



# Will the Values of Millennials Save Us?

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As Rebecca mentioned, while at the Enterprise 2.0 conference, we watched an inspiring talk by Molly Graham, Manager, Culture and Employment Branding at Facebook. Molly re-framed the Millennial generation, helping us to see that some of their stereotypical qualities, which are often perceived as negative, have actually been critical in creating their highly adaptive, change-loving, super successful company.

Describing Facebook as a Millennial company, because of its values of building trust, focusing on impact, moving fast, being bold, and being open, Molly asserted that Facebook and the Millennial generation are changing how we relate to everything: work, technology, friends, and family.

Whether or not those are the values of the Millennials, I hope she is right that these values are becoming universal. Imagine if the US Congress were focused on impact, moving fast, being bold, and being open. What a different world we'd be living in!

Molly also warned us, "If you think Millennials are challenging, think about the next generation after that: the generation that tries to swipe a screen, because it is being raised on iPads, the generation that picks up a mouse and asks, "What is this?" This generation already is or will be your customers. This is the future of your business. Change doesn't go away. It gets more extreme."

With this dramatic attention-getter, she began her re-frame. Millennials are accused of being needy because they want constant feedback. She sees them as seeking constant growth. Millennials are accused of being selfish. She sees them as being committed to continuous learning. Millennials are accused of being entitled. She sees this as passion. Millennials are accused of disrespecting authority. She sees them as demanding ownership (my favorite point).

<b>Needy</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Constant Growth</b>
<b>Selfish</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Continuous Learning</b>
<b>Entitled</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Passionate</b>
<b>Disrespects authority</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Demand Ownership</b>
<b>Impatient</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Seeks Challenge</b>

According to Molly, Millennials feel they have a right to information and access to parts of the business that have traditionally taken years to get access to. Essentially, they expect that they have a right and the ability to make the company better.

In my career as a consultant, it is amazing how many times I have seen employees and even senior leaders who are afraid to challenge their leaders, each other, and the status quo. Instead, they wait for someone else to make the company better.

When someone does take any of these actions, the response they get is often, “Who do you think you are, that you are saying /doing that?” In Australia, they call this the “poppy flower” syndrome; in the Midwest, the “[Minnesota nice](#)” syndrome. These and other colloquial phrases around the world teach us not to stick out too much and not to rock the boat.

I say, “Who do you think you are that you would *not* try something that might fail? Who do you think you are that you would *not* challenge the higher-ups in your company?”

On the other hand, I, too, am sometimes afraid to say or do something. However, when I do take such a risk, I feel stronger, more centered, more alive. When I initiate a difficult conversation with a senior leader or colleague, it usually results in a better relationship. When I get colleagues to approach something in a more innovative way, the conversation usually leads to a better initiative.

I’ve experienced the benefits of these moments many times, and yet it can still be scary.

Social psychology research teaches us that the need for acceptance is a very real human need. My real life experience teaches me that taking risks and acting as more of an owner leads to a feeling of greater aliveness and a much more fulfilling life.

Yes, Facebook, I want to live in a world in which we are *all* seeking constant growth, committed to continuous learning, passionate, and acting as owners and mid-wives of our communities, our schools, our organizations, and our planet.