

Millennials in the Workplace

SUBMITTED BY: Megan DeLena, Pottsgrove High School, PA

SUBJECT(S): Management

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

≡ OVERVIEW:

As part of a unit on production, I did a lecture on the special issues associated with service businesses. Having spent years in service industries myself, I tried to point out all the unique problems associated with delivering a quality product when the result is dependent on the training, motivation, experience, interpersonal skills and mood of the employees.

≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“Robots Advance: Automation in Burger Flipping and Beyond”](#)
- [“Millennials in the Workplace: Does This Sound Like You?”](#)
- [“How the Gig Economy Fits into the Future of Work”](#)
- [“How GE Builds Global Leaders: A Conversation with Chief Learning Officer Susan Peters”](#)

Purpose: To point out that owning and operating a service business is more difficult than it sounds and has special challenges when it comes to product delivery.

Objectives:

- Students will distinguish desired qualities in service industry employees.
- Students will compare these desired qualities with the qualities that millennials generally possess.

- Students will analyze the discrepancies between the two lists and predict what positives and negatives will result from this.

Resources /Materials

1. WGYP article: [Millennials in the Workplace: Does This Sound Like You?](#)
2. Another good article, this one from the Knowledge@Wharton network site, is [How GE Builds Global Leaders: A Conversation with Chief Learning Officer Susan Peters](#)

Activities and Procedures

1. I had the class write down a list of characteristics they would look for in a front desk employee if they owned or managed a hotel. I asked them to write down at least five personal qualities. Students asked if I was looking for skills and I said no, those could be taught. I wanted personal characteristics.
2. After a few minutes, we discussed the results. The students wanted to hire people who had good communication skills, were intelligent, had good personal hygiene, could follow directions, learned quickly etc.
3. I handed out the article that I had printed from Wharton Global Youth Program, [Millennials in the Workplace: Does This Sound Like You?](#) Students were told to “talk to the text.” This strategy has them notate the article as they read it. For example, exclamation marks might indicate surprise at a point, or they might write “no” if they don’t believe a statement in the article.
4. After the class read the article, we discussed characteristics of millennials. One student was insulted that the article lumped this whole group together yet admitted that his friends and classmates really did like praise. Another student commented that she agreed that cheating is really a means to an end – it is efficient – especially when the assignment is deemed superfluous by the students. There was some interesting discussion on this issue. The quality and importance of the assignment seemed to matter when it came to the ethics of cheating.
5. I then asked the students to work in pairs to answer the following questions:
 1. How does the list you created at the beginning of class differ from the qualities that the article points out exist in millennials?
 2. What are some positives that millennials bring to the work environment and what are some challenges that 40-something to 50-something bosses will have to deal with? As a teacher, I hear a lot of stories from students about how

“dumb” and “uptight” bosses are. We generated some thought and insight into the topic.

Tying it all Together:

After about five minutes, we shared the results. Although we began to run out of time, it became clear that the students were beginning to see my point. They know what is expected from employers for effective and efficient operation of a business, but as a generation, they may or may not be willing to fit the mold required by the workplace. I wanted to open their minds to the idea that perhaps there needs to be some flexibility from everyone.

What worked and what I would do differently

Students like to read and talk about themselves so this lesson works. It is short and proves a point quickly. I could have used more time because I felt there was more discussion that would have been productive, especially about the existence of cheating.

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