

# INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION WORKFORCE

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- THE 2014 MILLENNIAL IMPACT  
SIX-MONTH RESEARCH UPDATE

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## THE 2014 MILLENNIAL IMPACT – SIX-MONTH RESEARCH UPDATE

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# INTRODUCTION

Today's employers face a workforce in which Millennials – those born from 1980 to 2000 – are rapidly overtaking all other generations. This next generation views the workplace quite differently from any previous generation. The most successful companies are already working to understand these current and potential employees so they can recruit and retain the best of them. One way they can do this is through Millennials' affinity for cause work.

This Six-Month Research Update to the 2014 Millennial Impact Report creates the perfect tool for employers to immediately begin developing a culture that embraces Millennials by offering them the chance to use their talents and passions to “do good” at work.

As our Millennial Impact Project studies have consistently shown, “doing good” is vitally important to this generation. Companies seeking to build an attractive culture must recognize the Millennial employee's desire to combine their full-time work with their cause interests. Therefore, employers stand to benefit from a long-term culture that engages their employees in cause work.

Achieve, in partnership with the Case Foundation, released the 2014 Millennial Impact Report in June of last year. It was the fifth in the Millennial Impact Project, which has studied Millennials' preferences for cause work – any initiatives or programs that are charitable in nature.

The 2014 report and this update focused on Millennials as employees: how they engage with their employers and what their preferences are as related to company cause work. The initial report shared findings and analysis from a survey distributed to more than 1,500 Millennial employees representing more than 300 companies in the United States.

This update shares findings and analysis from the study's final two components:

- Video-based focus testing of employees evaluating sample employer communications, websites and promotions, and
- A nine-month panel of employees offering feedback on their employer's cause work.

These qualitative data collection methods allowed us to delve deeper into the motivations and thoughts behind the opinions and perceptions expressed in the initial survey.

What we found – and what we detail in this Six-Month Research Update – is that companies already adapting their CSR strategies as a way to recruit and retain the next generation workforce are finding success across the board. Millennial employees are looking at an employer's cause work when seeking a job, and the quality of the CSR program influences whether they remain there. Companies are recruiting better candidates when they can boast a CSR program that speaks to the Millennial generation's passions. And some companies are already well beyond their competition in this area.

These qualitative findings support and expand on our earlier survey findings. The following pages offer findings, analysis and recommendations for forward-thinking companies that see a need to build a culture that Millennials support.

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# SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

For the 2014 Millennial Impact Survey, Millennials were defined as individuals born from 1980 to 2000. As this was a study of Millennial employees and their preferences for company cause engagement, respondents self-identified as “employed” at the time they took the survey. The study explores what motivates Millennials to engage in company cause work, and findings are separated into three general themes: culture, relationships and resources.

The following are highlights from the initial survey.

## CULTURE

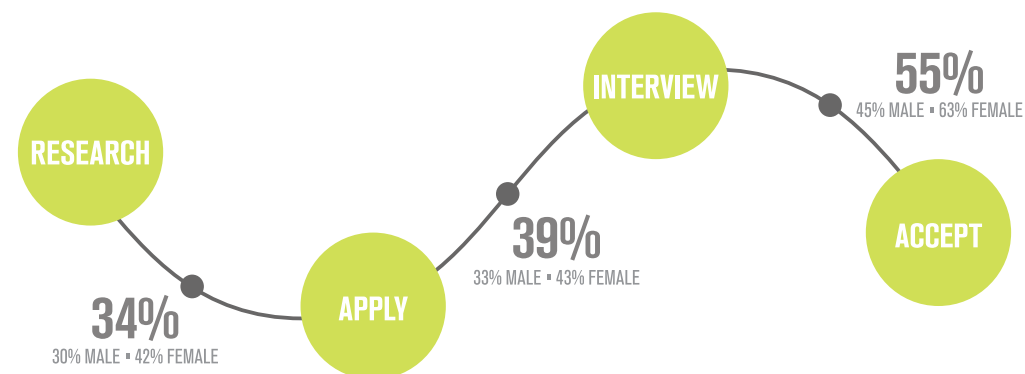
How cause work shapes today's hiring process and the overall culture a company tries to establish

“I took the position here because if a company cares that much about outside causes, then I know they are invested in treating me right as an employee.”

A company's cause work begins to influence most Millennial employees during the interview. While only 39% of Millennial employees said they researched their employer's cause work prior to the interview, 55% of employees were influenced to take their job after discussing cause work in the interview.

### MILLENNIAL JOB SEARCH PROCESS

PERCENTAGE OF MILLENNIALS INFLUENCED TO CONTINUE THE JOB-SEARCH PROCESS BASED ON A COMPANY'S CAUSE-RELATED WORK



**MORE THAN 50% OF MILLENNIALS WERE INFLUENCED TO ACCEPT A JOB BASED ON THAT COMPANY'S INVOLVEMENT WITH CAUSES.**

From the beginning of the job search to the point where the employee accepted the job, female Millennials tended to be more interested in company cause work than their male counterparts. In fact, 63% of female employees said their company's cause work influenced them to accept a job, compared to 45% of male employees.

## CULTURE (CONT'D)

When deciding whether or not to apply for a job, Millennials' top considerations were what the company specifically sells, produces or distributes. We asked participants what factors beyond compensation and benefits were important to their job search. Beyond compensation, top considerations included (in order of preference) the company's work culture, involvement with causes, office environment, and attention to diversity and HR standards.



### TOP FACTORS FOR MILLENNIALS WHEN DECIDING TO APPLY FOR A JOB

1. What the company specifically does, sells or produces
2. The company's work culture
3. The company's involvement with causes
4. The company's office environment
5. The company's diversity and HR awards

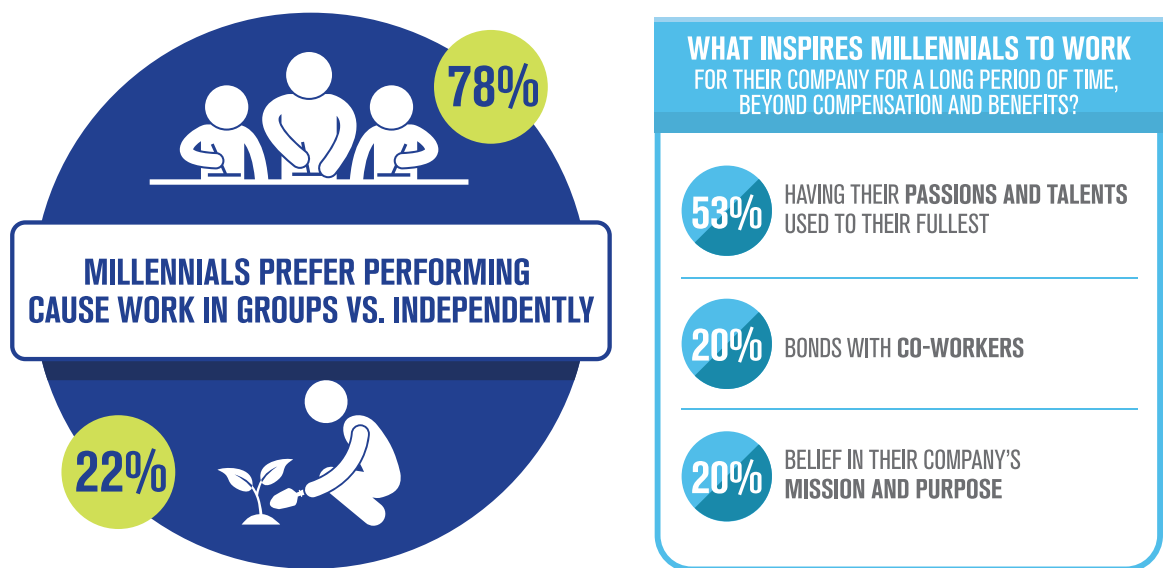
Company-wide giving campaigns were the initiatives Millennials most commonly participated in. Regarding volunteerism, Millennial employees preferred joining a company-wide or team-specific volunteer project rather than donating to a giving campaign. **Millennials who volunteer with and donate to causes on their own were found to be the most likely to research and consider a company's cause work during their job search.**

## RELATIONSHIPS

The interpersonal bonds co-workers build and the relationships Millennials have with causes and their employer

**“I would love to see more opportunities for remote employees to take a day and do our own cause project, rather than feeling stuck to my laptop while everyone else gets to participate [in a group cause project].”**

When given a choice between volunteering and participating in cause work independently or with a group of co-workers, 78% of Millennial employees preferred serving with a group of fellow employees. They also preferred participating in cause work with employees they work with directly or who are in their same department, rather than with employees they don't interact with regularly.



Beyond compensation and benefits, being passionate about the job was the main factor influencing Millennial employees to stay at their company for more than five years. The next most popular motivations were the bonds they established with other co-workers in their immediate team or department and belief in the company's mission and purpose.

Ultimately, Millennial employees want to work and volunteer together, but they also inspire each other through cause work. The Millennial workforce is highly connected and fixed to bring their passions for improving the world into their everyday jobs. Word-of-mouth knowledge from current or past employees was the third most common source of information about a company's cause work, behind the company's website and a Google search.

## RESOURCES

The assets (money, time, skill, etc.) that Millennials use to help a cause

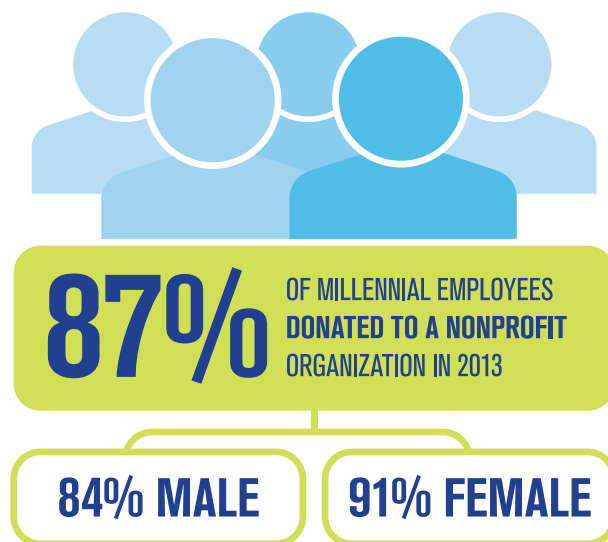
**“I would assume most ethical companies today would have some sort of charitable cause involvement.”**

We’ve found in previous studies, and affirmed in this survey, that Millennials are increasingly engaging with causes. Of the employees surveyed, 88% had donated to a nonprofit organization in 2013. In fact, 28% made donations of \$100 to \$500.

Beyond giving money, Millennials enjoy donating their specific skills or talents as resources to benefit a cause. Of the employees surveyed, 44% had volunteered skills through their employer to benefit a cause, and 94% enjoyed the experience of individualized, skills-based volunteering.

Through the survey, we found that the longer an employee was at their company, the less they enjoyed company-wide days of service. Of the employees who had been at their company less than a year, 92% enjoyed company-wide volunteer days. At two years, enjoyment dropped to 85%; at five years, only 81% of Millennial employees wanted to participate in company-wide volunteer days.

Millennial employees most appreciated cause initiatives that help their surrounding community. In addition, 94% of employees preferred using their specific skills for volunteering.



# PANEL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To both affirm and challenge the survey findings, Achieve conducted a nine-month attitudinal panel with 15 individual survey respondents (nine female, six male), tracking and analyzing their engagement in company cause work as well as the communication and promotional messages they received from their employer.

The purpose of this panel was to compare results from the aggregate survey to anecdotal comments and experiences from a representative segment of survey participants. Throughout the study, we monitored and surveyed participants to solicit their attitudes and thoughts about the materials they received, their views of company cause work and any actions they took or initiatives they participated in.

Throughout the nine-month panel, we asked participants to submit all cause-related communications they received from their employer. Participants completed a survey to measure their attitudes and feelings about their company's cause work. Every three months, we conducted video-recorded interviews with each participant to solicit more anecdotal feedback about their employer and their thoughts on cause work.

Overall, the focus testing and panel findings strongly reinforced what we learned about Millennial employees and their collective opinions about company cause work. The data from the initial survey coupled with comments and stories from the panel participants allow us to make several recommendations for companies looking to engage the next generation of employees in their cause initiatives.

## A company's cause engagement and culture begin at the executive level.

In the initial survey, we found that what an employee learns about a company's cause work during the hiring process directly affects how that individual views the company's cause work as an employee. While this finding did come up in our panel surveys and interviews, we also found that how direct managers view and participate in cause work themselves directly influences their employees. For the Millennial employees we studied, they were highly aware of whether or not management participated in their company's cause activities. Beyond direct management, executive leadership also has an influential role. Several employees said their company had good cause programs on paper, but even the executive leadership doesn't take it seriously, so why should they?

**Recommendation:** Create a uniform cause experience and culture throughout the company, starting with executive leadership and working down the ranks to direct managers of Millennials and their employees.

We found in our focus tests and panel interviews that a personal email from an executive or department manager is more effective in promoting a volunteer day or giving campaign than a company-wide email. If someone on the executive level or management staff is not demonstrably supportive of the project, then it will not be widely accepted by employees. However, when a vice president or high-ranking employee strongly encourages their department to volunteer or donate, the project's likelihood of success increases greatly.

## Rethink workplace giving campaigns.

In the survey and in our past Millennial Impact studies, we've found that most Millennials donate to a nonprofit organization at least yearly. In fact, only 13% of the employees we surveyed did not donate to a nonprofit organization in 2013. However, workplace giving campaigns are less favorable to Millennial



employees for several reasons, with the main reason being they would rather donate to a specific cause they support than give to a broader organization their company is partnering with. This preference must dictate the future strategies of organizations and federated workplace campaign programs if they want to solicit workplace support from Millennial employees.

During the nine months we tracked our panel participants, 47% were asked to donate to a workplace giving campaign at least once. Of those who were asked to give, 68% actually made a donation through a giving campaign sponsored by their company.

Nearly half of panel participants said they want more options to give than just the United Way or similar community organizations. They named specific issues and causes they cared about and didn't see how donating to their workplace giving campaign would address their personal cause interests.

**Recommendation:** For workplace giving campaigns, demonstrate exactly who or what will benefit from the donation. Millennials generally say they prefer donating to local, community-based organizations – but their giving habits reflect the opposite. In reality, they tend to give more to international NGOs and global nonprofits first because those organizations do a better job showing the need and how donations will help, in addition to eliciting peer fundraisers and friends to support the issue.

**“Cause work gives more meaning to the job than just a paycheck. Life isn’t about the money you make; it’s about what you do with your life to impact others.”**

### **Peer influence plays a crucial role in influencing Millennial and employee involvement.**

In the survey, we found that Millennial employees not only prefer volunteering in groups, but they are also more likely to participate in any workplace initiative if their peers within their department were also participating.

As revealed in other Millennial Impact reports, the Millennial generation is moved by the participation and passion of their peers. The same holds true in the workplace: The greatest influence on Millennial volunteerism and giving at work came from co-workers and peers who had volunteered or given themselves. In addition to peer influence, co-workers were most engaged when a peer influencer had encouraged participation in sanctioned workplace giving and volunteerism programs.

**Recommendation:** Companies must work with and through internal peer influencers to promote and encourage Millennial participation in their cause work. This includes recognizing and training Millennial employees to be brand cause agents who fully understand the various program opportunities (individual, department and company-wide) and can spread enthusiasm and build internal cause movements within the company. These brand cause agents will be the ones to help co-workers within their departments successfully onboard to the company's cause initiatives.

**“I’ve recently learned how important this work is when it comes to finding an overall good employer. If they have no commitment to the greater community, then I have to question what their commitment is to their employees who buy nothing from them, and their vision for where the company is headed.”**

## Reduce barriers to employee engagement. Make actions simple to complete and results easy to understand.

Although participation in programs may have been high at times during the last nine months, on reflection the employees struggled to understand the value they provided to the causes or the company – especially when the programs in which they took part were company-sanctioned. In contrast, the projects the individuals completed on their own made the most lasting impact, given it was the individual's choice based on personal interest in a particular issue.

The panel expressed frustration with participating in some programs offered by the company. Lack of knowledge at the department level challenged employees who expressed interest in programs offered by the company. In addition, department managers' lack of interest in such programs also seemed to deter the individual from participation and/or brought down the level of enthusiasm for the projects offered.

**Recommendation:** Companies need to effectively train department managers on cause programming to ensure that participation by their department is easy to do. In addition, company follow-up to let Millennials know specifically the effect of their contributions of time, skill or money to the cause is crucial. The employer's deep interest in knowing how and why their participation is necessary and valued must be evident to the Millennial in order to increase retention rates in cause work programming.

**“I’ve always volunteered with causes outside of work, so naturally I participate in the volunteer initiatives my company offers. I just wish I had more input in types of volunteer projects we do.”**

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Overall, through the panel, we found that significant interest in cause work exists; however, many barriers get in the way of the employee actually getting involved. Several of the panel participants constantly expressed challenges understanding available cause work opportunities. They knew that opportunities exist, but they did not feel personally encouraged to be involved or how their individual contribution would matter.

# CONCLUSION

As today's employers contemplate their incoming workforce in the next decade, they face the reality that it will be made up of individuals who have a strong desire to give back to their communities at work as well as at home. Throughout our five years of Millennial Impact Project research – now reinforced by the data within this update – we've learned that Millennial employees need to be given an outlet for this desire.

With this clearer picture of Millennials' attitudes toward seeking and selecting employment, both corporate and nonprofit employers can begin shaping their cultures to not just accommodate these eager do-gooders, but to intentionally create a space where they can become loyal and long-term employees.

Millennial employees' preferences are already reflected in thousands of organizations throughout the country. Successful programs actively encourage participation in cause work at the individual, department and company-wide levels. And Millennials are savvy: Our research shows that they respond best to sincere encouragement from all levels, which means those above them in the organizational chart join lower-level employees in taking part, whether that's physically (as a volunteer) or financially (as a donor). Department managers are in the most influential position: If an employee's supervisor is part of the corporate cause program, then his or her subordinates will be, too.

We've shown that while employees still (and probably always will) rank salary and benefits as the top drivers of employment selection, the opportunity for cause work with their co-workers ranks a close third. The employment decisions of Millennials are heavily based on the opportunity to use their passions and talent, bond with co-workers and believe in the company's mission. Employers that can satisfy those needs and desires are where Millennials want to work – and a well-crafted company cause program is ideal for doing so.

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Achieve is a research and creative agency for causes. Achieve helps organizations understand the behaviors of today's donors, activists and employees who are redefining cause engagement. They work with organizations committed to making the world a better place. Their research and creative services are perfect for nonprofits and companies who want to understand and reach new donors, employees, volunteers, activists and audiences.

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