

SAVE THE MILLENNIALS RETHINK THE REVIEW

For years, individuals and organizations alike have been saying, “the millennials are coming,” but the reality of this statement is the millennials aren’t coming anymore, they’re here. And maybe even more important is millennials aren’t just here, they are the largest generation currently punching a time clock in the American workforce. By definition, millennials are members of the American population born between 1981 and 1997.¹ This cohort makes up more than one-quarter of the total U.S. population and over one-third of the American workforce. So what does this mean for managers? The answer is simple: It means change.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Having come of age alongside social media and technology, millennials are accustomed to emailing professors and tweeting at celebrities and corporations, and many feel it is only natural to communicate with bosses and superiors just as easily, but that’s not always reality. This points to a dichotomy that exists in the workplace when it comes to communication. On one hand, there are still droves of experienced employees who believe non-communication is the best form of feedback. The adage, “If your boss isn’t coming to you, you’re doing a good job,” still rings true for many employees in upper-level management positions. On the other hand, millennials crave feedback. They crave accessibility and open communication, and if you, as a superior, aren’t talking to your millennial employees about their work and their contributions to the organization, you are inhibiting career development and risking premature departure.

Gone are the days when it was acceptable to only have performance-related reviews with your employees once or twice a year. Now, it is imperative performance conversations or check-ins take place at the very least monthly, if not weekly or daily. By engaging in consistent and frequent dialogue with employees on a regular basis, you can better gauge the quality of work being produced, recognize areas for improvement, and provide a more solid and cohesive work environment. This shows millennials they are valued for their work and are part of an organization that puts emphasis on learning and growth.

This bite-sized feedback is good for more than just millennials, though; it’s good for your whole workforce—and even you. Traditional performance reviews are known for the big decisions they help to make—decisions on compensation, promotions, and firings. But, ask yourself, “How accurate are these infrequent reviews in making such monumental decisions?” Implementing a system that supports more frequent feedback in smaller doses allows managers to have a better understanding of each employee when it comes time for a comprehensive salary and performance review. When you commit to talking to your employees more often, you ensure your team shares the same vision and goals, and you are able to quickly and swiftly fix any problems that might arise before it’s too late.

Managing a handful of bite-sized conversations over the course of a year may seem like an overwhelming task, but with a little help from your HR team and the adoption of a simple, optional tool, keeping track of your conversations couldn’t be easier. We recommend partnering with your human resources colleagues to create a short questionnaire that will help guide managers in quarterly performance-related conversations. Curating questions pertaining to an employee’s contributions, learning and development, frustrations, and areas for improvement, provides a well-rounded understanding of an individual’s strengths, weaknesses, and progress over time. We dove in headfirst and made a similar change to our review process for internal employees in 2016.

TRADITIONALISTS: 1928-1945

BABY BOOMERS: 1946-1964

GEN X: 1965-1980

GEN Y (MILLENNIALS): 1981-1997

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SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE:

How have you contributed to the company this quarter, and what have been your greatest contributions?

In what ways have you grown professionally this quarter?

If you could change anything about your current position or work environment, what would you change?

IS THE YEARLY REVIEW EXTINCT?

From start-ups to corporate giants, organizations across the board are starting to see and feel the problems that arise from traditional performance reviews, so much so the percent of employers who eliminated performance reviews tripled to 12% in just a few years.² So, is it time for you to do away with the traditional review, too? Not completely, but making the effort to engage your employees in ongoing conversations that offer constant feedback and ideas for improvement and growth throughout the year stands to do much more for your organization than the traditional performance review does alone.

While the need for bite-sized feedback came with the surge of millennials entering the working world, changing the way we offer feedback and talk to our employees stands to benefit everyone in the workforce.

²Greenfield, Rebecca. "What's After Annual Performance Reviews? Never-Ending Performance Reviews." Bloomberg.com. Bloomberg, 12 Oct. 2015. Web. 2 Nov. 2015.

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