

# SIX TIPS FOR DEVELOPING MILLENNIAL LEADERS

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Millennials (born 1984 to 2000 and currently aged 18 to 35, and also known as Gen Y) are the leaders of today – they lead in virtually every sphere of life, including churches, charities and organisations. Much has been written about their upbringing, their schooling and the way in which they have adapted to or rebelled against current workplace and Church culture.

However, little has been written about the way that they are transforming leadership.

We (Simon Barrington, a Baby Boomer, and Rachel Luetchford, a millennial) set out to interview nearly 500 Christian millennial leaders over the course of a year and published the results of our research in October 2018 (downloadable from [www.millennial-leader.com/research](http://www.millennial-leader.com/research)).

Based on this new research, we began to see how the generations could work better together and learn from one another, so we set about writing *Leading – The Millennial Way*. In the book we answer two basic questions:

1. How do millennials hone their unique energy to become the best leaders they can be?
2. And how do non-millennials harness the power of this generation and step into leading the millennial way themselves?

Reflecting on what the research highlighted, we have produced six practical steps you can take to help encourage and develop millennial leaders.

## 1. TEACH HEALTHY CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Teaching healthy conflict management is extremely important in raising up a generation of leaders who can lead boldly and reach their God-given potential. Conflict management was the most cited difficulty in leading for millennials. 69% of those surveyed had received no conflict management training at all, and they identified that conflict in the workplace tends to spill over into other areas of their lives.

They expressed both a fear of conflict, fuelled by a strong desire to be liked, and also a desire to be able to do conflict well. They tend to avoid it as much as possible. Yet all leaders know that conflict is a part of the leadership territory, and therefore it is vital for



leaders to understand and learn how to tackle issues surrounding conflict. Personal example and formal training both have their part to play. Older leaders practicing the concepts of grace, forgiveness and healthy conflict management will model for millennials a way to engage in healthy conflict. Formal training will provide the tools they need (see Growing Bridgebuilders, [www.cpas.org.uk](http://www.cpas.org.uk)).

## 2. BE AWARE OF THE TENSIONS SURROUNDING IDENTITY AND FACILITATE SPACE FOR MILLENNIAL LEADERS TO REFLECT

On the surface millennial leaders seemed to be secure in their identity as children of God, yet when delving deeper there were underlying identity issues. Just over half of the participants acknowledged that they struggled with a 'need for approval' and wanting 'to be liked'. Their sense of value was linked to what others thought rather than in their identity in God. Another dominant theme was the high fear of failure that millennials shared.

Create space for millennial leaders to have time to become more self-aware and explore their own identity. Of course this isn't just a millennial issue. My own journey (Simon) has been one of finding the courage and bravery to be truly myself and the strength to take off the masks and learn to be vulnerable and authentic in the context of leading in both a large corporate and in a Christian charity. My interaction with millennials has deeply enriched me and shaped me on that journey: a character forming journey of learning to lead out of who I really am. It seems it will be helpful to provide space for millennials to explore these themes as well, to enable them to gain a healthy sense of identity.

## 3. PUT MILLENNIAL LEADERS IN ENVIRONMENTS OF HIGH CHALLENGE AND HIGH SUPPORT

Seek to put millennials you are leading in an environment that has both high support and high challenge. In the research one millennial shared: 'You need a good team around. You need a team to support you. Equally you need a team that's going to appropriately challenge you. You need people above you as well, who are equally supporting what you are doing and equally have that ability to challenge what you are doing. That sort of high challenge, but high support.'

Environments that allowed leaders to take risks and fail within authentic community, that give real, instant feedback were seen as highly important for millennials to flourish. High support and high challenge are needed simultaneously.

## 4. MENTORING IS KEY

Mentoring has been and continues to be highly significant in leadership development. It allows for personalised content through its ongoing, one-to-one approach. The mentee can observe the mentor in their life and leadership, and as trust builds, in turn they feel able to show vulnerability, try new things and grow.

One millennial concluded: 'mentoring is the most helpful thing because it's context driven. It's very specific to what's going on.' Another explained it is 'one of the best ways to solidify character'. It is widely recognised that this generation are looking for mentors, and our research backs this up. The challenge for many millennials is finding those of older generations who are willing to be mentors.

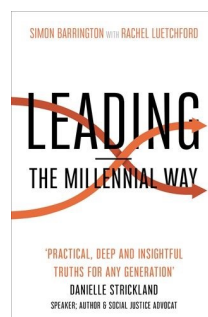
## 5. OFFER LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES WHENEVER YOU CAN

85% of millennials surveyed by Forge Leadership selected 'learning on the job' as one of the top three things that has had the most influence on how they lead. Millennials told us that they grew massively in leadership from being offered real, not token, responsibility even before they felt they were ready. The opportunity to learn and fail in a safe environment was seen as absolutely invaluable. Real leadership responsibility is a catapult to being better at leading, taking risks, growing, and experimenting.

## 6. NURTURE SELF-CONFIDENCE

In our research we asked how millennials would generally rate their self-esteem. 55% of males rated theirs as 'high' or 'very high'. Unfortunately, for women, this was only 29%.

If we are to raise up women leaders from the next generation to fulfil their potential and lead with great influence, then we need to support them in developing a greater sense of confidence and self-esteem. Special attention needs to be paid to the mentoring of and advocating on behalf of female millennial leaders.



Simon Barrington and Rachel Luetchford's book, *Leading – The Millennial Way*, is published by SPCK on 18 April 2019 and can be ordered online at [www.millennial-leader.com/book](http://www.millennial-leader.com/book).

