



WORKPLACE MAY 29, 2019

# Millennials Worry About the Environment -- Should Your Company?

BY JENNIFER ROBISON



## STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Gallup finds that millennials' concerns about global warming is at a high point
- A climate-focused corporate social responsibility may be meaningful to younger generations

- If a company's effort is false or half-hearted, it may drive people away
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The function of a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative is to make a positive impact -- or, at least, curtail a negative one -- on a business' customers, employees, shareholders, suppliers and community.

Leaders are interested in CSR involvement for moral reasons, of course, but for business purposes as well.

As BlackRock CEO Larry Fink wrote in his 2018 letter to investors:

"Society is demanding that companies, both public and private, serve a social purpose. To prosper over time, every company must not only deliver financial performance, but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society."

Fink is right -- research shows that most customers want companies to take a stand on social issues and that they have more respect for CEOs who, as one exec told Gallup, "Do what government doesn't."

There's no shortage of issues on which a company can take a stand, but leaders should take note of a recent Gallup Poll, which found that, "the public's concern about global warming and belief that humans are responsible [for it] are holding steady at or near the trend high points."

And the poll found that 67% of people aged 18 to 29 and 49% of those aged 30 to 49 say global warming is real, man-made and a serious threat.

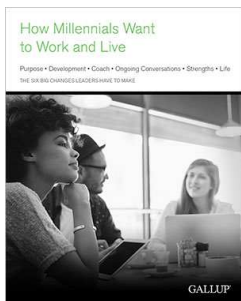
So, if millennials or Gen Z are a significant part of a business' employee or market base, a CSR program of environmental sustainability might do more than combat climate change -- it could ally your company with a very demanding generation as well.

**Millennials make up the largest portion of the workforce today -- and they're worth \$1 trillion in consumer spending.**

In Gallup's report *How Millennials Want to Work and Live*, millennials are an exceptionally purpose-driven generation. "That's the way we've always done it," doesn't cut it with millennials, and they expect leaders and managers to adapt to their standards in the workplace and in society.

Moreover, the report finds millennials are three times more likely than any other age group to have changed jobs in the last year, the least likely to believe they'll be in the same job in a year, and the least engaged of all employees or customers.

They're also worth \$1 trillion in consumer spending and 73% say they'd spend more for sustainable products.



## REPORT

### How Millennials Want to Work and Live

Discover what millennials want and what that means for the future of your organization.

Clearly, millennials want to find meaning where they work and shop, and environmental sustainability is important to them. Creating an environmental CSR program would connect both the millennial need for mission and the corporate need to serve a social purpose.

Unless, that is, global warming is *not* important to your company or your customers. In that case, selecting environmental sustainability might be a serious mistake.

## What aligns with your company's purpose, brand and culture?

Gallup has examined the pitfalls and advantages of corporate brand associations, and while brand alliances and CSR initiatives are different, Gallup's advice to leaders remains the same: Only get involved with causes that align to the company's purpose, brand and culture.

There are dangers associated with claiming interest in an issue that is foreign to or in opposition to the brand -- either the initiative will alienate customers and employees, or the CSR program will ring false. Even if leaders aren't investing in a CSR initiative to foster customer trust in the brand, they certainly don't want to provoke public cynicism.

So, if environmental sustainability does not suit your company's purpose, brand and culture, look for something that does. The list of causes and communities that need support is endless.

Select one that's a genuine fit for your culture, even if the fit is not instantly obvious to outsiders.

For example, Marriott's Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln, Nebraska, has an artist-in-residence program -- complete with studio space and a stipend -- because, as The Cornhusker says, "Woven throughout the cultural fiber of our hotel is a long-standing passion for the arts."

The hotel's program may be quirky, but it's true to the brand.

## **Find a natural fit that connects with younger generations and your target audience.**

If combatting global warming *is* a genuine concern and a natural fit for your company, developing a CSR program in response makes sense -- especially if millennials and Gen Z are important to you.

More than any other age group, they are, "highly worried about global warming, think it will pose a serious threat in their lifetime, believe it's the result of human activity, and think news reports about it are accurate or underestimate the problem," as the poll shows.

And more than any other age group, they search for meaning from their work and purpose in their patronage.

By making a meaningful contribution to solve a problem that is of particular concern to younger workers and your target customers, a business can accomplish two

important objectives for every dollar spent: Save the world and earn millennials' respect.

**Learn how to connect your company's social responsibility to what matters most to your employees and customers:**

- [Download Gallup's report on \*How Millennials Want to Work and Live\*](#)
- Learn more about creating [an employee experience that aligns with your purpose, brand and culture](#)
- Partner with us to learn how to make lasting connections with your [customers](#)

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## Millennials Want Jobs to Be Development Opportunities

Millennials desire opportunities to learn and grow in their jobs -- but they're struggling to find ones they think are worthwhile.

REPORT

## How Millennials Want to Work and Live

71% of millennials are either not engaged  
or actively disengaged at work

May 29, 2019

Gallup <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/257786/millennials-worry-environment-company.aspx>

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