

Enhancing the Effectiveness of Millennial Teachers Through Principals Using Performance Management

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Abstract

Millennial teachers bring a wealth of human capital to the schools in which they work. Most Millennial teachers are supervised by Baby Boomers or Generation X principals. Different perspectives regarding the work environment of these three generations are reviewed. Taking into consideration the needs and wants of Millennial teachers, these Baby Boomer and Generation X principals need to supervise Millennial teachers with the goal of maximizing the human capital they possess. The performance management model is explained in the context of Baby Boomer and Generation X principals effectively supervising Millennial teachers to create an environment where these teachers can “be their best.”

Keywords: Millennial teachers, Baby Boomer and Generation X principals, generational differences, expectation setting, coaching, and performance management

It is the wise school administrator who tries to understand the Millennial mindset in the role both they and technology can play in unleashing creativity. Working out how to maximize the potential of this generation’s particular attitudes and approaches can have immense payoffs (Friedman, 2015).

Definitions for generations, including years born, name, and 2017 ages can be found in Table 1. While some experts on generational differences may have slightly different dates for years born, the information presented here should not change any assumptions based on generational definitions.

Table 1

Generations Defined

Years Born	Name	2017 ages
1925-45	Silent Generation or Traditionalists	72-92
1946-64	Baby Boomers	53-71
1965-80	Generation X	37-52
1981-99	Millennials or Generation Y	18-36
2000-present	Generation Z or Digital Natives	<18

Millennials are quickly representing the majority of teachers in many schools as Baby Boomers decrease in numbers through retirement. Maximizing the human capital attributes (potential to enhance student learning) of Millennials through principals creating an effective work environment is crucial. Effectively working through generational differences in values, beliefs, and preferences between principals and teachers is important. Individuals from different eras, working in harmony, will benefit each other's performance and enhance student learning.

Principals are often Baby Boomers or Generation Xers, while a rapidly increasing number of teachers are Millennials. Principals need to focus on working effectively with Millennial teachers to maximize their job performance and satisfaction. Millennials are generally not hesitant to change where they work, and considering the acute teacher shortages nationally in many schools, it is important to help Millennial teachers be effective, happy, and satisfied at work. A recent study documented the critical role principals play in creating school working conditions that aid in retaining teachers in their buildings (Burkhauser, 2017). Understanding the needs, wants, and general characteristics of Millennials is crucial to working effectively with them.

Examples of differences on similar factors for Millennials and Baby Boomers can be seen in Table 2. Additional descriptors of Baby Boomers are: (a) motivated by competition; (b) goal-driven; (c) resourceful when the budget is tight; and (d) have sustained engagement when working on a task (Pappas, 2016).

Table 2

Examples of Perceptual Differences between Baby Boomers and Millennials

Baby Boomers	Millennials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loyalty to the organization where they work • Value recognition for hard work • Understand change is necessary, but are cautious to adapt (e.g., technology) • Value face-to-face and written communication • View of work-life balance tends to be more focused on work • Sometimes apprehensive to diversity and tend to defend status quo • Value workplace rules, policies, and procedures designated for efficiency and getting quality work done • Believe in continual professional development for advancements in career, being productive, and effectively meeting job requirements • Value money and lucrative retirement plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loyalty to the organization is dependent upon if there is enjoyment on the job, and people in the organization being loyal to them • Enjoy frequent feedback on quality of work • Change is positive and they are quick to adapt • Prefer fast-paced communications that are technologically-based (e.g., emails, texts, social media) • Work-life balance is centered; will sometimes work extra hours when necessary, but equally value social time away from work • Quick to accept diversity, inclusion, and accompanying changes, because it has been a part of their environment • View some workplace rules as trivial and unnecessary; desire flexibility • Do not always want to spend time on professional development unless there is a payoff in job satisfaction • Value being appreciated as much as money (Harvey & Clark, 2016)

Characteristics of Millennials, in addition to information in Table 2, are: (a) driven by information technology; (b) likely to speak up and assume their opinions will be heard and valued; (c) expect work to be assessed on merit; (d) do not respond well to “because that is the way things have always been done;” (e) want frequent feedback on performance; (f) like to work in teams; (g) follow a “work to live” mentality; (h) positive and confident about their work; and (i) like challenges and have a disdain for boring experiences (Gallup, 2016; Heathfield, 2016). General characteristics of Generation Xers are: (a) highly independent and goal-oriented regarding achieving a position of power; (b) thrive in structured hierarchical environments; (c) view people in positions of power as experts; (d) value flexibility and adaptability within a hierarchy; (e) follow a “work to live” mentality; (f) concerned that they will be able to retire comfortably; (g) structured, punctual, and “linear” in their thinking; (h) action-oriented; and (i) move through work quickly (Asghar, 2014; Cummins, 2014; Giang, 2013; Goudreau, 2013; Krueger, 2014; Pfau, 2016; Sollors, 2017).

In summary, there are differences between Millennials, Baby Boomers, and Generation Xers regarding how they view the world of work. These differences need not prevent a Millennial teacher and a principal from working collaboratively if the principal effectively manages the work environment by using the performance management model.

Performance Management

In the present climate of ever-increasing accountability for teachers’ performance, it is essential that principals have comprehensive and systematic approaches to supervising and evaluating the Millennial teachers. As supervisors, principals need to take actions that create environments in which Millennial teachers can reach their full potential for job performance and satisfaction. Use of the performance management model (see Figure 1) in the supervision and evaluation of Millennial teachers takes the mystery out of what is expected of their performance so that there are “no surprises” to them when summative evaluation occurs.

The role of the expectation-setting process (Step 2) in a model intended to reward and improve performance is seen in Figure 1. As depicted, the expectation-setting process is preceded by the principal reviewing the job description, prior summative evaluations and any previously identified goals and developmental activities, and criteria from the teacher evaluation plan (Step 1) with the Millennial teacher. The Millennial teacher is encouraged to give opinions, offer suggestions, and ask questions for clarity in the give-and-take discussion in Step 1. Next, the principal and Millennial teacher clearly articulates the specific expectations that will guide the teacher in terms of performance. This process must be accomplished collaboratively with the Millennial teacher freely asking questions, voicing opinions, and truly feeling an important part of the process. Clarity of performance expectations is vital to the overall effectiveness of the performance management process (Bartz, DeMont, Hillman, & Miller, 1992-1993).

Step 1**Identification of Evaluation Criteria**

- Information from previous summative evaluation (from Step 5, if information is available from previous year)
- Job description and teacher evaluation criteria
- Involve millennial

Step 2**Expectations**

- Human element components and technical element components (flow from Step 1)
- Involve millennial through multiple mini discussion sessions

Step 3**Feedback and Coaching (Formative)**

- Review expectations from Step 2
- Formal observations and informal observations
- Have meaningful information and data
- Mini feedback sessions that involve millennial
- Coach if an expectation is not met (performance coaching)

Step 4**Summative Evaluation Conference (Feedback and Coaching Also Used Here)**

- Summative rating completed
- May identify professional development goals
- Career coaching, if applicable
- Based on information from Steps 1, 2, and 3
- Involve millennial

Step 5**Management Decisions**

- Summative rating and any other relevant information from Step 4
- Tenure status, if applicable
- Future building assignment, if applicable
- Individual professional development goals, if applicable
- Involve millennial

Figure 1. Performance Management Model.

After expectations are set, the principal frequently provides the Millennial teacher with performance feedback (Step 3) relative to the previously established expectations. This feedback

is based on having collected sufficient on-the-job information to be of use in assessing the Millennial teacher's performance. Much of the feedback will likely be positive reinforcement for a job well done. The principal seeks out the perceptions of the Millennial teacher and encourages questioning and suggestions for clarity during feedback sessions. When the aggregated data indicates that performance is not meeting the original expectations, the principal and Millennial teacher discuss the situation. In a collaborative format they consider alternatives, with the ultimate goal being improved performance. This process of identifying ways for improving performance referred to as "performance coaching" is a part of Step 3. This phase is formative and should be used to help the Millennial teacher meet the agreed-upon expectations (Bartz & Bartz, 1995).

At a predetermined point in time (e.g., annually) a formal performance appraisal conference is held (Step 4). This represents summative evaluation. The performance appraisal conference should also address any training and professional development growth activities needed for improvement. The results of this performance appraisal are data used as the basis for administrative decisions (e.g., tenure status for the Millennial teacher, next year's assignment, and agreed-upon professional development activities). The performance appraisal process should also include positive reinforcement in those areas in which the Millennial met or exceeded expectations (Step 5).

Specifics of Expectation Setting

Two critical elements of expectation setting are *technical* and *human*. The technical element addresses specifically what is expected of the Millennial teacher flowing from Step 1 in the performance management model that includes the job description and all criteria of the teacher evaluation system on which her/his performance is evaluated. Principals must be clear on the factors and criteria of the technical element components. Further, there must be an environment in which Millennial teachers can express their opinions and ask questions for clarification of these components.

Equally important in the expectation setting process for Millennial teachers is the human element composed of *involvement*, *understanding*, *acceptance*, and *commitment*. *Involvement* is exemplified by the principal sharing information with the Millennial teacher about how she/he views the technical element components to be addressed in the Millennial teacher's classroom and general job duties. Equally important is the Millennial teacher having input by sharing general perspectives, opinions, suggestions, and questions about the information discussed with the principal. The Millennial teacher may identify areas of desired growth and needed staff development to address this growth. Involvement is a "give-and-take" process.

Understanding means the Millennial teacher has internalized the technical element components and translated what effective performance looks like to him/her. The principal should establish a truly two-way communication dialogue. The Millennial teacher should be encouraged to ask questions for clarity and give suggestions. *Acceptance* represents the Millennial teacher believing that the technical element components are legitimate, worth his/her effort, and important to improving student learning and self-development. It is essential for the discussion to include a "contextual understanding" of the technical element components by the teacher and principal. *Commitment* addresses attitudes and beliefs that are likely to drive behaviors needed for the Millennial teacher to effectively meet the technical element components. Again, this is a two-way communication process, with the Millennial teacher

feeling free to offer opinions, give suggestions, and ask questions (Bartz et al., 1992-1993).

Details of Feedback and Coaching

Feedback and coaching are highly interrelated. The difference is that feedback represents the information that *describes performance*, while coaching is the assistance given to *improve performance* when feedback indicates expectations are not met. The definition for coaching used here is “performance coaching.” This contrasts with developmental coaching that focuses on assisting Millennial teachers in gaining knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform effectively for future job responsibilities. Performance coaching deals with the “here and now” in relationship to meeting expectations. In general, coaching is frequently more difficult for principals to perform effectively than is giving feedback. It is often easier to indicate what is “right or wrong” with performance through feedback than to specifically identify ways in which the Millennial teacher can improve performance so it aligns with expectations.

Feedback. Behavioral science research clearly indicates the critical role feedback plays in behavioral change for the formative and summative evaluation of Millennial teachers. Feedback is defined as the activity of providing information to the Millennial teacher in relationship to how her/his performance meets expectations. Thus, it assumes that expectations have been clearly established.

Effective feedback requires the principal to spend sufficient time collecting information and data on the performance of a Millennial teacher in order to give specific feedback related to expectations. From the perspective of the Millennial teacher, feedback answers the question “How am I doing?” Principals should view effectively giving feedback from the perspective that it is “received” as opposed to merely given. This means that unless feedback is received by the Millennial teacher and internalized, it is unlikely to have much impact on performance.

When providing feedback to a Millennial teacher, the principal should initially be descriptive and nonjudgmental. An example of a judgmental statement is “You do a poor job in actively getting students involved in the collaborative process.” According to Bartz and Bartz (1995), the same issue addressed descriptively is “I do not see much collaborative interaction among students. What is your observation?” Feedback needs to be timely in that the sooner it is given to when the performance it is addressing occurred, the greater its impact (Kaplan, 2010). Additional factors for principals to consider regarding feedback are:

- challenge and motivate the Millennial teacher to invest effort and ownership in the situation,
- not be given when the Millennial teacher or principal are upset or frustrated,
- be specific,
- focus on behaviors and not personality,
- demonstrate interest in the Millennial teacher,
- demonstrate effective preparation by the principal,
- ensure that both the principal and Millennial teacher understand what was discussed,
- encourage opinions, questions, and suggestions from the Millennial teacher,
- encourage self-reflection by the Millennial teacher,
- respect the dignity and opinions of the Millennial teacher, and
- exhibit a trusting climate.

Coaching. Performance coaching is based on the belief that the principal needs to work collaboratively with a Millennial teacher to enhance performance when an expectation is not met. Principals must be sure to seek out the opinions, questions, and suggestions of the Millennial teacher throughout the coaching process so that it is truly a joint venture. The principal also needs to make sure that the Millennial teacher has previously received proper training and development activities in relationship to the expectation for which performance is not met. Performance may be an issue of unmet training and development needs. The principal may need to prescribe additional resources in order to assist the Millennial teacher in improving performance. The principal should clearly determine if the Millennial teacher has any perceptions regarding obstacles preventing him/her from performing up to expectations (Bartz & Bartz, 1995). Following are additional factors to consider when coaching Millennials:

- specifically and accurately identify what behavior change(s) are needed,
- indicate the positive consequences for making the necessary change(s),
- check for understanding to make sure she/he knows why the change(s) are needed,
- discuss the Millennial teacher's responsibility for making the change(s),
- work with the Millennial teacher so that buy-in and ownership are likely,
- establish credibility in the context of the principal's knowledge and skills to recommend change(s) to address the performance issue,
- show appreciation for the Millennial teacher's efforts and commitment,
- respect the integrity and capability of the Millennial teacher,
- encourage self-discovery and self-development through discussions with the Millennial teacher, and
- provide follow-up after the coaching session to determine the extent to which the desired change(s) are actually taking place.

Concluding Thoughts

All of us are products of the times in which our values and beliefs were formed (e.g., perspective on technology and its attributes and limitations). If properly addressed, the varying perspectives of generational differences are an asset to diversity and problem solving in the school setting (Bartz & Rice, 2017).

Baby Boomer and Generation X principals need to consciously strive to understand the needs and wants of their Millennial teachers and utilize the teachers' human capital assets for maximizing student learning. Millennial teachers want input about their job expectations and opportunities to give meaningful input, ask questions, and make suggestions. These are reasonable and honorable perspectives. The wise principal knows how to incorporate the attributes of Millennial teachers through the expectation-setting process, performance feedback sessions, and the coaching process through performance management to create an environment in which Millennials can "be their best."

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