

# Law Firms Make Adjustments to Make Most of Millennials

by John Pacenti

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Attorney Christina Himmel says she has heard the knocks from older lawyers on the so-called millennial generation.

"Entitled is the word you get, but I don't think that's true," said Himmel, an associate at Kluger, Kaplan, Silverman, Katzen & Levine who at 28 is at the forefront of the millennial generation.

"We have a certain energy and enthusiasm that we bring to the work place. A lot of us are really excited, and we are really passionate by things that we're doing. There is an optimism and excitement about the future."

## MILLENNIAL GENERATION

**Born:** Early 1980s to early 2000s

**AKA:** Generation Y; Generation Me; 9/11 Generation; Trophy Kids

**Characteristics:**  
Technologically savvy, entrepreneurial, socially conscious, optimistic, loves coffee

**Criticisms:** Entitled, needy, unfocused, disrespectful of established hierarchies and processes

Entitled or not, law firms are finding millennials make for a somewhat different kind of associate. So rather than eschew the generation that wears ear buds and soy lattes as fashion accessories, many law firms have adapted to their needs with promising results.

"They have a wonderful work ethic. They just don't want to do it from seven in morning to seven at night," said Abbey Kaplan, partner a Kluger Kaplan. "They have a tremendous focus on their career, but they want to do it on their track not somebody else's track."

These new lawyers are bucking the traditional associate track where they are required to work ungodly long hours doing research and then end up holding a name partner's brief case during trial. Often they are turning down larger paychecks from bigger more regimented firms for an opportunity to get their hands dirty right away.

"We want them hitting the ground running literally the day after they pass the Bar, getting into court and learning how to be litigators right from the start rather than do document review and do research and writing," Kaplan said.



J. ALBERT DIAZ

**Millennial Daniel Diaz-Balart, 29, went from being an assistant Miami-Dade prosecutor to Leesfield Scolaro because he knew "it wouldn't be long before I was back in the courtroom."**

## EXPERIENCE OVER PAY

Attorney Daniel Diaz-Balart, 29, comes from one of Miami's most well-known families. His father is former U.S. Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart and after serving as an assistant Miami-Dade prosecutor, he could have landed at a large firm.

Diaz-Balart chose Leesfield Scolaro in Miami because he was more concerned with experience than a salary at a big firm.

"I knew coming to a firm like Leesfield Scolaro with their history of aggressive advocacy, it wouldn't be long before I was back in the courtroom," he said.

Diaz-Balart's colleagues have also opted for hands-on trial experience at boutique firms, but have found some push-back once they get into the courtroom.

"I have heard of a situation where partners at other firms aren't happy to learn they are litigating against an associate at another firm. They think they should be litigating other partners," he said.

Attorney David Levine, a founding partner at Levine Kellogg Lehman Schneider + Grossman in Miami, said he has hired about 10 millennials at his

firm and have learned they are not willing to bide their time.

"They want to get client contact right away, they want to get into court right away and they want to get deposition experience," he said. "Our model seems to dovetail a little better with what's going on today."

Levine Kellogg formed in 2010 during the Great Recession. A number of stellar job candidates fell to them when bigger firms withdrew offers.

He found these young lawyer who came to age with the Internet and the advent of the smart phone are extreme multi-taskers and efficient. They want feedback and are not content to jump into a project blind, Levine said.

## LATTES AND EARBUDS

Millennials are a favorite punching bag in the media especially by writers belonging to the highly critical generations that proceeded the millennials.

Their firms are run—if not founded by—baby boomers, the first generation to be catered to by advertisers and an economic juggernaut as they become senior citizens. Their supervisors tend to be those from Generation X, a cynical

group raised by divorced parents and television.

Forbes Magazine in 2012 bashed the up-and-coming generation with such stories as: "Why Millennials Are Spending More Than They Earn, and Parents Are Footing the Bill" and "Is Gen Y's Live-at-Home Lifestyle Killing the Housing Market?"

Facts are that many millennials got caught up in the vortex of the Great Depression where the job pool shrunk to a puddle just as they were ready to jump in with both feet.

But Kaplan and Levine reject the millennial stereotype of the tweeting hipster who still lives with his parents and earns just enough scratch cash as an online mystery shopper to keep him in caffeine.

Himmel said she has never received a participation trophy or ribbon, a knock on her generation that it doesn't earning what it reaps.

Kaplan got a crash course on the millennial generation from his daughter, who is an executive at the microblogging site Tumblr.

"I really wanted to know what the millennials tick," he said. "I did a lot of reading about it."

He found they are looking for a hip, fun, communal and



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David Levine, head of table, said Levine Kellogg has hired about 10 millennials, including, clockwise from bottom, Brandon M. Thompson, Brenden D. Soucy, Victor Petrescu and Stephanie Hauser.

laid-back work space that is still challenging.

"We really spend a lot of time and energy giving them an opportunity to walk through business development in marketing, public relations and advertising," Kaplan said.

## TEAM APPROACH

Learning millennials love the team approach, Kaplan split up his young associates into work groups of about three or four and meets with them regularly to discuss ideas and client strategy. He gives each of them a marketing budget to develop a book of business.

"We want to them to take our clients out and get them to know them better," Kaplan said.

He envies this generation for its emphasis on working to live rather than living to work. They are not necessarily defined by their profession as much as their predecessors.

"I saw how my mom worked all the time, and I think that forces you to become one-dimensional," Himmel said. "My generation is interested in be-

ing more than one thing."

And millennials excel at networking.

Levine and Kaplan have put these young associates to work at their respective firms making contacts with clients' associate general counsels, many of whom are also millennials. Kaplan said this networking will pay off in the future when those associate general counsels become general counsels.

And, of course, this generation's technological prowess is unparalleled in work place, though there is one coming up behind it that appears to be part cyborg.

This attribute can also be a negative, Levine said.

"Younger people instead of picking up the telephone and talking to others, will send an e-mail," he said. "There are certain times that doesn't do it. You have to talk to somebody on the line. With e-mail, you lose that personal interaction, and there is still nothing like that when settling a matter."



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Abbey Kaplan, second from left, likes the work ethic of his millennial lawyers, including Richard I. Segal, left, Christina Himmel and Josh M. Rubens.

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