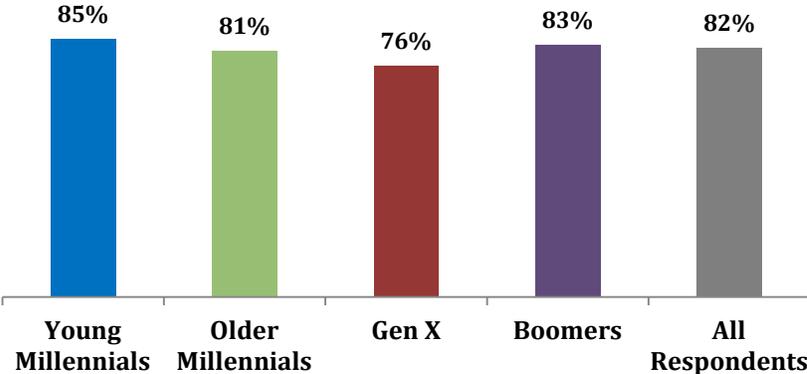
Current Employment Status



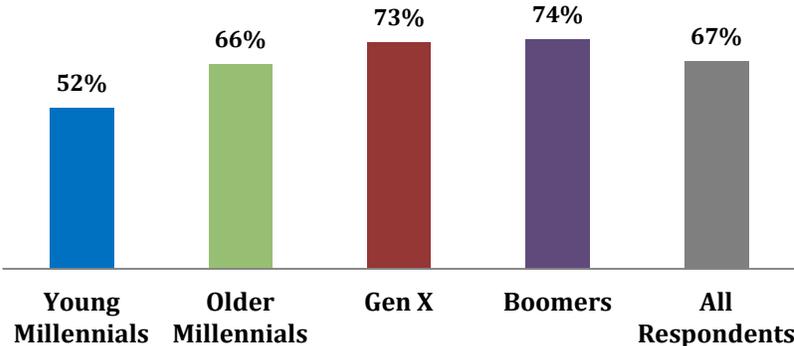
APPENDIX C: Career Priority Ratings

See below for the Top 2 Box importance ratings for each of the 15 career priorities that participants rated.

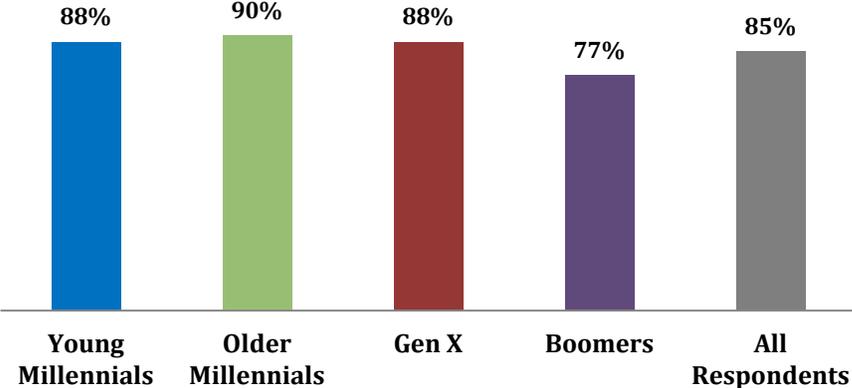
Achievement and accomplishment



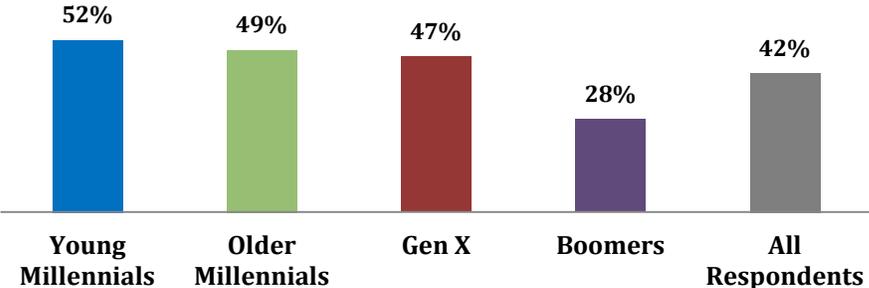
Appreciation



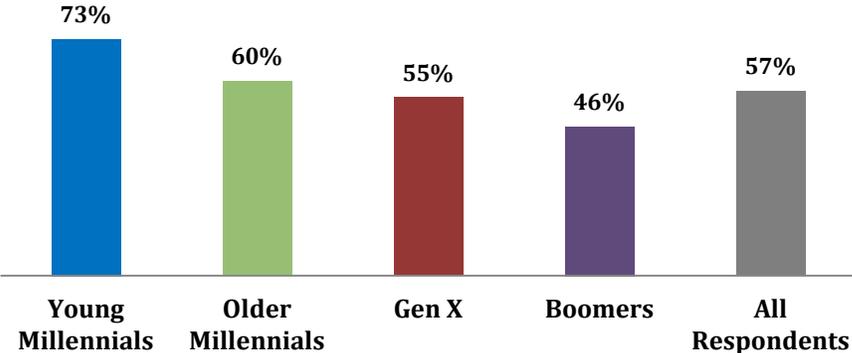
Having a boss you respect and trust



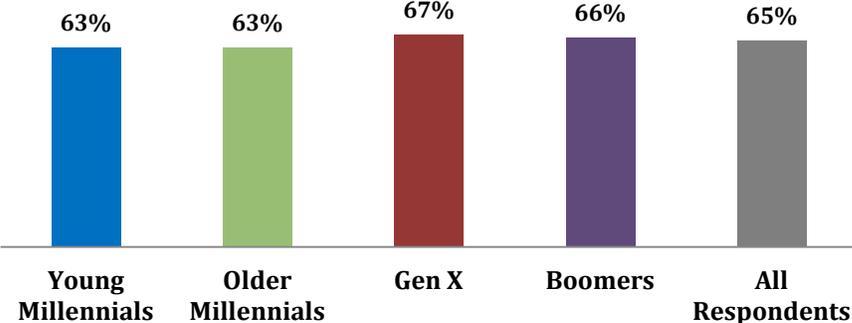
Promotions



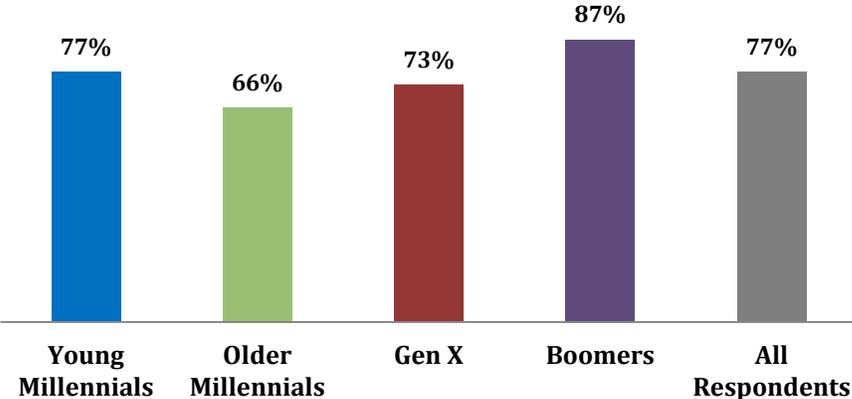
Coaching/mentorship



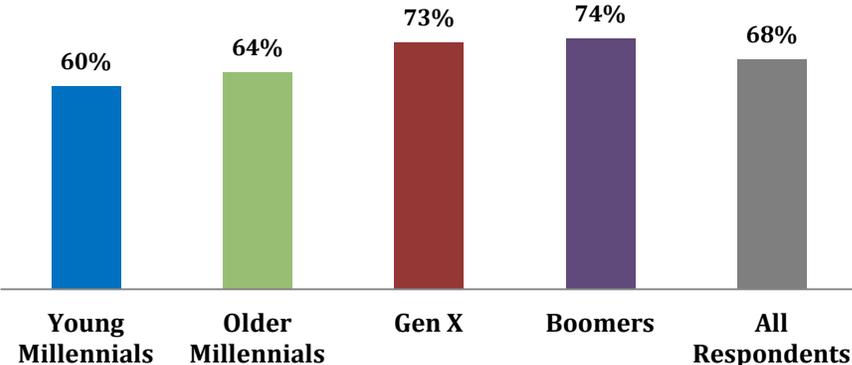
Compensation



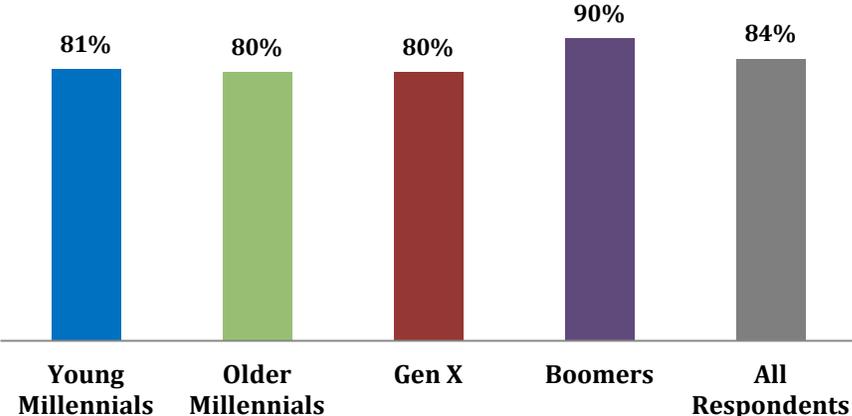
Connections and relationships with others



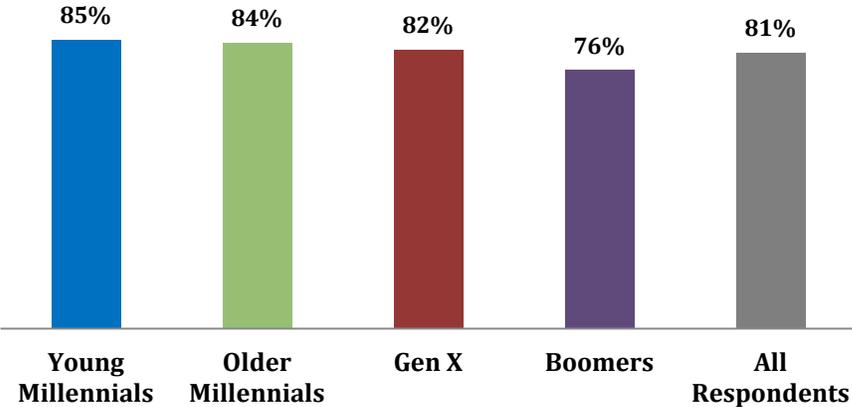
Empowerment



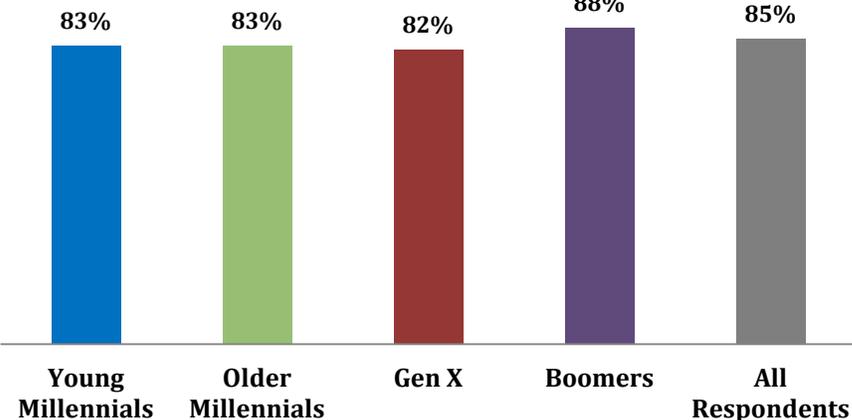
Fair treatment and respect



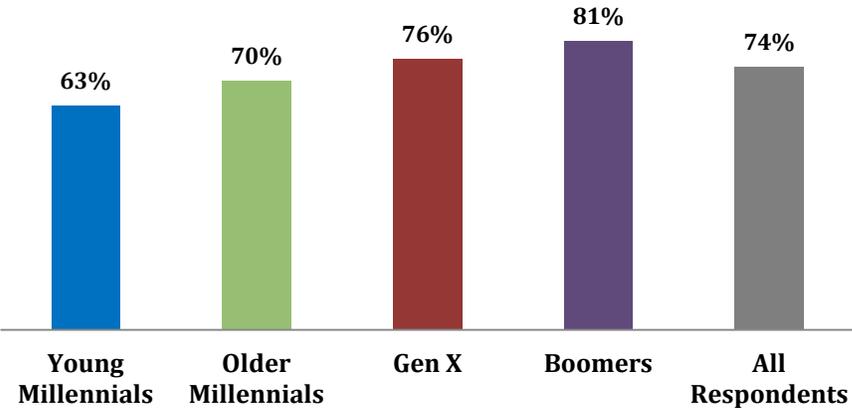
Growth and learning



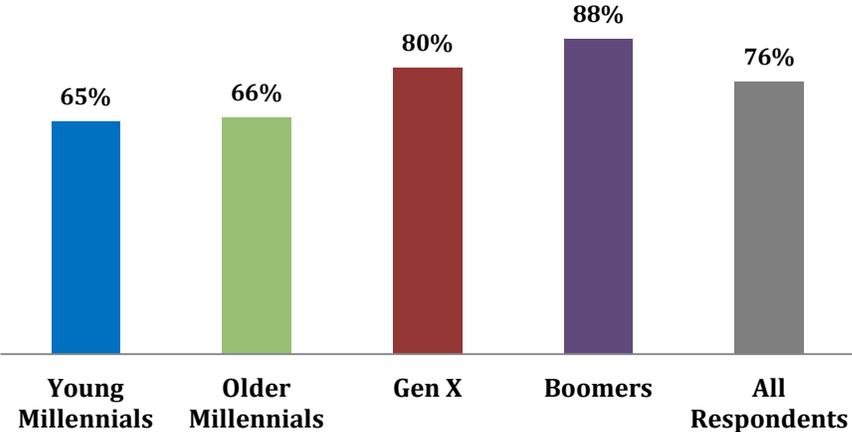
Interesting work



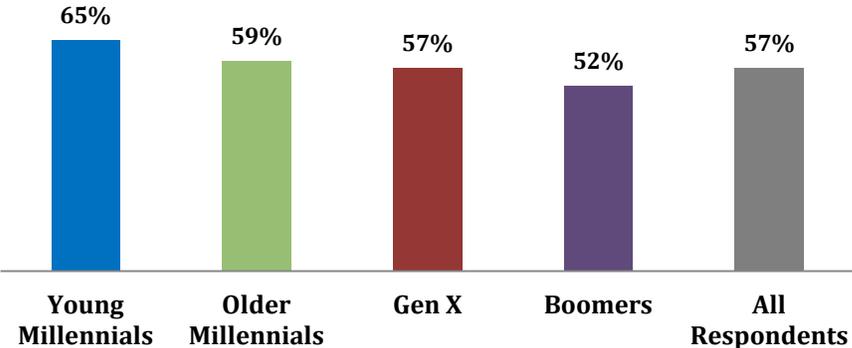
Job flexibility



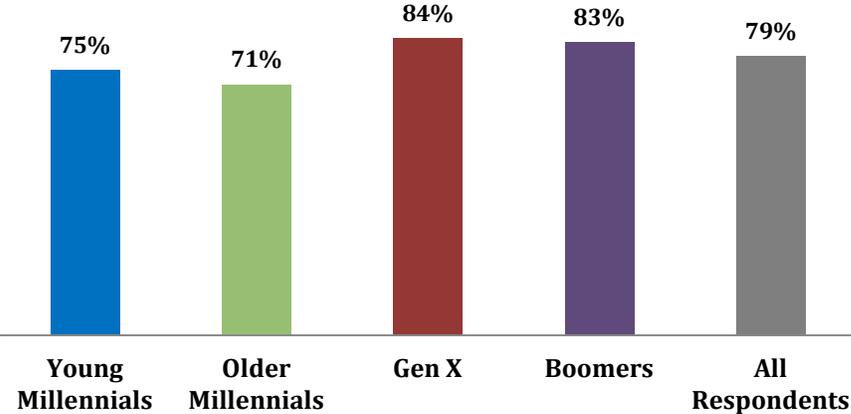
Opportunity to make a difference



Security



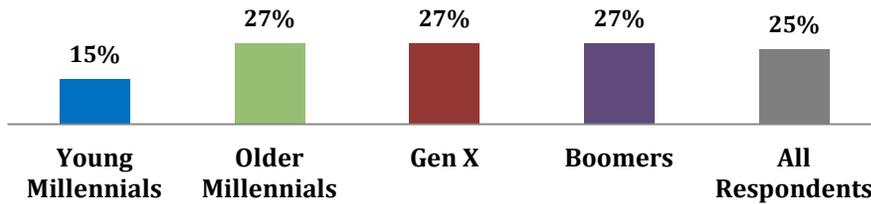
Open/transparent communication



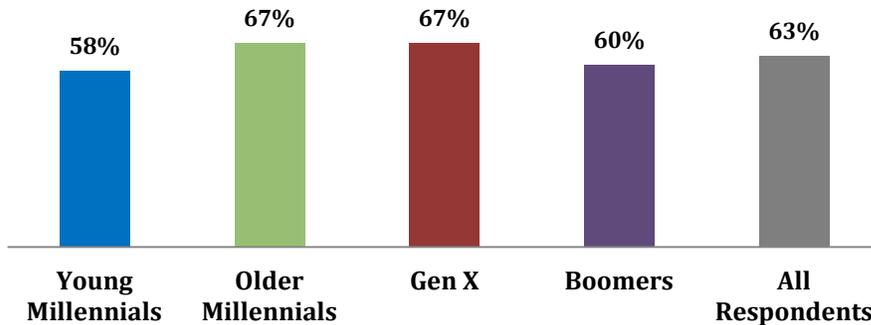
APPENDIX D: Career Belief Agreement Ratings

See below for the Top 2 Box agreement ratings for each of the 14 career beliefs that participants rated.

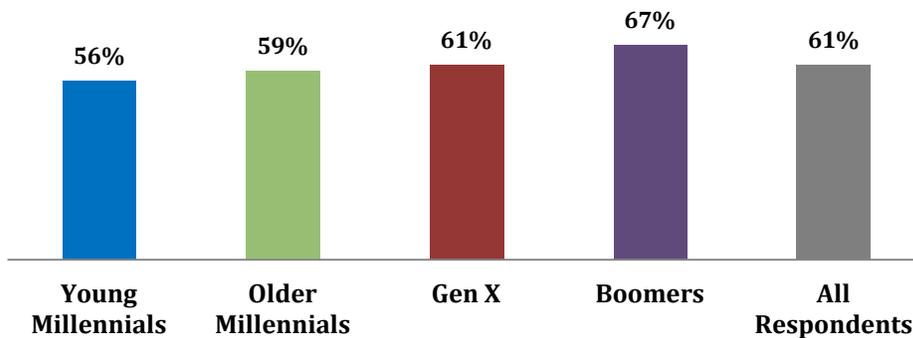
Work is meant to be a way to express one's authentic self



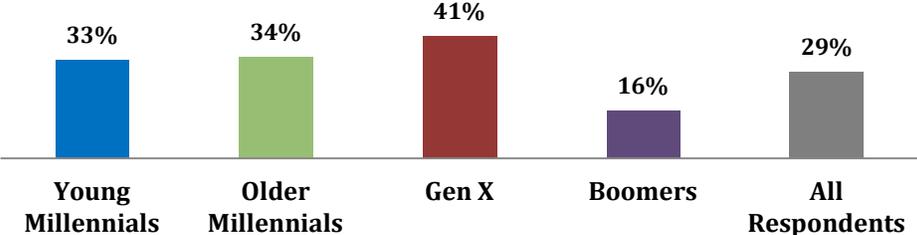
Once I've mastered a task, I should/I owe it to myself to take on the next challenge



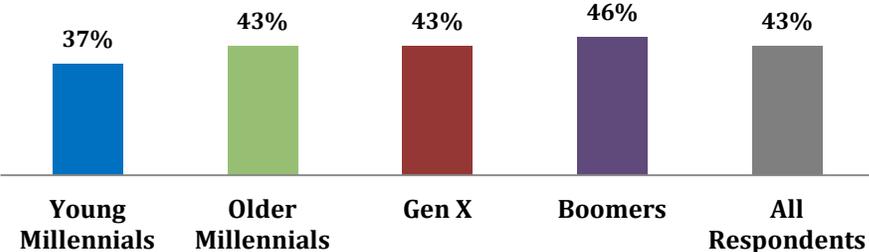
Work should be a way to improve conditions beyond an organization's bottom line



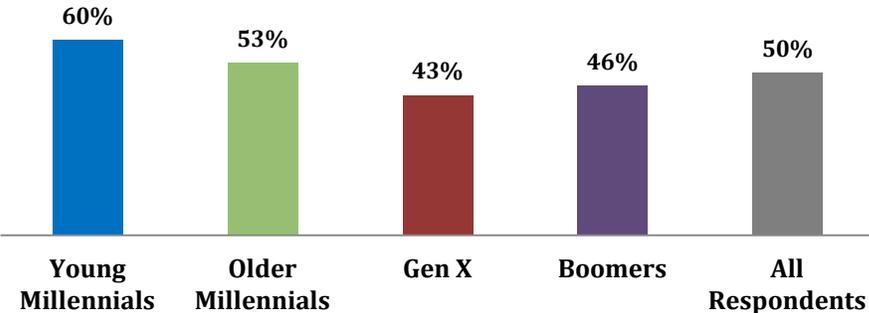
The ability to access information and learn is more valuable and important than experience



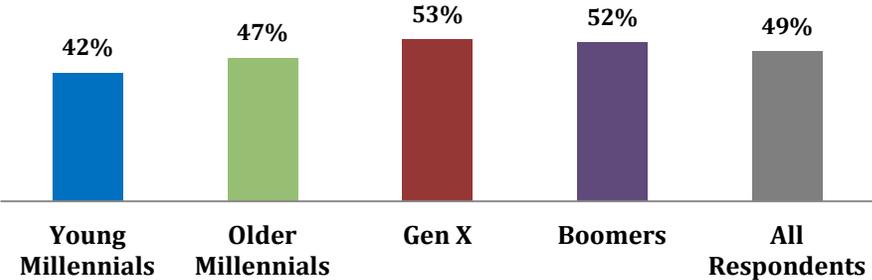
Time in a role/seniority has no impact on ability to lead



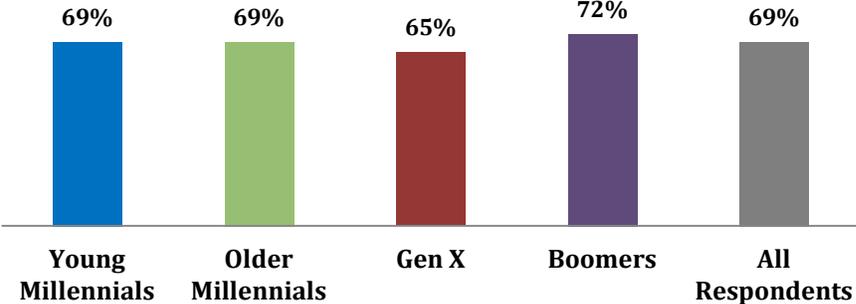
Everyone with the capacity to contribute should have a voice in key decisions that affect them



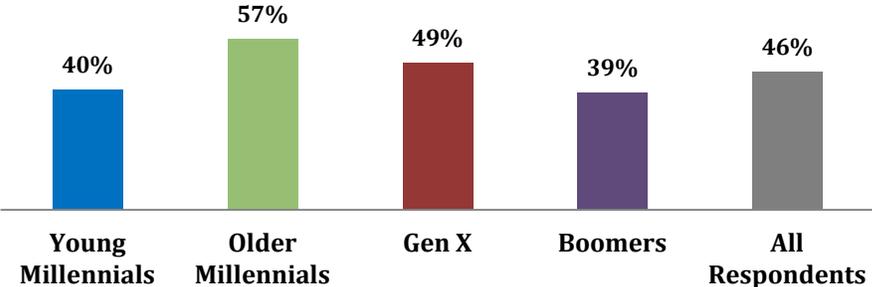
Supervisors should act as supportive peers vs. authority figures



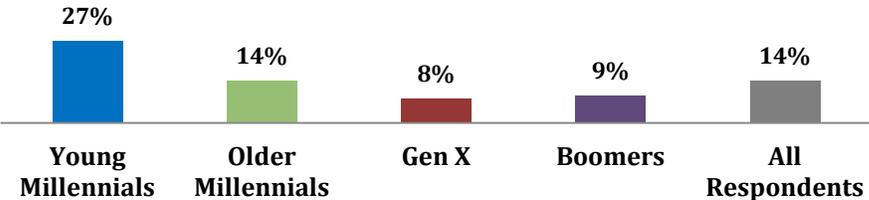
Respect should be based upon performance not organizational level



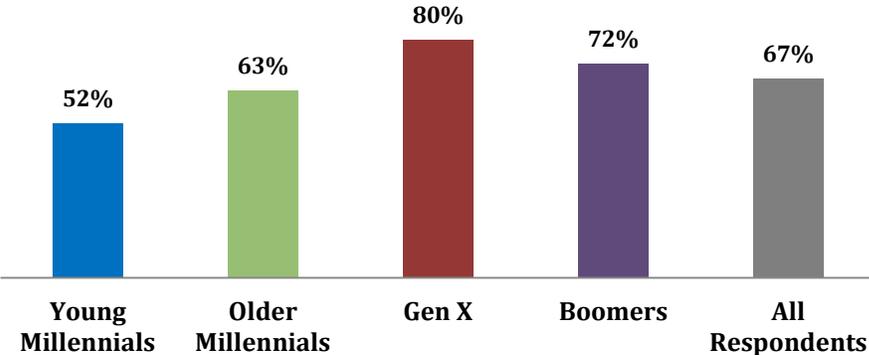
Once goals are clear, employees should decide how to do the work



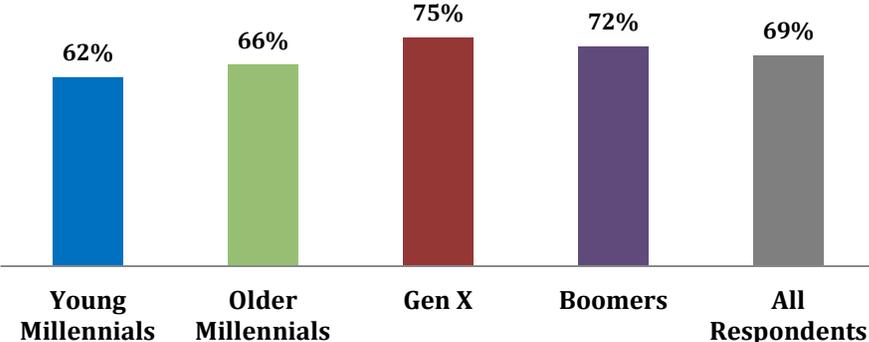
Individuals should put their career development above the needs of an organization



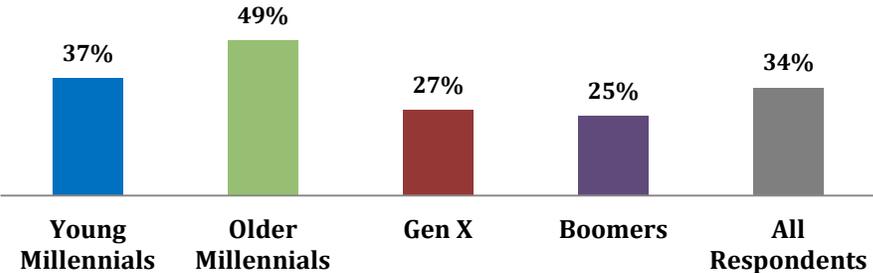
Being able to question your manager on a decision is the sign of a healthy workplace



Managers should show interest in their employees as people



Companies should provide career paths that allow for rapid career growth for employees



One of a manager's fundamental roles is to support his/her employees' career development

