Workplace Engagement and Generational Differences in Values

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Abstract

This article summarizes literature on workplace engagement, an issue that affects organizations' financial results and individuals' personal lives. The newest of the four generations in the workplace, Millennials, were recently shown to have different values than the other two prevalent generations. Surveys taken by 16,000 high school seniors of three generations on intrinsic, extrinsic, social, leisure, and altruistic values at work show only the altruistic value is not statistically different. When aggregated, these generational differences have noticeable practical impact. In the classroom, engagement is essential to learning. Examples of engaging activities that address the Millennials' values are provided.

This article provides a survey of the literature on workplace engagement, and explains how the values of the newest generation in the workforce, the Millennials, differ from previous generations. These value differences may diminish the effectiveness of employers' efforts to increase engagement, similar to the way differing values also may reduce our own effectiveness in the classroom.

Information on engagement in the workplace is of interest to *Business Communication Quarterly* readers for three reasons: First, we teach audience analysis, for which an understanding of how these differing perspectives developed is helpful. Second, as we increasingly teach online classes with diverse audiences, our own

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classes may include multiple generations. Third, as we consult with organizations, we may find that they are using the same erroneous strategies as those discussed here. An exploration of employees' underlying values can illuminate more effective approaches toward engagement.

Other parallels exist. In the workplace, four generations may work side by side, similar to the presence of multiple generations in our online classes. Classroom teachers rise to similar challenges as do workplace practitioners, who are charged with increasing employee engagement in ways that are perceived as fair and equally appealing to all employees, while meeting their diverse needs, interests, and values. Both universities and organizations have invested substantial resources to recruit, retain, and engage the Millennials, yet overall workplace engagement continues at dismal levels. Many of the attempts to engage employees to be discussed here may have fallen short due to unrecognized differences in generational values, which will be explained. I will close with suggestions from the literature on how the Millennials' distinct value preferences might be addressed in the classroom.

The four generations currently in the workplace include the Silent Generation, also known as Traditionalists (1925-1945); Baby Boomers (1946-1964); Generation X or GenX (1965-1981); and the Millennials (1982-1999). The latter are also known as Net Gen, Gen Y, GenerationMe, Gen Net, and Digital Natives. A generation is typically described as having been born within a specified range of birth years. Smith and Clurman (1998) argued that those within a generation share "the life experiences of their formative years" (p. 3). They include life experiences such as pop culture, economic conditions, world events, natural disasters, and technology. However, consistent birth years among researchers are generally agreed for only the first two generations, Silents and Boomers. The first birth year for GenX, according to the great majority of researchers cited in this article is either 1964 or 1965, with a generally accepted end date for this generation of 1980 or 1981. Consistent birth years for both GenX and the Millennials are likely to become firmer with time. Today, however, the first year of Millennials' birth varies from about 1977 to 1982, with the narrower range of 1980-1981 used by most researchers shown here. Given the end date of 1981 for the GenXers, I have adopted the birth year of 1982 for Millennials. Such slight variations are typically not an issue across the large samples discussed here because those born in adjacent birth years are regarded as having been very close to the same shared defining experiences (Parry & Urwin, 2010). Therefore, the data presented in this article may be deemed comparable, as generational changes are generally understood to describe gradual but steady changes over time "rather than sudden shifts at birth year cutoffs" (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010, p. 1120).

The forces that influence and form these distinct generational cohorts are thought to be strongest during childhood and early adolescence (Twenge et al., 2010). Boomers, for example, are said to have been shaped by the advent of television. In 1950, only 12% of American households had televisions. Eight years later, 83% had at least one (Tapscott, 2009). Traditionally structured families gathered around the television, as the Silent Generation had gathered around the radio. Boomers saw as well as heard the

civil rights movement, the women's movement, nightly protests against U.S. actions in Vietnam, and the assassinations of John F. Kennedy; his brother, Robert Kennedy; and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. (Tapscott, 2009).

GenX children were not as likely to gather with family around the television, as families were increasingly likely to be composed of single parents facing workplace demands, or dual-income earners who alternated child-care responsibilities. GenX-ers were the first "latchkey" kids, who let themselves into the house after school and watched television unsupervised until a caregiver (usually mom) came home. This generation grew up with Sesame Street, learned about AIDS as it became an epidemic, and watched the Berlin Wall fall (Twenge et al., 2010). Despite a marked decline in the birth rate in the 1970s that resulted in a 15% decline in the number of GenXers (Tapscott, 2009), they, unlike the Boomers, were confronted with high unemployment and keen competition for jobs, as the Boomers had filled most positions. The economic difficulties were compounded with the layoffs and corporate downsizings of the recessionary early 1980s.

As the economy recovered, so did the birth rate, bringing a second boom with the arrival of the Millennials. Televisions moved to the background, as computers now made information available 24/7 for this generation. By 1994, 35% of schools provided access to the Internet in school (Tapscott, 2009). In 2003, Oblinger reported survey results showing that 94% of 12- to 17-year-olds used the Internet for research on school assignments, and 78% thought the Internet useful for school work. Computers informed people of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the Gulf War, and the scandal-ridden downfall of major corporations (Tapscott, 2009; Twenge et al., 2010). Such national events as Columbine in 1999 and several child kidnappings led to a cultural shift from a lack of supervision to the opposite extreme, where parents became overly involved in their children's lives (Tulgan, 2009). Parents attempted to protect their children from not only life-threatening events but also ego-damaging occurrences, such as failing grades. Children's self-esteem was continually nurtured with praise (Tapscott, 2009). Rather than exploring the out-of-doors, protected children played indoors on video games, an interactive experience in which they experientially learned what actions were successful to increase their scores or vanquish an opponent, lessons that were immediately reinforced. Recent research has led to the hypothesis that children's brains stimulated by digital technology may differ in both physical structure and function, especially if the stimulation occurs during critical periods of brain development such as early childhood and adolescence (Tapscott, 2009). Specific examples of differences include the ability to process fast-moving images more quickly and the ability to "access, sort, categorize, and remember" information well (Tapscott, 2009, p. 30).

A few authors have taken issue with the concept of a generation and inherent differences (Parry & Urwin, 2010; Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2010). However, the concept has been generally well received in the popular literature and accepted among employers (Alsop, 2008; Gilbert, 2011; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Sahoo & Sahu, 2009; Tapscott, 2009; Tulgan, 2009). An understanding of generations is now broadly accepted as a resource for the classroom (Hartman & McCambridge, 2011; Kassing,

Piemonte, Goman, & Mitchell, 2012; Taylor, 2010). The final frontier, academic theory, appears also to be accepting generational differences as the evidence continues to grow (Fairlie, 2011; Shuck, 2011; Twenge et al., 2010).

Engagement Definitions and Benefits

A key fact emerging from the breadth of literature on workplace engagement is that researchers have developed numerous definitions. This article will emphasize definitions from the academic literature, as practitioner definitions vary by organization (BlessingWhite, Inc., 2011). Typically, employer definitions include components of commitment, work ethic, loyalty, and satisfaction; the result is often a confounding of variables (Shuck, 2011). An example is consultant researchers BlessingWhite, Inc.' s (2011) own assertion that employees "need to find purpose and satisfaction" in work (p. 5). Thus, the firm's model of engagement includes both the employee's contribution to the company and the personal satisfaction the individual derives; the firm insists that the two should be in "alignment" (p. 5). Academic definitions tend to parse the components and proceed in multiple directions. The exact definition will be quoted to avoid any misinterpretations due to semantics.

The seminal academic definition developed by Kahn (1990) identifies engagement as "the harnessing" of the self to one's role at work. The self is expressed "physically, cognitively, and emotionally . . ." (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). Later authors described work engagement as exceeding both basic motivation and work ethic. Instead, Schaufeli, Martinez, Marques Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker (2002) termed it a "positive, fulfilling, and work-related state of mind . . ." (p. 465). The state of mind terminology suggests that engagement is the outcome of many variables over a period of time. Macey, Schneider, Barbera, and Young's (2009) definition is consistent in that engaged employees choose to work harder. Their engaged employees "are [those who are] more *likely to* [italics added] work harder through increased levels of discretionary effort" (as cited in Bakker, 2011, p. 265).

Shuck (2011) provides an in-depth academic literature review, in which he categorizes the breadth of definitions according to four perspectives. Shuck contrasts Kahn's (1990) need-satisfying framework; Maslach, Shaufeli, and Leiter's (2001) antithesis of burnout; Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes's (2010) satisfaction-engagement notion; and Saks's (2006) multidimensional approach. Bakker (2011), who espouses the antithesis of burnout approach, claims that "arguably the most often used definition of work engagement" (p. 265) is that of Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), who find engagement to be "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (p. 295). In this definition, vigor requires both high energy and "mental resilience" at work (Bakker, 2011, p. 265). Such mental resilience might also be termed "persistence when facing difficulties" (Kassing et al., 2012, p. 241). Many of us can relate to the need for persistence. Dedication requires not only the strong involvement we would expect but also reward for the employee who experiences "a sense of significance, enthusiasm, and challenge" (Bakker, 2011, p. 265).

Finally, absorption is reserved for those who are "happily engrossed" in their work (Bakker, 2011, p. 265). Although we can see a common thread here, consensus on the specifics of a satisfactory definition has eluded both academics and practitioners.

Practitioners' definitions also vary by organization (BlessingWhite, Inc., 2011); however, employers commonly strive to increase their employees' engagement, which is reputed to have multiple, far-reaching benefits (Kumar & Sia, 2012; Sahoo & Sahu, 2009). Quantifiable benefits include increased net revenue (22%), improved earnings before taxes (43%), reduced team member turnover (19%), and lower workers' compensation claims (27%; Williams, 2010). Hewitt Associates found "high-engagement firms" reported a 19% higher total shareholder return than average in 2009 (as cited by BlessingWhite, Inc., 2011, p. 7). In addition, high engagement has been linked with improved employee retention, product quality, and improved customer service, resulting in increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. The benefits have further payoff with increased employee loyalty and advocacy on the firm's behalf (Kumar & Sia, 2012).

Employers' Attempts to Increase Engagement

For employers to achieve the benefits of employee engagement, it is necessary to have an understanding of the "drivers" that increase engagement, and the opposing "threats" or perceived reductions in the driver that would diminish engagement (as discussed below). Such threats jeopardized subject firms' performance in 2009, as measured by total shareholder return, to 44% *below* average (BlessingWhite, Inc., 2011). The variables assessed to determine engagement levels are not totally controllable by either employer or employee, as interactions with colleagues and supervisors are part of the dynamic. However, in one study of 6,500 managers across six companies, researchers found the most important engagement drivers were the employee's relationship with the immediate supervisor responsible for "managing [the employee's] performance" and the employees' own "career opportunities" for advancement in the company (Gilbert, 2011, p. 2). In fact, "managing performance" (Gilbert, 2011, p. 2) was the most frequent engagement driver. This indicator refers to Millennials getting immediate, frequent, and direct feedback on their job performance. Just as managing performance can enhance engagement, so too can poor supervisory management damage employees' engagement. The most important threat to engagement was "employer reputation," which could diminish an employee's pride in the company. Accurate information on drivers and threats to engagement is vital, as human resource departments then can design interventions to increase the drivers and attempt to reduce the threats, thus presumably also increasing benefits to the organization (Bakker, 2011).

Interventions to improve the drivers of engagement may be considered necessary due to a worldwide average engagement level of only 31% (BlessingWhite, Inc., 2011), only slightly better than Gebauer and Lowman's (2008) finding of worldwide engagement levels at about 20% of the global workforce. In the more recent data,

BlessingWhite, Inc. (2011) found specific engagement levels varied from a high of 37% in India to a low of 17% in China. North America follows Australia with engagement levels of 33% and 36%, respectively, with Europe (30%) and Southeast Asia (26%) completing the areas assessed. In addition to geographic differences in engagement, BlessingWhite, Inc. also identified generational differences, using Millennials' birth years as 1978-1994.

North America may be unique in having generations in the workplace that differ in their numerical proportions, as some other locations, notably Japan and Western Europe, did not experience a baby boom after World War II (Tapscott, 2009). Of the four generations BlessingWhite, Inc. studied in North America, the Boomers emerged as the most engaged (39%), followed by GenXers at 35%, Millennials at 16%, and the Silent Generation at a mere 10% (BlessingWhite, Inc., 2011). In general, engagement correlated with rank, length of time employed in the organization, and with departments "closer to clients" (BlessingWhite, Inc., 2011, p. 10). Boomers at the peak of their careers might be expected to be most engaged. The issue is how to increase the engagement of other generations, especially the newest entrants to the workforce, the Millennials, who have a reputation for expecting inflated salaries, quick advancement, and work they enjoy. They find that many entry-level tasks fail to meet their standards for challenging, meaningful tasks (Tulgan, 2009), a possible explanation for their low engagement.

Responding to this issue of engagement is a challenge that practitioners are under increasing pressure to meet, due to the necessity of replacing the soon-to-retire Traditionalists and Baby Boomers. The first of the 75 million Baby Boomers (Tapscott, 2009) turned 66 years of age in 2012. The generation that followed, GenX, cannot alone fill the vacant positions due to being 15% less populous than the Baby Boomers (Tapscott, 2009). However, the Millennials (born since 1982) are a growing segment of the workforce that already exceeds the Baby Boomers, previously the largest generation ever (Tapscott, 2009). Engagement of the younger generations is crucial for employers who wish to gain and retain the best and the brightest of this large group.

Interventions have been tried before. Since at least the late 20th century, HR departments have sponsored a variety of efforts to increase engagement levels among the GenXers, the workforce's then-newest entrants. Employers attempted to lure top recruits at that time with "fun" in the workplace (Bakke, 2005; Gavin & Mason, 2004; Schullery, 2005).

However, Millennials pose challenges beyond those presented by the GenXers, due to the former's high self-esteem and high expectations (Tulgan, 2009). Combined with the Millennials' reluctance to give whole-hearted effort to anything they find less-than-meaningful work, the cohort has gained a reputation as "entitled," (Alsop, 2008, p. 24) rather than as willing to work their way up. Thus, engaging the Millennials is critical, not only to enjoy the benefits noted above but also to avoid increased turnover, as Millennials are thought to job-hop if not engaged (Alsop, 2008; Hartman & McCambridge, 2011). According to Tapscott (2009), employers who have been successful in attracting the youngest generation realize that "for Net Gen-ers [Millennials], work should be fun. Net Gen-ers see no clear dividing line between the two" (p. 92).

Recent examples of employers' efforts to engage their employees include Google's provision of pool tables and a baby grand piano, and allowance for roller hockey in the parking lot (Alsop, 2008). Google has also provided a rock-climbing wall on site, a company pool, and a beach volleyball pit (Tapscott, 2009). Others have reported amenities such as meditation rooms at eBay, and as much as 5 weeks time off in an employee's first year at KPMG (Twenge et al., 2010). To attract the most talented recruits Microsoft can find to its campus headquarters near Seattle, Washington, the company offers a private lake, 25 cafeterias, football, baseball, soccer, and volleyball (Tapscott, 2009). The quantifiable success of these interventions is unknown, due to the use of privately controlled assessment instruments and the proprietary nature of the data found. In general, as the number of companies offering "fun" has increased, we can conclude that management believes that offering fun in the workplace is a successful strategy toward improved engagement of Millennials. However, a 16% engagement rate among Millennials (BlessingWhite, Inc., 2011) suggests fun is not the final answer. And, an additional downside exists.

Special amenities for Millennials have sometimes raised the ire of older generations who were not so favored and find the perceived inconsistency unfair (Tulgan, 2009). In addition, anecdotal reports of these interventions toward improved engagement of the youngest generation have raised debate as to whether such efforts are worthwhile and needed, or whether this generation simply sees themselves as "entitled" (Alsop, 2008, p. 24). One way employers have tried to balance benefits to older workers is by developing two-way mentoring plans (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). The employer, recognizing the Millennial's prowess with technology, pairs the younger employee with a more experienced worker. The older employee provides a proverbial wing to shelter the new arrival and guide the individual through the organizational context toward success (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). In turn, the Millennials share their technological expertise with the older employees, who may be struggling to unlearn old habits and embrace new productivity tools. These matches are often beneficial to both parties and to the employer, which gains two energized employees.

Meeting Millennials' demands for work they enjoy and providing unlimited "fun" shows a lack of leadership, in Tulgan's view (2009, p. 16). He instead advises strong leadership and commitment to "high-maintenance management" (Tulgan, 2009, p. 17) to provide, not what Millennials want, but what they need. According to Tulgan (2009), managers should insist that Millennials meet the organization's standards, while meeting Millennials' desire for work that is engaging: "They want to learn, to be challenged, and to understand the relationship between their work and the overall mission of the organization. They want . . . some flexibility in where, when, and how they work" (Tulgan, 2009, p. 13). Managers who "guide, direct, and support them every step of the way" will be rewarded, he says, with exceptionally high performance from this newest workforce.

To provide the best guidance for the Millennials, it is helpful to be aware of recent research that has identified differences in generational values. These values exert direct influence on attitudes and behaviors. Twenge et al. (2010) reasoned that if differing attitudes and behaviors are caused by value-based differences, then differences in generational behaviors may reflect differing values due to varied influences in

childhood and early adolescence. The researchers studied differences in work values, which are conceptualized as "outcomes people desire and feel they should attain through work" (Twenge et al., 2010, p. 1121). Twenge et al. sought differences among Boomers, GenX, and the Millennials, whose childhood and early adult experiences with the economy, cultural changes, and technology have differed markedly. Unlike previous cross-sectional design studies that surveyed current employees of varied ages, Twenge et al. (2010) reviewed existing data on values gathered from high school seniors and argued that the worldview or values formed by then remain consistent through early adulthood and even throughout one's entire life.

Twenge et al. (2010) examined questionnaires administered to 16,507 graduating high school seniors in their 18th year: 1976 for Boomers, 1991 for GenX, and 2006 for Millennials. The birth years of these 18-year-olds are at the approximate midpoint of the generational range. The results are unique among generational studies in examining a consistent age group, thereby separating the effects of age and longevity on the job (Twenge et al., 2010). This research also reviewed the largest number of subjects of any research to date, and used a cross section of subjects, as opposed to the narrower groups used in smaller samples for studies of building trade workers (Real, Mitnick, & Maloney, 2010), hospitality management employees (Chen & Choi, 2008), and Canadian knowledge workers (Lyons, Duxbury, & Higgins, 2005). Of these, only Lyons et al. (2005) used a comparable scale. Their results agreed with Twenge et al. in that altruism was more important to Boomers than to Millennials; however, other results differed. The differences may be explained due to the different measurement instrument, smaller sample size, or cultural differences. The other studies focused on other qualities important in the context of their workplaces.

Because of the large magnitude of the sample and the methodology of comparing subjects of the same age, the Twenge et al. (2010) results will be discussed here. By using data from the same survey with different generations at the same age, the researchers controlled more variables than other studies. They obtained consistent measures of the high school students' values related to job stability, leisure time, and 23 different job characteristics. These measures quantified distinct differences in values categorized as extrinsic, intrinsic, altruistic, social, and leisure. The responses by the high school seniors on the 5-point Likert-type scale at age 18 years can be expected to be consistent with employees' preferences in their work lives, as noted above. Statistical measures of significant differences were used to determine if GenX and Millennials' responses differed from those of the Boomers.

Differences in Work-Related Values Across Generations

Generational cohorts do hold similar values and differ from other cohorts. Significant differences in job values were found to exist across the generations (Twenge et al., 2010) and are summarized in Table 1. Significances are only shown for GenX and Millennials, as the differences are with respect to the Boomers, whose ratings established the baseline comparison. In Table 1, "1" designates the generation who agreed most

Table 1. Importance of Work-Related Values by Generation.

Value	Boomers	GenX	Millennials
Leisure	3	2*	1*
Extrinsic	3	1**	2*
Intrinsic	1	2	3*
Altruistic	1	2	3
Social	1	2	3*

Source. Data based on Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, and Lance (2010, pp. 1127-1129).
Note. Value of "1" indicates generation rating value most highly. Only the altruistic value showed no significant differences among generations.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

strongly on a 1 to 5 scale with statements relating to the value. For example, Boomers rated intrinsic values higher than did either the GenXers or Millennials, but only the Millennials' difference in rating was significant. In contrast, GenX ratings of extrinsic values significantly exceeded those given by both Boomers and Millennials. Both the GenX and Millennials differed significantly from the Boomers in rating extrinsic rewards related to work.

The results show that the Millennials are significantly more interested in extrinsic rewards than are Boomers, although Millennials are less interested than GenX. Although salaries and the material possessions that money can buy, as well as the accompanying prestige, were still important to Millennials, these are significantly *less important* than these values are to GenXers, who displayed "particularly pronounced" differences with the Boomers (Twenge et al., 2010, p. 1132). This value was the only one that did not change in a linear progression across the generations (Twenge et al., 2010).

In contrast, each generation is increasingly *less* likely to value intrinsic rewards as highly as the previous generation. The Boomers rated having interesting and challenging work most highly, while each successive generation has had slightly less interest. However, intrinsic rewards are still rated highly by all three generations. The Millennials differed significantly from both of the other generations, although GenXers and Boomers did not differ significantly from each other (Twenge et al., 2010).

Social rewards were similar to intrinsic rewards in having significantly *less value* to Millennials than to GenX, who did not differ significantly from Boomers. This most populous baseline group ranked the value most highly among all the generations, which is consistent with the Boomers' rating work as central to their lives (Twenge et al., 2010). In contrast, the Millennials' resulting low rating is surprising, given the younger group's avid interest in social media; they may simply wish to pursue friendships outside the work environment.

The least contrast among generations was in the value of altruistic rewards, which showed no significant differences across generations. In contrast to some theorists' expectations (Howe & Strauss, 2000), Millennials were slightly *less inclined* than either Boomers or GenXers to be attracted to a job that allows opportunities for volunteering during work hours, or where they have "an opportunity to be directly helpful

to others" (Twenge et al., 2010, pp. 1132-1133). Statistically, this value has equal appeal for all generations.

The strongest statistical change in value ratings was for leisure rewards at work, which was measured with questions related to a job that allows for self-paced work, work that is "mostly free of supervision," and time for "other things in your life," as well as increased vacation (Monitoring the Future Form 4 questions, as shown in Twenge et al., 2010, p. 1127). In fact, GenXers and Millennials were "progressively more likely" to value leisure at work (p. 1131), with each generation significantly *more likely* to value leisure than the preceding cohort. The Millennials' preference exceeded Cohen's (1977) generally accepted standard cutoff for a moderate effect size.

Although most of the generational differences found in values were limited to small to moderate effects (Twenge et al., 2010) in the aggregate, the differences are of practical importance. Notably, the Millennials as a group had a smaller standard deviation over the span of responses than either the GenX or Boomer generation (Twenge et al., 2010), indicating that the Millennials as a group are more like-minded than other generations. Across all generations tested, the survey respondents were shown to have interpreted the questions in a consistent way, ensuring that these value preferences are indeed generational differences in the category tested.

The above results shed light on why Millennials may be perceived as having an attitude of entitlement, as they value both leisure and extrinsic rewards highly. The impact of the importance of leisure at work helps explain the rise in employers' approach to providing fun at work, and the still-highly rated intrinsic value shows why Millennials want work itself to be rewarding, which *is* more fun. The preference for intrinsic rewards is consistent with Fairlie's (2011) contention that "meaningful work" is strongly correlated with employee engagement (p. 510). In academia, we see evidence of the leisure value (i.e., for "other things" in your life, Twenge et al., 2010, p. 1127) when students choose classes that meet twice a week rather than those meeting three times per week.

Pedagogical Application: Millennials in the Classroom

The distinct differences between the current generation (the Millennials) and preceding generations (GenX and Boomers) suggest a need for classroom adaptation to increase students' engagement, as ". . . it is clear that creating an active, engaging environment is key to learning for Millennials" (Werth & Werth, 2011, p. 14). Recognizing the preferences shown in Table 1 by the Millennial students who dominate many of our classrooms, we as teachers can use this information to inform our instruction. By addressing the Millennials' values, we are more likely to engage them and increase their learning.

Adaptation to the Millennials' values avoids the trap of mistaking "fun" as the complete answer to the engagement riddle. Nor is technology alone the answer, despite Millennials' early conditioning on video games. The video games as interactive, experiential learning tools, however, provide an example of learning as a "plug-and-play experience" in which Millennials not only learn, but also interact with the games in an enjoyable, challenging way, according to Alison Black (as cited in Werth

Table 2. Recent *Business Communication Quarterly* Resources on Engagement That Align With Millennials' Values.

Value(s) Addressed	Author(s)	Title
Leisure, social	Kelm (2011)	Social Media: It's What Students Do
Extrinsic	Brzovic and Matz (2009)	Students Advise Fortune 500 Company: Designing a Problem-Based Learning Community
Intrinsic	Pennell and Miles (2009)	"It Actually Made Me Think": Problem-Based Learning in the Business Communication Classroom
Intrinsic, social	Conn (2008)	Integrating Writing Skills and Ethics Training in Business Communication Pedagogy: A Resume Case Study Exemplar
Intrinsic, social	Meredith (2012)	Strategic Communication and Social Media: An MBA Course From a Business Communication Perspective
Social	Hartman and McCambridge (2011)	Optimizing Millennials' Communication Styles
Altruistic	Mabry (2011)	Tackling the Sustainability Dilemma: A Holistic Approach to Preparing Students for the Professional Organization

& Werth, 2011). Although Millennials' brains may function differently due to early exposure to digital technologies as noted earlier (Tapscott, 2009), their learning options are broader than video games. However, many of the same trial-and-error principles found in video games can be applied to learning business communication.

Experts in adult learning advocate moving away from lecturing Millennials to using the principles designed for teaching adults (Werth & Werth, 2011). Knowles (1980) identified four assumptions to make about maturing learners: (a) they gain self-direction; (b) they gather experience, a useful resource on which to build learning; (c) their focus on getting a job and succeeding in their careers tends to dominate motivation for learning; and (d) they expect what they learn to have immediate application. Teaching based on these assumptions becomes more student-directed, with the instructor facilitating rather than lecturing (Werth & Werth, 2011).

My suggestion is that one additional element be considered in the analysis of our student audiences to guide our facilitation of students' learning: Millennials' values. This article provides information on those values. This information, combined with the tested exercises and activities shown in previous articles in, for example, *Business Communication Quarterly*, offers additional opportunities for engagement and learning. Table 2 provides a sample of recent articles, categorized by and aligned with the Millennials' values. The table illustrates how each of the values can be addressed to reach a specific learning outcome. Those shown for "social" rewards address interpersonal skills, as the original value was measured on interest in making friends and

having contact with "a lot" of people (Twenge et al., 2010, p. 1128). Several of the articles could be used for more than one value.

The sample suggestions shown in Table 2 will challenge students with meaningful activities and assignments that build effective skills for and address their interest in obtaining career positions and advancing in those careers. These are only a sample of potential exercises provided by this journal's recent authors. Most of the sample exercises require critical thinking, and encourage development of the ability to articulate dissent, which is valued in engaged employees as necessary for accurate feedback and organizational improvement (Kassing et al., 2012). Addressing Millennials' values can help engage students in the classroom and give them practice for the workplace so that they are more independent and productive on the first day of employment.

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