

E-Tool #11 Millennials 101 for Tanning Salon Owners



Tanning salon owners must understand the Millennial generation and what makes its members tick. These youngsters are your salon employees and your customers, after all! Among the tanning salon owners I work with, more than 90 percent of their sales employees are Millennials. This is one reason why it's so important for my clients to understand the minds of this younger generation. I always take the time to share what makes Millennials tick and how older tanning salon owners can bond with the values and expectations of this younger generation.

In this helpful e-tool, I will share the following information:

1. Explain the mindset of most Millennials
2. Share tips for interviewing, hiring, and managing Millennials
3. Give you three steps for a Millennial-friendly tanning salon
4. The importance of being honest with your Millennial employees
5. Seven things not to do if you want to keep your Millennial staff

This information will help you better understand and manage and motivate your significantly younger tanning salon staff.

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1. WHO ARE THE MILLENNIALS?

The Millennial generation encompasses everyone born between 1982 and 1998. In 2015, this demographic officially surpassed the population of Baby Boomers, who were born between 1946 and 1964. Millennials were born during a time of a great economy and parents (or grandparents, like me) who could afford to give them everything to satisfy their energies. Energy pursuits that started with computer labs, video games, and a combination of immediate feedback and unlimited information flows about everything and anything.

According to Jamie Gutfreund, chief strategy officer for the Intelligence Group, there will be about 86 million Millennials in the workplace by 2020. This represents a full 40 percent of the total working population. They are or will be thoroughly in charge of what seems like everything. So having said that, it's time for the Baby Boomers and Generation X to get a grasp on how to deal with these tattoo-laced, body-pierced strangers from another planet.

Here are some other facts about Millennials in the workplace from Jamie Gutfreund:

- 64 percent of Millennials say it's a priority for them to make the world a better place.
- 72 percent of them would like to be their own boss; but if they do have to work for a boss, 79 percent said they want that boss to serve as a coach or mentor.
- 88 percent of Millennials said they prefer a collaborative work culture rather than a competitive or authoritative one.
- 74 percent of Millennials want flexible work schedules.
- And 88 percent want "work-life integration," which isn't the same as work-life balance, since work and life now blend together inextricably.

So, Gutfreund and myself say it's in every tanning salon owner's interest to learn to how attract, reach, and motivate Millennials. A few salon owners do it well, but most don't. Those who don't might soon pay a price. As a business owner, you can't afford not to recruit the best talent. This includes the best talent from the Millennials, even if Generation X finds their younger siblings to be so flighty and flakey.

MILLENNIALS VS. PREVIOUS GENERATIONS

That belief of "paying your dues" is one huge difference between Millennials and the Gen Xers and Baby Boomers. Xers and Boomers struggle to accept the Millennials' attitudes of, "I want it now." But "now" makes sense to the Millennials who grew up with instant feedback from computers, Internet, social media, and increasingly intelligent video games. There is little acceptance by the Millennials of the concept of staying with a job to get their "gold watch" after 30 years of continuous service. Millennials will be loyal to a job as long as there is an effort to meet their defined values.



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2. INTERVIEWING AND MANAGING MILLENNIALS

Some tanning salon owners find it difficult to manage their younger workforce. Baby Boomers were raised to believe that having a job was a privilege, while Millennials grew up receiving trophies just for showing up. Needless to say, these vast differences between both groups can lead to frustration and misunderstanding. Managing Millennials can be trying at times, but it's not impossible. Here are some tips to help you bridge the Generation Gap in order to lead your employees:

HOW TO INTERVIEW MILLENNIALS

If you struggle to manage Millennials, you might be tempted to say, "Well I just won't hire anyone in their twenties." Such an outlook is not realistic. Unless you're willing to pay upwards of \$14 an hour for your bed cleaners, chances are good that Millennials will be the ones applying for your salon's job openings. Since this is the case, it's important to properly interview these 20-somethings when they're in your salon.

During the interview process, probe to see what their work passions are. As they answer, pay close attention to whether this person might be able to walk the walk, so to speak. To do that, get them to open up about their past work experiences and why they were successful. Also ask them what they hope to learn from working for you. Here's a hint: Only wanting a paycheck is not a good enough answer!

Something else regarding the interview process – rather than asking simple questions that require a yes-or-no answer, try asking open-ended questions that require applicants to provide more detail. Here are some examples of open-ended questions you can ask your Millennial applicants:

- "Tell me about a time in one of your past jobs where you had to find a way to turn around an irate customer."
- "Tell me about a time when you had to resolve an issue between yourself and a fellow employee. What did you do to fix things?"
- "Describe the best boss you've ever had and what made them such a good leader?"

HOW TO MANAGE MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES

Every boss wants to get the most out of their employees. I recommend every salon owner treat their employees the way you would like to be treated. When you do your best to make your employees feel appreciated, they'll go to the ends of the earth for you and your business. Millennials are no different. But how do you motivate a generation who received trophies just for showing up? Generally speaking, offer recognition for true performance, such as consistently high PTA and EFT closing ratios, and true effort.



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To better help you manage your Millennials, here are seven easy tips any salon owner can utilize:

1. Provide solid structure in the way of policies and procedures. For example, making it clear that they cannot use their cell phones during shifts.
2. Provide them with flexibility in the area of customer service. For example, your younger staff members shouldn't need permission to give a free tanning session away to pacify an angry client.
3. Let them earn your praise and show them how they can do this. Remember, too many members of "Generation Snowflake" were given far too many participation awards.
4. Remember to keep the lines of communication open. This generation is used to talking directly to authority figures.
5. Don't be afraid to challenge them. Millennials grew up playing video games and continue to do it into young adulthood. They often respond well to product and membership sales contests, etc.
6. Utilize their love for tech. Millennials practically grew up with cell phones in their hands. Put their social media skills to good use by letting them help with your online marketing.
7. Take the time to train them. Millennials respond well to learning from peers and online training.

WHY MANAGING MILLENNIALS IS IMPORTANT

Do your Millennial employees drive you crazy? You still need to learn how to properly manage them. These kids will make up the majority of your work force, and you'll need to overcome the generation gap between you and them. Yes, they're a lot different than you and other people your age, but you can motivate them to give you their best. That's the essence of human resources management, after all. Good luck!

3. THE MILLENNIAL-FRIENDLY TANNING SALON: THREE STEPS

Tanning salon owners, there are three easy steps to make your business more Millennial friendly. Millennials are certainly different from the previous generations, particularly in some very visual ways. (Can all those body piercings affect a good FM radio signal?) There are also many ways they're similar to Baby Boomers and Generation X. The majority of all human beings want to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Knowing this, you make your work environment more pleasurable and less painful for your young staff. These three tips will make you the "employer of choice" among Millennials in your town:

STEP 1: THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Simply put, tanning salon owners need to lose the it's-my-way-or-the-highway attitude. This is especially true if you're only paying minimum wage. (You should be paying your staff more, but I'll discuss that in a bit.) This attitude does not work with Millennials. If you use this approach, your salon employees will only stay as long as it takes to



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find a better job with a nicer boss. You might not think that the “revolving door” is a big problem until you have a mass exodus right before peak season. Can you imagine? I don’t even want to think about it.

Millennials tend to be a sensitive yet socially aware generation. To properly manage this demographic, you need to provide them with structure, such as clear-cut policies such as “no cell phone use during their shifts. You also must be a mentor to them. Communication with Millennials using honesty and tact, and find ways to challenge and engage them, such as contests that reward them for their efforts. There are a variety of strategies you can use to motivate and manage your Millennial tanning salon employees.

STEP 2: PAY MORE THAN MINIMUM WAGE

When you’re paying minimum wages or just above it, you’re not giving your employees an incentive to continue to work in your tanning salon. There are many minimum wage jobs out there and Millennials tend to go through them quickly until they find one that makes them happy. Also, it’s hard to create job satisfaction when you’re only paying the bare minimum. There is no incentive for loyalty. Where there is no loyalty, there is huge turnover and a rainbow of issues inherent with a salon full of employees who don’t care about the owner’s interests.

Get your compensation and rewards system in order so you can be the employer of choice. Every tanning salon has different demographics, so it will take some research on your part to come up with an hourly wage that’s competitive yet won’t cut too deeply into your tanning salon’s profits. A word about this – the more you’re willing to pay your tanning salon employees, the better quality employee you’ll attract. Your goal is to lure someone with retail sales experience away from their current job and into your tanning salon. Here’s more information on tanning salon compensation and company morale.

STEP 3: GIVE THEM MORE RESPONSIBILITY

Yes, you probably hired your Millennial staff to clean tanning beds and booths, check guests in, and try to make as many upgrade, tanning lotion, and EFT membership sales as they can. These duties are challenging but not always fun. It’s been my experience that if you add a little fun to their workday, you’ll get a positive response from your younger employees. You get bonus points for those times when you give them credit for being the experts. With a staff of Millennials, you do have some marketing experts at your disposal.

If you employ Millennials, you know that they are experts at social media. I highly recommend that you utilize this experience. Put their skills, experience, and friends lists to good use by letting them help with your social media marketing. Ask them to share their ideas on how they can help you. Take it from me, they’ll love the idea that the boss came to them to ask for their expertise. There’s another bonus to this as well – you’ll likely attract new tanners. Better yet, many of these new tanners will likely be Millennials!



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EMBRACE CHANGE... AND MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES

Managing Millennials is just one more adjustment today's tanning salon owners must learn to make. There was a time not too long ago that we were a "field of dreams" industry. You know, if you build it (a tanning salon), they will come. All that changed in the late 2000s with the convergence of a shipwrecked economy and some horrible tanning press. The dollars salon owners profit today are dollars that are well earned. There is no low-lying fruit to pick up anymore, and harvesting the fruit that's left requires everyone's commitment. Use these tips to manage and motivate the Millennials at your tanning salon.

4. HONESTY AND THE MILLENNIAL TANNING SALON EMPLOYEE

As a tanning salon owner, you should be honest with your Millennial employees. Being upfront builds transparency and trust for successful salon management. Millennials have little time for B.S. Their access to the Internet in their young and early adult lives caused them to be raised in an environment of availability of facts. Because of this, they always want the bottom line. The best way to handle the Millennial with good or bad news is to simply tell the truth. This is the hallmark of owners who succeed through the trusting ambitions of every tanning salon worker.

Here are four ways tanning salon owners can and should be honest with their Millennial employees:

1. Honesty About Wages and Raises: Without trust and the accommodating respect for your word, you have little hope for your employees taking an emotional interest in your tanning salon. Unfortunately, some tanning salon owners make a huge misstep when they try to deceive their Millennial employees. Here's one all-too-common example: "Sorry, but there are no raises for merit performance this year." I've heard of at least two tanning salon owners say this then turn around and host a major employee holiday party complete with catered food and a full bar. It's not consistent with what you told your employees, and there's no way your staff won't become resentful about this.

2. Honesty and Employee Theft: Dishonesty breeds resent and resent often leads to employee theft. Unfortunately, this is an ever-present reality for most if not all tanning salon owners. There are many things you can do to help prevent employee theft, such as cameras in the lobby, etc. Still, the most effective ways to curb employee theft is to curb your employees' desire to steal from you. When employees steal, there must be three elements present:

- Opportunity, which is always found in any retail business.
- Need or greed, both of which are possibilities for anyone who works for you.
- Justification. Like it or not, your employees will use your dishonesty as a reason for why they steal from you.

3. Honesty and Performance Reviews: If you don't give periodic reviews or any kind of feedback on how your team of Millennials is doing, they should have no reason to do better. Too often at tanning salons, there is no feedback, or feedback that's incomplete or inaccurate. It works both for terrible or wonderful employee evaluations. Telling someone that they're an excellent employee without any facts or examples to back up your opinions is as



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bad as not doing the same for problem workers. Again, the message is honesty and transparency.

4. Honesty and the Tanning Salon Owner: You want some honest efforts from all of your Millennial tanning salon employees? Then you need to be honest with them. Try sharing your honest assertions about where the salon or salons are financially, as well as your market share, competition analysis, and many other facets of your business. As one major CBS exec told me many years ago, "When in doubt, tell the truth." You'll best manage your Millennial employees if you use those words of wisdom in your tanning salon.

5. SEVEN WAYS TO LOSE MILLENNIAL SALON EMPLOYEES

There are many ways to lose good Millennial tanning salon employees. In this installment, I focus on seven specific ways you can make this happen. You don't want to do this, especially since these youngsters could be selling tanning lotions, upgrades, and EFT memberships to your tanners. Once you know what you're doing wrong, you can fix things and retain your rockstar tanning salon staff.

Here are seven things to avoid if you want to keep your Millennial salon employees:

1. Not Giving Feedback: Millennials love feedback. They grew up getting it, whether it was Internet information assisting them with a homework project or racking up a kill count on their favorite video games. Employers who shy away from providing performance feedback or intentionally avoid it – perhaps hoping whatever chronic issues simply go away – get low marks from the Millennial generation. You're not helping them to get better at what they're doing.

Feedback is like keeping score and Millennials want it all the time. So give it to them and that will help you as an owner or manager decide which ones have the natural competence to learn about selling your tanning services and products.

2. Not Recognizing Contributions: Like feedback, recognizing the contributions your Millennials make is huge motivation. Demotivation can creep in when you're young workers aren't given any nod to their real efforts. Remember, this is a generation that got a trophy just for showing up! I encourage tanning salon owners and managers to take stock of each employee who's going above and beyond and acknowledge their efforts. Here's a secret: Your employees will appreciate that you've noticed and will continue to work hard to please you. It's a win-win situation for everyone.

3. Micro-Managing: If you want your workers to develop skill levels, they must have delegated and trained tasks to show off their learning and accomplishments. That doesn't happen when you keep employees at a level replaceable by any breathing body that walks in the door. Tanning salon owners and managers sometimes lack good delegation skills. (This judgment comes from 48 years of managing managers and even salon owners.)

Give workers the training and understanding of what is to be done and suggestions of how it's done, then stand back and let them take a crack at it. Trying to program an employee for every minute of their activities will not en-



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courage initiative, and initiative is the growing nutrient for a successful salon's future.

4. Don't Encourage "Kiss-Ups:" If you need your own self-esteem enhanced, don't do it by pushing employees to pucker up and kiss your butt. All you get with Millennial butt kissing are people acting in phony ways to avoid your criticism, or to get your unmerited praise. If that's what you want, it's better to get a dog. Most dogs greet us every time we come home like it's the next appearance of the Beatles! You want your employees to be honest with you and Millennials that feel forced to kiss up usually won't stay because butt kissing is inherently demeaning and it doesn't help the employee to learn real portable skills.

5. No Caring + No Sharing = No Staying: Empathy differs from sympathy in that it sends a message that you understand your employees' problems but don't own them. Even saying that, it's important to know that workers want bosses who have some human warmth and can reflect their understanding for the everyday frustrations of work and life. If you show your young employees that you don't care about their issues, you might as well show them the door.

Tanning salon owners and managers who have no empathy get the least amount of reverse consideration from their employees, such as filling shifts, watching out for company assets, open upward and downward communication, or commitment to customer service excellence.

6. Being a Screamer: Many years ago, I had the displeasure of working with a client who felt the best way to motivate their younger workers was dropping "f-bombs" each time they felt disappointment with their staff. This tanning salon owner sincerely believed that their Millennial employees will "react better to language they can identify with."

Millennials or not, adults acting insanely do not motivate adult behavior. Whatever the message this salon owner was trying to get across was lost in their fusillade of profanity and apparent disrespect for the feelings of their staff. No one takes seriously a boss who has the low regard for a subordinate by consistently using offensive language.

7. Withholding Financial Rewards: Why some owners refuse to pay good employees an actionable wage that stimulates selling consistency is beyond me. It makes no sense to spend big money on tanning equipment, salon leases, marketing, and every other necessary cost then try to buy excellent human talent at below-market-value prices. If you think you're making smart decisions by paying dumb prices you're only fooling yourself.

And worse is to parade your own personal wealth and materialism in front of your staff then believe that minimum wages and low incentives don't get noticed. Of all company book values to consider in the valuation of your salon, equipment – especially in today's flooded used equipment market – is one of the least valuable assets you have.

There are only two real capital values of your salon(s) and that's the fan following you've garnered with your customer base, and the quality of the Millennials that provide those tanners with unique customer services. Treat your



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young workers with respect and they'll reciprocate. Remember, you need to be the "employer of choice" in today's marketplace.

WHY TO KEEP GOOD MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES

Tanning salon owners, you should do all you can to keep your Millennial employees. These youngsters are the ones you depend upon to sell tanning lotions, upgrade sessions, spray tans, and EFT memberships. More importantly, they're the ones who'll help you attract their friends and family – other Millennials – to your salon for a tan. That's the hidden, largely untapped value of employing this demographic. Keeping these youngsters and motivating them is actually rather easy. Just avoid doing the seven things I mentioned above. This should make for many happy Millennials working at your tanning salon.

FINAL THOUGHT: THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING MILLENNIALS

Are you a Baby Boomer or Generation X tanning salon owner who wants to understand your young employees? Think back to your own early life labor limitations. (Example: I once bagged groceries for 75 cents an hour!) If you didn't like the drudgery and mind-numbing repetition, imagine how your tanning salon employees feel about it in their professional lives. So, how to solve the problem? You must learn how to be the employer of choice among today's Millennial workforce. Fortunately, it's not that difficult to do this. The key, as stated above, is remembering when you were the low man or woman on the employment totem pole... and not creating that environment in your tanning salon.