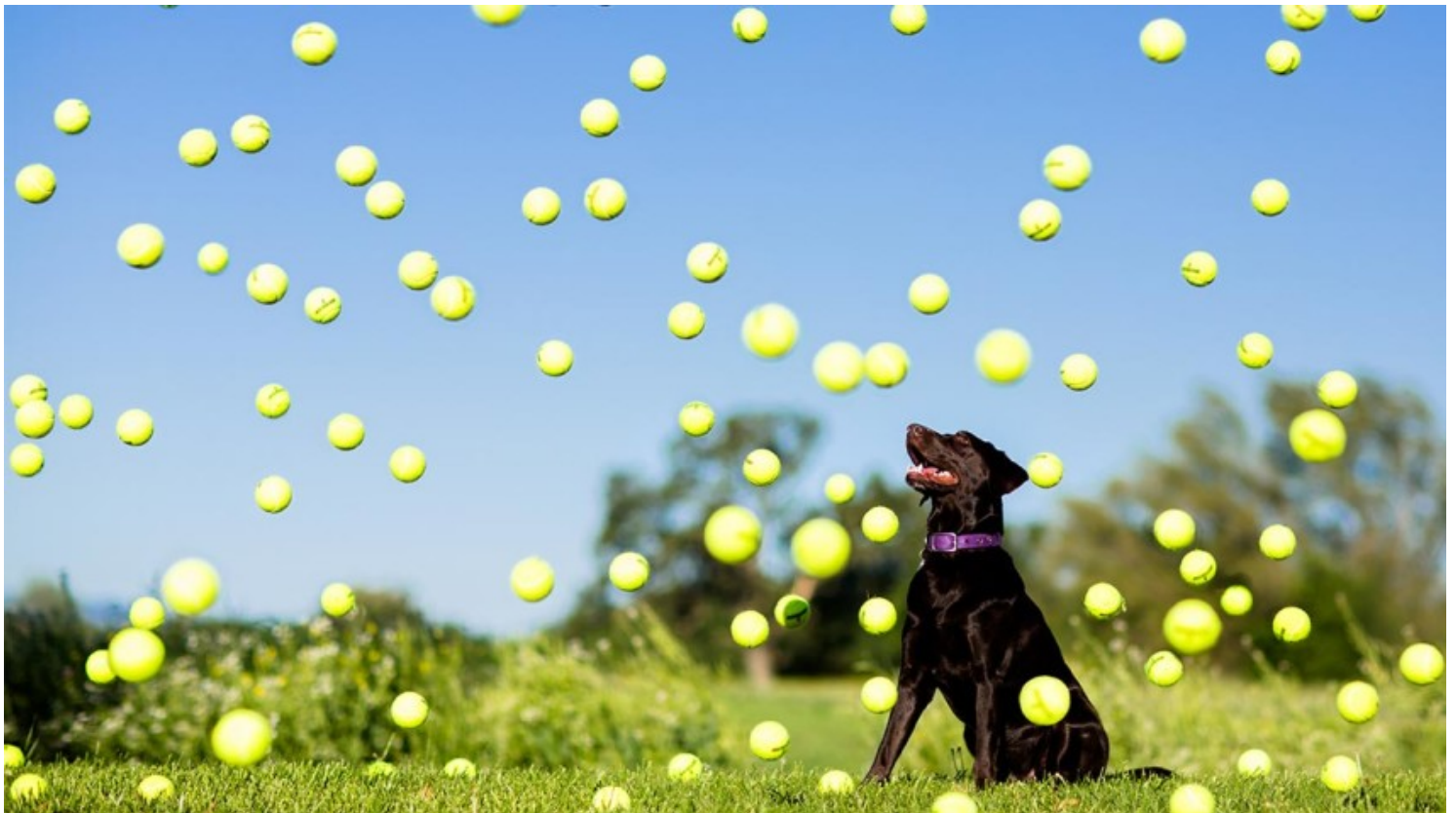


What Facebook Knows About Engaging Millennial Employees

by Lori Goler

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Millennials now outnumber Gen Xers in the American workplace. According to data from Pew Research, they constitute more than one-third of all U.S. employees, and by 2025 they will make up 44% of the national workforce. Facebook holds the distinction of being the first *Fortune* 500 company to be founded and led by a Millennial, and we pride ourselves on having built a workplace that is designed by and for this generation. So what does it take to attract and retain Millennial talent?

Through employee surveys conducted over the past seven years, we've found that Millennials' wants and needs are strikingly similar to those of colleagues from different generations. They're looking for jobs that give them a sense of fulfillment or meaning, allow them to be authentic and

play to their strengths, offer opportunities for learning and growth, and empower them to take initiative.

Fulfillment. Millennials want to do meaningful work and be a part of something that will have a positive impact on the world. Some might characterize this attitude as demanding and self-centered – asking for too much from a job. But our data indicates that at Facebook – and probably many other organizations – people of all generations have begun to redefine fulfillment in this way. It’s what Chip Conley, founder of Joie de Vivre hotels, calls finding “meaning *at* work and meaning *in* work.” We know from our internal data that having real, personal impact at work is part of achieving that meaning. One way we create this is by encouraging engineers who join the company to choose their team, basing the decision in part on where they believe they will have the most meaningful impact, and in part on organizational needs.

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Authenticity. Millennials are often dismissed as narcissists because they share a lot – often on Facebook! It’s true they’re more likely to post a selfie than other generations, but many have argued that they’re no more self-absorbed than other cohorts, perhaps even less so. In our view, there’s nothing wrong with expressing one’s true

self, both at home and at the office. Doing so translates into closer work-life integration and leaders who are more authentic and thus more effective. In fact, this idea is an excellent reflection of the way we use the Facebook product internally to collaborate and communicate with each other about work, build communities around common interests, and share information about our personal lives.

Strengths. Millennials play to their individual strengths, not because they’re too lazy or too afraid to try new things but because they want to perform to the best of their abilities and achieve what psychologists call a “flow state” – operating like athletes or musicians at the top of their game. When their jobs don’t meet this criteria, Millennials are more likely to move on to a new role, leave the organization, or quit. That’s not entirely crazy. In a 10-year McKinsey study cited in this HBR article, top executives reported being five times as productive in a flow state. Since we know a focus on strengths benefits people of every generation as well as the organization, we work hard to match our people with opportunities that align with their skills and interests. We strive to build roles for people instead of force-fitting them into preexisting ones. For example, we let people

decide whether they want to become managers or remain individual contributors. You don't have to manage to move up. There are parallel career tracks all the way to some of the most senior roles, so that people can keep doing what they're best at, whether it's writing code or leading a team.

Learning. Even as Millennials exercise their strengths, they also appreciate learning opportunities. They want real-time feedback, ongoing coaching, and stretch development opportunities sooner and more frequently than traditional corporate cultures provide. We've found that people of any generation value and benefit from that emphasis on continuous growth, and we encourage it at all levels of the organization. Consider CEO Mark Zuckerberg's response when, several years ago, an intern told him that he needed to work on his public speaking. After thanking his critic for the feedback, Mark continued to practice at our weekly internal Q&As and external speaking opportunities. And we went on to hire the bold intern.

Initiative. Another common criticism of Millennials centers on their "sense of entitlement." They don't wait for a seat at the table. They want to be agents in the action, and they choose their own leaders, often unofficially or outside the traditional hierarchy. But the result is not anarchy. It's innovation that energizes both the individual and the company. That's why we encourage people at all levels to put forward ideas and take the initiative to implement them. The now-famous "rainbow filter," which allowed people to use their Facebook profile photos to publicly celebrate the Supreme Court's same-sex marriage ruling, was, for example, the brainchild of two interns. They had not been asked or assigned to create it, nor were profile pages the focus of their respective work. But they saw an opportunity and ran with it.

Facebook is a company of nearly 12,000 people in more than 65 offices across 30 countries around the world, with a family of apps that includes Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger. We're excited to have a healthy population of Millennial employees whose engagement and preferences have paved the way for a new kind of culture at work in which all generations thrive. Given demographic trends, we encourage other organizations to do the same.



Lori Goler is the head of people at Facebook.

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