

Study: Young workers now value respect over 'fun' perks in the workplace

July 22 2021, by Eric Stann

Millennials, often referred to as the "job-hopping generation," represent a group of young workers who once grabbed the national spotlight with their publicized demands for "fun" work perks, such as happy hours. However, researchers at the Novak Leadership Institute at the University of Missouri and Kansas State University discovered today's young workers—ages 21-34—represent a life-stage shift toward placing more value on having respectful communication in the workplace over trendy work perks.

"Millennials have been called the 'entitled generation,' and they kind of give [young workers](#) a bad rap because their often-publicized interests began with wanting to have fun in the [workplace](#), but today's young workers have shifted toward interests in doing valuable work and finding meaning in their day-to-day job functions," said Danielle LaGree, an assistant professor of strategic communication at Kansas State University, who earned her doctorate at the Missouri School of Journalism. "Leaders and managers are the ones who have the power to help foster that connection of meaningful work, determine what employee well-being means and how to communicate that meaning in a respectful way to their employees."

The team of researchers, which includes experts from the Novak Leadership Institute and the MU Department of Communication, were able to identify this shift in workplace values for young workers after surveying more than 1,000 full-time workers, ages 21-34, who represent 18 different career areas, including the service industry. The team

analyzed how participants rated, on a 1 to 5 scale, how each of the following workplace culture aspects were representative of their current place of employment—respectful engagement, autonomous respect, occupational resilience, [job satisfaction](#), [employee](#) loyalty and retention, and job engagement.

While previous studies have reported leaders and managers spend 70-90% of their time communicating, LaGree believes this study shows more emphasis needs to be placed on training leaders and managers on how to be effective communicators and convey respectful communication with their employees. She believes that even though the study was completed before the COVID-19 pandemic began, their results continue to be relevant in today's workplaces, which may have adjusted to more of a hybrid workplace split between work and home offices, or gone entirely remote.

LaGree acknowledges the extent to which leaders and managers can foster supportive cultures and outcomes is still unclear, yet she believes their study strongly contributes to the concept that workplaces are intensely social experiences.

"As we see here with our research, actively recognizing employees for the value they bring to their organization will help equip them to bounce back after adversity, to perform better in their jobs and be more committed to their organizations in the long term," LaGree said. "I think that's especially relevant today, even though this study was conducted before the coronavirus pandemic."

Margaret Duffy, executive director of the Novak Leadership Institute and a professor of strategic communication in the Missouri School of Journalism, believes employers risk losing younger employees if they don't make an effort to use respectful communication in the workplace.

"There's a giant risk for employers if they don't help employees have a sense of purpose and a sense of well-being and engagement," Duffy said. "Coming to work may not be joyful every day, but if work is something where I can feel fulfillment, I can feel respected as a human being and most important, that I can feel that I have earned the respect and recognition that I'm given by my boss and by my co-workers."

More information: Danielle LaGree et al, The Effect of Respect: Respectful Communication at Work Drives Resiliency, Engagement, and Job Satisfaction among Early Career Employees, *International Journal of Business Communication* (2021). [DOI: 10.1177/23294884211016529](https://doi.org/10.1177/23294884211016529)

Provided by University of Missouri

Citation: Study: Young workers now value respect over 'fun' perks in the workplace (2021, July 22) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-07-young-workers-respect-fun-perks.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.