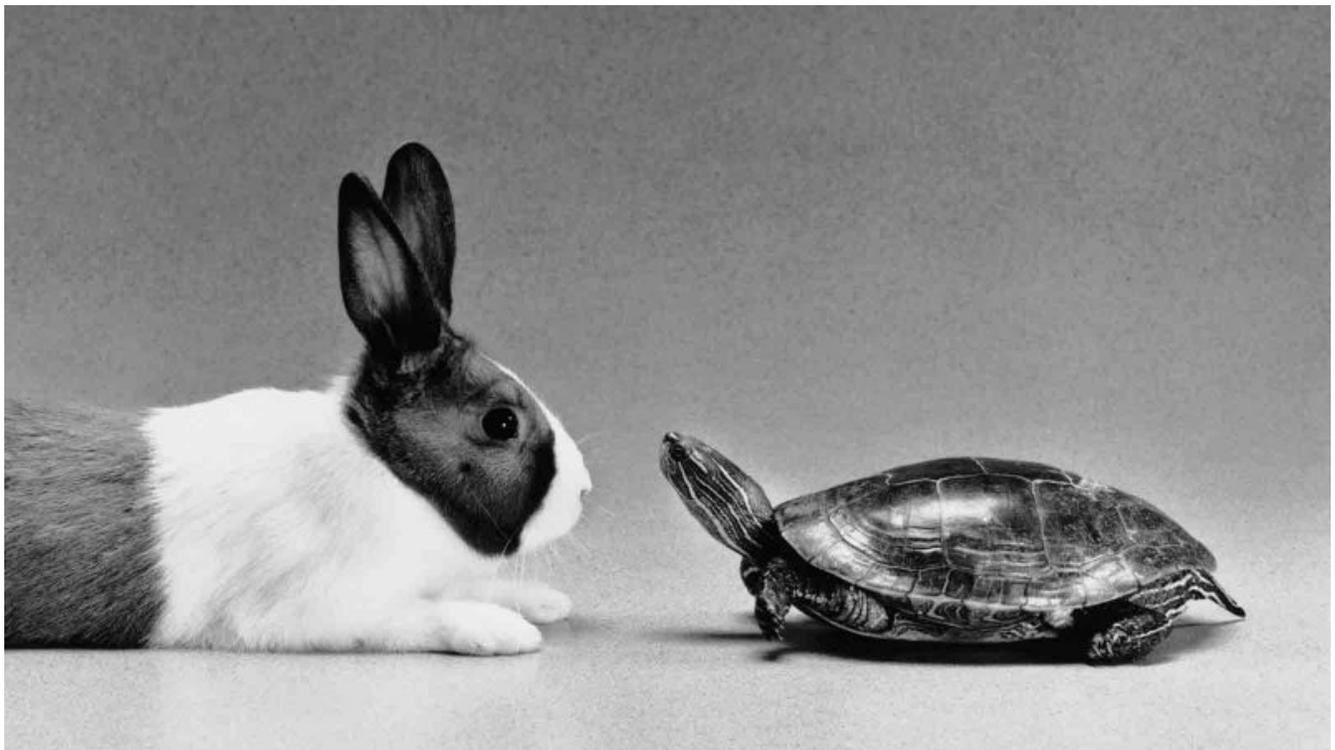




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The disconnect between Baby Boomers and Millennials when it comes to work ethic

By [Mark Lurie](#) Sep 16, 2018

Baby Boomers sometimes believe Millennials are entitled and lazy, but this couldn't be further from the truth.

Millennials have entered a professional world where their realities are wildly different from the ones Boomers knew. They prioritize things that don't make sense to Boomers because their environment has different demands.

For example, Millennials expect to be fired or let go regularly, so they want work that is directly in line with their own career equity, which are the skills and experiences that help them improve their career prospects. They know their time is limited, so they don't invest in doing things outside their own path. Boomers, however, are used to working hard for a company in exchange for long-term investment in skills development and for security, like a retirement fund or pension.



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But employment security and long-term investment no longer exist in the modern working world.

So what are Millennials working for?

Having worked extensively with Millennials at my companies, I've found they often work incredibly hard. But first, they need to feel like what they're working toward aligns with their own goals and aspirations. Specifically, I hired a lot of freshly graduated art history students to work as account representatives at Lofty.com. I ensured upon hiring them that I knew what they wanted to build in their careers, and ensure that their role within Lofty would amount to that end. This created a management-employee partnership. They worked hard for my company because they felt they were getting something out of it that benefitted them.

This may sound foreign to Boomers. They come from a world where they were expected to pay their dues by working hard on whatever the company needed, with the expectation that the company would reward them over in the long-term. Now, Millennials will work hard when they are given opportunities that help them provide for themselves without any kind of deal.

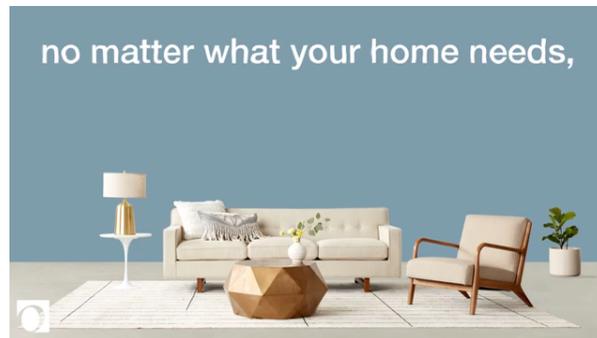
In order to bridge this generational divide, we have to update the old bargain in a way that Boomers can understand and Millennials can use. That means understanding where both sides are coming from in order to make the best possible deal.

But first, let's talk a little further about where Boomers are coming from.

Baby Boomers have certain expectations of young employees based on their own experience

Boomers entered a company and were expected to pay their dues in order to move forward. The understanding was if they worked hard for the company for several years, and the company benefited from their work, they'd be rewarded

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This was the bargain struck between an employee and company in the old days: you work hard and in exchange, we'll give you security and stability.

Now, Boomers expect Millennials to work for the same bargain. They think Millennials want to progress too fast and aren't paying their dues, which comes off as lazy. Boomers also assume Millennials are flighty and don't stay in their roles with any kind of commitment. What Boomers don't realize is the other end of the deal they had, the end that's supposed to be a payoff for the employee, isn't there anymore.

It's a whole new world out there, and Boomers have to recognize that if they're going to successfully manage Millennials

They also have to understand what Millennials actually want.

Because Millennials don't expect to stay with a company for the long term, their interest is in what can benefit them now.

This doesn't come from an inability to commit. It's the result of massive turnover rates, an unstable economy, and a more competitive business environment.

What Millennials are learning from their work experience is they will inevitably get fired, let go, shut down, or need to look elsewhere for personal growth. They expect to leave a position in a very short amount of time so they want to get

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work as a way to build their own professional equity and skill set as future bargaining chips so when it's time to move on, they're prepared.

Professional services companies like consulting firms, investment banks and law firms have already found a way to tap into this mindset by offering skills development and mentorship. In some ways, they're preparing their staff to move on to other companies, but they're also getting an intense level of hard work from Millennials in the meantime. In some cases, the employee feels invested and stays long-term.



Tech companies also understand the benefit of this investment and fight to recruit then keep Millennial talent. For example, Google also currently sends employees to conferences and boot camps to improve their skills. This is another way to tap into Millennial aspirations for a mutual benefit. The team feels like they're getting skills they can apply anywhere, and the company gets a return on their investment.

While this is one example of what a new bargain could look like, it's not the only one.

There are other ways to tap into a Millennial's aspirations, but they don't come from mind-reading.

Boomers managing Millennials need to understand their employment

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around what the employee wants from a job need to happen as early as the interview in order to continue motivating throughout the working relationship.

Some questions to ask include:

- What does the employee want from us?
- What are we providing the employee in exchange?
- What does the employee want in the long term? The short-term?
- What do they want from their career?
- What kinds of goals do they have outside of work?

Once a Boomer has answers to a few of these, they can start to craft a mutually beneficial working relationship with their Millennial staff. This means having regular conversations between employee and employer about what each side wants from the role going forward and how the two can help each other in the best way.

One thing I do at Codex Protocol is have monthly meetings with each employee. We don't talk about their projects or what they've accomplished. I limit the conversations strictly to what they want going forward and how I can help them achieve that. I've noticed in my Millennial employees, they work the hardest when I've given them chances to do work, achieve goals, and build their resume toward what they want long term.



There's a way to build mutually beneficial relationships between generations, and it comes from compromise on both sides. When given tasks that make them feel like they're building toward something, Millennials will work to help Boomers' businesses grow. Bridging the communication gap between these two generations can lead to greater outcomes on all sides, and maybe we can finally put a stop to all those think pieces about Millennial work ethic.

Mark Lurie is the Founder & CEO at Codex Protocol.

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