

# **MILLENNIALS:** MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP

**By Lindsey Pollak**  
The Hartford's Millennial Workplace Expert



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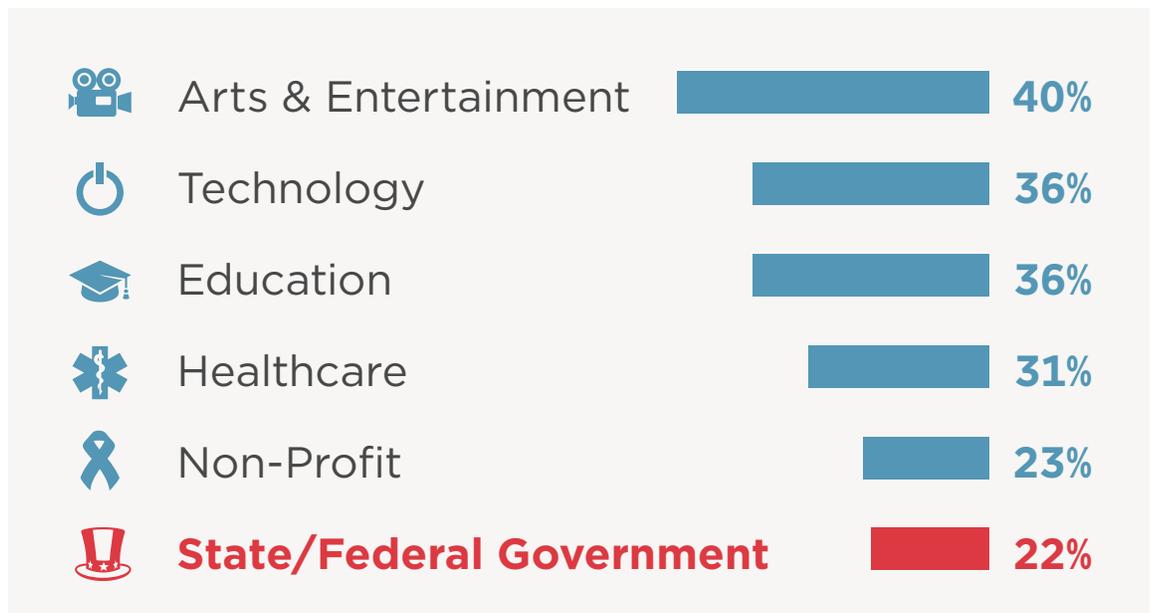
## MILLENNIALS: MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP

**Millennials (ages 18-34) are a generation driven to make a difference, a generation looking to lead the way towards creating a better future – which is exactly why, despite some challenges to overcome, government careers can be a good fit. There’s a real power and a commitment in seeing the potential of government and what it can do to change people’s lives.**

Given that the overall mission of government agencies is to serve the people, careers in this sector could be very rewarding for Millennials, with their genuine, strong desire to make an impact – on the world, on their communities and on the organizations in which they work.

In fact, in **The Hartford’s 2015 Millennial Leadership Survey**, 22% of survey respondents ranked government as the 6th most appealing industry in which to work.<sup>1</sup>

797 Millennials (with some college or higher education) were asked: **If you could work in any of the industries listed, which appeals to you most?**



Millennials believe they can make a difference on **Day 1** of a job, no matter what their role.

One of the top industries Millennials want to work in<sup>3</sup> is one that government agencies are far behind in:

### TECHNOLOGY

(including social media & apps)<sup>4</sup>

**60%**

of Millennials said Leadership skills were the top type of training Millennials said they want from their employers.



of Millennials see themselves as leaders **TODAY.**<sup>5</sup>



of Millennials aspire to be leaders in the **NEXT FIVE YEARS.**<sup>6</sup>

## ATTRACTION AND RETENTION INCENTIVES

### CONNECTION

One of the biggest challenges government agencies face in attracting and retaining its Millennial workers is finding ways to forge stronger connections between each individual's job and the overall mission. It's important for senior leaders to be very transparent with young workers, talking to them about what's going on with the business, why they are doing the work that they do and the impact it is having on their communities. Being reminded of the bigger picture can be a very powerful motivator and incentive.

By ensuring employees feel part of influential work and letting them see direct results from their efforts frequently, senior leaders can help keep engagement high. This is important for all generations, but especially so for Millennials. They have grown up in a social media environment and have seen first-hand how one tweet can go viral and affect the world. They believe they can make a difference on Day 1 of a job, no matter what their role.

### LEADERSHIP

It will be vital for management to give Millennials opportunities to lead, as well as provide the training they need - and want - to do so effectively. In fact, 33% of Millennials surveyed advised companies to promote leadership opportunities in order to attract and retain Gen Y workers. Leadership skills were the top type of training Millennials said they want from their employers (60%), with technical skills coming in a close second (54%).<sup>2</sup>

Millennials also are driven to lead in areas they know well. In fact, more than 80% of Millennials see themselves as leaders, and one of the top industries that they want to work in is technology.<sup>3</sup> Many government agencies are far behind when it comes to their use of technology,<sup>4</sup> including social media and apps. While it can be difficult to make changes in heavily regulated, heavily bureaucratic industries such as government, even micro-changes can have a positive impact and can be a good place to start.

Additionally, even incremental shifts towards more of a meritocracy could offer Millennials opportunities for rewarding, engaging work. For example, on a political campaign, meritocracy is born from an overload of work and a reliance on volunteers willing to take on whatever needs to be done. In those scenarios, workers can advance quickly by proving to be capable and responsible. Similarly, if government agencies could offer stretch assignments to Millennial workers supporting the agency's mission, it could provide the leadership training and opportunities they desire. It also could help forge a more direct connection between effort and impact.



### Reverse Mentoring

Other opportunities such as “reverse mentoring” or “reciprocal mentoring” can help foster closer connections between younger workers and senior leaders. Both groups have skills and experience that can benefit each. This is a leadership opportunity that usually has no cost associated with it except the time shared. Older executives can offer mentoring about industry practices and processes, offer guidance and solutions to career issues, and help guide personal or career development. In return, aspiring leaders can offer mentoring to executives on social media, new technologies, and current trends. This is especially important for leaders in government – which serve ALL people – to have a wide variety of generations advising them, providing information and insight.

### FINANCIALS

Given that 46% of Millennials are paying off student loans and that 24% have indicated student loan debt is a significant factor in the jobs/careers they pursue,<sup>8</sup> government agencies looking to recruit Millennials should consider the appeal of offering student loan repayment. There’s been a rise in industries, such as professional services and investment banking, offering this as an employee benefit. The Society for Human Resource Management’s 2015 Employee Benefits survey found approximately 3 percent of employers currently offer help to pay down employees’ student loan debt. However, a growing number of employers have announced they will be offering this as an employee benefit in the future.<sup>9</sup>



of Millennials are **PAYING OFF STUDENT LOANS**.<sup>11</sup>



said that student loan debt has had or will have greatest impact on the **JOB OR CAREER THEY PURSUE**.<sup>12</sup>

Currently the money that employers give their employees to repay student loans is considered taxable income. However, there have been efforts in Congress to make this perk tax-free.<sup>10</sup> Even without preferential tax treatment, though, benefits such as these can offer strong incentive, helping to attract and retain talent.

There aren't many differences between what Millennial women and men want from their employers, but pay equity was, understandably, of more concern to women. Since most government agencies have transparent bands of salary and benefits, promoting this could help attract workers concerned with the gender wage gap that exists in many other industries.<sup>13</sup>

Both women and men were interested in having flexible work options as well - 50% of women and 37% of men said that having flexibility with work schedules was important to them.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, given the reality of different lifestyles (same-sex marriage, single parenthood, etc.) there is even more convergence between the genders as to the value they place on specific benefits from their workplace. Some state governments have been implementing or considering new legislation about extended paternity leave - making it equal to maternity leave, for example - as has the military.<sup>15</sup> Offering extended parental leaves and other types of workplace flexibility will appeal to both genders of Millennials.



## CONCLUSION

Despite the bureaucracy often associated with government, and some of the challenges that can pose for creating changes within the established system, there are definite opportunities to entice and engage Millennial employees. By being willing to embrace all that Millennials bring to their employers, government agencies can capitalize on this vibrant, growing workforce of aspiring leaders, who are driven and eager to make a positive impact on the world in which they live. They have the desire to make change happen. And with some expert guidance and shared experience, they can help government achieve its mission of serving the nation's communities, while helping it transform and evolve to best represent those it serves.

### FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES

are an important option to Millennial women and men.<sup>14</sup>



Women



Men



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## About Lindsey Pollak

Lindsey Pollak is **The Hartford's Millennial workplace expert** and the author of *New York Times* best-seller "**Becoming the Boss: New Rules for the Next Generation of Leaders,**" as well as the book: "**Getting from College to Career: Your Essential Guide to Succeeding in the Real World.**" She has more than a dozen years of experience advising both young professionals and organizations on the changing world of work.

Pollak has partnered with The Hartford for four years on a national campaign to help Millennials understand their benefits and help employers and brokers understand the largest generation in the workplace today ([thehartford.com/tomorrow](http://thehartford.com/tomorrow)).

Her advice has appeared in national news media, such as *The New York Times*, *Fox News*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *CNN*, *The TODAY Show*, *Forbes*, and NPR. She serves as the chair of *Cosmopolitan* magazine's Millennial Advisory Board.

**Pollak** (@lindseypollak) appears on several "Best People to Follow on Twitter" lists, including *Mashable's* list of "20 Twitter Resources for Job Hunters" and *Marie Claire's* "100 Twitters Every Woman Should Follow." She has been named to the 2014 and 2013 "Top 10 List of Leaders in College and University Career Services" by the Career Services Insights Survey. Her **website** is on *Forbes'* "Top 100 Websites for Your Career."

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<sup>1-3</sup> [The Hartford's 2015 Millennial Leadership Survey](#), The Hartford.

<sup>4</sup> "Their mission: a tech-savvy government," by P. Kivilanz, June 22, 2016, *CNN Money*.

<sup>5-7</sup> [The Hartford's 2015 Millennial Leadership Survey](#), The Hartford.

<sup>8</sup> [The Hartford's Millennial Money: Soaring Student Loan Debt](#), 2015, The Hartford.

<sup>9</sup> "Easing the Student Loan Debt Burden? Points to Consider," by J. Sammer, January 7, 2016, *The Society for Human Resource Management*.

<sup>10</sup> "Members of Congress Push for Tax-Free, Employer-Led Student Loan Assistance," by D. Fuscaldo, April 4, 2016, *Education News*.

<sup>11-12</sup> [The Hartford's Millennial Money: Soaring Student Loan Debt](#), 2015, The Hartford.

<sup>13</sup> "The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap (Spring 2016)," by C. Hill, Ph.D., Spring 2016, Economic Justice, [www.AAUW.org](http://www.AAUW.org).

<sup>14</sup> [The Hartford's 2015 Millennial Leadership Survey](#), The Hartford.

<sup>15</sup> "Carter Announces 12 Weeks Paid Military Maternity Leave, Other Benefits," by L. Ferdinando, January 28, 2016, U.S. Department of Defense, [www.defense.gov](http://www.defense.gov).