

# New Study Reveals Sharp Differences Between Millennial Communication Professionals And Their Managers

*By CommPro.biz Editorial Staff*



Millennials are often criticized for the different values, qualities and skills they bring to work. However, a new study by The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations and the Institute for Public Relations of millennial communication professionals (MCPs) confirms their generational differences but concludes some differences (e.g., millennials' strong values for diversity, transparency and social responsibility) will help advance and enrich the profession.

The study also reveals a talent management ecosystem organizations can use to attract, engage, develop, retain and gain from top millennial talent.

A survey of 420 MCPs and 420 professionals who manage them (MGRs) revealed sharp differences in perceptions about millennials' workplace values and attributes, engagement, leadership capabilities, and recruiting and retention drivers.

***Workplace values and attributes***

More than 80% of MCPs said they're ambitious and passionate about work, but only half of their managers agreed. MCPs rated themselves much higher than MGRs did in work centrality, rewards and recognition, risk-taking and work-life-social values. The biggest differences were in work centrality—ambition, passion for work and professionalism—and work-life-social values like diversity and social responsibility, as MCPs consistently rated themselves higher than their managers did.

### ***Leadership capabilities***

Almost three quarters (70.9%) of MCPs said they are ready to lead. They rated their capabilities much higher than did MGRs for their communication knowledge, vision, team leadership skills, ethical orientation, strategic decision-making and relationship-building skills, and readiness to lead. Fewer than half of their MGRs agreed, citing deficiencies in all areas, especially ethical orientation (47.6%) and readiness to lead (49.0%).

### ***Engagement in Job and Organization***

MGRs rated their own engagement in the job (83.1%) and the organization (74.4%) significantly higher than MCPs rated their work (72.8%) and organizational (59.3%) engagement. However, MCPs with less than one year on the job were as highly engaged as MGRS; the level dropped sharply for those with 1-3 years of experience before returning to year-one levels after seven years.

“Millennial communicators come to the job excited and enthusiastic,” said Bruce K. Berger, Ph.D., co-investigator of the study and research director for The Plank Center. “But those qualities soon fade for some who leave the organization due to poor cultural fit, supervisory issues, or better opportunities.”

### ***Recruitment and Retention Drivers***

Two-thirds of MCPs said job decisions were driven most by reputation (68.1%), culture (67.2%), and location (67.4%), among nine drivers. More than 60% said key retention drivers were culture (63.8%), work-life-social approaches (62.4%), and development opportunities (61.6%), among 14 factors. MGRs' perceptions of recruitment and retention drivers for MCPs were significantly lower for most factors.

### ***Bringing the Positive Differences to Life with a Talent Management Ecosystem***

According to Berger, the generational differences are real, but so are some bright hopes and qualities within them. "MCPs see the world differently—from context to connectivity to crisis—but they are digital natives with great passion for leadership and strong values for transparency, social responsibility, diversity and community—all touchstones for our profession today. We can draw from these skills and values to enhance practice and build a brighter future," Berger said.