An Introduction to
Second-Wave Millennials

By Warren Wright, CEO, Second Wave Learning

Who are Second-Wave Millennials?

Second-Wave Millennials are the younger Millennials raised by Gen X parents. Some call them GenZ or iGen. They were born between 1995-2004. The youngest are still in high school and the oldest are entering the workplace right now. This compares to First-Wave Millennials, who were raised by Boomer parents and were born between 1982 and 1994. Common sense tells us that a 36-year old has differing traits and preferences compared to a 15-year old, so these two waves are helpful in distinguishing those traits.

Common Traits for All Millennials

Whether they were raised in the eighties or early 2000's, all Millennials have broad traits and behaviors that are enduring and unique regardless of the generation that raised them. For example, Millennials tend to be high achievers, prefer collaboration over conflict, are motivated by purpose and mission more than money, are community and civic-minded, are positive and optimistic, and tend to be risk-averse.

The social norms in Millennials' coming of age experience have always held high standards for these "special" kids. Generation X children, on the other hand, always knew they weren't so special. Finally, they are the first digital native generation, exhibiting a kinship with technology as an extension of themselves that sets them apart from all older generations.

Generational Waves

Every generation has a First-Wave (older cohort) and a Second-Wave (younger cohort). Each wave has slightly different traits because they were raised by the parents of two different generations. Older Millennials are First-Wavers (as of 2018, ages 24 to 36), and most were raised by Baby Boomer parents. Younger Millennials, coming into the workplace now, are Second-Wave Millennials (ages 14 to 23) and most were raised by Generation X parents. Marketers often call Second-Wave Millennials "Generation Z", "iGen" or "Post-Millennials", as if it is an entirely new generation, but by its very definition, the length of a generation is 20-25 years. This is why we are calling this group Second-Wave Millennials.

TRAITS OF MILLENNIALS (1982-2004)

COLLABORATIVE	CIVIC-MINDED	DIGITAL-NATIVES	ACHIEVERS	RISK ADVERSE	MISSION-MINDED

Differences Between First-Wave and Second-Wave Millennials

Second-Wavers are growing up more slowly than their older counterparts. They are delaying or avoiding sex, drugs, and alcohol. They are moving away from home later, delaying getting a driver's license, and putting off financial independence. These behaviors are the reason that physicians and psychologists raised the official age of adolescence from 19 to 24, an astonishing 5-years.*

At the same time, they are more in tune with social and emotional learning, are open-minded, forward-thinking, prudent on social issues, and inclusive of others. They are sophisticated marketers of their own brand, having been raised with YouTube and selfie images, and stylized Instagram posts.
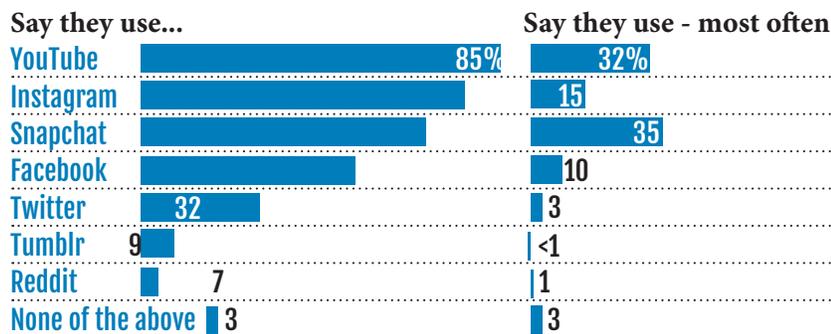
Second-Wavers and Stress

Recent studies have shown that Second-Wavers are experiencing unusually high levels of stress. They feel more anxious, lonely, depressed, and sleep less. Although there is not enough evidence to point to what is causing this, one of the most likely suspects is their smart phone addiction. The timing of these mental health issues mirrors the rise of the iPhone, which was introduced in 2007, before the oldest Second-Waver reached puberty. By 2012, smart phone use reached over 75%. Today, it is 96% for these Second-Wavers. A Kaiser Family Foundation study found that young people spend an average of 8 hours a day on media (smart phones, tablets, computer monitors and TV)—far more than any other activity other than sleep. One study found that the presence of a mobile device interferes with human relationships, having negative effects on closeness, connection, and conversation quality.

*Lancet Medical Journal, March 2018

YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat are the most popular on-line platforms among teens

% of U.S. teens who...

Say they use...		Say they use - most often	
YouTube	85%		32%
Instagram			15
Snapchat			35
Facebook			10
Twitter	32		3
Tumblr	9		<1
Reddit	7		1
None of the above	3		3

Note: Figures in first column add to more than 100% because multiple responses were allowed. Question about most-used site was asked only of respondents who use multiple sites; results have been recalculated to include those who use only one site. Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.
"Teens Social Media & Technology"
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Raised by Generation X

While technology looms large in the influence of their development (or lack of development), the other contributing factor influencing their behavior is how they were raised by their Generation X parents. First-Wave Millennials were raised mostly by Boomers, who were always protective and had high expectations for their kids, but Gen X parents have taken this to a new level. As children, Gen-Xers had very little structure, so their inclination as parents is to reverse that trend, and over-compensate to create a highly ordered regime of planned activities. Leave nothing to chance has been the mantra of Gen X parents in raising their children. Put simply, Second-Wavers have been over-parented by their Gen X parents. There has been virtually no unstructured free time for these Second-Wavers. Furthermore, parents have steered their kids away from part time and summer jobs in favor of fine-tuning their hard skills through tutoring and summer camps emphasizing areas like robotics and other STEM-related fields.

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Second-Wavers at Work

The addictive nature of social media, combined with the extension of adolescence to later years have a negative influence on their development into adulthood, making them less prepared for the workplace. It is not the knowledge and hard skills that Second-Wavers are lacking, it's the soft skills.

The first thing you may notice about some Second-Wave Millennials is their slightly awkward social interactions —making eye contact, speaking clearly, and greeting with a firm handshake. As much as Gen X parents have prepared them for everything else, making a good first impression is not one of them. The dominance of the digital platform on social media has dramatically affected their communication style. Messaging platforms like Snap have replaced traditional modes of communication like email, phone, and of course, in-person communication (note: use this sentence as a call-out). Writing in full sentences with proper grammar, punctuation and spelling is uncommon in daily social discourse. High school and college curriculums today rely on Blackboard and other electronic communication tools, driving students deeper into the digital world, and away from face-to-face interaction. Extensive research in this area has shown that technology has had a negative effect on both quality and quantity of face-to-face communication, which is critical to workplace success.

80% of Second-Wavers use Snapchat once a month
* PiperJafffray, 2016

STEM v. Soft-skills

Second-Wavers are now entering the workforce at a disadvantage for professional work environments. Google's Project Oxygen shocked everyone when it concluded after extensive analytics that out of the eight top characteristics of their best performing employees, STEM knowledge was last, and the top seven were all soft-skills like interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, being a good listener, and being a good critical thinker.

42%
of Millennials say most important work benefit is learning and development
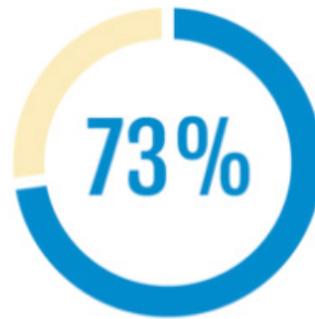
73%
of Millennials expect to pursue additional education and training to advance in careers

Keys to Training Second-Wave Millennials for the Workplace

The good news about Second-Wavers is they follow the rules and are good students. Additionally, soft skills are trainable. The key areas of focus for training should be Self-Awareness, Critical Thinking and Problem-solving, Communication, and Interpersonal skills. An ideal time to train is during the on-boarding period within the first 3-months of employment, but they can even benefit if they have been at your company for between two and three years.

Self-Awareness, Critical Thinking, Problem-solving

Communication and Interpersonal skills

Soft-skill Training Should Include:

- Professional and interpersonal communication
- Self-awareness
- Teamwork, collaboration and consensus building
- Decision making
- Creative thinking and problem solving
- Public speaking
- Time and self-management
- Social media and its effects
- Relationship skills and conflict resolution

Bringing It All Together for the Second-Waver

Second-Wave Millennials, despite these challenges in the workplace, can be developed into incredibly valuable, committed, and loyal employees. Many companies are finding that it is worth it to make the investment in them. Second Wave Learning helps companies attract and retain newly hired employees with an on-boarding and talent development process that teaches the soft skills they need to be successful in the workplace.

Using Iowa's CORE Employability Skills inventory as a backdrop, we've refined the soft skills based on feedback from employers around the U.S. to create a program can works for new hires.

IOWA Department of Education, CORE Employability Skills
https://iowacore.gov/sites/default/files/k-12_21stcentskills.pdf

Contact us at
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