

# The Millennial Inquirer

## Gen Y as a springboard for change in the workplace

Millennials, Gen Y, Echo Boomers, First Digitals — these are just a few of the names that describe the next generation to enter the workforce. Born between 1980 and 1994, Millennials are children of Baby Boomers and are just as strong in numbers. Seventy-plus million in all, they will fill the labor gap left behind by their parents.

If we look at numbers alone, the imminent labor gap won't be a problem. Ability shouldn't be a problem either — Millennials are motivated and innovative, well

educated, and nimble. So why is attracting and engaging this new breed of talent such a challenge?

Millennials bring a new set of expectations and sense of purpose to the workplace, but they need special attention. While salary is still a piece of the puzzle, personal growth and making a difference are just as important, especially when it comes to retention. At the end of the day, a better fit benefits both sides of the equation — setting up your company and your employees for long-term growth.

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### TAKE ACTION — *designing for The Millennial Inquirer*

1.

#### *Show your colors*

Let applicants in on all your passions and perks. Black-box hiring doesn't work for experience-savvy, values-driven Millennials.

2.

#### *Rethink compensation*

Define compensation as broadly as Millennials do for a potential win-win. Millennials aren't just saying, "Show me the money."

3.

#### *Engage through opportunities*

Diverse experiences — ways to grow and learn — are a must for Millennials. Show them the next challenge, before they're off to their next job.

4.

#### *Change to benefit all*

Millennials may be driving change, but the changes can benefit everyone. Consider the good of your entire organization when responding to Millennials' ambitions.

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## Out of office and online

After Jillian completed her master's at Northeastern she knew she wanted to stay in Boston. A participant in the university's work-study co-op program between the university and local companies, she had three internships under her belt and a local network. Her outlook was good.

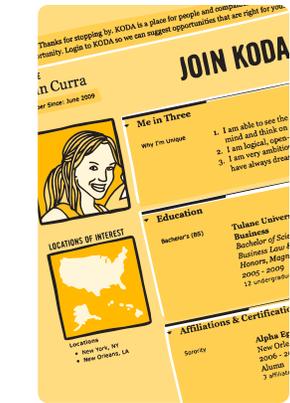
Then the application process started. Frustrated by impersonal online job postings, Jillian wanted to walk down the street and submit her applications in person. "I feel like I'm putting my résumé through a slit in a giant wall and waiting for someone to open the window to let me in," she said.

When Jillian was "let in," she found interviews fake. "It's like being in a fish bowl," she says. Her one positive interview experience was for a marketing position with lululemon, a successful athletic apparel brand. "We went to the park and sat Indian style in the grass. It was much easier to speak freely." This experience set lululemon apart, and it became Jillian's top choice for employment.

*How might companies make the hiring experience a better reflection of the work experience? How might employers set up their applications and interviews to help Millennials reveal more about who they are?*



PATTERNS are a collection of shared thoughts, insights, and observations gathered through our work and the world around us. We invite you to join the conversation, so we can raise the bar and develop richer design thinking experiences collectively.



## Beyond the résumé

Nearing the end of college, Jeff and Tony noticed an unsettling trend: their friends, even the most talented of them, were struggling to find their way into the working world. For Jeff and Tony, the question wasn't, "What's wrong with our friends?" Rather, it was, "What's wrong with this process?"

It didn't take long to uncover the problem: a generation of super-communicators, masters of digital media, confined to a black-and-white one-pager to show what they have to offer. This disconnect is what Jeff and Tony hope to rectify through KODA.us, the "opportunity community" they launched early in 2009.

KODA's rich profiles create context for the types of information that define and attract the "emerging workforce": life experience, work environment, and opportunities for growth. The philosophy behind the service is that the more real information available, the more likely employers and applicants are going to find a good fit — a win-win situation.

*How might companies facilitate transparency across hiring (ongoing orientation) and reviews? How might employers encourage proactive self-disclosure to set more accurate expectations?*

**Be a pattern spotter:** Now that you've been exposed to a few different examples, don't be surprised if you start seeing *The Millennial Inquirer* patterns all around. Keep your eyes open and let us know what you find, especially if it's the next new pattern.

## Benefits gap

"I don't understand benefits, but I'm curious: What do you offer in terms of training and development?" said Natasha, a 23-year-old top candidate. The first time he heard this question, Greg, a recruiter at The Gap, found himself wishing he had a better response.

Recently, Gap has adopted forward-looking and flexible practices to address concerns of Millennials. According to Greg, "It's not only about Millennials, but they are the driving force." One notable accommodation is that the company now offers flextime. "In addition to a more flexible schedule, flextime allows employees to be better to the environment by working from home and to volunteer during work hours."

Natasha's next query stumped Greg: "Do you offer iPod training?" He hadn't heard of such a thing, but learned that it's a way for employees to take courses on their own schedule. "It's all part of ensuring work/life balance," he explained. "Practices and norms just haven't caught up to workers' expectations."

*How might companies create a menu of benefits allowing employees to select what matters most to them? How might companies create flexible and continuous opportunities to learn?*



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## Hiring rules

IDEO-employee Joe logs into Facebook and what does he see? A highly targeted ad from a guy named Eric: I want to work at IDEO. After virtually interviewing the company and self-selecting himself for the job, Eric found a unique channel through which to apply. While reactions ranged from "clever" to "creepy," it's hard to deny that Eric and other Millennials are changing the rules of the job search.

## Friend referrals

For Millennials, a referral from a friend is more than a way to get one's résumé to the top of the pile. "My impression of a company comes from my friends and their experience," says Ben, a recent Harvard grad. "They know me, they know the company, and they can tell if I'd be a good fit."



## The free MBA

In December 2008, bestselling business author Seth Godin, announced in a blog post that he would be offering an "audacious" 6-month alternative MBA — for free. He said, "I'm convinced there are people out there who — given the right teaching, encouragement, and opportunity — can change the world." The post struck a major cord, attracting 48,000 views and 340 applications for a total of 9 spots.

**Contact:** Get in touch with us for all that is pattern related at [patterns@ideo.com](mailto:patterns@ideo.com) or visit us at <http://patterns.ideo.com>.