



## THE POST MILLENNIAL WORKFORCE

By Amy Hirsh Robinson, Interchange Group ([www.interchange-group.com](http://www.interchange-group.com))

The Post-Millennial workforce is here. The oldest of this new generation are graduating high school, and employers, especially those facing a shortage of skilled labor, are preparing for this next influx of talent. Demographers use a variety of names to refer to this generation – Generation Z, Plurals, iGens – but none of these labels has yet to stick. And while it is clear that the members of this generation will be the most technologically savvy in history, most of their other values, characteristics and behaviors are misunderstood.



### **Growing Up in A World of Uncertainty & Disruption**

The world that Post-Millennials are growing up in can be summarized by disruption and uncertainty. In contrast to Millennials, who have seen a full cycle of boom and bust, Post-Millennials have experienced only the Great Recession and the economic malaise that has followed it. They are a generation that has never known a time before financial crisis.

Post-Millennials are growing up during a time of unprecedented political disruption as well. The 2016 presidential campaign defied and disregarded most, if not all, of the modern rules, conventions, and political principles of winning an American election. The sense of unpredictability experienced in the aftermath of Trump's election is now a defining marker of this generation.

Post-Millennials are also witnessing dramatic changes in social and familial paradigms. The concept of family is more diverse than ever before, with the nuclear model (two parents, married, with children) representing only 46% of American households and alternative family structures becoming the norm. This generation is more accepting than their predecessors of racial and sexual differences and are less likely to adhere to traditional gender roles and norms. Post-Millennials are the most diverse generation in U.S. history, and the last generation to be majority non-Hispanic white.

The Post-Millennial's perspective on safety is also distinct. This generation only knows a world of helmets, car seats, and "active shooter" lockdown drills at school. They have never witnessed a time before terrorist attacks. The resulting anxiety about safety has spawned a booming industry of technological surveillance – from baby monitors to GPS tracking devices in kids' phones. And, as the first generation to be born into a world of virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI), Post-Millennials will expect a degree of digital engagement in every person, place and thing they encounter.

Lastly, this generation is being raised on a steady diet of dystopian literature and films such as the Hunger Games and Marvel franchises. Today's fictional young people are depicted as gritty, self-reliant warriors battling against self-serving corporations and authoritarian regimes. Post-Millennials are learning how to weather and bounce back from adversity.

### **Meet the Post-Millennial Clean-Up Crew**

Post-Millennials have witnessed the disruption of all political, societal, and economic norms, realities and codes of conduct. These influences combine to create a generation that embraces grit and fixes problems. They are the Post-Millennial clean-up crew. Their characteristics and strengths will both complement and undergird the new models for life and work ushered in by the Millennials.

- **Risk Averse & Rule Abiding** - Having always lived with uncertainty, Post-Millennials have an understandable aversion to risk and chaos. The experience of growing up in the wake of 9/11, Sandy Hook and mobile surveillance technology will produce a conforming generation tolerant of rules and boundaries.
- **Tech Savvy** - As the most technologically savvy generation in American history, Post-Millennials will adopt VR, AR and robots without hesitation. In contrast to the fear that older workers harbor that automation will cost them their jobs, this generation is excited about AI and robotics and believes new technology will spur an evolution of human work.
- **Self-Directed Yet Inclusive** - Compared to Millennials, Post-Millennials will be self-directed and independent, yet their strong value for diversity and inclusion will drive them to work well with others. They are intent on bridging divides to achieve societal progress.
- **Process, Resilience & Grit** - The Post-Millennials will use their process orientation and resilience to fix and refine work and to solve problems while others simply point them out. This generation is growing up with uncertainty, but they are responding with grit.

### **Attracting & Retaining the Post-Millennial Workforce**

The Post-Millennial generation will be one of the most important cohorts for the U.S. workforce. They will be the solvers and silent leaders and employers will need them. To attract and retain this generation, organizations must work to prioritize and implement these four strategies.

1. **Inclusive Cultures & Practices** - Employers must embrace and model progressive diversity and inclusion practices. The Post-Millennial generation has no tolerance for discrimination of any kind. More importantly, they expect their workplace to be inclusive, where all are welcome, respected and treated equally at every level, so that work can get done and progress can be made.
2. **Economic security** - We are shifting back to an era where money and security in the workplace will be good motivators. The Post-Millennials will be a generation of savers and job security will be important to them. This cohort will be focused on entrepreneurial endeavors to earn money and practical education that will ensure them viable careers.
3. **Advanced Technology & Tools** - This generation's inherent knowledge and use of technology raises the bar for employers. Post-Millennials will expect organizations to have the most advanced technology and tools and leverage technology at every opportunity. VR will be used for Talent Acquisition, AR will be used for job training and AI and robotics will be imbedded into everything from employee badges to professional services.
4. **Exposure to Practical Experiences** - Post-Millennials will be looking for exposure to practical experiences to ensure they stay employable as well as useful to society. Modern-day apprenticeships that utilize experiential learning and structured rotations that provide internal movement will attract and engage this generation in the workforce and build dedicated pipelines of talent for employers.

### **The Workforce of the Future**

The Millennial generation is in the process of disrupting and re-envisioning all major political, social, economic and commercial institutions. The Post-Millennials will make it their mission to refine and improve these new models for work and life. They are intent on halting and repairing the ills they see around them. Employers who can provide them opportunities to do so and who can adhere to the four strategies outlined above will be first to attract this fresh cohort of doers.