I t is often said that if you want to learn something, you must experience it. So I did something different while researching this article—something a millennial would do. I researched my topic totally online, including newspaper and magazine articles I would have searched for in print another time. Aside from some personal interviews and surveys, it was all electronic. I wanted to be succinct and informative with some discussion about millennials in the workplace and how we as an industry need to be better prepared for them—to manage and be managed by them and have them as customers— so we can understand how our business is changing as a result.

So what is a millennial? Is there even a definition in a dictionary such as Webster's? I didn't actually check with an actual hard copy. That is so baby boomer. Who is Webster? Don't you mean Wikipedia? I think that's how a millennial would respond (electronically of course via text, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or Twitter).

As listed on the Wikipedia website, otherwise known as the electronic encyclopedia, millennials are considered "the demographic cohort following Generation X. There are no precise dates when the generation starts and ends. Researchers and commentators use birth years ranging from the early 1980s to the early 2000s."

Everything I have seen during the last couple of months tells me the Internet consensus suggests 1980–1995 or so should represent millennials.

To understand this generation, it may be helpful to refresh our social and civic knowledge of the American population demographic by generation:

- Greatest generation: pre-WWII era, those older than 75 (also called the silent or GI generation).
- Baby boomers: those born after WWII, now up to 50 years old or so.
- Generation Xers: born late 1960s through 1980.
- Millennials (echo boom, Generation Y, or recession generation): born from 1980 through the mid-1990s.
- New century generation: also called Generation Z, born from 1995 or so to the present.

Do we understand this generation of workers? We need to.

By Joe Balskus, PE, PTOE

NOT-SO-MYSTERIOUS

Millennials' Importance

Why write an article for *The Parking Professional* about millennials in the parking industry when a small percentage of the IPI membership (my own estimate) is likely considered part of that generation? (This, by the way, is a huge issue for us as an industry and an organization going forward, and we'll talk about it in a bit.) Our customers are millennials! And more of them are moving into urban areas, where the majority of our parking facilities are. Our co-workers are millennials, too. If you haven't noticed, the millennial generation population now outnumbers the baby boomers, with close to 80 million members.

Understanding millennials is important. It's so important that the Executive Office of the President of the United States Council of Economic Advisers published "15 Economic Facts About Millennials." Nearly 50 pages long, it provides an excellent summary of millennials in the workplace. A quick summary of these facts, some of which I have rephrased to keep the politics out and some of which are quite obvious to a generation member with more wisdom, follows. One thing I noticed in the report is that the council classifies the youngest population (those born after millennials) as the homeland generation, whereas other media commenters would say Generation Z:

- Millennials are now the largest and most diverse generation in the U.S.
- Millennials have been shaped by technology.
- Millennials value community, family, and creativity in their work.
- Millennials have invested in human capital more than previous generations.
- College-going millennials are more likely to study social science and applied fields.
- More students rely on loans to pay for post-secondary education.
- Millennials are more likely to focus exclusively on studies instead of combining school and work.
- Millennials are more likely to have health insurance coverage during their young adult years.
- Millennials are starting their careers during an historic downturn forecast to last for years to come.
- Investments in human capital are likely to have a substantial payoff for millennials.
- Working millennials are staying with their early-career employers longer than previous generations.
- Millennial women have more labor market equality than those of previous generations.

MILLENNIALS

> Perhaps the most significant fact noted above is the number and diversity of millennials we are now serving and working with in our daily routines. The boomers are retiring, the Gen Xers are moving up, and the millennials are feeding the bottom of the business world as new blood.

- Millennials tend to get married later than previous generations.
- Millennials are less likely to be homeowners than young adults in previous generations.
- College-educated millennials have moved into urban areas faster than their less-educated peers.

Many of these points pertain to our industry because of bilateral concerns from the customer standpoint and our co-workers, who aren't getting married until later and have to pay off higher student loans than prior generations.

Perhaps the most significant fact noted above is the number and diversity of millennials we are now serving and working with in our daily routines. The boomers are retiring, the Gen Xers are moving up, and the millennials are feeding the bottom of the business world as new blood.

Millennials and Parking

I am relatively new to the parking industry with only a decade under my belt; my other expertise is as a transportation engineer. I am involved with the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) as well as IPI. As we move toward the goal of combining parking with other forms of transportation, remember that this push is mostly driven by the millennial population. They are nudging both kinds of organizations to think about them and the future of membership. Why? Because recruiting members is a whole different ballgame now than it was back in the day. Millennials get organized at the technological grassroots level and use social media to communicate as naturally as breathing. And communicate they do.

Because millennials have different demands than our more seasoned members, we have to change the way we think. They are used to the instant availability of information and everything being electronic, including communications, even between two people in the same room. Interpersonal skills are much different than what a lot of us are used to.

Like a millennial, I researched this article by searchings the internet using Google. I easily found more than 30 articles, websites, presentations, papers, and other sites about the topic of millennials and working with them. I did some research on my smartphone but mostly used my laptop. By the time you read this article, the iWatch will likely be on several million wrists.

Everyone online seems to have a fact, factoid, survey, report, blog, video, or snippet about millennials. And almost all of these are generated by non-millennials—not surprising.

Statistics say that as compared to older generations, millennials are:

- Less patriotic.
- More independent in political affiliations.
- Less religious.
- Least trustful of other people.
- Staying single by a substantial margin.
- Twice as likely to take selfies.
- Wary of older generations at work.
- More in favor of bigger government.
- More liberal than conservative.

Discussing millennials in the workplace from my Generation X perspective has certainly shown that a better understanding of my younger colleagues and customers is needed. This is especially true in the parking industry, where there aren't many visible millennials yet.

A few additional points:

- In the U.S., millennials represent the largest generation ever, with 80 million members.
- Millennials are tech-savvy and have known nothing else but easy access to the Internet and its free information and knowledge.
- Millennials, some articles say, spend nearly two hours a day on social media.
- They love social media, and 75 percent of them have a profile there.
- Millennials don't watch as much broadcast television but view shows on-demand on handheld devices.

Working Styles

Some findings from recent studies by Pew Research, the 2015 Millennial Majority Workforce, and others indicate just less than 30 percent of millennials are currently in management positions, with two-thirds seeing themselves in management-level positions in two years. Hiring managers report difficulty finding and retaining millennial management-level employees.

Some additional startling results from the surveys indicate that more than 75 percent of millennials are inclined to work for themselves and freelance in the future, taking advantage of technology to do so. I can verify this from an anecdotal standpoint—I am seeing many consultants work from home because they can. This freelancing is on the rise, with companies accepting the supporting roles of consultants to conduct their business without having to hire full-time employees. Surveys are indicating a greater desire by companies to retain these workers to fill necessary roles. The majority of these freelancers are, of course, millennials.

The surveys indicated millennials enjoy freelance work and would do more of it if they could. Part of the reason for this is the millennial generation trait to be more flexible in their work schedules. Instead of committing to an 8-to-5 workday in a set office, they work off-hours

all over the place and strongly prefer such flexibility.

While millennials desire this flexibility, there is consensus in many surveys that they also believe they are entitled to things that previous generations would not even consider in their daily routines. These include salaries, benefits, and most of all, position or title and the time it should take to get to that level at work. Is this part of their upbringing, where every player got a trophy at the end of the season?

Effect at Work

As the millennial worker population has almost doubled in 10 years, it is having a profound effect on the workplace. These employees bring skill sets that no other generation before has provided, and they have an immeasurable adeptness for technology that is second nature to them.

It's interesting to note that millennials also have a more socially conscious attitude in the workplace environment and are more accepting of gender and other differences than previous generations.

Many of the surveys I reviewed indicate that while there is still a higher-than-expected unemployment rate, including those who are permanently out of the labor pool, 20- to 30-year-old millennials with the skills desired by hiring managers are more difficult to recruit and retain than previous generations.

Also of note is this generation's use of personal smartphones in the office environment, which is pervasive. Leaving the smartphone on with notifications for emails and texts, even on vibrate mode, can interrupt the daily routine. Facebook is the king of disrupting employee productivity. When new posts are made, texts or emails are sent that demand workers stop what they are doing and check it out. The same is true for Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. I am not aware yet of an employer restricting the use of smartphones by employees except for those who are driving or flying. Can you imagine the revolt of millennials and others if they were told by an employer that smartphones were not be allowed to be used at their work stations during the workday?

All that said, some major emerging technologies will have a dramatic effect on our industry thanks to millennial use, including wearable technology and driverless cars. Can you foresee the day when the actual smartphone is embedded in your clothes and/or uniform? When that happens, how can we regulate use in the workplace? Connecting wearable tech with networks and cars will be a very simple step.

Lifestyle

Millennials are moving back into cities because they desire to be able to live, work, learn, and play within a much smaller dimension than during past trends of suburban sprawl. The driverless vehicle will facilitate that ability, so they can move to the city and still have access to vehicles that could be idle far outside city limits, where parking is easier to come by and will be much cheaper. The millennial can activate his idled vehicle with wearable technology to come pick him up from his townhouse apartment without taking up a parking space. Remember the Hoff in "Knight Rider"? His Kitt car was essentially a driverless car, albeit a high-performance one.

So what does all this mean? Is this just the usual generational difference gap that every generation loves to complain about? Weren't the greatest generation members complaining about the baby boomers before the boomers complained about Generation X? Perhaps this is true, but the exponential increase in technology in our everyday work environment has most certainly created some significant differences between our generations, both positive and negative. "Back in the day, walking to school uphill both ways in four feet of snow" clichés just don't cut it anymore. The Internet has revolutionized the way we do business and the boomers and Generation Xers, including me, followed it as it transformed, and we adapted where we could.

The millennials, however, haven't adapted. They don't need to. They thrive on this technology because they grew up with it as part of their daily lives. They cannot understand how the Internet has revolutionized many things—it's always been this way. They cannot understand work life before pushing the Easy Button. They cannot envision life before the personal computer or the smartphone. Perhaps that is the negative: They don't understand that what they have has come so far from what it was in terms of the business environment.

They are also connected like no generation before to their outside network. This connectedness provides a confidence in their abilities and allows them to be more open to change. This by itself can present a potential problem when they're working with an older generation that has "always done it that way." Conflicts arise.

What's It All Mean?

Working with millennials and having them in your organization is something you must embrace! We are all professionals, and while they may be a different generation, understanding millennials is crucial to being successful in the business environment.

Understanding can dramatically improve your relations with younger colleagues and allow you to better embrace them in the workplace and when serving them as customers. Engaging them with genuine discussions on their and your needs without a generational gap discussion will show immediate results.

Consider challenging them to differentiate themselves in the marketplace. Allow them flexibility in their work environment where you can reasonably do so. Show them that you're trying to understand their ideas and priorities. It will benefit everyone. ℗

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SERVING MEMBERS

By Bob Dietz

The year was 1982. Ronald Reagan was president of the United States and Michael Jackson released his album "Thriller," which would become the largest-selling record (flat, black, circular, with a hole in the middle) album of all time. The three-and-a-half-inch disc for computers was introduced, and I was in my third year as a parking enforcement worker, handing out parking tickets from my canvas-doored scooter in the city of Lansing, Mich. Parking folks in Michigan had just decided to organize into a statewide assembly that was deemed the Michigan Parking Association (MPA). Ted Perez from Grand Rapids was the first president of this newly founded group.

Flash forward to 2015. The MPA is still continuing on in the tradition Ted and his friends hoped for all those years ago. To give the group's founders their due, the MPA honored its past presidents, including Ted, in September 2012 with a gathering on Mackinac Island, which is located on the Lake Huron side of the Straits of Mackinac between Michigan's upper and lower peninsulas.

Mackinac Island is unique in that there are no motorized vehicles allowed. This does not mean one cannot still receive a parking citation, as there are no-parking signs around for the drivers of horse-drawn carriages to be wary of. The keynote speaker at that very special gathering was Donald Shoup, author of *The High Cost of Free Parking*. With the colors of autumn beginning to show, there is nothing quite like playing on the island's golf course, where golfers ride in horse-powered carriages to go from the front to the back nine. Views of the Grand Hotel and the islands and waters of Lake Huron

take their focus away from the game to experience an ethereal moment in life. It is indeed pure Michigan.

Economic Priorities

In 2013, with a theme of "Lean Not Mean: Gaining Greater Efficiencies and Improving Services," MPA addressed the issue of the day and focused on doing more with less throughout its annual conference. Budget constraints across the nation and the world required that parking system operators everywhere needed to learn new methods to accomplish the same goals.

Jim Manley, managing director of The Demmer Center for Business Transformation at Michigan State University, was the conference keynote speaker. Manley presented an eye-opening business approach of "Walk the Gimba" (do the job), explaining that we should not try to design a parking booth unless we have worked in one. The conference was held in Grand Rapids during the ArtPrize art festival. ArtPrize is one of the country's largest artisan-participating and publicly attended art festivals. With awards in excess of $500,000 and venues throughout the city, this is an exciting event not to be missed, and our conference took full advantage.

Branding

The 2014 conference was held in the newly revitalized and rejuvenated downtown Detroit. The theme of the conference was "Are You Branding" and our keynote speaker was Rob Rankel, author of *The Revenge of Brand X*.

Rankel recalled ad campaigns and taglines we all remember from the past. While not all parking vendors need taglines to be recalled 20 years from now, Rankel touched on short-term recall for immediate product and service recognition.

One of the social events was a tour of Hitsville USA, the Motown museum. Participants were given an "ease on down the road" walking tour that culminated in the famous Studio A, where the likes of The Supremes and Smokey Robinson recorded their hits. We tried to imagine Stevie Wonder on the grand piano as our poorly trained and strained voices united in the studio with a rendition of The Temptations' "My Girl" that was unlike any heard before.

This Year

With a theme of "Advances in Technology and Their Impact," our 2015 conference will be outside the larger metropolitan areas of the Great Lake State as we switch up our travels back to a more rural area—Mt. Pleasant, Mich. This is home to Central Michigan University and also the Soaring Eagle Resort and Casino. The facility was developed in 1998 by true Michigan natives the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe and has a built-in excitement all its own. Social functions for this locale will be a bit more earthy as we are looking to canoe, kayak, or ride the horse trails.

Awards

Like many parking and transportation associations, MPA recognizes and annually awards agencies and individuals for their performance throughout the previous year. In 2014, among other awards, we were especially proud of the recipient of the Parking Professional Merit Award. This is presented to a non-management employee exhibiting exemplary work habits and contributions to an organization. This award was given to Alic Mirzet of the Grand Rapids parking system. While performing his daily work tasks in one of the city's parking garages, Mirzat is credited with quick thinking and actions in saving the life of an area teenager.

We are proud to be a small part of a distinguished group of people who over the decades have been affiliated with parking in Michigan. Thanks, Ted, for getting all of this started. ⓟ

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