



# Myths, exaggerations and uncomfortable truths

*The real story behind Millennials in the workplace*

IBM Institute for Business Value

## **Executive Report**

Talent and Change

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IBM Talent and Change services and Smarter Workforce solutions combine market-leading talent management and social collaboration tools with the power of workforce science and advanced analytics. They enable organizations to attract, engage and grow top-performing talent, create an engaging social and collaborative culture, and connect the right people to get work done. We help organizations build an impassioned and engaged workforce and deeper client relationships leading to measurable business outcomes.

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## Millennials: The real story

*The first wave of Millennials is rising up the ranks at work and shaping — or making — key business decisions. It's important to understand the impact they're having on today's changing workplace, but if the buzz is to be believed, they're either lazy narcissists or energized optimists bent on saving the world. So, what's really going on? Our multigenerational study of employees in 12 countries debunks 5 common myths and exposes 3 "uncomfortable truths" that apply irrespective of age. Millennials — as digital natives — bring vital value to a work environment in the midst of a digital revolution. But in many ways, they are a lot like their older colleagues.*

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## Executive summary

Over the past few years, numerous reports have been published predicting how Millennials (those aged 21–34) would revolutionize the workplace. All have one common feature: they assume that Millennials are somehow *different* from their predecessors.

The fundamental distinction between Millennials and older employees is their digital proficiency. Millennials are the first generation to grow up immersed in a digital world. Using mobile and social technologies, immediately accessing data, ideas and inspiration and instantly communicating and collaborating is second nature for these digital natives.

Yet the buzz about Millennials suggests that the differences go much deeper. The most unflattering commentaries claim that Millennials are “lazy, entitled, selfish and shallow.”<sup>1</sup> More complimentary assertions paint Millennials as open-minded with a strong sense of community fueled by the digital networks they've formed, and committed to saving the world.<sup>2</sup>

So, what's the real story? We decided it was time to take stock, now that the first Millennials are reaching the top echelons and making — or influencing — major business decisions.

In a multigenerational study of 1,784 employees from organizations across 12 countries and 6 industries, we compared the preferences and behavioral patterns of Millennials with those of Gen X (aged 35–49) and Baby Boomers (aged 50–60). We discovered that Millennials want many of the same things their older colleagues do. While there are some distinctions among the generations, Millennials' attitudes are not poles apart from other employees'.

Our research debunks five common myths about Millennials. We've also uncovered three “uncomfortable truths” that apply to employees of all ages. Lastly, we've made five practical recommendations for helping a multigenerational workforce thrive in today's volatile work environment.

## Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers share similar opinions of the workplace



### 54% of Millennials

don't fully understand their organization's business strategy (for Baby Boomers, it's 58%)



### 47% of Gen X

would leave their current job for another offering more money and a more innovative environment (for Millennials, it's 42%)



### 70% of Baby Boomers

don't think their organization is effectively addressing the customer experience (for Millennials, it's 60%)

Myths, exaggerations and uncomfortable truths

## Busting the myths




Let's start by unraveling the myths.

### Myth 1: Millennials' career goals and expectations are different from those of older generations.

Millennials have similar career aspirations to those of other generations. And their goals are as varied — in nearly the same proportions — as those of their older colleagues. Millennials desire financial security and seniority just as much as Gen X and Baby Boomers, while Gen X and Baby Boomers are just as interested as Millennials in working with a diverse group of people. Our data reveal no standouts or trends that signify any generational predilections (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

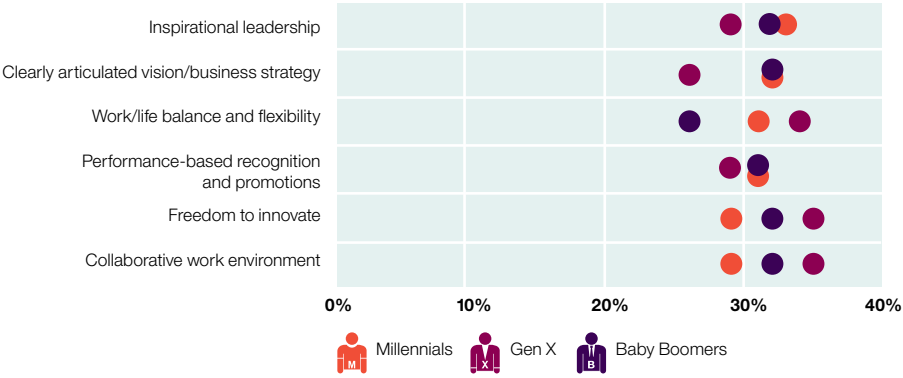
*Millennials place much the same weight on many of the same career goals as older employees do*

Top career goals	 Millennials	 Gen X	 Baby Boomers
Make a positive impact on my organization	25%	21%	23%
Help solve social and/or environmental challenges	22%	20%	24%
Work with a diverse group of people	22%	22%	21%
Work for an organization among the best in my industry	21%	25%	23%
Do work I am passionate about	20%	21%	23%
Become an expert in my field	20%	20%	15%
Manage my work/life balance	18%	22%	21%
Become a senior leader	18%	18%	18%
Achieve financial security	17%	16%	18%
Start my own business	17%	12%	15%

Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014, Millennials n=1,153, Gen X n=353, Baby Boomers n=278. Q15: Select the 2 long-term career goals that are most important to you.

Millennials also align with other generations over what it takes to engage employees at work (see Figure 2). Like Baby Boomers, they stress the importance of inspirational leadership, a clearly articulated business strategy and performance-based recognition and promotions. They place less emphasis on a collaborative work environment, the freedom to innovate and the flexibility to manage their work/life balance than Gen X employees, but the differences are small. By and large, all three generations prize the same qualities.

**Figure 2**  
*What does it take to engage employees at work? Millennials' priorities align with those of other generations*



Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014, Millennials n=1,153, Gen X n=353, Baby Boomers n=278.  
 Q18: Which attributes does an organization need to offer to help employees feel engaged at work? Select your top three.

**Career advice from Millennials for Millennials**

*“The world is undergoing an upheaval. Be prepared, be flexible and be willing to change your old habits.”*

Controller, Automotive, Germany

### Career advice from Millennials for Millennials

*“Do more, worry less. Listen more, speak less.”*




Assistant Engineer, Electronics, China

### Myth 2: Millennials want constant acclaim and think everyone on the team should get a trophy.

We asked all our respondents to rank the top three attributes of their perfect boss (see Figure 3). Above all, Millennials want a manager who's ethical and fair and also values transparency and dependability. They think it's less important to have a boss who recognizes their accomplishments and asks for their input. In fact, Gen X employees are almost as likely to want a boss who provides pats on the back, and Baby Boomers are more likely to want a boss who solicits their views.

**Figure 3**

*Millennials appreciate ethics and transparency above all other leadership traits*

Attributes of the perfect boss	 Millennials	 Gen X	 Baby Boomers
<b>Ethical and fair</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Transparent and readily shares information</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Dependable and consistent</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>35%</b>
Is open to new ways of doing things	<b>31%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>34%</b>
Clearly defines goals and expectations	<b>31%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>30%</b>
Recognizes my accomplishments	<b>29%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>23%</b>
Provides hands-on guidance and feedback	<b>29%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>28%</b>
Is interested in my professional development	<b>28%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>31%</b>
Lets me work without much supervision	<b>27%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>31%</b>
Asks for my input	<b>24%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>26%</b>

Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014, Millennials n=1,153, Gen X n=353, Baby Boomers n=278. Q19: What attributes would your perfect boss have? Rank your top 3 in order of importance, with 1 as the most important.

We also asked our respondents what employees should be rewarded for, and how. Here, we did identify some interesting generational differences. Surprisingly, it's largely Gen X employees, not Millennials, who think everyone on a successful team should be rewarded. Gen X employees are also more likely to believe collaboration and information sharing should be recognized (see Figure 4).

The notion that Millennials expect to have every opportunity handed to them on a silver platter and endless praise for their achievements is palpably false. They are no hungrier for accolades than Gen X employees. What they *do* desire is to be treated fairly.

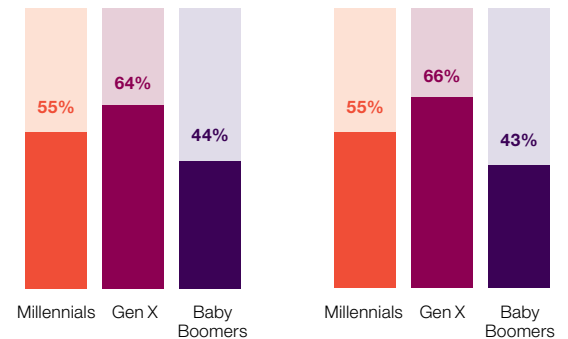
**Myth 3: Millennials are digital addicts who want to do — and share — everything online, without regard for personal or professional boundaries.**

No question about it, Millennials are adept at interacting online, but this doesn't mean they want to do everything virtually. When it comes to acquiring new work-related knowledge and skills, for example, they prefer face-to-face contact. They're slightly more comfortable with virtual learning than their older colleagues: 35 percent are happy to use self-paced interactive modules, apps or online simulations, compared to 33 percent of Gen X and 30 percent of Baby Boomers. However, Millennials' top three preferences involve personal interaction (see Figure 5).

Millennials are also quite capable of distinguishing between the personal and professional realms and exercising discretion when they use social media. To explore the extent to which employees are sensitive about these boundaries, we asked our respondents whether they use their personal social media accounts for business purposes. Twenty-seven percent of Millennials never do so. Gen X employees are almost equally wary (24 percent), but only 7 percent of Baby Boomers say they keep their personal and professional social interactions separate.

**Figure 4**

*Gen X is more inclined to favor prizes for all and recognition of qualities such as collaboration and information sharing*



**If a team is successful, everyone should be rewarded**

**Employees should be rewarded for sharing information and collaborating**

Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014, Percentage of respondents who agreed (selected 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale). Millennials n=1,153, Gen X n=353, Baby Boomers n=278. Q24.2: If a team is successful, everyone should be rewarded and Q24.3: Employees should be rewarded for sharing information and collaborating. (5-point scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree).

**Figure 5**

*Millennials prefer face-to-face contact when they're acquiring new work skills*

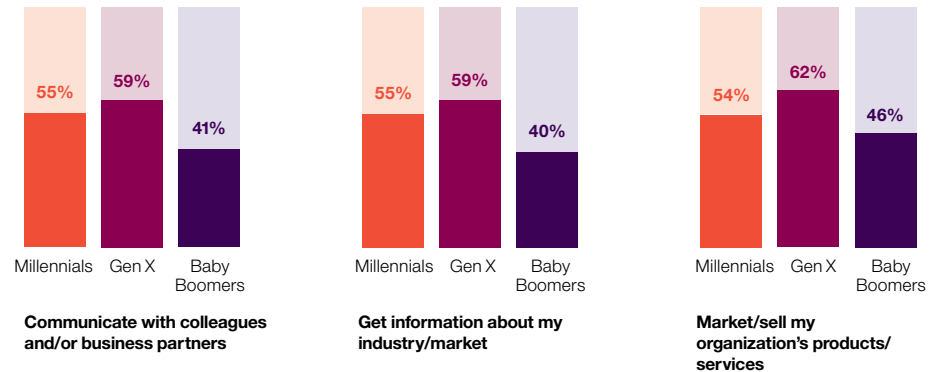


Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014, Millennials n=1,153, Gen X n=353, Baby Boomers n=278. Q25: How do you prefer to obtain new work-related knowledge and skills? Select your top 3.

Moreover, those Millennials who are accessing their personal social networks for professional reasons do so less frequently than Gen X employees. It's the latter who are more inclined to use their personal social media accounts regularly to communicate, access information and market or sell their organization's offerings (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6**

*Gen X employees use their personal social media accounts for work purposes more frequently than other employees do*



Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014. Percentage of respondents who use social media frequently or all the time for a given business purpose. Millennials n=803, Gen X n=258, Baby Boomers n=251. Q32: How often do you reach out to one of your personal social media networks for business purposes to... Q32.1: Communicate with colleagues and or business partners? Q32: Get information about my industry/market? Q32.7: Market/sell my organization's products and services? (5-point scale: 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=occasionally, 4=frequently, 5=all the time).



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This is not to say that using personal social media accounts for business is a misguided practice. Many organizations encourage their employees to leverage their personal networks, but this approach could increase the potential for misuse or mistakes if employees don't have the proper guidance. Given today's escalating concerns about privacy and security, it's imperative to ensure all employees receive direction about what can and cannot be shared externally.

**Myth 4: Millennials, unlike their older colleagues, can't make a decision without first inviting everyone to weigh in.**

Despite their reputation for crowdsourcing, Millennials are no more likely than many of their older colleagues to solicit advice at work. True, more than half of all Millennials say they make better business decisions when a variety of people provide input. But nearly two-thirds of Gen X employees say the same.

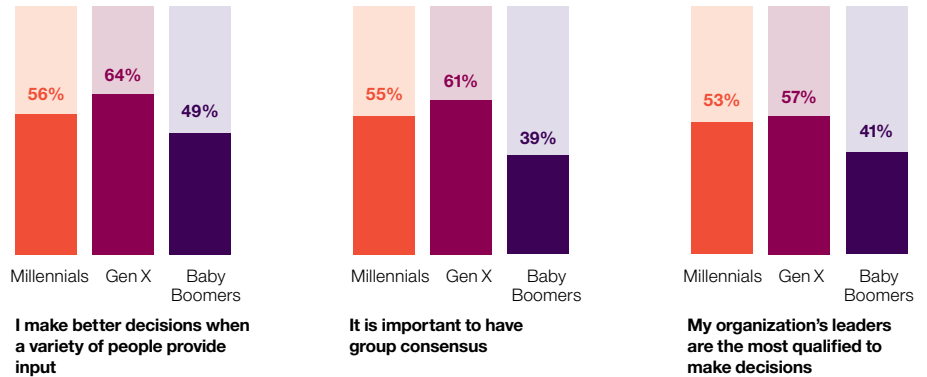
More than half of Millennials also believe, like their Gen X colleagues, that their leaders are most qualified to make business decisions. Baby Boomers, by contrast, feel far less compelled to include others or worry about seeking consensus and are more skeptical about whether the boss knows best (see Figure 7).

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**Career advice from Millennials for Millennials**

*“Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes early in their career. Just make sure you learn from them.”*

**Vendor**, Manufacturing, South Korea

**Figure 7***Baby Boomers are the outliers when it comes to making business decisions*

Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014. Percentage of respondents who agreed (selected 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale). Millennials n=1,153, Gen X n=353, Baby Boomers n=278. Q27.2: I make better decisions when a variety of people provide input; Q27.3: It is important to have group consensus; and Q27.4: My organization's leaders are the most qualified to make decisions (5-point scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree).

Baby Boomers accustomed to making decisions on their own may find it difficult to shift to a more collaborative culture, which can cause tension between older and younger employees. But organizations would be missing an opportunity if they didn't capitalize on Millennials' and Gen Xs' desire to tap a variety of sources to inform their decisions. Having the aptitude and tools to do this quickly is essential, as the business landscape becomes more interconnected and complex.




### Myth 5: Millennials are more likely to jump ship if a job doesn't fulfill their passions.

Another fiction. When Millennials change jobs, they do so for much the same reasons as Gen X and Baby Boomers. We asked respondents why they would leave their current job for another, and four key motives surfaced: to enter the fast lane, shoot for the top, follow one's heart, or save the world. But, as Figure 8 shows, there are no overwhelming generational differences. It seems that aspirations — more than age — determine why people move on, and Millennials care as much as older workers about getting ahead.

There's some evidence that Millennials are more itinerant than other generations: 27 percent have already worked for five or six different employers. However, this is likely a reflection of today's economic conditions. Seventy-five percent of Millennial respondents said they've held their current positions for three years or more, suggesting that they are no more inclined than older colleagues to gallivant from one job to the next.

**Figure 8**

*Employees of every generation have much the same reasons for changing jobs*

Reasons for changing jobs	 Millennials	 Gen X	 Baby Boomers
<b>Enter the fast lane</b> (make more money and work in a more creative, innovative environment)	42%	47%	42%
<b>Shoot for the top</b> (assume more responsibility in an organization with a first-rate reputation)	24%	19%	28%
<b>Follow my heart</b> (advance my career while doing work I'm more passionate about)	21%	24%	16%
<b>Save the world</b> (make a positive social/environmental impact and have more job security)	13%	11%	14%

Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014, Millennials n=1,153, Gen X n=353, Baby Boomers n=278. Q26: Why would you leave your current job for a job with a different organization?

### Career advice from Millennials for Millennials

*“It is good to seek new challenges, but stability also matters.”*

Senior Engineer, Telecommunications, India

**Career advice from Millennials for Millennials**

*“Always ask, ‘Why?’ You’ll discover how the things you do every day impact your company, and you’ll learn much more about the business that way.”*

eCommerce Sales Associate, Automotive, United States

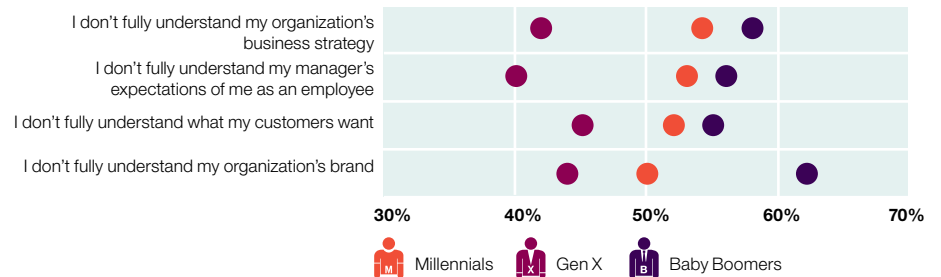
## Exposing uncomfortable truths

We’ve dispelled a few myths about the attitudes and behavior of Millennials. We also have some uncomfortable truths to share. In the course of our research, we identified three insights that apply universally and should give business leaders everywhere cause for concern.

**Uncomfortable truth 1: Employees are in the dark. Many aren’t sure they understand their organization’s business strategy — and their leaders are partly to blame.**

More than half of the people we surveyed don’t fully understand key elements of their organization’s strategy, what they’re supposed to do or what their customers want. While up to 60 percent of Gen X respondents believe they have a good grasp of these fundamentals, many of their colleagues are struggling (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9**  
*Many employees aren’t confident that they fully understand key elements of their organization’s business*



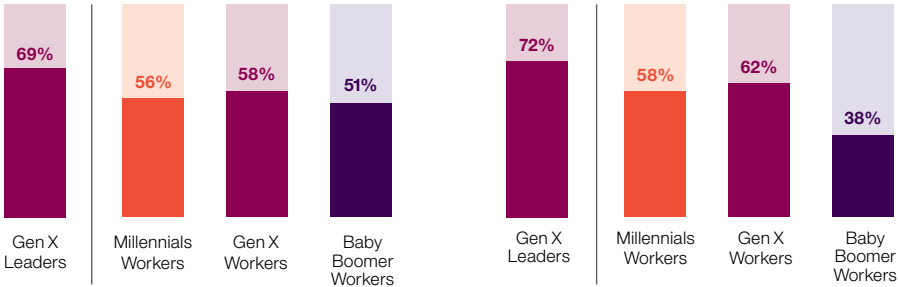
Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014. Percentage of respondents who said they had some, little or no understanding. Millennials n=803, Gen X n=258, Baby Boomers n=251. Q22: To what extent do you understand... Q22.1: You organization's business strategy? Q22.6: Your manager's expectations for you as an employee? Q22.2: What your customers want? Q22.3: Your organization's brand promise in the marketplace? (5-point scale: 1=no understanding, 2=little understanding, 3=some understanding, 4=mostly understand, 5=completely understand).

These revelations should cause alarm, since it will be hard for any enterprise to thrive in today’s competitive environment if its employees don’t understand the basic tenets of its business strategy and brand promise. Yet at least part of the blame lies at the very top.

We asked our respondents to rate their organization’s leaders on a number of criteria. We analyzed their answers by role, as well as by generation, to find out how job status influences their perceptions (see *How we defined each role*).

Nearly half of all respondents say their leaders don’t clearly communicate their vision for the business or what they expect from employees. Gen X leaders, in particular, overrate how well they inspire confidence and recognize employees’ accomplishments (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10**  
*Gen X leaders tend to overestimate how well they connect with their employees*



**Percentage of respondents who think leaders inspire employee confidence**

Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014, Gen X leaders n=123, Millennial workers n=446, Gen X workers n=92, Baby Boomer workers n=94. Q20.7: To what extent do the leaders in your organization inspire employee confidence? (5-point scale: 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=usually, 5=always).

**Percentage of respondents who think leaders recognize employees’ accomplishments**

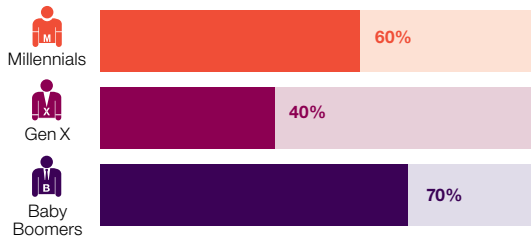
Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014, Gen X leaders n=123, Millennial workers n=445, Gen X workers n=92, Baby Boomer workers n=94. Q20.4: To what extent do the leaders in your organization recognize employee accomplishments? (5-point scale: 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=usually, 5=always).

**How we defined each role**

- Leaders*  
Individuals with a significant degree of influence within their organizations (directors, vice presidents, presidents and C-suite officers).
- Managers*  
Individuals who manage one or more employees.
- Workers*  
Individuals with no managerial or executive responsibilities.

**Figure 11**

*Most employees, irrespective of age, are critical of their organization's ability to effectively address the customer experience*



Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014. Percentage of respondents who said their organization was ineffective (selected 1 or 2 on a 5-point scale). Millennials n=1,153, Gen X n=353, Baby Boomers n=278. Q21.1 To what extent does your organization effectively address customer experience? (5-point scale: 1=very ineffective, 2=ineffective, 3=neither ineffective nor effective, 4=effective, 5=very effective).

These disjunctions are especially troubling because Gen Xers are reaching the arc of their careers and more likely to hold leadership positions. In our survey, 35 percent of Gen X respondents are leaders, compared with 26 percent of Millennials and just 22 percent of Baby Boomers.

### **Uncomfortable truth 2: All three generations think the customer experience is poor.**

We asked our respondents to rate their organization's effectiveness on a number of factors such as workforce diversity and attention to environmental and societal concerns. The results were favorable, with a single big exception: employees of every generation think their enterprise handles the customer experience badly (see Figure 11).

Fortunately, there's one bright spot. Sixty-five percent of both Millennial and Gen X employees give their organization a high grade for using social media to engage customers. The majority of Baby Boomers (56 percent) also appreciate the extent to which social media can help an enterprise form stronger bonds with its customers, although they're less complimentary than their younger colleagues. They may, perhaps, find it harder to see how social media can be leveraged to resolve shortcomings in the customer experience.

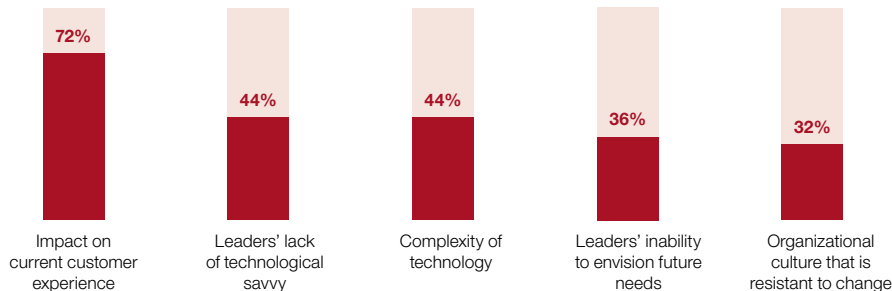
### **Uncomfortable truth 3: Employees of all ages have embraced the technological revolution. The problem? Their enterprises are slow to implement new applications.**

As more Millennials have embarked on their careers, expectations of a technological revolution in the workplace have increased. However, only 4 percent of respondents claim their organization has no issues implementing new technologies. The vast majority point to a variety of inhibitors that keep their organizations from adopting the latest innovations, including the complexity of new technologies, as well as their leaders' lack of vision and technological savvy.

But by far the biggest barrier cited by every generation is fear of the impact these changes would have on the customer experience (see Figure 12). Ironically, even though most respondents think the customer experience is lacking, they also believe their organizations would rather maintain this unfortunate status quo than risk introducing new technologies that could improve the situation.

Employees of all ages — not just Millennials — appreciate how critical technology is to the success of their business. They also know that when an organization is slow to implement new technologies, its competitiveness erodes. Working for the best enterprise in their field ranks as a top career goal for Gen X, Baby Boomers and many Millennials. So executives who have been dragging their feet should take a hard look at what’s holding them back and the risks of inaction.

**Figure 12**  
*Employees of every generation point to the same obstacles in implementing new technologies*



Source: IBM Institute for Business Value Millennial Survey 2014, n=1,784. Q30: What inhibits your organization from applying new technologies? Select your top 3.

### Career advice from Millennials for Millennials

*“Always be keen to learn and be up to date on the latest technology and trends in the market.”*

Quality Assurance Leader, IT, India

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### Career advice from Millennials for Millennials

*“Don’t be cocky.”*

**Financial Services Advisor**, Banking, Mexico

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## Recommendations

In view of our findings, what should employers do? We have five specific recommendations for handling the challenges.

### **Focus on the individual**

Managing a multigenerational workforce entails seeing people as individuals, not generational stereotypes. Organizations need to plan how best to leverage digital natives’ capabilities. But they need to be wary of placing so much emphasis on age that they lose sight of individual preferences and skill sets that transcend generational clichés. To recruit, retain and grow top talent, employers need robust workforce analytics, together with policies and programs that accommodate individual career aspirations.

*How to get started:* Map a talent strategy in phases — short-term and long-term. Assess the current state to set a baseline and identify improvements. Factors could include: compensation, workplace flexibility, diversity, a collaborative and innovative corporate culture, use of the latest technologies, management styles, skills, training and so on. Identify the tools and analytics needed to execute the strategy and measure the results.

### **Foster a collaborative culture**

The best and brightest employees — those with the potential to become tomorrow’s leaders — are likely to prefer working in a collaborative organization where they are encouraged to contribute new ideas and take a consensual approach to making decisions. Executives in enterprises where this isn’t common should think about how to change their work environment and incentives. As the workplace becomes more virtual, they also need to consider how their collaboration tools can leverage the latest in cloud and mobile technologies.



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*How to get started:* Make a senior leader the “Collaboration Czar” to build a team of enthusiastic employees from all parts of the business who’ll develop a strategy for improved collaboration. Internal grassroots collaboration programs can be very powerful, but sustainable change requires that executive leadership shift the culture.

### **Make customer experience a priority**

Many employees — not just Millennials — are eager to adopt new technologies at work. But most believe their organizations are reluctant to change because of the impact this could have on their customer experience — ironically, an experience that respondents overwhelmingly say isn’t handled well. Business leaders need to investigate any delays, be transparent about the challenges and work collaboratively to implement innovations that could improve the customer experience.

*How to get started:* Do a thorough assessment of the customer experience from your customers’ point of view. Detail all interactions that touch your current technologies. Find the spots where the experience falls short; determine the source of the problem and why it exists; and perform a risk benefit analysis to clear the path for a course of action.

### **Look within**

Our results suggest that many leaders may be overestimating how well they’re connecting with their staff. Introspection is hard — and sometimes painful — but all leaders need an honest assessment of their own strengths and weaknesses. They need to ask themselves these tough questions: Do you inspire confidence? Do you show an interest in your employees’ professional development? Do you communicate with clarity and transparency?

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### **Career advice from Millennials for Millennials**

*“Work hard. It will pay off.”*

**Structural Engineer**, Construction, France

**Career advice from Millennials for Millennials**

*“Just do your best, and hope the best will come out of it.”*

**Office Worker**, Manufacturing, Japan

*How to get started:* Leaders, take a look at your calendar. In the last six months, how much time did you spend celebrating team successes and recognizing employee accomplishments? How frequently did you meet with employees for roundtable discussions about the business? How often did you talk with those you mentor? If the answer is “not enough,” consider creative ways to connect more often and more effectively — both in-person and virtually.

**Get everyone on board**

If employees don't understand the business fundamentals, the organization is bound to struggle. Leaders need to make sure all employees understand the strategy, business model, what customers expect and what the brand represents. They also need to ensure employees know how they fit within the grand scheme. If everyone is on board, the business will have a more engaged workforce — and a more engaged workforce delivers a better customer experience.

*How to get started:* Use online survey tools to test employees' understanding of the business fundamentals and capture feedback. Devise a method to ensure anonymity. Analyze the results and form a task force of employees across the business to address the root causes of the problem and develop pilot programs to introduce improvements. Be transparent about the findings and update employees on the progress.

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## Millennials as a catalyst for change

By 2020, Millennials will be approximately 50 percent of the U.S. workforce, and by 2030, 75 percent of the global workforce.<sup>3</sup> By sheer numbers alone, they have become the catalyst for accelerated change in the workplace. Many Gen X and Baby Boomer employees also have adopted new ways of doing business, and they're just as anxious as Millennials to see their organizations introduce new technologies more rapidly.

Additionally, when it comes to career goals, preferences for management styles and recognition, understanding of business strategies and expectations for customer experience, our findings suggest Millennial employees are not vastly different from their older colleagues.

The key takeaway for business leaders is this: Millennials represent the first wave of digital natives to enter the workforce, and this does distinguish them. Organizations that have embarked on their own transformation urgently need this digital capital. They should eagerly look for ways to embrace Millennials and create the work environments where top talent can flourish — across all generations. This will require nuanced strategies that reflect the reality of a multigenerational workforce: employees of all ages are complex individuals working in an environment that's becoming more virtual, more diverse and more volatile by the day.

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### Career advice from Millennials for Millennials

*“I’ve adopted my motto from Amazon’s Jeff Bezos: Work hard, have fun, make history.”*

**Developer, IT, Spain**

**For more information**

To learn more about this IBM Institute for Business Value study, please contact us at [iibv@us.ibm.com](mailto:iibv@us.ibm.com). Follow @IBMIBV on Twitter and for a full catalog of our research or to subscribe to our monthly newsletter, visit: [ibm.com/iibv](http://ibm.com/iibv)

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## Ready or not? Ask yourself these questions

- How can you devise a talent strategy that leverages the aptitudes of digital natives while also addressing employees’ individual needs and aspirations?
- How does your organization nurture an environment of collaboration, transparency and creativity?
- Do employees in your organization know how their jobs support the goals of the business?
- What are your organization’s leaders doing to help employees understand fundamental business strategies?
- Why might your organization be reluctant to implement the latest technologies, especially those that could improve the customer experience? What can be done to remove these barriers?

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### **About the author**

Carolyn Heller Baird is a Global Research Leader in the IBM Institute for Business Value. Her seasoned experience spans nearly 20 years in Customer Experience Design, developing digital transformation strategies with a focus on communications, marketing, branding and content development for IBM clients across all industries and geographies. Carolyn has also served as the North America Communications and Workforce Enablement Strategy Leader for IBM Global Business Services, and she has directed numerous IBV studies on social business and marketing, including the 2011 Chief Marketing Officer Study. She can be reached at [cbaird@us.ibm.com](mailto:cbaird@us.ibm.com).

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### **How we conducted our research**

In the summer of 2014, the IBM Institute for Business Value surveyed 1,784 employees from organizations large and small in 12 countries across 6 industries.<sup>4</sup> Respondents represented three generations: Millennials (21–34), Gen X (35–46) and Baby Boomers (ages 50+). All respondents were currently employed and had obtained, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree. Each generation had a wide representation of roles, from senior leaders to those without executive or managerial responsibilities. In addition, 30 to 40 percent of respondents from each generation, geography and industry had some degree of influence over purchasing decisions for their organization (single purchases of US \$10,000 or more). Qualitative research was also conducted via a Tweetchat, a roundtable discussion and 14 one-on-one interviews.

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**Acknowledgments**

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**Notes and sources**

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4. The 12 countries represented in the survey include: Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, Spain, United Kingdom and United States. The 6 industries represented in the survey include: Banking, Consumer Electronics, Insurance, Media & Entertainment, Retail and Telecommunications.

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Produced in the United States of America  
January 2015

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