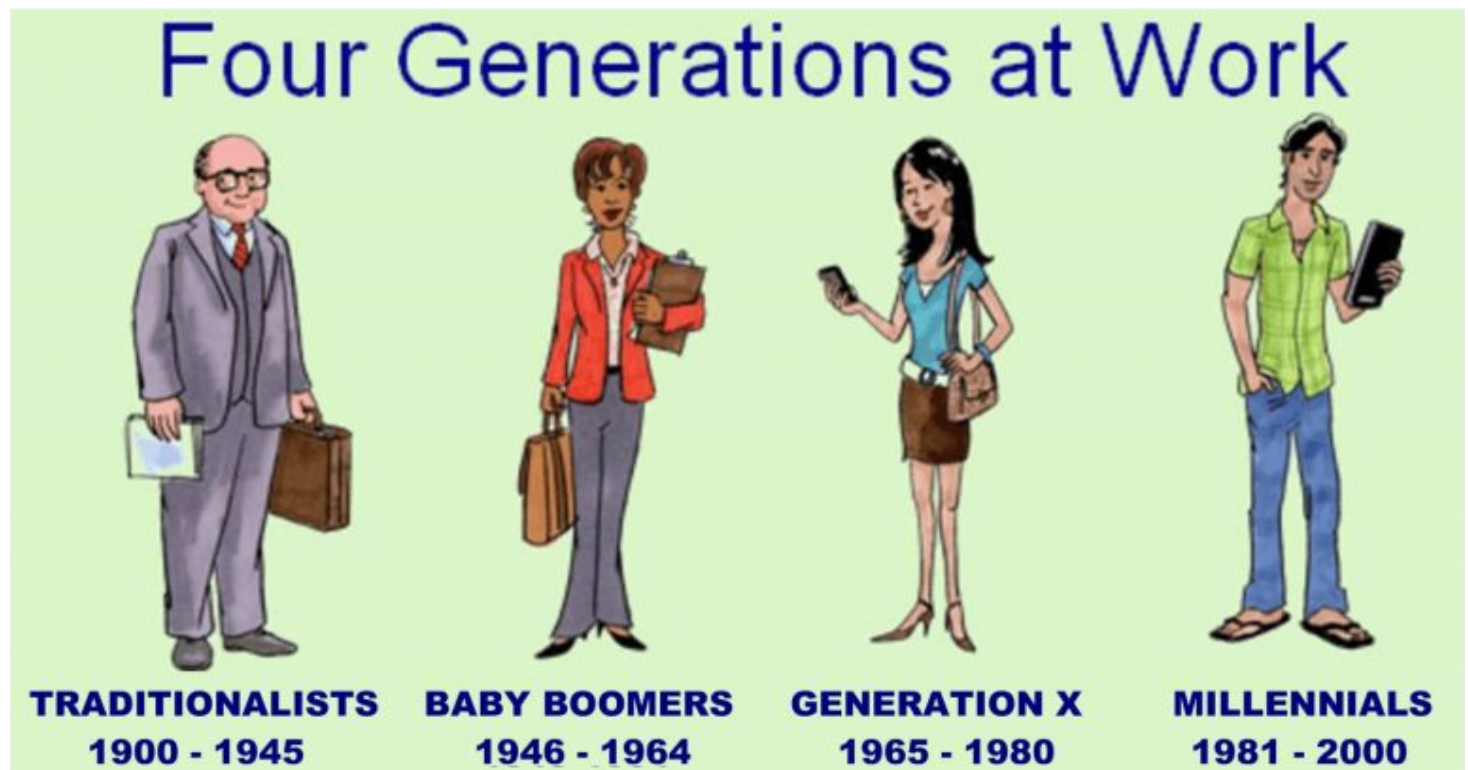


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For the past several years, accounting firms have faced a leaky bucket in terms of staffing. While firms are currently growing—the latest [AICPA](#) survey estimates that more than 60 percent of firms are planning expansions—many face a [talent shortage](#).

Now comprising the [largest segment](#) of the workforce, the tech-savvy Millennial generation stands to fill the talent gaps. While Millennials are known for championing [different](#) values than their predecessors, simply offering a well-paying job is no longer enough, yet cultural requests reflect the preferences of other

generations as well. By updating practices, branding and company culture to meet

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expecting workplace respect and taking pride in the emotional and financial fruits of their labor.

Next up, the Generation X-ers, referred to as [‘latch-key kids’](#), are categorized as resourceful employees that have a think-on-their feet approach to work. Raised in an era of tech and social change, Gen X-ers thrive in a creative environment that allows for flexible work-life balance options.

Millennials, the youngest of the group, have been marked by both previous generations for appreciating work-life flexibility, taking pride in their work and wanting to feeling heard and valued.

While these descriptions represent a stereotypical view of each generation, today's younger generation of workers have sparked conversations that unite workers and put employees first. By taking these values and desired work conditions into account, CPA firms can craft a workplace welcoming to all workers—Baby Boomers and Millennials alike. Here are four tips that can help firms become more attractive in today's competitive environment.

1. Show Social Consciousness

Letting go of the idea that wealth will bring happiness has changed the way younger workers interact with their employers. They opt for flexibility and social consciousness over large paychecks. Many companies, including [Google](#), [Amazon](#) and [AirBnB](#), showcase policies that integrate flexibility and social consciousness into the workplace. Examples include volunteer events, employee recognition programs, remote work and dedicated creative time—Google engineers are allotted to use 20 percent of their time for creative pursuits.

Because a sense of purpose has taken a larger role in the lives of Millennials, firms that fuse office life with larger social causes can attract and retain better talent.

While this may seem like extra work for an organization, the effort pays off, because

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their employer sees and values both their professional skills and their personal lives will reward the business with a deeper commitment.

2. Signify Savvy with Technology

In general, Millennials are **better informed** and more curious about the world than their older peers. This can be chalked up to social media platforms and other technology solutions that deliver vast amounts of information to their fingertips. While Millennials are accustomed to instant information, gratification and fast results, other generations aren't far behind. If your firm hasn't upgraded to paperless document management systems, e-signature tools, communication messaging systems like Slack or Google Chats, and workflow tools like Basecamp or Asana, it's time to put such tools—or their compliant enterprise versions—to work.

3. Think Beyond Perks

From indoor swimming pools to free gourmet dinners, perks have become an accepted and expected part of contemporary company culture. By themselves, however, perks cannot provide meaning. A company needs a strong and purposeful culture to energize everything else it does. The most powerful way to keep such a culture alive is by continuing to nurture it, an act facilitated by tracking and measuring culture over time.

As firms strive to make their workplaces more appealing to attract top talent, the effects of any change needs to be measured to track results. Technology platforms like people analytics solutions can provide firms with strategic and operational feedback they can act on to improve culture and make changes that are growing in importance to younger workers.

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'likes' and comments on social posts, Millennials desire a similar level of interaction in the workplace. Firms that actively create a workplace environment that caters to this tendency will reap the rewards and secure a top talent into the future.

Immediacy and short-tail gratification can be facilitated through communication practices, including the technology solutions mentioned above. Other methods, like forgoing quarterly reviews in favor of ongoing feedback cycles set each week, month or quarter, can help solidify an environment that garners regular employee recognition and iterative feedback loops.

The New, Aware CPA Firm

As the workforce continues to evolve, so too does the meaning of being a CPA. Technological trends like artificial intelligence robo-advisors (possibly soon robo-CPAs), blockchain, distributed workforces and Millennials themselves will alter the future firm. To stay ahead of the curve, craft your firm's culture intentionally with a focus on social awareness, tech-savviness and an ongoing cycle of feedback. You'll be ready to not just to address the challenges of the present, but be more prepared for the future, which is indeed, just beginning.

Greg Besner is Founder and CEO of [CultureIQ](#).

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