

**MILLENNIALS
MAKE THEIR
MARK.**

The younger generation is bringing more to work than tattoos, flip-flops and iPods. They have new ways of communicating, collaborating and getting things done.



THINGS ARE CHANGING AROUND THE WATER COOLER.

The youngest generation, the millennials, is entering the workplace. The oldest millennials are still in their 20s, but already they're creating some workplace trends of their own, according to the latest Steelcase Workplace Survey. Among the findings:

- Millennials are three times more likely to work off-site or while traveling, compared to other office workers.
- Formal meeting spaces are less important to millennials than their older co-workers.
- Millennials are less distracted by noise.

As they start their careers, the millennials are entering a multi-generational workplace. The current mix is a four-way blend:

- **Traditionalists (born before 1945)**
- **Boomers (born 1946-64)**
- **Generation X (born 1965-77)**
- **Millennials (born 1978-1999)**

Most organizations today have large numbers of boomers, a smaller group of gen Xers, plus smaller numbers of the youngest and oldest generations. But the mix is shifting. The first boomers turn 60 this year. Some have already retired. Moving to center stage: the millennials.

The 'Net Generation

Over 70 million strong, millennials already outnumber the baby boomers at their peak. In just the last four years they've grown from 14% of the workforce to 21% -- nearly 32 million workers.

More than any other generation, millennials love technology. Theirs is the first generation raised with the internet, instant messaging and email. Other generations have adopted technology; millennials were born into it.



Steelcase survey data reveal that nearly all workers (98%) say their workplace should provide access to the right technology for their individual work, but fewer millennials (7%) have problems with that access than older workers (11%).

"Millennial workers come to the business world pre-wired. Four out of five colleges offer wireless networks, and the average time a typical college student spends online has nearly quadrupled in the past eight years," says Ed Roy, a Steelcase workplace consultant who focuses on the higher education market. "So naturally, when they start working for a business, they're going to expect technology to be right there, all the time."

Campuses provide a broad observation deck for seeing what's likely to come next in the workplace, Roy continues. "We spend a lot of time on campus observing students and faculty. How are they using the space? How are they interacting? Are there any gaps? What could we provide that would make the environment work better? Students today want more flexibility, more technology, more cool spaces. They're not looking to come out of school and go backward in time."

"Millennial workers come to the business world pre-wired. Four out of five colleges offer wireless networks, and the average time a typical college student spends online has nearly quadrupled in the past eight years," says Ed Roy, a Steelcase workplace consultant who focuses on the higher education market. "So naturally, when they start working for a business, they're going to expect technology to be right there, all the time."

Always Connected

Tech is both part of the millennial multitasking workstyle and an enabler of it. When it comes to face-to-face work, instant collaboration anywhere and everywhere is a hallmark of the generation. And that has big implications for the workplace.

For example, 91% of boomers, gen-Xers and traditionalists say that having meeting spaces available for scheduling is an important factor that affects their satisfaction with their workplace. Fully one-third say it's a problem finding those spaces. Fewer millennials think it's of medium or high importance - 81%. After all, when you're used to collaborating informally, you tend to worry less about meeting rooms with big conference tables. As long as there's a casual space like a cafe or lounge area, millennials can and prefer to work in a variety of places.

The issues that millennials say impact their work performance also set them apart. Half as many millennials as older workers say the availability of meeting spaces has an impact on their work performance. And significantly fewer millennials than other workers say audio/noise distractions have an impact (see chart).

Today, millennials tend to be the ones who receive, store, process and distribute information. A higher percentage of older, more experienced workers use the information with others and apply particular skills to it.

"As millennials gain experience and take on more responsibilities, they might change their attitudes about workspace factors such as available meeting spaces and/or noise distractions," notes Mark DeWys, a millennial who's a Steelcase marketer focusing on generational differences. "These are issues we can cross-reference and track over time to learn more," he notes.

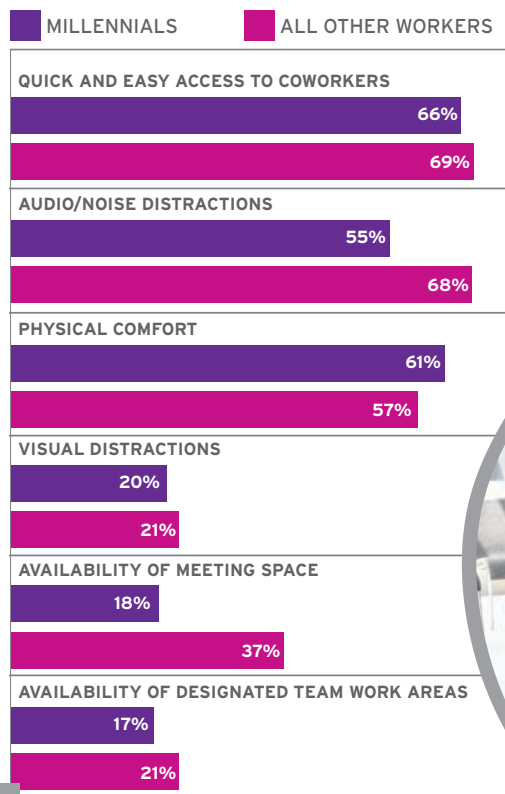
Mutual Admiration

Think it could be hard to get millennials and older employees working closely? You may be surprised.

"There's this mythology built up about relationships between the oldest and youngest generations, and for the most part it's just not true," says Terry West, director of WorkSpace Futures Research at Steelcase who was part of a group that recently studied how workers pass on their knowledge and experience, a project sponsored by the Helen Hamlyn Research Centre of the Royal College of Art, London, along with IDEO, DEGW and Steelcase.

"Millennials and traditionalists are farthest apart in age, so forming relationships must be difficult -- or so the myth goes. But it turns out they have a lot of appreciation for each other.

IMPACTS TO WORK PERFORMANCE



They tend to form strong relationships based on learning from each other. It's not just a student-teacher

Information Handlers

Knowledge work means handling information. Steelcase has identified and patented six distinct workstyle patterns. What role are millennials playing in those patterns today?

	Millennials	Other Generations
Receives / distributes information for others	24%	20%
Stores information for others	6%	3%
Processes information	32%	12%
Disseminates information to others	7%	17%
Uses information with others	16%	19%
Uses information with special skill	15%	29%

relationship." "Millennials appreciate the knowledge the older person has acquired, and older workers in turn appreciate the ways millennials see the world today, and their vitality and agility in responding to it. They even take cues from millennials and apply those cues to their own lives, staying active and maintaining a certain amount of agility themselves," says West.

Coming of age in a multitasking milieu and now entering a work world flush with inter-departmental teams and projects, the millennial generation

may have an advantage over their colleagues: a natural inclination to keep in touch with others, communicate and collaborate.

That's a huge benefit in the workplace, says Bruce Simoneaux, an applied research consultant for Steelcase who works with companies on four continents and specializes in understanding the needs of four generations. "Every organization looks for ways to improve information sharing. Technology can help, but information truly flows through a network of trust."

"There's this mythology built up about relationships between the oldest and youngest generations, and for the most part it's just not true," says Terry West, director of WorkSpace Futures Research at Steelcase

"Think about how you share information. It's easiest with people on the same team, people you know. If someone you don't know requests information, your antenna goes up: 'What's going to happen with the information I share?'

"You share more information, and faster, with people you trust. To trust someone, you have to know them, and to know them you have to meet them. Social interaction builds the trust network in the organization, and millennials stay in contact with others all the time."

Pass It On

This inclination to collaborate is a powerful tool businesses are learning to leverage. Simoneaux says companies can attract and retain millennials by catering to their preferences and providing the kinds of spaces they consider ideal:

- fun, open, collaborative space
- flexible, fluid space & workstations
- personalized workstation design
- visual display everywhere
- tech environment (plug 'n play, wireless)

There's also growing evidence that millennials, more than any other generation, value natural daylight in the workplace, and they're more apt to ask questions about air quality, efficient energy use, "green" materials and maintenance procedures, and other environmental issues.

As the Steelcase Workplace Survey shows, millennials say the biggest impact on their performance is quick and easy access to co-workers. Many companies are making sure their private offices - where the graying boomers and traditionalists often live - have furniture and technology that support collaboration. Mobile work-surfaces that invite an impromptu question from a younger colleague and a place to easily plug in a laptop encourage collaboration and mentoring.

"When millennials start with a company, the Number One thing they request -- and require -- is a mentor," says Simoneaux.

"One of the strategies we've proposed is a 'mentor pod,' an open workspace where experienced people can go to work. By simply being there, it signals they're available to counsel others."

Companies are just now waking up to the havoc that the newest generation is causing in their offices, according to a recent article in *Fast Company* magazine. Workplaces designed with millennials in mind can help smooth the transition and are clearly an idea whose time has come.



Footnotes

1 Steelcase Workplace Survey of 6,809 workers in organizations throughout the United States and Canada. Data reported as of January 20, 2006.

2 USA Today, "Generation Y: They've arrived at work with a new attitude" by Stephanie Armour, November 16, 2005

3 Steelcase Workplace Survey

4 Steelcase Workplace Survey

5 Fast Company, "Scenes from the Culture Clash" by Danielle Sacks, January 2006