

# Defining work for a new generation

By  [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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The nature of work has changed and the design of the workplace and spaces of the future will influence the human mind in the workplace. The role of millennials in the workplace, the way they think and work, are an important aspect of this.

This was the focus of a recent Tower Bridge Roundtable discussion on the released Deloitte 2016 Millennial Survey. Moderated by Graeme Codrington, author and strategy consultant, TomorrowTodayGlobe, the panel taking up the discussion included Jonathan Hall, Tower Bridge, marketing director, Jackie Launder, executive producer, Mondcor Executive Search and Consulting, Prof Andrew Thatcher, chair of industrial/organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, and Tumelo Seaketso, partner/director at Deloitte Consulting.

The millennials includes people born in the early 1980s up to 2000, all who would be graduating high school in the new millennium. The Deloitte 2016 Millennial Survey looks at people born from 1982 onwards and are in the workplace currently or have been for a few years. The survey is global and South Africa also participates, with 200 participants out of over 7000.



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Of the participants surveyed, 66% say they will be looking to leave their current employment by 2020, with one in four looking to still leave this year. The biggest factor driving this is purpose. “The Survey shows that the overriding characteristic or trait of millennials are that they are purpose-driven in their work with two-thirds of participants saying that the overriding choice of where they work is purpose,” says Seaketso.

Personal values have a big influence on where millennials chose to work and the employers they chose. If the company's values are not what they believe in and compromises their values, then they will consider moving. While they appreciate the impact on clients and customers, it is personal values that align them to employers.

To fix the mismatch between employers and the millennials, employers need to understand how technology changes the how and where of work, says Launder. "Too often the employee value proposition is not aligned to the brand vision that the millennials see or experience within the company with management style still that of the 70s and 80s and being output orientated."

Misalignments between employers and millennials include how people and profits are viewed. "A rebalancing is needed. Millennials look at the organisation's contribution to society, and how the organisation, management and leadership engages with them and addresses issues," says Prof Thatcher.

The survey shows that only one in three millennials feel that the organisation effectively utilises their skills and the experience they have to offer. "Less than half of the millennials interviewed felt that the current business culture encourages them to come up with innovation ideas."

While they do believe that technology and innovation will allow them to contribute and that their lives will be more fulfilled as technology develops, business culture needs to be transformed.

This needs to be a far deeper transformation than just workplace design, says Hall. "You can have a modern workplace that is cool like Google, but if your leadership culture and physical space is not aligned, it will not work. Humans need to be trusted to have self-control over their work without having to be in the line of sight and at the office from 8:30."

Google is a good example of a modern work culture, says Codrington, but while they have hackathons and suspend their real work for a day to be crazy creative, what people forget is that the rest of the time they work really hard and are very focused.

Flexibility also does not assume no structure, but it is more about the what (is required of you) and when, than the where and how for millennials. "They also require instant feedback so they can autocorrect as they work and they want to be involved in the thinking," says Launder.

"Millennials want to be deployed on work that excites them and connects them with people that challenge and excite them," she adds.

## ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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