



Trophy Kids Grow Up

Ron Alsop

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The first wave of the Millennial Generation--born between 1980 and 2001--is entering the work force, and employers are facing some of the biggest management challenges they've ever encountered. They are trying to integrate the most demanding and most coddled generation in history into a workplace shaped by the driven baby-boom generation. Like them or not, the millennials are America future work force. They are actually a larger group than the boomers--92 million vs. 78 million. The millennials are truly trophy kids, the pride and joy of their parents who remain closely connected even as their children head off to college and enter the work force. Millennials are a complex generation, with some conflicting characteristics. Although they're hard working and achievement oriented, most millennials don't excel at leadership and independent problem solving. They want the freedom and flexibility of a virtual office, but they also want rules and responsibilities to be spelled out explicitly. "It's all about me," might seem to be the mantra of this demanding bunch of young people, yet they also tend to be very civic-minded and philanthropic.

This book will let readers meet the millennials and learn how this remarkable generation promises to stir up the workplace and perhaps the world. It provides a rich portrait of the millennials, told through the eyes of millennials themselves and from the perspectives of their parents, educators, psychologists, recruiters, and corporate managers. Clearly, the millennials represent a new breed of student, worker, and global citizen, and this book explores in depth their most salient attributes, particularly as they are playing out in the workplace. It also describes how companies are changing tactics to recruit millennials in the Internet age and looks at some of this generation's dream jobs.

Trophy Kids Grow Up Details

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Nicole says

This seemed unnecessarily critical of Millennials in some ways (and often repetitive), but I did enjoy learning about emerging and changing workplaces (and attitudes about work). I appreciate that a new generation is offering an alternative to the work-for-money paradigm and instead the focus is work that matters - and how employers will ensure that this piece is offered to employees.

Written in 2008, it's interesting to see how the educational system has adapted to the Millennials in the workplace - apparently they're not very good at problem-solving (enter Common Core, which is all ABOUT problem solving).

Some interesting discussions on entitlement and how this generation will lead going forward. Interesting read (but some may find tedious).

Ann says

Honestly, this was a disappointment. While he had the ability and the resources to develop into a fantastic commentary regarding the millennial generation, Ron Alsop evidently did not use the full gamut of his connections. The only examples of employed millennials were young employees of large corporations such as Wachovia, JP Morgan and Chase, Merrill Lynch, Goldman Sachs, etc. His only examples of students were either undergraduate students studying business (and other related majors) or graduate students in the process of achieving M.B.A. degrees: he completely failed to study *all* millennials, having only touched the surface. As a "millennial" myself, I can only think of *one* acquaintance of mine which fits the majority of his ignorant generalizations.

Also, if you're under the age of 30, this commentary will offend you. Don't waste your time.

Jason St. Clair says

This wasn't the first book or article I read on Millennials in the workplace so I didn't find a whole lot of new information. However, Alsop added one feature that makes this book stand out from similar works; conversations with and quotes from real-life people. This is an experiential phenomenon and in order to support your assertions you need to illustrate the experiences of people in these situations. Insights from employees or business managers really fleshed out the Millennial characteristics even though they were the same old stereotypes that I've read many times before.

Tanya says

I liked the first 2/3 of the book and felt as though information about this generation was on target. I hoped by the final third of the book that there would be some specific strategies about how to help this generation to become more resiliant and resourceful. Instead, it was information about how companies need to change their recruiting and what they will need to offer to better serve the needs of this generation. It was not the direction I expected it to go and I feel like in the long run our businesses and family connections will be failed.

Wellington says

This book read like I was reading a typical MSN/CNN/Yahoo "headline" story filled with information and quotes but lacking substance. The author pulls quotes and anecdotes from "Trophy Kids" those born between 1980 and 2000 and as the book goes on goes in the direction of working and recruiting these children.

Book does make me feel somewhat old since I'm part of Generation X. I felt some disdain from working from the "typical" Trophy Kid.

Book is worth a read but probably a forgettable one. In a couple months from now, I will forget about it and move on.

Marci says

While this book is an over generalization (but so is the descriptions of previous generations)....there will always be an over generalization when you are trying to talk about literally tens of millions of people. I think that the shortcomings of this book is that I think it describes the wealthy/upper-middle class, but I'm not sure there's accurate views on the middle-lower class/less moneyed.

Maybe it's my Gen X cynicism talking here, but there are some truly salient defining characteristics of this generation of people that are very different from previous generations. It has been through working with this new generation that I have truly gotten a better generational identity myself. In working with these younger folks, I'm frustrated and annoyed by their relative lack of problem-solving/black and white/checklist oriented work styles, the need for what feels like constant feedback, the over entitlement (thinking everything should come to them yesterday without having to pay your dues as an entry level person--perhaps actually even volunteering to get the necessary experience), and overemphasis on surface level social networking.

Jane says

It's not just my imagination that the 20-somethings these days have a real sense of entitlement. I've noticed that many 20-somethings seem anti-social and aren't very good at face to face communication. In the office many of them put their head down as they walk by you whilst they text on their phone, not even looking up to acknowledge you. They also want to get paid the big bucks, but not do the work to get it. These "kids"

have been raised to think they are the center of the world by their parents, but the reality is that no one else will see them that way.

Stacy says

I teach college students so this book was especially interesting to me. I found a lot of what Alsop wrote about to be very true to the students I see. The chapters relating to their relationships with their parents, addiction to technology and "great expectations" to be particularly spot-on. I have students ask me things that I can NEVER imagine asking a professor. Most recently - I had a student ask me to weigh his final exam higher than his group project, since he did so poorly on the group project. I actually had to explain to him how that would be unfair to all the other students in the class and I would not do it. Again, how can you even ask something like that? Did he really think I would say yes? But these are our next generation of leaders so I guess we better learn to deal with them now!

Kelly says

First, hire someone who knows how to use Photoshop correctly. The shadows on the ipod earbuds are not removed and it looks awful.

Second, you ruin your thesis in the first chapter. The reason "millennials" require a lot from jobs is because they're in competition globally. The 2/3 who move back at home with parents after graduation do so OUT OF NECESSITY since jobs are still paying wages that were paid for Gen X'ers. This won't pay for RENT, let alone the utilities. Millennials, much to your chagrin, are not out for their tech tools only; they're hoping to be able to not live with their parents and pay off the exorbitant debt accrued in college and maybe, JUST MAYBE, afford things like health insurance. But even when you do land the full-time job, that's a luxury. Raise your hand if you're a millennial with a full time job and don't have health insurance because you need that money to pay rent!

Third, the requirements to get a job these days is far above those to earn jobs 10-15 years ago. Back then, you would graduate college and go to work the next Monday (and may I add, without debt). Now, it's going to take 6-12 months to find a job because -- low and behold -- entry-level jobs require two years of experience in addition to the college degree (on which you dumped thousands of dollars). The reason this generation feels "entitled," Mr. Alsop, is because your generation ruined our futures by building companies that aren't worth investing our trust in (Enron, Merrill Lynch, and so forth); you EXPECT a degree and experience for a salary fit for a 1978 graduate; and you're entirely unable to navigate the technical tools that make working more efficient and useful.

I bet you could have hired a millennial to fix your terrible Photoshop job and they would have done it in much less time than whoever did do it, and they would be excited to put the skills they learned in college to use.

I don't get why people of Alsop's generation and pedigree continue to write about the millennial generation and continue to do so with such fear and mistrust. You know, the truth is I have more faith in this generation than theirs -- we've seen corporate greed; we understand competition on a global scale; we move quickly in order TO compete and in order TO maintain our skills; and we value how education and (hold on~!)

COLLEGE PROJECTS are actually valuable, skill-building tools for future jobs. As much as Alsop and company continue to want to belittle things like the "college project" as experience, it's more experience than they ever earned in college and required many, many, MANY more sacrifices on our part than on theirs. You know what? Maybe our generation deserves a break since we have never had them!

Save your time on reading this one. It's another middle age white man telling us how we're going to hell in a handbasket. And he doesn't know how to use Photoshop or find someone who does.

Elisa George says

Sure to offend Millennials, this book has good information, well supported by research. Having worked with this generation for several years, there was little that was new, except the specific examples of how colleges and employers have faced real challenges. Those real life approaches were very informative and helpful. I found every generalization about the generation to be true and have faced almost all the frustrations described. The specific research and anecdotes gave me some new ideas to try in working with Millennials.

Aneesa says

Reading this book was like reading astrology. I went from shock to outrage to recognition to feeling misunderstood to bored. I suspect that many of the characteristics that the author uses to classify the millennials are just characteristics of young people, regardless of generation (they grow up in a time of increased violence, for instance). However, this book is actually about only a small subset of the generation (in-demand MBA graduates). I am looking forward to comparing it to *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy* .

Melanie says

Abandoned because it was too boring. I don't really think that it's fair to group together people born from 1980-2000 in a group because too much stuff changed. I am an early millennial (over 21 but under 30 when this book was published in 2008) and there is a huge difference between people born in the early-mid 80s and the kids born in the 90s. They don't even remember Columbine and they probably weren't freely exposed to the horror of 9-11 the way that those who were in high school or college were. I doubt they remember how easy it was to pass through an airport security checkpoint. I doubt a lot of them remember life before the internet was a *thing* and it probably wasn't a novelty for a lot of them to get their first cell phone (got mine when I was 23, several months after I got married).

Anyway, I read the first chapter, skimmed the "chapter summaries" at the end of each chapter, and blah.

Ellyn says

This book attempts to explore the impact of the millennial generation, which roughly consists of young people born between 1980 and 2001, on the workplace. It characterizes millennials as entitled, insecure, and lacking in independent thinking, technology obsessed, but also generous, hard working, and devoted to

making their communities and the world a better place to live. The book is clearly an overgeneralization, and it applies mostly to middle to upper middle class college graduates working in business-related fields. I think I would have enjoyed it more had it looked more at young people working in a broader range of fields and at more of a variety of workplaces, including nonprofits and education-related jobs. In addition, the book was written prior to the recent economic downturn, which undoubtedly has had an impact on many of the workplaces that the author profiles. All that being said, it was an interesting book with many kernels of truth, and I gained some good insights from it.

Wendy says

Yet another book that discusses and classifies an entire generation based on a highly select smattering of its East Coast upper middle class representatives. Yes, the Millennials are here, and yes they're bringing changes to the way the world works. Every generation has done that, as Alsop points out repeatedly. But the problems and challenges aren't nearly as narrowly focused as Alsop suggests. The ones we need to be talking about aren't the select "best of them" who will occupy a handful of management positions at Fortune 500 companies, but rather the rest of them who will be soon making up the entire entering workforce in every kind of company and business.

As stated in an earlier review, this book was nothing more than an overblown magazine article, and one that largely managed to miss its own point. It's also concerning that Alsop doesn't seem to know what the moniker "The Trophy Generation" means; at one point he states that it's a reference to the parents treating their kids like trophies, when it's actually the name for the self-esteemia phenomenon whereby everyone who competes wins (or, gets a trophy) so that no one's feelings are hurt.

For the limited population Alsop is talking about, he does have some good points to make. However, for the book he claims to have written, he makes some mind-blowing errors that undermine his own credibility. Read the first chapter or two, but don't waste your time on the rest of the (very repetitive) book.

Anna Noga says

Read this book to try to understand the younger generation and to try and see what changes in my parenting can help avoid some undesirable traits in my kids. He does a good job of outlining the good (generous, work/life balance priorities) and not so good traits (entitled, easily bored, wanting too much too soon) of the millennial generation. It's interesting to read how corporations are restructuring to accommodate the needs of this new generation of workers. Not sure if I totally agree with it. When you continue to give a demanding individual all they want, they don't learn to compromise. Not only did these people get their way as kids, but now also as adults.
