Identifying Traits & Values Associated with the City of Austin's High-Performing Millennial Employees

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Introduction

4 Million

Baby Boomers retire every year

While *Gen X* has been waiting in the wings to take their places, they are *significantly smaller than Boomers* in number.

Therefore, *organizations* will need to *rely on high-performing Millennial workers* to fill critical gaps.

While Millennials make up *1/3 of the labor pool* they are only participating at a *rate of 25% in the public sector.* This means governments must *maximize the use of a smaller population* to fill key positions.

Labor Force Composition by Generation
% of the labor force
Source: Pew Research Center
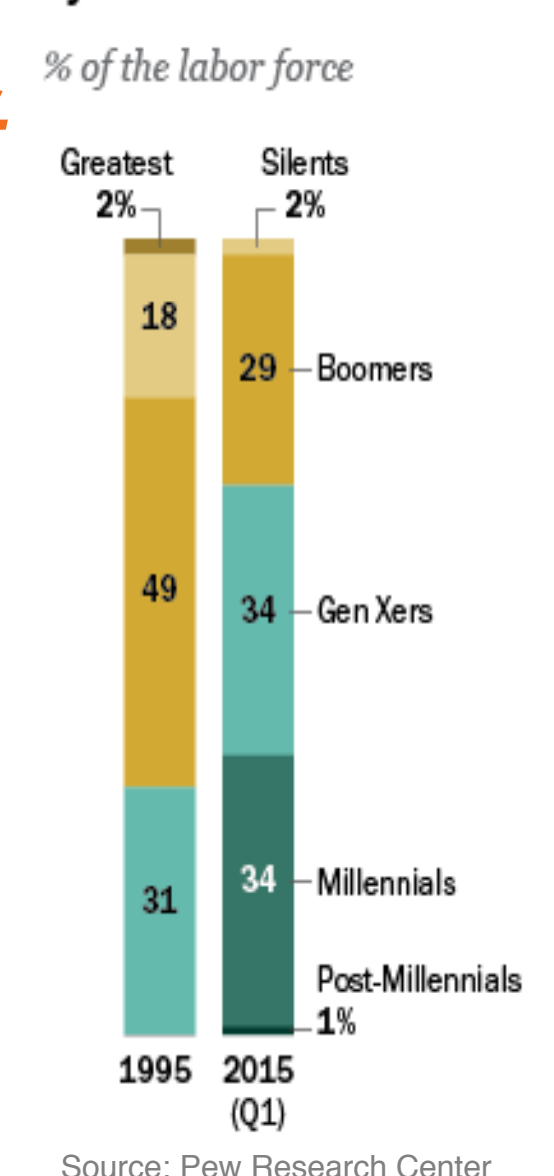
Millennials Are Now the Largest Labor Force
In millions
Source: Pew Research Center
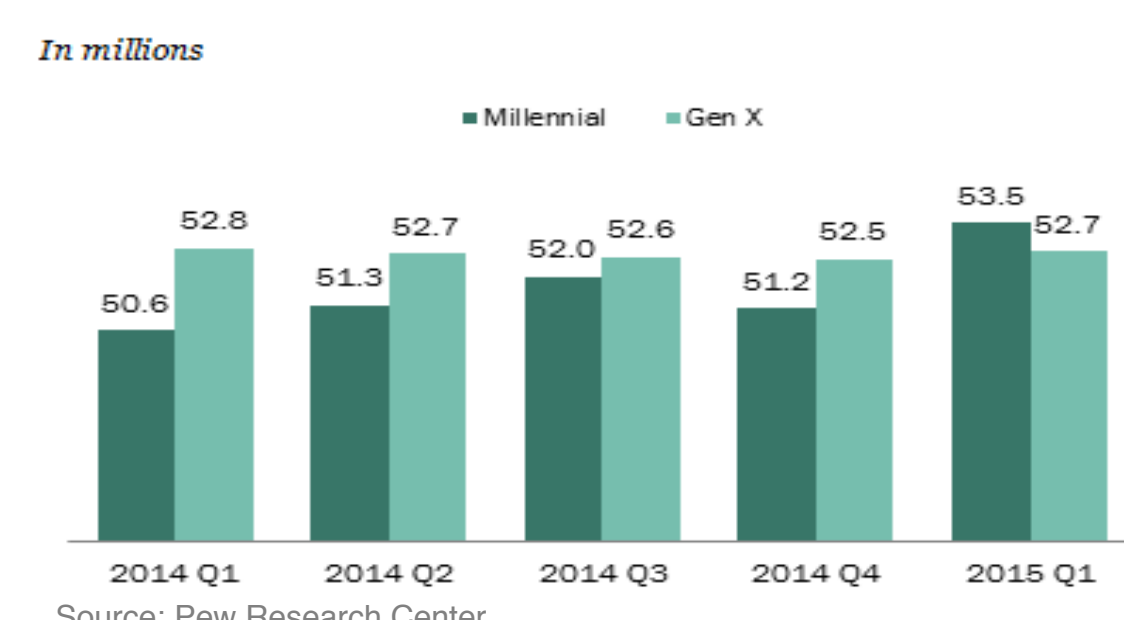
Methods

Semi-structured interviews with 6 *high-performing Millennial* employees at the *City of Austin.*

High-performing is defined as *working in a position above the organizational norm* for their education and experience level.

Qualitative vs. Quantitative – Allowed for a more probing and interrogative approach to concretely identify *traits and values* and allowing an *understanding of the "why" behind the "what."*

Results

Experimenters: Open to – and actively engaging in – new experiences. Each interviewee ended up in government by abandoning other career paths.

"I've lived about three lives. In cat terms I still have a few left." – Betty, 29 yrs old

Money: Not a primary motivating factor in life

"I would take less pay to do something I think is contributing than the opposite." – Betty, 29 yrs old

"I used to think it mattered more but then I was like, I'm choosing something different so it really isn't." – Sally, 34 yrs old.

Resilient: The ability to adapt and cope with adversity both professionally and personally

"People just don't realize it. They're like, 'if you failed once you're a failure or if you succeeded once you're a success,' it's like, that's just not the way it works."– Sally, 34 yrs old

Traditional Benefits: Pensions, Healthcare, and stability are highly desirable.

"When I started it was kind of cliché, 'oh, the City of Austin has great benefits.' I had come into the city because of school. I kind of stayed for a lot of reasons - just because I loved the work I was doing - but from the benefits piece of it...that became important." – Isaac, 34 yrs old

Altruism: Caring for the well-being of others

"You know, one of the best feelings at work is when you get off the phone and you feel like you've actually talked somebody from a problem to a solution and it feels complete. That, that is rewarding to me." – Isaac, 34 yrs old

Non-Traditional Benefits: Flexible schedules, collaborative environments, merit promotions.

"I feel that assigning someone based solely on seniority doesn't promote innovation or opportunities for growth. I don't think the person that's been here seven years should get promoted just because the other person has been here two years." – Linda, 29 yrs old

Conclusions

Recruit:

- Seek to *promote government careers* as an option for Millennials
- *Expand the recruitment pool* by looking in non-traditional sectors
- Place greater *emphasis on skills* over experience in position posting and design

Retain:

- *Encourage experimentation* and innovation throughout the organization
- *Consider reorganizing* to create more collaborative and fluid work environments
- *Protect traditional benefits* such as pensions, healthcare, and paid vacations
- Expand *flexible scheduling and teleworking* opportunities across the full spectrum of job classifications

Develop:

- *Don't punish failure*. Seek instead to train and mentor
- *Teach resiliency* at all levels
- Establish *advancement systems* that *emphasize merit and performance* over time & experience

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