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# Will telework help to recruit Millennial employees?

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## ABSTRACT

This study depicts the attitudes of Millennials toward teleworking. It seems a natural fit for a generation touted as computer literate, interested in a balance of work/ life activities and conscience of environmental issues to consider teleworking for their employment. This paper reviews major points of teleworking and Millennial perceptions. Students from a northeast liberal arts university will be surveyed. The results provide important considerations for managers of this cohort.

## Keywords

Telework, Millennials, work/life balance, managers

## 1 NEWEST WORKERS

The most recent generational cohort to enter the workforce, the Millennials, born 1981- 1999 (also referred to as Nexters, Generation Net, Digital Natives and Generation Y) were brought up with Internet connectivity to the world. Millennials are described as being more positive than Gen Xers (born 1965-1980), cooperative team players and accepting of authority (Howe & Strauss, 2000). They are noted to be most similar to the Traditionalist (born before 1946) generation in their views of family and civic mindedness (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). They anticipate having to work over 40 hours a week to maintain their lifestyles (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000), however Millennials are said to value family and personal time (Barna, 1995). These Millennials desire balance between work and family life, meaningful work and autonomy (Buckley, Beau, Novicevic, & Sigerstad, 2001).

Millennials expect communication via technology and “may be intolerant of those who are technologically challenged” (Murray, 2004, p. 106). This techno-literate cohort is three times the size of their predecessor generation, Generation X and the “largest population of business education students in American history” (Pelton & True, 2004, p.64). There has been a “paucity of research attention focused on the generational differences” of this significant group (Pelton & True, 2004, p. 64). Flexibility is critical and it is suggested that these “digital natives” have a penchant for the “anywhere-everywhere mentality because they treat technology as a trusted partner ...”

(Manafy & Gautschi, 2011, p.7) which can be accommodated by teleworking.

## 2 MANAGING MILLENNIALS

The preferences of the Millennials will present challenges and opportunities to managers who are advised to apply strategies tailored to the Millennials’ specific characteristics (Eisner, 2005). This may particularly difficult to Baby Boomer managers (born 1946 - 1964) who are from a generation known for being workaholics, needed to be seen in the workplace for hours and sacrificed for their careers (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Managers of “Gen Y’s” (Millennials) have been advised to be “careful not to oversimplify workplace differences, but should see intergenerational differences as one of several aspects of diversity” (Eisner, 2005, p. 10). “When managers and coworkers do not understand each other’s generational differences, tension increases and job satisfaction and productivity decrease” (Kupperschmidt, 2000. p. 65).

## 3 PROGRESSION OF TELEWORK

Telework is a growing method of employment that garners advantages for both the employer and the employee. Telework was used by 82 of Fortune’s “ 2011 Best 100 Companies To Work For” with the top ten teleworking companies ranging from 37% – 86% of regular users (see Table 1). The top 100 award is voted for by employees on the best practices, fairness and services of an organization (Levering & Moskowitz, 2011). Telework is considered one of those best practices that allows employees flexible options for improved work/life balance.

Company	% of regular telecommuters
Deloitte	86%
Cisco	85%
Intel	82%
Accenture	80%
Teach for America	80%
PricewaterhouseCoopers	70%
Brocade Communications Systems	50%
S. C. Johnson & Son	40%
Stryker	38%
American Fidelity Assurance Co.	37%

**Table 1.** Sample of Companies using Telework.  
Source: [CNNMoney.com/Fortune](http://CNNMoney.com/Fortune)

### **Employer Benefits**

For the employer, telework is reported to increase productivity, reduce needed office space and operating costs, decrease absenteeism and limit turnover, and ensure easier continuity recovery as all the employees are not in one place (Cascio, 2000; Manochehri & Pinkerton, 2003; "Telecommunication," 2011; Wells, 2001). Telework is now the law for all federal executive agencies since the passage of the 2010 Telework Enhancement Act that will increase telework programs that inform workers of eligibility, recruit and retain valuable workers, maintain continuity of operations through emergencies and help federal employees better balance work and family obligations (Gruber, 2009; Public Law, 2009).

### **Employee Benefits**

For the teleworker, one of the major benefits reported is monetary savings such as less gasoline consumption, decreased automobile wear and tear, lowered parking fees, fewer tolls, saved costs for office attire and reduced child or elder care needs (Hylmo & Buzzanell, 2002; Nilles, 1994; Potter, 2003). Time is also saved from travel and traffic congestion. In fact, it has been noted that "it is the reduced commuting time and not the reduced commuting cost that makes telecommuting attractive" to the worker (Peters, Tijdens, & Wetzels, 2004, p.273).

### **Societal Benefits**

Telework contributes to cleaner air nationwide with reduced car exhausts and particulates from brake and tire erosion. The carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and organic compounds in the atmosphere can cause many illnesses including cancer, heart attacks, headaches, asthma and lung disease, the third leading cause of death in U.S. ("Telework = Better Health," 2009). These are just some of the environmental considerations emphasized to organizations to 'telegreen' the workplace' (TeleGreen, 2009). The Millennials, known as a socially conscience generation, are more likely to seek employment in organizations that show concern for the environment (Cone, 2006).

## **4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to explore how the preference for working styles described in the literature about Millennials, such as autonomy, work-life balance and computer competence, determine the preference for telework for Millennials. This research is a follow up to a previous study (Nicholas, 2009) on the attitudes of Millennial university students toward telework. Using a survey instrument, students will be assessed to determine their preferences regarding the flexible work option of telework.

## **5 METHODOLOGY**

A quantitative survey research design will be used. The survey method has been noted to be the preferable method for collecting information for analysis (Zikmund, 2003). The survey questionnaire can reach a large number of people who can complete it at his/her convenience (Trochim, 2005). This study will use an e-mail invitation with a direct link to the survey. Web-based surveys are well-received according to a survey of 63 professionals by the American Educational Research Association's Survey Research Special Interest Group (Shannon, Johnson, Searcy, & Lott, 2002). These professionals favorably noted low costs, compatibility of data with other software programs, and the likelihood of response when the survey link was connectable in an e-mail message (Shannon, Johnson, Searcy, & Lott, 2002).

In a web based questionnaire, participants will be asked about their perceived importance of teleworking, autonomy, work-life balance and their perceived computer competence. The survey is composed of forced choice questions. The survey instrument for teleworking, autonomy, work/life balance and computer competence was based on previous literature and in some cases reworded. Autonomy scales were adapted from Hackman and Oldham (1976) and Campion (1988). Items to measure work/life balance were adapted from Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996) and the PricewaterhouseCoopers International Student Survey (1999). Items to measure computer competence were adapted from Bunz (2004). Attitudes towards teleworking were adapted from Baruch and Yuen (2000), Mokhtarian and Salomon (1995), and Ward and Shabha (2001). The final scales were then examined by a panel of 5 experts who are scholars with backgrounds in organizational behavior, information systems and quantitative methods. This panel of experts assessed the questions for face and content validity. A pilot study of 21 participants was conducted to test the survey items and the clarity of instructions. A sample size of 12-30 subjects is the customary size for this type of study (Hunt, Sparkman & Wilcox, 1982). The pilot study was constructed to further limit any misunderstanding of the survey items and to avoid any problems of validity and reliability of the survey instrument and data analysis (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2001). After a factor analysis and reliability measurements, only two items were excluded.

The previous 2007 study (Nicholas, 2009) of 195 Millennials (and 63 non-Millennials) included their viewpoints regarding autonomy, work/life balance, and perceived computer competence and its relationship with telework preference. The results had shown that they did not seem to prefer teleworking, but the analysis of differences between males and females depicted greater interest from males.

This updated study focuses only on Millennials and will determine whether Millennial telework preferences have evolved in comparison to the previous study.

## 6 RESULTS

(in progress)

## 7 FUTURE RESEARCH

There is certainly a need for “more research into the attitudes and expectations of the next generation of workers” particularly toward “the changing nature of work” (Ng & Burke, 2006, 490).

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