The (Unofficial) Viventium Guide to Millennial Empowerment

Even though college gives you a solid basis, in the corporate world we're all still learning as we go. For many growing organizations, it's absolutely crucial to maintain an ongoing conversation with your millennial employees.

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When's the last time you heard or read something that truly resonated with you? Sounds like a dumb question, given the sheer amount of opinions circulating on the internet. But despite how many memes you might stumble upon that make you go, "omg that's so me," the phenomenon happens less frequently than you'd think. So when you come across a blog or a video or a speech that blows your mind, you kind of take a step back and think, "wow, they actually get me." (At this point, you might consider turning off the My Chemical Romance song that's been lowkey playing in the background of your life since middle school.) I experienced this reaction recently when I listened to Simon Sinek's interview on Millennials in the Workplace – if you haven't seen it yet, I highly recommend giving it fifteen minutes of your time. Sinek discusses why millennials are the way they are – and why they're perceived in a certain way by older generations. He breaks it down into four main factors:

parenting, technology, impatience, and environment. (For a compelling discussion of the impatience phenomenon, check out our CMO Terra's blog, Do You Have a Minute?) Sinek's argument is not perfect, obviously, and since the publication of the interview quite a few responses have popped up in opposition to his assertions. But he reveals what I believe to be some real truths about my generation as we all shift into the workplace. Possibly Sinek's most interesting commentary revolves around his fourth factor for millennial behavior: environment.

> *"...we put [millennials] in corporate environments that care more about the numbers than they do about the kids. They care more about the short-term gains than the life of this young human being. We care more about the year than the lifetime. We are putting them in corporate environments that are not helping them build their confidence. That aren't helping them learn the skills of cooperation. That aren't helping them overcome the challenges of a digital world and finding more balance."*

In his interview, Sinek challenges companies to create environments that help millennials succeed. And as I listened to this portion of his speech, I felt like Hermione Granger anxiously raising her hand in Professor Snape's class because she knows the answer. Because – and I say this with complete modesty – we've kind of figured it out over here. So, Mr. Sinek, I present to you Viventium's unofficial guide to building a work environment that will actually help millennial employees:

Trust us, you can trust us

Sinek points out (under his umbrella of "impatience") that one of the reasons millennials tend to job-hop is that they feel like they are not making enough of an impact in their current roles. While he has a point about learning patience – you can't save the world in a day – companies can help their millennial employees work toward making a real impact by giving them real responsibilities. Here at Viventium, each of our millennial employees (55% of our company's workforce, by the way) has a job with meaningful responsibility. From payroll to marketing to software development, there's no such thing as an entry-level job here that is solely busy work. And as a result, there's a collective sense here that our contributions matter to our organization.

Learning doesn't end in college

Even though college gives you a solid basis, in the corporate world we're all still learning as we go. That's what makes internships so valuable, but even a full resume of great internships isn't full preparation for everything you'll need to know. Learning is ongoing and needs to happen within the workplace for millennials to grow and succeed, for themselves and for their companies. And it doesn't have to be formal webinars or Lunch and Learn programs, either. In our marketing department, whenever a "teachable" moment arises in one of our meetings, our CMO takes the opportunity to talk us through an issue or share some of her own experience.

It's always a conversation

Open communication. It's the key to any successful relationship, including employers and employees. And for companies, it's absolutely crucial to maintain an ongoing conversation with your millennial employees. When I first joined Viventium, I was immediately informed of the open-door policy upon my welcome to the company – and the thing is, they truly meant it. That open, ongoing communication has allowed me and my fellow millennial coworkers to develop the right kind of rapport with our Gen-X and Baby Boomer coworkers, one that allows both sides to be honest and transparent about expectations and reactions. It's clear to us that the company cares about its millennial employees. And that makes all the difference. Simon Sinek is right – environment has a significant impact on millennial work performance. So manage your millennial talent the right way. You might be surprised with the results.

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