

Hudson

Millennial Professionals:

Eager to Make Their Mark

IF YOU'RE AN EMPLOYER AND YOU PICK UP ONE OF DOZENS OF ARTICLES ABOUT MILLENNIALS, THE GENERATION BORN AFTER ABOUT 1978, YOU'RE LIKELY TO HAVE AN ANXIETY ATTACK.

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You may read that these recent entrants to the workforce are difficult to manage, unwilling to work hard, crumble at even the most gentle criticism, turn to their parents for help on every decision and are ready to jump ship at a moment's notice.

But recent in-depth interviews conducted by Hudson with young knowledge workers tell a very different story. These workers, between 23 and 29 years old, are enthusiastic about their work, committed to their companies' success, eager to learn and get along very well with their supervisors and other co-workers. You can put the anti-anxiety medication back in the bottle.

The Hudson survey respondents work in a variety of industries, including IT, financial services, legal, marketing, consulting, automotive and construction. They all have at least a bachelor's degree, and some have earned or are working toward an advanced degree. They have been with their current company between three months and 4.5 years.

The number of millennial knowledge workers is not easily determined. Most published materials about millennial workers do not distinguish knowledge workers from other employees. In addition, the number keeps growing as millennials become old enough to join the workforce. To come up with a credible estimate of how many millennial knowledge workers are now employed, Hudson analyzed the first six months of the 2006 Current Population Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The analysis found that of the 29.3 million workers between 20 and 29 years old, an estimated 4.46 million (15.2 percent), are knowledge workers. Knowledge workers were defined as having a bachelor's degree or higher and working in "management, business and financial occupations" or "professional and related occupations." (See table below)

HUDSON ESTIMATE OF KNOWLEDGE WORKERS, AGES 20-29	
	Average January – June 2006
Total (mil)	40.2
Employed (mil)	29.3
Knowledge workers* (mil)	4.5
<i>People who have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher and work in management, business and financial occupations or professional and related occupations</i>	
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Current Population Survey</i>	

Because of their sheer numbers and the fact that baby boomers – born roughly between 1946 and 1964 – are starting to retire, millennials will have a profound influence in the workplace for at least the next half century.

Experts say that the next huge wave of workers cramming into the cubicles of corporate America were brought up by their baby boomer parents to believe they can accomplish anything they want. Raised to ask questions and speak their minds, they don't hesitate to do both. But Hudson's interviews suggest that this is not about ego. Most of all, these workers want to learn and grow so they can make a greater contribution to their company.

Although many observers fret about the strained relationship between millennials and older workers, most of the millennials interviewed by Hudson said that their relationship with older workers is good. Several noted that they respect their older colleagues, and none described conflicts with these workers.

"You don't really look at the age. You don't look at anyone beyond what they do," said Roy Esh, a 26-year-old paralegal at New York law firm Kasowitz, Benson, Torres & Friedman.

Melissa Bock, an application developer at HR consulting company Hewitt Associates, acknowledged that people her age don't talk about the same things as older workers. "But in the end," she said, "you're all trying to get to the same point, the same end goal, so you do whatever you can to work together."

MILLENNIAL MODEL

Like the other millennials Hudson interviewed, Mike Mulder is ambitious, focused and dedicated to helping his company succeed. Mulder, 28, took his job as relationship manager in the Business Banking Department of Harris Bankcorp Inc. about a year and a half ago because of the potential for growth, strong management team and positive work environment. "There is not only a work/life balance but a company direction that's going in the right place that I'd like it to be going," Mulder said.

Mulder, who has a bachelor's degree from Indiana University, worked for another banking company before joining Harris. ["I wanted] to be with a company that was... looking to become a large player in the market that we're in, which is a very competitive market in Chicago. And I wanted to be part of a team that was more proactive in their approach to drive business growth."

Mulder works at a suburban office of the Chicago-based bank, with companies ranging from start-ups to businesses with \$25 million in annual revenue. He pointed out that for start-ups, banks need to think creatively to come up with financial solutions. "When it works and you see them making things happen and being successful, obviously that's where the gratification comes in," he said. "At the end of a day it should be a mutually beneficial relationship where they're getting what they need and we make what we need."

Mulder works with a lot of people who are much older than he is, and gets along well with them. "I think we all have a mutual respect for each other," he said. "Obviously I look to them for their experience and there are things that I bring in terms of my education and my experience that maybe they don't have. So it's a very good working relationship."

As the co-founder of BUZZ-A Philanthropic Organization of Dedicated Professionals, Mulder has found a way to serve others. He is trying to get more young professionals involved in the non-profit, which does fundraising and volunteer work for local charities.. "It is a good way for people ...to build relationships, whether it's friendships or work relationships," he said.

During the next three years Mulder's goal is to become the top-producing banker in his department, and ultimately to work his way into management. He expects to stay in his current job, but he is open to the possibility of other career paths. "Opportunities can come and go and one day I might decide to jump on a different train. ... At this point in time in my career I'm extremely happy and I tell that to every executive recruiter that calls me on an every-other-week basis," he said. He added, "I truly believe that what I do on a day-to-day basis will allow me to do a variety of things if I were ever to change fields."

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WHAT 20-SOMETHINGS WANT

Half of the millennials Hudson interviewed mentioned the opportunity for growth as the most important factor in choosing to work for their current employer. Noted Timothy Durham, a financial analyst at Ford Motor Co., "I wanted the opportunity to move around and see different areas of the company relatively early in my career, so I could get a better feel for what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go within the company." Durham added that autonomy is important to him. "I don't like being told to do something this way; I like to be given the freedom to think and figure it out myself," he said.

Brian Di Bartolomeo, a consultant/director at Foresight International, feels the same way. "I love the autonomy...The president really doesn't get too involved with anything I'm doing unless I pull him into it," he said. "[It's] a real coup for me that he trusts me enough that I'm able to...manage my own team." Di Bartolomeo, 27, added that he prefers to work on more complex projects because he finds them more engaging. Foresight International is a survey research and software company with about 30 employees.

Nearly all the interview subjects were most concerned about the work environment when choosing their jobs. Said Shannon Smiley, a junior account planner at Energy BBDO, "I knew I'd be putting in more than 40 hours a week and I wanted to make sure it was with people that I enjoyed working for, and that motivated me." Smiley, 27, added that money was not a factor in her decision to work for BBDO Worldwide, a network of advertising agencies.

Similarly, Jason Camlic, an IT administrator at L.E.K. Consulting, liked the laid-back atmosphere at the Boston-based company. "It just seems to be really easygoing, and there's really not a separation between [professionals] and support staff here. Everybody's really like one big happy family." L.E.K. Consulting is a privately owned strategy consulting firm.

Suzanne Rupp, MIS senior financial analyst at CNA Insurance, said that she most enjoys working on challenging projects "that require me to work with a lot of different people." Added Rupp, 26, "I like working with people who know a lot and who I can learn a lot from."

Naomi Gres, a research analyst at Technomic, Inc., is grateful for the support she gets from her co-workers. "Anybody and everybody who can will help you...anyone from my manager to my project managers to another research analyst to a consultant – anybody," said Gres, 29. Technomic conducts market research on the foodservice industry.

While a handful of those interviewed consulted their parents in choosing their career or deciding whether to take their jobs, they were equally likely to have consulted others in

their field or teachers and advisors, challenging the stereotype of millennials clearing every move with their parents. Nevertheless, some mentioned they were grateful for their parents' support. "My parents just generally were supportive as to what I wanted to do with my life, but they never pushed the idea of law on me," said Bryan Leinbach, an associate at New York law firm Ziechner, Ellman and Krause.

LEAN ON ME

While acknowledging that he would prefer a shorter commute and would be happy to make "a little bit more money," Andy Gumm loves his job. How much? "I would do this for the rest of my life," he said.

A videographer in the Creative Services department at Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU), a consumer research company, Gumm said he wants to learn as much as he can and contribute as much as he can. "Everyone's got to pull their weight and probably a little bit more. And I like being a part of that. I like knowing that people can count on me," Gumm said.

Gumm, 27, has been with TRU for about a year. He has an excellent relationship with his supervisor. "We're on a really good personal level, so not letting him down motivates me. The head of our company is an alum from the same school I graduated from (Drake University in Iowa) ...All these people have taken a chance on me and not letting anybody down and being part of that team keeps me going," he said.

Gumm was a broadcast journalism major, but decided after college that he wanted to be behind the camera, not in front of it. He considered jobs in sales and other fields, but in the back of his mind recognized that "getting back into something I learned in college was important to me." Before joining TRU, he worked for Florida State University's athletic video department.

Gumm said he interacts well with older workers at the company. He eats lunch regularly with a vice president, and occasionally goes out for drinks with other officers after completing a project.

While he would like to see his responsibilities gradually increase, he is not particularly concerned with climbing the corporate ladder. "I'd like to gauge my achievements and my worth to the company, but if the only way of doing that is just changing my title, that's not important to me. You can call me whatever you want; I just want to know that I'm making a difference."

Like Gumm, the Hudson interview subjects as a group feel a strong responsibility to co-workers and mentors. Asked what motivates her to put forth extra effort on the job, Megan Hinterman, an assistant buyer at bookseller Borders Group, remarked, "It's not the pay. It's more like keeping my end up because I know everybody else is working so hard...For me it's about being known as a person who can be counted on to get it done and get it done right," said Hinterman, 27.

Bob Craft, an engineer at Fair Isaac Corp., a leading provider of analytics and decision technology, said that he wants to do a good job to impress his co-workers. "I don't want to let them down. I know if we don't do a good job then our managers usually take a lot of heat for it and we don't want that to happen. That's probably the biggest thing that motivates me."

Craft, 25, likes what he's doing right now so much that he isn't particularly concerned about moving up in the company. "Obviously I want to continue to go forward but ...my ultimate goal is not just to get a promotion. [It's] just to do a good job and the promotions will come when they come," he said.

Similarly, Rupp of CNA Insurance said, "I want to make sure I really know what I'm doing before I go to the next step...I don't want to move up just to move up."

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

When Cori Ferman, 27, was interviewing for her position at advertising giant Leo Burnett Worldwide, she asked her potential boss whether he has an "open door policy" and if he is willing to provide regular feedback. "I like to know I'm doing a good job, and if I'm not doing a good job, please tell me why so I can figure it out. That is so important to me," she said.

Ferman, who had done an internship at Burnett during graduate school at DePaul University, now works fulltime at the agency. She is highly motivated by the people she works with to give 100 percent each day. "I never want to let someone down and I never want to feel like I didn't give it my all." She added that when things go wrong, "We talk. It's not just that I'm going in and just doing my job. There's so much more to it."

Ferman held several jobs in advertising and marketing after earning her undergraduate degree. When she was working for a small graphics company in St. Louis doing e-mail and database marketing campaigns, she decided she wanted to learn more about New Media, and applied to the program at DePaul.

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She now works as a coordinator in the new Global Growth group at Leo Burnett, which is responsible for growing the agency brand as well as global new business endeavors.

Ferman said that she feels her opinions are valued. "I think it's wonderful that my boss asks what I think and wants my input... I am always encouraged to speak up, and I feel comfortable doing so. Even outside of my direct group I feel comfortable to voice my opinion and people listen."

If she needs help or has questions, she's found that co-workers go out of their way to help and have taught her a great deal. "I chose [the job] because I knew there was a lot of growth. And I knew I wouldn't be stuck in a role where I was unhappy." She said that she turned down a job that would have paid more. "It wasn't the money," she said.

Ferman likes that her job gives her the opportunity to develop her skills. "I'm never actually working on just one thing, so I get a taste of everything," she noted. "It's very important to me that my work is important to the agency."

Ultimately Ferman would like to be an account director, responsible for developing client strategies and inspiring the "creatives" to produce excellent work. But for the time being, "where I am right now is absolutely where I want to be," she said. "I'd like to stay there for a long time."

CONCLUSION

Members of the millennial generation are seeking jobs that give them opportunities to learn and develop in their chosen fields. The interviews Hudson conducted demonstrate that regardless of what industry they are in, millennials want to make a difference for their companies and their companies' customers. They respect and work well with older workers, and expect respect in return. They want to advance in their fields, but don't necessarily want to climb to the top of the corporate ladder, especially if it means having no time for activities outside of work.

Employers who want to get the most out of their youngest workers will take their interests and desires seriously, and recognize that more than anything else, this generation wants to make a difference in the workplace.