

Optimising millennial talent in the workplace



By [Pasqua Heard](#)

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In her recent enlightening address at the IABC's Innovating Business Communication Conference, professional speaker and coach Saffron Baggallay emphasised the need to understand, value and work with millennials. She offered a sobering perspective on practices corporates need to adopt in order to provide an effective workplace for millennials.

While millennials, also known as Generation Y or echo boomers, are an immensely diverse group that can't be boxed in, there seem to be some key trends that run through this generation. According to Baggallay, millennials' diversity is determined by their access to and relationship with technology. However, many millennials are those who, thanks to the internet, have always lived in a world of choice. This poses a threat to businesses today, as, due to social media and the internet, consumers (comprising of a large number of millennials) have higher expectations and are more unpredictable than ever before. Furthermore, the market has become exceptionally competitive. Therefore, businesses have to find ways to be relevant both to consumers and their future workforce as well as learn to be adaptable to the changing times.



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“Millennials do not understand not being privy to information, which has completely dismantled old hierarchies in organisations. They want to be part of the discussion when you talk about the future of your company, as this relates to them,” argues Baggallay.

Commenting on the renowned presumption that many millennials are entitled, Baggallay suggested that this is a generation that faces extreme competition for opportunity, thus, this entitlement could instead be viewed as their need to get ahead.

The ideal workplace for millennials is one which looks out for their self-development and personal career growth. “The millennial generation will not only demand, but also create a new way of leadership. You cannot have business development without personal development. This is an extremely emotionally intelligent generation that’s always had a platform to announce how they feel [through social media]. This is a generation that is going to demand the kind of leader who has emotional and social intelligence. This is a business imperative going forward,” explains Baggallay.

Nombulelo Malinga, a public relations graduate from CPUT who also gave a talk at the IABC conference, somewhat proved Baggallay’s argument. Malinga highlighted millennials’ demands of the PR industry, some of which included:

- Suitable pay, as “millennials do not want to work for free”.
- A healthy work environment which doesn’t involve gossip and slander of fellow employees.
- Approachable seniors and staff who know how to control their anger and rather provide constructive feedback in the workplace.
- A need for managers to delegate projects to juniors, so that they can progress in their career.

Baggallay, referencing the Arab Spring, #FeesMustFall and Occupy Wall Street movements, said that millennials are well aware of various issues facing the world today and understand that their sheer volume matters and that they need to gather together to be heard. Most interesting was her warning: “They will rise up as a generation if they don’t like things. They will leave your organisation if they don’t agree with the way it’s run, because Generation Y is not innately loyal to a system. Why would they be when none of the systems - government systems, family systems, education systems and others - have not been sustainable?”

Baggallay is founder of [The Training Space](#), which offers coaching to organisations to better their workforce and workplace.

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