Millennials, also called Gen Y, represent a third of the American workforce and are expected to grow to 75% of the global workforce by 2020. While baby boomers and Gen Xers lived through the advent of high tech, millennials were raised on it, making them the perfect go-to people for adapting quickly and teaching other workers new tricks.
Worth emulating
It may be true that many people tend to resist change, but millennials expect and even embrace it. Business owners would be wise to tap into the can-do spirit that millennials embody and cascade it throughout the organization for a fresh approach to success.

1. Embrace change
Technology is constantly evolving and changing the way we do business. Millennials adapt by quickly learning new and different skills. They’re used to the speed at which technology moves, and they eagerly await the next release of their mobile devices, fitness trackers, and electronic gaming.

2. Ask questions
There’s a reason Gen Y is called “Generation Why.” Millennials ask questions if they don’t understand the reason behind a process, procedure, or practice — opening the door for newer, fresher ways of getting things done. For this article, Bottom Line asked a few millennials how they help shape the workplace.

For Rachel, “Questioning the norms, seeing situations from a different perspective, and understanding that things aren’t usually black and white” are among this generation’s most important lessons.2

3. Get flexible
A 9 to 5, Monday through Friday workweek in the confines of a cubicle can be a soul killer for millennials. For a generation that grew up on the internet and stayed connected at all hours, face-to-face meetings and a set schedule hold little value. Having the freedom to work on their own terms is key.

Millennial Janna, who works virtually, is a good example. “I prefer fewer meetings, especially for things that can be accomplished over email. I can’t stand having a [conference] call for a call’s sake.”

4. Seek feedback
Few employees believe no feedback is good feedback, but millennials go a step further by not only asking for feedback, but requesting it on a regular basis (preferably monthly).3 While some have criticized this as a need for constant praise and attention, Gen Y considers continuous feedback — not to be confused with micromanagement — the best way to grow.

5. Follow your passion
According to one millennial, “Baby boomers got caught climbing the corporate ladder and hated every rung.”4 Gen Y believes that doing something just because it pays well won’t make you happy. The greater reward is in figuring out what you want to do what fulfills you and then doing it. By pursuing your passion, work-life balance occurs automatically since this mindset lets you fit both work and play into every day.
6. Give back
What you do in life shouldn’t just make you money; it should make the world better. Sure, millennials want a fair wage and to live comfortably like the generations that came before, but they also want to do good, support and promote causes they care about, and feel a broader connection with the world. Regardless of the generation, most people want to do good for society and give back. But before millennials became a force in business, work wasn’t traditionally the place to achieve both personal and professional goals at the same time.

7. Be authentic
Millennials have a corporate-speak threshold that’s set very low. They don’t have patience for jargon and spin. Their own lives are pretty much an open book and they’re comfortable with the honest viewpoints exchanged through their social networks.

8. Take risks
While not all millennials like taking risks, many consider it a necessary means for achieving their goals. Occasional failure is merely a trade-off for infinite possibilities.

In the final analysis, every generation — every individual — wants the same basic considerations at work: respect, trustworthiness, stability, feedback, and loyalty.

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When we interviewed millennial Madeleine, she echoed the sentiment: “Younger or older, regardless of age, I treat my co-workers with the same level of respect and care.”

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1 Thomson’s 2015 Global Employee Benefits Watch.
3 Millennials Want to Be Coached at Work, February 2015.
4 What Old People Can Learn From Millennials, September 2014.