

5 Myths That Are Hurting Millennial Lawyers — And the Law Firms They Work For

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Whether it's for [spending too much money on avocado toast](#) or for [“killing off” yet another industry](#), millennials are in the news all the time. While millennials make headlines daily, this generation is still consistently misunderstood.

The 2018 LMA Southwest Regional Conference broke down millennial lawyer stereotypes in the session “Turning Millennial Lawyers into Marketing Ninjas,” led by [Morgan MacLeod](#) of Cubicle Fugitive and [Lindsay Bombardier](#) of Lenczner Slaght. The session was centered on Cubicle Fugitive's recent research study, “A Booming Force in Law: The Millennial Lawyer.”

Below, are five common millennial myths we learned — and the uncomfortable truths law firms must face if they want to retain young talent.

1. Millennial career goals are different from older generations.

It may seem like millennials have nothing in common with baby boomers. But they still care about the same benefits that professionals of all ages want: opportunities for growth, competitive wages and a strong employer with a good reputation.

One difference is that millennials tend to care more about doing a job that's meaningful. They want to be engaged and they want to work for companies that care about their personal well-being. Although this represents a shift from the way firms have operated in the past, it should be an exciting and welcome change. In the right environment, a millennial is likely to be a dedicated and passionate lawyer — and a big asset to the firm.

2. Millennials want constant acclaim and trophies.

Millennials have become known as the “certificate of participation” generation. That's a major oversimplification of what they *really* want: engagement, feedback and face-to-face interaction. More so than any generation before them, millennial lawyers want to know that they're doing something worthwhile and rewarding. In fact, it's the number one characteristic they look for in a law firm, according to Cubicle Fugitive's report.

So, how do millennials find that sense of reward? By getting feedback, both positive and negative. Young lawyers are driven to achieve, but they want reassurance that they're on the right track along the way. If your firm doesn't prioritize mentorship and feedback, it's time to make it a permanent part of your culture.

3. Millennials are more likely to jump ship.

Perhaps the most persistent millennial stereotype is that none of them stay in a job for more than a few years. But this isn't true, and there are studies to back it up. The Pew Research Center found that "millennial workers ... are just as likely to stick with their employers as their older counterparts in Generation X when they were young adults." The Cubicle Fugitive report also found that 61 percent of respondents are planning to stay at their current firm and hope to become a partner.

Then why *do* young lawyers leave their firms? Some simply realize they'd rather work in-house. But 27 percent of respondents said they don't see any opportunity for growth in their current positions, and one in ten said they were going to leave because of poor firm culture. These issues stem from bad firm management, not from the personality traits of young lawyers. Millennials are loyal, so long as their employers give them a reason to stay.

4. Millennials don't take the initiative to understand their firms.

Alarming, 37 percent of millennial lawyers have little to no understanding of their firm's business strategy. That's a problem, especially for purpose-driven people who need to know the big picture to connect to their jobs.

To put it bluntly, if associates don't understand the firm's strategy, leaders are to blame. Whether it's just not communicated well enough or, worse, there is no strategy, it's on the leaders to right the ship. To retain young talent, firms should make sure new associates are introduced to every aspect of the firm and partners need to be transparent about major firm decisions and changes.

5. Millennials are digital addicts.

Sure, millennials are comfortable with technology and they can pick up new things in a snap, but it's dismissive to think that millennials don't know how to read a book or use a paper and pencil. It's not a bad thing that young people are more comfortable with email than a fax machine — it's just the changing of the times.

The real problem here is that many law firms are slow to adapt. Of course, a millennial used to the latest technology is going to stick out in an outdated office. If you overhear your young associates complaining, "I wish we had [inset technology here]," it might be a sign to listen and consider some updates.

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