

# **Current Leadership Challenges Facing Law Enforcement: Effectively Leading the Millennial Generation**

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## ***Abstract***

*The purpose of this research paper was to determine the leadership qualities that are expected by the Millennial workforce. Each generation has different expectations of leadership, but the Millennials have very different expectations and require much more attention than previous generations. A survey was sent to all Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and Fort Walton Beach Police Department personnel who would be considered the Millennial generation. Transparency, good communication skills, and approachability are important leadership qualities that research reveals as being the most valued qualities of a leader. This paper provides a guideline to future law enforcement leaders on how to better manage and motivate their Millennial personnel.*

## **Introduction**

For the first time in history, today's workforce has more different generations in law enforcement than ever before. This has caused a problem for leadership. Retention rates across the world are low and employers across the world are scrambling to find a solution. The perception is that the most problematic generation in the workforce is the "Y Generation," or more popularly known as "Millennials." The leaders who are unwilling to learn how to communicate and lead this generation will only find the problem will get worse for them and their agency unless they are willing to change. Many report that Millennials will be between 50-60% of the workforce by the year 2025. The perception of some senior law enforcement professionals is that "they are going to have to adjust to the way we do business." Everyone would agree that law enforcement professionals must learn and abide by the law and procedures of an agency, but the way we train, communicate, and develop our employees has to change. If leaders are unwilling to change they will not be able to retain good employees. They will continue to throw money away by spending money on training for a person they will lose in three years. I recently conducted a study at my agency related to employee retention and I determined that if we were able to keep employees past three years that we would receive our return on investment.

Criminal Justice professionals across the United States are dealing with an epidemic of high turnover rates and increased public scrutiny. Some would argue the high turnover rates are because the economy has improved over the last couple of years. Others would argue that the new generation coming into law enforcement are the problem. Both are valid arguments; however, the problem goes much deeper and law enforcement leaders should prepare for the uphill battle that is ahead.

The availability of jobs today has law enforcement agencies competing against the private sector more than ever. Due to the amount of daily stress incurred by officers and the dangers associated with the job, it's harder to sell people on the benefits of serving in law enforcement. Although money is a factor in recruiting and retaining new officers, it's not everything, especially to Millennials who have a strong desire to serve and make a difference. Relationships matter to this generation. Millennials are looking for leaders to learn how to effectively motivate, communicate, and develop them.

The increased public scrutiny of police officers is good and bad for today's criminal justice professionals. The accountability that comes from the public scrutiny has helped agencies across the country change their methods of operation and take a closer look as to whether current procedures are effective. Although the public scrutiny is stressful to the officers these changes have pushed law enforcement to a new level of professionalism. I would argue that the police officer of today is more highly trained and professional than the officers of 20 years ago. The implementation of body worn cameras has reduced reported uses of force and sustained disciplinary action against officers. These decreases and improvements would not have occurred without the public scrutiny. The downside to the public scrutiny is an even greater challenge, but the biggest impact is seen with recruitment and retention.

In this paper I will discuss the research that was found on how to effectively lead the millennial generation who will make up the primary workforce for the next 30 years. The benefit of learning how to provide leadership to this group will assist with law enforcement recruiting and retention of employees. The competitive advantage that agencies will have by implementing new leadership strategies focused on leading millennials will drastically reduce problems with recruiting and retention of good employees.

## **Literature Review**

### **Generational Overview**

The leadership style of "everyone gets treated the same," will not benefit the personnel or agency that has this type of leadership style. In terms of policies and procedures and application of law this leadership would be appropriate but it cannot be used to lead new police officers in the future, otherwise, turnover rates will continue to grow. In today's workforce there are four generations of people: Veterans/Traditionalists (1928-1945), Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1979), and Generation Y (1980-2000) (Sprague, 2008). With this many generations in the workforce, leaders have to be more dynamic and flexible than ever. If a leader wishes to effectively lead his/her personnel they have to utilize leadership styles that engage the different generations in the workforce (Pitt-Catsouphes & Matz-Costa, 2009). Learning the different styles that are required to lead this group will make a leader more effective.

Each group has a different preference of what motivates them and it's vital for leaders to find out what these motivations are in order to have productive and happy employees. These employees also have very different expectations from their supervisors.

## **Veteran Generation**

Many people from this group are already in retirement or are about to enter retirement. Traditionalists have a respect for authority and are not likely to question authority, but they would not respond well to a micromanager (Hammill, 2005.) This generation would rather be left alone to do their work and in most cases they do not require a lot of direction from supervision (Hammill, 2005.) Face-to-face contact is preferred and they only wish to do their jobs well, which means leaders do not need to have as much engagement.

## **Baby Boomers**

Baby boomers also prefer face-to-face contact with their leadership and they respond well to monetary or promotional gains at work. This generation is the group that established the phrase “workaholic” (Hammill, 2005). In many cases, Baby Boomers’ jobs are a large part of their identity (Hammill, 2005.) If utilized correctly then they bring a lot of value to the workplace due to their work ethic and team player mentality. This generation is typically entrenched in the veteran leadership within an agency and they seem to have the most trouble with the millennial generation due to conflicts from different upbringings.

## **Generation X**

The last generation before I begin dissecting the topic of the research paper is “Generation X,” who were those born between 1965-1979. According to Hammill, Generation X is skeptical of the world around them and they would choose to follow their own set of rules. (Hammill, 2005). This group started asking the question “Why?” but Millennials, not Generation X, are the generation more commonly associated with asking the question “why?”

Members of Generation X respond well to straightforward and candid communications (Sheef & Thielfodt, n.d; Raines, 1997). Due to the fact that they grew up during times of government and private sector corruption scandals they are more likely to be suspicious of change. They are the first generation that prefers face-to-face contact but will equally accept telephonic or virtual contact (Hammill, 2005).

## **Millennial Generation**

This generation was born between the years of 1980-2000. This generation of people grew up in an era characterized by power, wealth, and prosperity (Hammill, 2005.) They have experienced a world with technology growing at a very fast pace so they are used to adapting to new technology which benefits them in the workforce. According to Hammill, this generation is characterized by look to what’s next, the idea of multi-tasking, goal orientation, and tolerance (Hammill, 2005.) Millennials believe they do not need to be working in a career field for a long period of time before being eligible to promote and they desire a balance between work and personal life which is much different from the Baby Boomer generation who are leaving the work force. The clashes in personality

between the Baby Boomers and Millennials is what may be causing such retention problem for all employers. One of the biggest conflicts is the difference in work ethics. Baby Boomers, especially those in leadership, are the hardest working generation. When they see that millennials prefer more of a balanced work and personal life then the perception is millennials are lazy (Hammill, 2005). Maybe millennials are more efficient at their work than Baby Boomers?

## **Destructive Leadership**

If employers wish to contend with competitors in the future then they must begin by learning how to communicate with the millennial generation. According to Hammill, the leadership style that this generation prefers is leaders who are nurturing and appreciative of their work (Hammill, 2005). Some employers are unwilling to provide this constant feedback because it differs from their upbringing, but millennials were brought up with parents who gave them a lot of positive feedback. This generation, more than others, grew up with positive feedback and parents who allowed them as children to give feedback to the parents (Hammill, 2005). They were almost treated as equals by their parents which is why older generations have trouble communicating effectively with them. The reason this generation asks “Why?” is because they were afforded the explanation from their parents so they do not view employers as any different. This generation does not respond well to “Because I told you so” (Hammill, 2005).

Destructive leaders who go unchecked can damage the reputation of a government agency for years, which does not help with recruitment. Millennials have an entrepreneurial spirit which is similar to those who fall into the Generation X category (Hammill, 2005). Millennials wish to be encouraged to provide ideas in the workplace and a boss who is impatient, rude, or unwilling to accept ideas from others will cause this group to seek employment elsewhere. These employees are considered emotionally sensitive and vulnerable because of the indulgent love they received from their parents (Hou, Li, & Tu, 2014). In a study conducted on Chinese millennial employees the author states:

“Fear of reprimand from a destructive leader means that these employees seldom attempt to come up with new ideas or constructive suggestions. In addition, innovation occurs in conditions of support and guaranteed resources, and an open mind”. (Yidong & Xinxin, 2013).

It’s more important than ever to select leaders who are good communicators and know how to develop and build positive working relationships with future generations of employees. Even if a person is good at their job it does not mean they will be able to lead a group of people to be successful together. Relationships with fellow employees and bosses matters to millennial employees more than previous generations. The culture of agencies has to change and leaders have to learn to lead with compassion if they want to be successful in recruiting and retaining talented employees (Friedman & Gerstein, 2017).

## **Compassionate Leadership**

The easy access to information has bred a culture of accountability for the actions of misdeeds. Millennials and Generation X have grown up seeing stories on the news or through the internet pertaining to corruption such as Enron or the corruption that caused the housing bubble to burst in 2007 causing the Great Recession. Story after story showed people who lost all of their life savings while corporate executives continued receiving bonuses and flying private jets after the government bailout. These incidents caused younger generations to be cautious of leaders who were only concerned with their own salaries and less concerned with others (Friedman & Gerstein, 2017). The Deloitte Millennial Survey (Deloitte, 2016) showed that millennials believe employees should be put first over company profits and that a strong foundation of trust and integrity is very important when making the decision to stay with an employer (Deloitte, 2016).

What does it take to be a compassionate leader? A researcher in 2014 believes there are three requirements for a person to feel compassion: “The problem must be serious; the individual’s problem cannot be self-inflicted; and the observer must be able to identify the victim’s suffering” (Cherry, 2014). If a leader has these three qualities they will be able to sense when there is a problem with their staff. If they have good communication skills to go along with compassion then they will be more successful in gaining the trust of the millennial staff. Servant style leadership works well with millennials because they believe employees should take priority over other successes (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2013.) Although a leader can have other leadership qualities the importance of leading with the intention of serving others has a big impact on employees. A leader who has the qualities of compassion, gratitude, authenticity, humility, humor, and integrity will improve employee retention and performance (Baker & O’Malley, 2008).

## **Employee Development and Preparation**

One important quality a leader must have is the ability to develop their employees through training and mentorship. Millennials wish to make an impact but fall short because of experience so they seek the guidance of a compassionate and patient leader who will teach them how to be successful (Erickson, 2013). Most experts would agree that millennials lack the basic face-to-face communication skills required to feel a part of an organization. The lack of communication skills can become overwhelming for those entering the workforce especially when they are required to communicate with three other generations of workers (Schawbel, 2013). It’s important for millennials who are entering law enforcement to have the basic requirements to perform their everyday duties but it’s equally important to start training them to be leaders sooner rather than later. Customized leadership training must be developed to cater to the millennial generation in order for them to benefit because previous training practices will not work. The authors of “Mastering Millennial Leadership,” introduce the idea of rotational on-the-job training. This would mean millennials would have the opportunity to experience different aspects of the agency. Alexandra Levit made this statement about rotational training:

“Rotational programs allow Millennials to experience as many facets of the company as possible so that they learn what they’re really passionate about, what they’re good at, and the intersection of the two,” explains Levit. “In such a program, they would learn how the business works from the ground up and master a variety of critical transferable skills like project and people management” (Levit, 2013).

Millennials require constant feedback, so leaders are encouraged to communicate what their expectations are and provide individual evaluation. Most agencies have annual employee evaluations, but millennials require more than an annual evaluation to feel like their work is appreciated and is making a difference (Hammill, 2005). Most importantly, this group needs honest feedback because they are suspicious of leadership who they do not trust. Levit also suggests a training program to cover subjects such as: becoming a mature leader, how to establish profitable relationships, demonstrating controlled initiatives, transferrable skills sets, and being proactive about job growth (Levit, 2013). All of these subjects give the opportunity for these employees to grow as individuals and in turn they will work to improve the culture of the organization.

### **Be a Coach Instead of a Boss**

Millennials want leaders who are engaging and care about their individual success. They would prefer someone who is willing to mentor them and coach them to the success they desire (Sherman, 2017). Leaders who wish to be successful with this generation should know what the goals of the individual are, otherwise they will fail to produce productive employees at their agency. Coaching a person to be successful does not mean a boss should “micromanage” the person. Coaching means to give them the tools they need to succeed and then empowering them to make it happen (Sherman, 2017). Sherman makes the statement in an article: “Active listening is key to effective coaching. Rather than give advice, a coach teaches and directs (Sherman, 2017). Micromanagers are the worst type of boss to have in charge of millennials because millennials are very similar to the Veteran and Baby Boomer generation. Although they need feedback on their performance they are not productive employees under this type of leadership. The Veteran and Baby Boomer generation do not respond well to this type of management, but they are less likely to leave the job unlike millennial employees (Hammill, 2005). Leaders have to be cautious of solving problems for millennials and instead give them advice because solving the problem only stunts the growth they need to succeed (Sherman, 2017).

### **Millennials in Public Service**

Believe it or not, millennials enjoy serving others as long as they believe in the cause. There is no profession that has the opportunity to serve others and make a bigger impact on a community than law enforcement does. It is important for the future of the criminal justice profession for leaders to work tirelessly to answer the question “Why join law enforcement?” Military leaders Hinote and Sundavall (2015) stated this about millennials who enter the military: “if we are truly committed to strategic agility in our force, we must harness the creative power, enthusiasm for service, and teamwork they bring to

our institutions” (Hinote & Sundavall, 2015). Military service is not that much different than serving in law enforcement. Instead of law enforcement leaders and complaints being the driving force behind law enforcement operations, leaders should task their millennial employees with how to fix complex operational problems. Giving them this task would increase their motivation and give them a sense that what they do makes an impact, especially if their ideas work. Many of the patrol operations are no different than that of 50 years ago. There are two types of policing: reactive and proactive. Millennials thrive when they feel their ideas are being heard and they gain confidence when their plans are implemented and are successful. Instead of finding ways to criticize, and in some cases hinder a millennial's progress, leaders should find ways to unleash their potential. By doing this it may not only benefit the agency in operations but they will retain more talented employees while at the same time benefiting the communities they are protecting.

## **Methods**

The purpose of the research project is to determine the best practices for leading the millennial generation in today's workforce. Research recently collected has shown a communication barrier that is occurring with the different generations in the workforce and this barrier is causing high turnover rates worldwide. The data collected for this project is meant to provide guidance to leaders within organizations on what personal leadership characteristics are valued by those falling into the category of “Millennial”.

A survey of twenty questions was presented to over two-hundred twenty-eight sworn and non-sworn personnel who are currently employed with the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and the Fort Walton Beach Police Department. The personnel who were presented the survey were employees born between 1980-2000. The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office currently has two-hundred six (206) employees who fall into this category and the Fort Walton Beach Police Department has twenty-two (22).

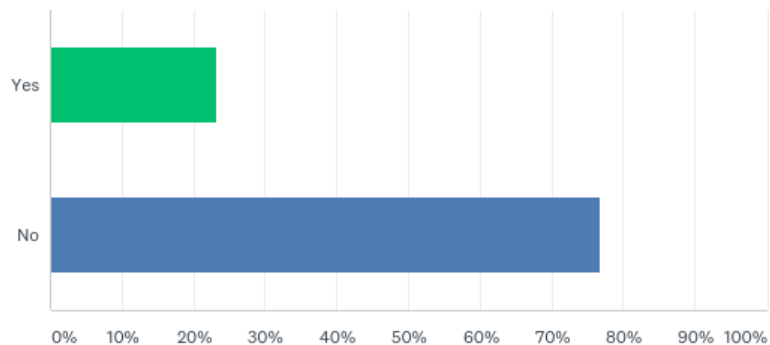
The survey questions were used to determine what characteristics employees prefer in their supervisors. Some of the questions presented identified their current job satisfaction and their perception of career growth within their specific agency. Participants were told the survey was completely anonymous in order to encourage honest feedback. Participants were encouraged to provide honest feedback because the results from the survey would be used to provide training to supervisory personnel within their agency. This training may benefit employees by having a supervisor who is better informed on how to lead and supervise those who fall into the “Millennial” category. For the purpose of time, the survey was meant to be very easy to understand in hopes that more personnel would participate in the survey.

## Results

The survey was distributed to 250 Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office sworn and non-sworn employees and police officers at the Fort Walton Beach Police Department. The survey was specifically sent to personnel who would be considered the "Millennial Generation" by being born between years 1980-2000. I received 112 responses, for a response rate of 45%. I also received 100% completion of each of the survey questions that were returned except for Question 20 which four respondents (4%) skipped for an unknown reason. The survey focused on questions with the intention of gathering input on what those considered "Millennials" expect from leadership. One hundred and five respondents (93.75%) were personnel from the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and the remaining seven respondents (6.25%) were employees of the Fort Walton Beach Police Department.

The first question asked participants to indicate if they were in a leadership position or not. Eighty-six respondents (77%) stated that they were not in a leadership position within their agency, while twenty-six (23%) stated they were in a leadership position.

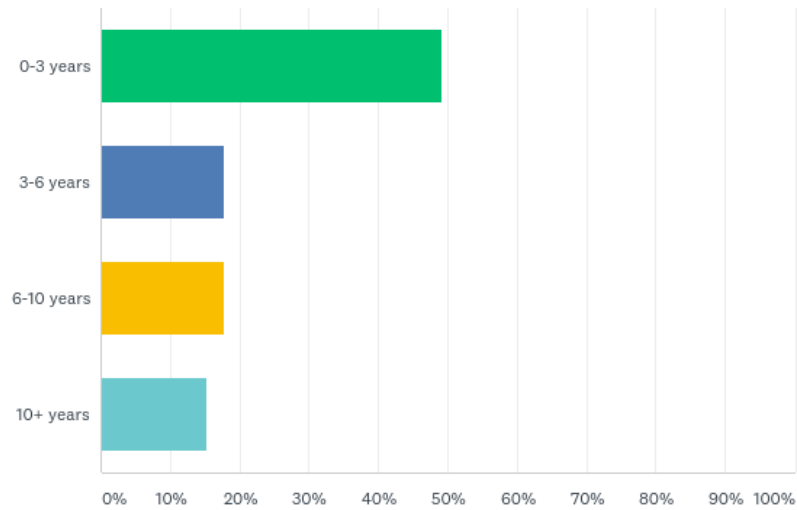
TABLE 1: Position of Leadership?



The second question asked the respondents to provide their years of service with an agency. Of the 112 respondents, 55 (49%) indicated they had been employed by their current agency for 3 years or less; 20 (18%) indicated they had been employed for 3-6 years, 20 (18%) indicated they had been employed for 6-10 years, and 17 (15%) indicated they had been employed for 10 years or more.

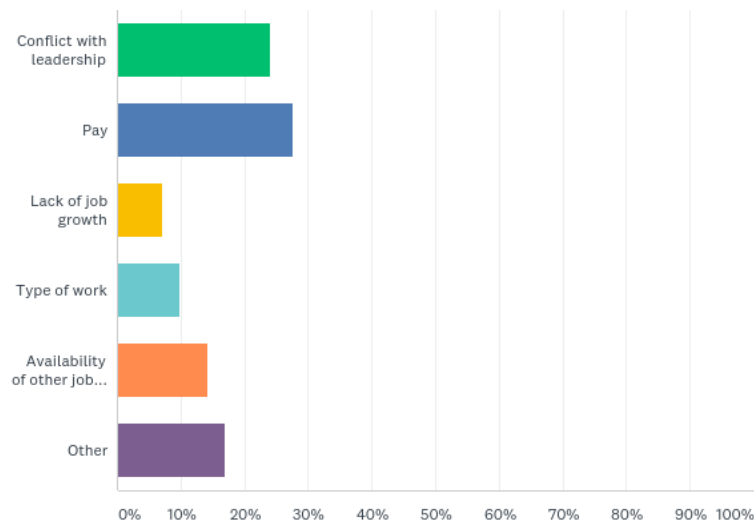


TABLE 2: Years of Service



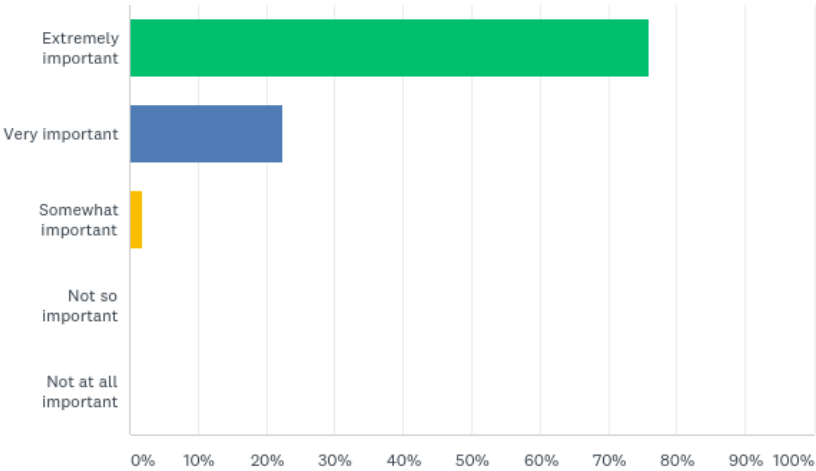
The third question asked respondents to respond to what they believed the leading factor of turnover is at their agency. Of the 112 respondents, 27 (24%) believed a conflict with leadership as the cause; 31 (28%) believe current pay to be the cause; 8 (7%) believe the lack of job growth to be the cause; 11 (10%) believe the type of work to be the cause; 16 (14%) believe the availability of other job opportunities to be the cause; 19 (17%) indicated “other” to be the cause. Unfortunately, I could not obtain specifics on what “other” would be, which was a flaw found in the survey.

TABLE 3: Leading factor for turnover



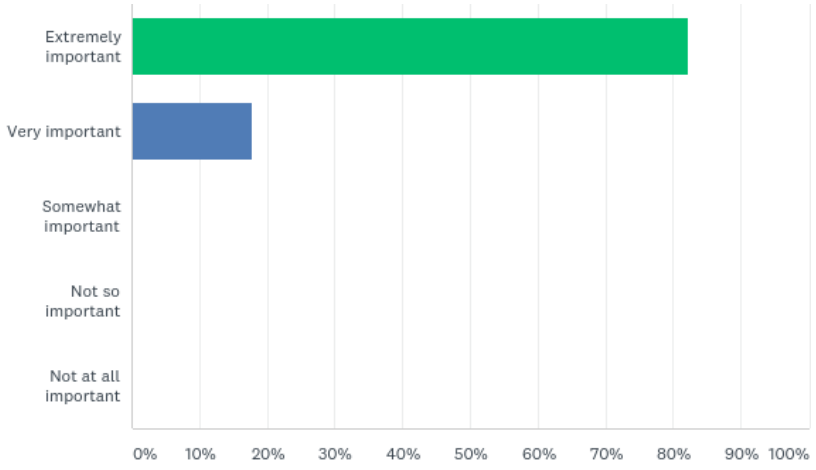
The fourth question asked respondents what they believed is the importance level for a leader to be a good communicator? Of the 112 respondents, 85 (76%) believed it is extremely important for a leader to be a good communicator; 25 (22%) believed it is very important for a leader to be a good communicator; 2 (2%) believed it is somewhat important for a leader to a good communicator.

TABLE 4: Importance of a leader to be a good communicator



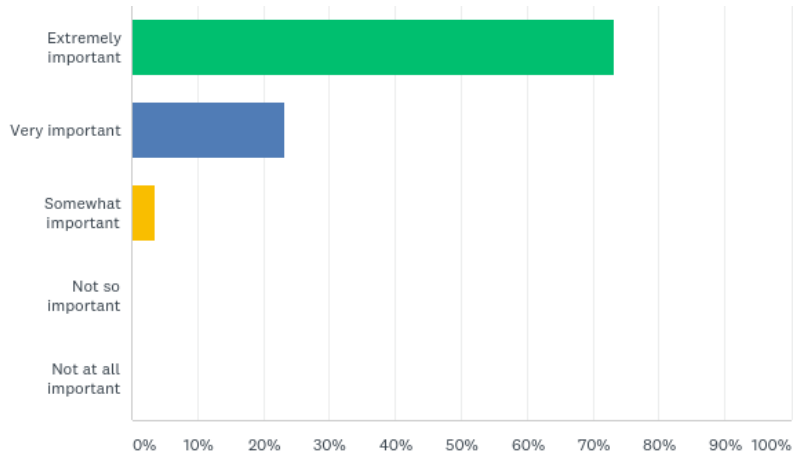
The fifth question asked respondents to identify the importance level of a leader who takes ownership of their mistakes. Of the 112 respondents, 92 (82%) believed it is extremely important for a leader to take ownership of their mistakes; 20 (18%) believed it is very important for a leader to take ownership of their mistakes.

TABLE 5: Importance of a leader own their mistakes



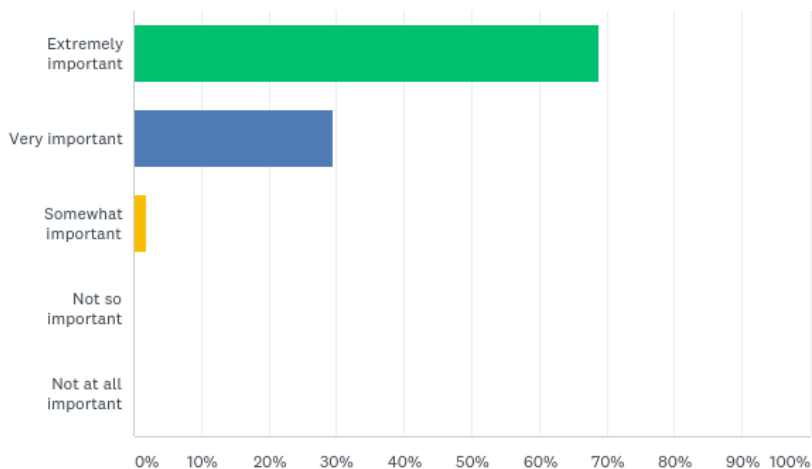
Question 6 asks respondents to identify the importance level of a leader who is approachable. Of the 112 respondents, 82 (73%) believed it is extremely important for a leader to be approachable; 26 (23%) believed it is very important for a leader to be approachable; 4 (4%) believed it is somewhat important for a leader to be approachable.

TABLE 6: Importance of a leader being approachable



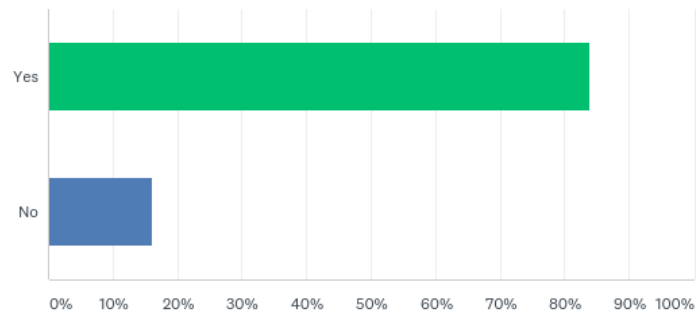
The seventh question asked respondents to identify the importance of a leader who provides constructive feedback to employees even if the feedback may hurt their feelings. Of the 112 respondents, 77 (69%) believed it is extremely important for a leader to provide constructive feedback; 33 (29%) believed it is very important for a leader to provide constructive feedback; 2 (2%) believed it is somewhat important for a leader to provide constructive feedback.

TABLE 7: Constructive Feedback



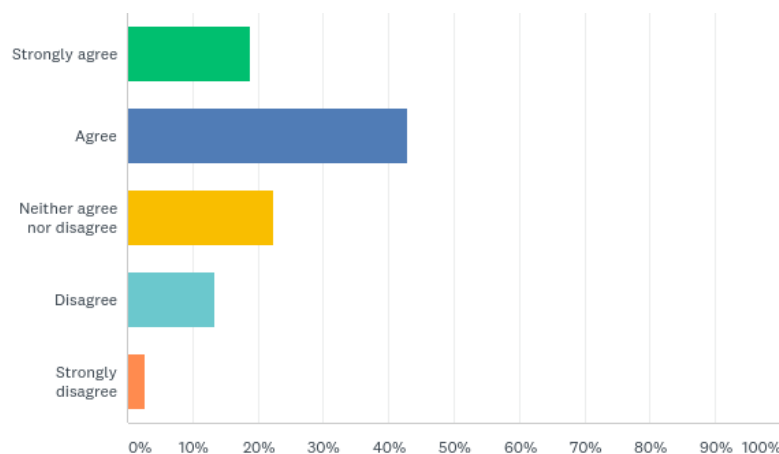
The eighth question asked the respondents to identify the importance of a leader who places a high value on the importance of details in their job. Of the 112 respondents, 94 (84%) responded “Yes” that details are important; 18 (16%) responded “No” to details being important.

TABLE 8: Importance of paying attention to detail



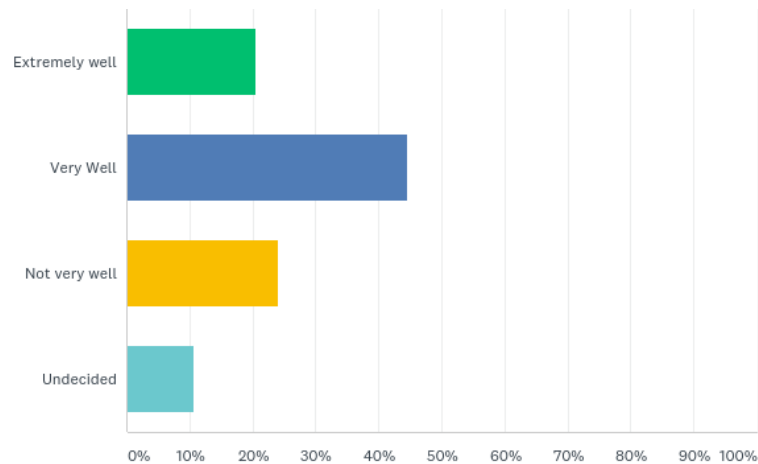
Question 9 asks respondents to indicate their level of satisfaction with opportunities for professional growth at their agencies. Of the 112, 21 (19%) strongly agreed that their agency provides opportunity for job growth; 48 (43%) agreed that their agency provides opportunity for job growth; 25 (22%) neither agreed or disagreed that their agency provides opportunity for job growth; 15 (13%) disagreed that their agency provides opportunity for job growth; 3 (3%) strongly disagreed that their agency provides opportunity for job growth.

TABLE 9: Professional Growth



The tenth question asked respondents to identify the level they believe their supervisor facilitates communication amongst employees. Of the 112 respondents, 23 (21%) believed their supervisor does extremely well at facilitating communication amongst employees; 50 (45%) believed their supervisor does very well at facilitating communication amongst employees; 27 (24%) believed their supervisor does not facilitate communication amongst employees very well; 12 (11%) believed they are undecided on whether their supervisor facilitates communication well amongst employees.

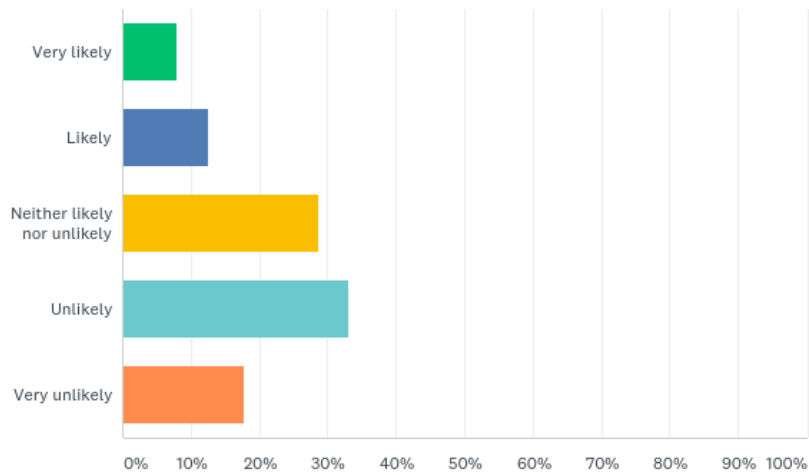
TABLE 10: Does your supervisor facilitate communication well amongst employees?



Question 11 asks the respondent to rate their overall happiness at work from a scale of 1 to 10, which a 10 would be the highest level of happiness. Of the 112 respondents, 99 (88%) indicated their happiness level to be between 6 and 10 at their current employer; 13 (12%) indicated their happiness level to be between 1 and 5 at their current employer.

Question 12 asks respondents of how likely they would be to accept a job at another organization if they were offered a 5% pay raise at a similar position. Of the 112 respondents, 9 (8%) believed they would be very likely to leave if offered a 5% pay raise at another agency to perform the same job task; 14 (13%) believed they would likely leave if offered a 5% pay raise at another agency to perform the same job task; 32 (29%) believed they are undecided if they would leave if offered a 5% pay raise at another agency to perform the same job task; 37 (33%) believed they would be unlikely to leave if offered; 20 (18%) believed they are very unlikely to accept a position if offered a 5% pay raise at another agency to perform the same job task.

TABLE 11: Would you leave our agency if you were offered a 5% pay raise to do the same job somewhere else?



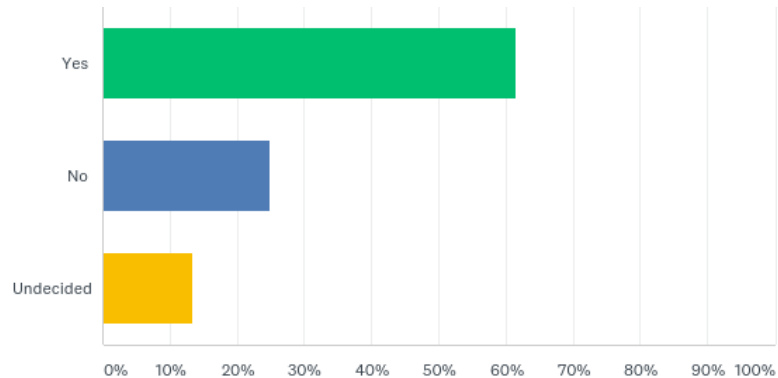
Question 13 asked respondents to rate the level they believed they were challenged at work on a daily basis. They were asked to rate the challenge level between 1 and 10, which 10 would indicate they felt very challenged at work. Of the 112 respondents, 72 (64%) indicated the level they feel challenged at work between 6 and 10; 40 (36%) indicated the level they felt challenged at work between 1 and 5.

Question 14 asks respondents to provide the reason they would leave the organization tomorrow and what the reason for leaving would be. Of the 112 respondents, 3 (3%) stated they would leave because they do not feel challenged enough in their current position; 13 (12%) stated they would leave because of the stresses associated with their job assignment; 21 (19%) stated they would leave because of a conflict with leadership; 12 (11%) indicated they would leave due to lack of promotional opportunities; 63 (53%) indicated they would leave for “other” reasons that were not specifically identified. This was another flaw found in the survey, which left unanswered details of why the respondents would leave their job.

Question 15 asked respondents to rate their supervisor at recognizing their contributions at work on a scale from 1 and 10, which 10 was identified as the supervisor is very good at recognizing their contributions. Of the 112 respondents, 82 (73%) indicated between a scale of 6 and 10 of how well their supervisor does at recognizing their contributions at work; 30 (27%) indicated between a scale of 1 and 5 of how well their supervisor does at recognizing their contributions at work.

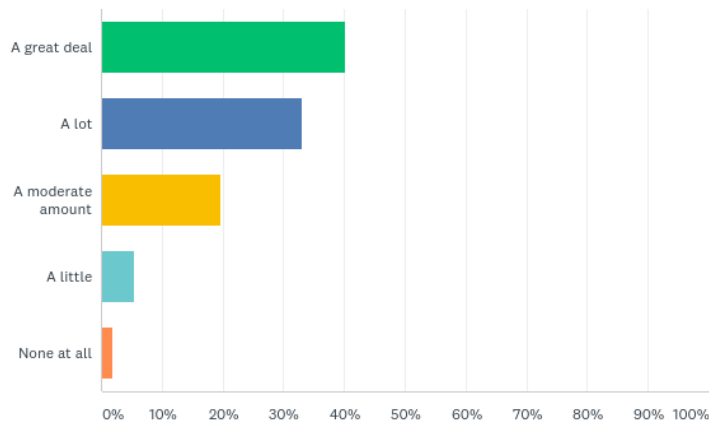
The sixteenth question in the survey asks respondents if they feel comfortable providing feedback to their supervisor? Of the 112 respondents, 69 (62%) answered “Yes,” indicated they are comfortable with providing their supervisor feedback; 28 (25%) answered “No,” indicated they do not feel comfortable providing feedback to their supervisor; 15 (13%) indicated they are undecided on whether they feel comfortable providing feedback to their supervisor.

TABLE 12: Can you provide feedback to your supervisor?



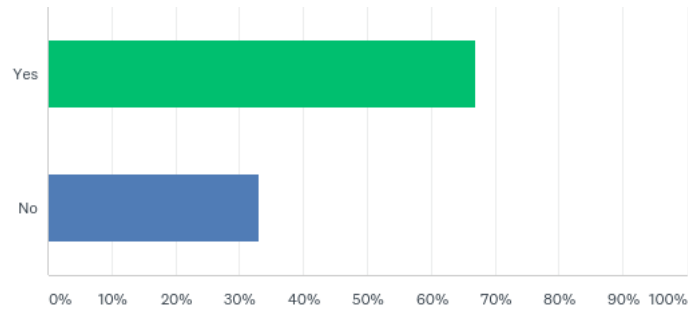
Question 17 asks the respondent to rate how much they believed they derive meaning from their current job assignment. Of the 112 respondents, 45 (40%) believed the meaning of their work to matter a great deal; 37 (33%) believed their work means a lot to the overall mission; 22 (20%) indicated that they believed their work has a moderate amount of meaning; 6 (5%) believe their work has very little meaning; 2 (2%) believed their work has no meaning at all.

TABLE 13: How meaningful do you feel your work is?



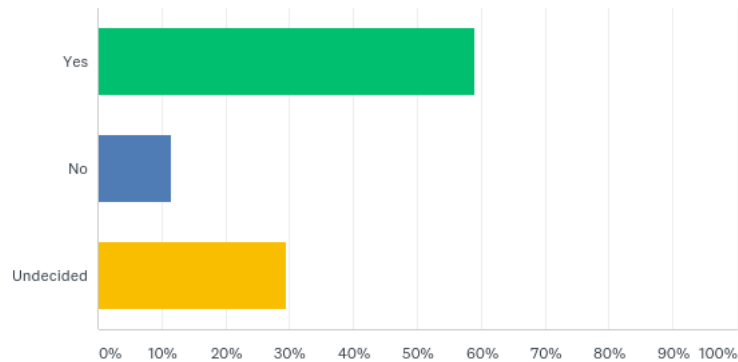
Question 18 asks the respondent to identify whether they believed their supervisor sets clear goals to achieve by, answer “Yes” or “No”. Of the 112 respondents, 75 (67%) answered “Yes,” indicating they believed their supervisor sets clear goals for them to achieve; 37 (33%) answered “No,” indicating they do not believe their supervisor sets clear goals to achieve.

TABLE 14: Does supervision set clear goals?



Question 19 asks respondents to identify “Yes,” “No,” or “Undecided” as it relates to identifying whether or not they believe their agency supports professional development. Of the 112 respondents, 66 (59%) answered “Yes,” indicating they believed their agency supported their professional development; 13 (12%) answered “No,” indicating they believe their agency did not support their professional development; 33 (29%) answered “Undecided,” indicating they did not know whether their agency supported their desire for professional development.

TABLE 15: Does your organization support your professional development?

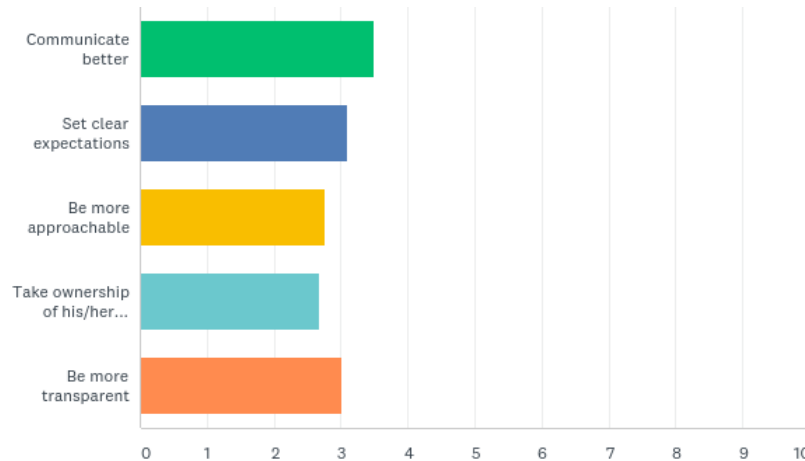


The final question asked what the respondent believes their leadership should do better. They were asked to rank these qualities from 1 to 5, which 1 was identified as the most important. Four participants chose to skip this question. In order to provide a clear picture of the rankings provided by the respondents, the data that will be shown displays the top percentage to least percentage by the scale of 1 to 5. Out of 108 respondents, 27% of the respondents ranked the number 1 quality their supervisor should improve is communicate better; 24% of the respondents ranked the second most important quality their supervisor should improve is being more transparent; 18% of the respondents ranked the third most important quality their supervisor should improve is setting clear expectations; 15% believe that their leaders should improve their approachability; 15%



ranked the least important quality their leaders should improve as taking ownership of their mistakes.

TABLE 16: What do you wish leadership would do better?



## Discussion

The results of the survey seem to provide consistent information found in research as it pertains to the expectations that Millennials have for those who lead them in the workplace. The survey indicates that millennial workers expect these four characteristics from their leadership: ownership of mistakes, approachability, fair and consistent accountability, and professional development. Almost 50% of personnel surveyed indicated they had only been employed with their respective agency for less than three years. In discussions I have had and as indicated in the survey, personnel are more likely to stay long term at an agency if they commit more than three years. The agency also receives its return on investment (ROI) from the amount of training that goes into a new employee if they keep the employee longer than three years.

An overwhelming 76% of personnel indicated that it is extremely important for a leader to be a good communicator. Millennials are not the generation to do what they are told merely because a leader is of a higher rank. They want a leader to explain to them why what they do is important. In order to make a positive change in the workplace, leaders who have a problem explaining “Why,” will continue to have issues retaining good personnel. Millennials also want a leader who is approachable (73%) and provides constructive criticism (69%). Research and this survey show that Millennials want to be involved in the “process,” but they also want a leader to tell them when they are making mistakes. They especially want to hear feedback when it’s positive, because positive feedback is a source of motivation for Millennials. Professional development is a priority that cannot be ignored by leadership. Throughout my research I found many examples of Millennials who believed they should be in a leadership position within their company

within a short period of time, even though this may be an unrealistic goal. If we do not provide the professional development in the form of training, they may feel they will not grow within an agency and will move on.

## **Recommendations**

First and foremost, leaders today have to make changes now in order to improve retention of good employees and effectively lead their personnel to performing at a high level. Those who are unwilling to make the changes because of ego will only hurt their agency's future. Leaders who have the mentality of "you will do it this way because I said so," are the leaders of the past. The leaders of the future are willing to explain themselves and can adjust to any situation or personnel type.

These days the workforce is very competitive and as leaders it is our duty to always be one step ahead on implementing strategies and making individual changes to improve ourselves. Personnel will stay if the culture of the agency is right and they feel they are a part of something special. Research has shown that Millennials want to feel like they are a part of something which makes a difference and what better a profession than law enforcement. Other than teachers, no one has more of a positive impact on a community than first responders.

Agencies must to promote leaders who are transparent and willing to go the "extra mile" in communicating with their personnel. There are times when it is inappropriate to ask a leader "Why?". For example, when handling a critical incident, there is very little time to answer "Why?," and personnel should have the trust in leadership to respond without question in order to save lives. However, if they are asking why they should make changes to a report or they question a policy, it is our duty to explain to them so they understand why it is important to make the changes. Leaders need patience now more than ever.

Transparency, good communication skills, and approachability are important leadership qualities that are expected. Very few topics of discussion in a law enforcement agency should not be made public to employees. No one gossips more than law enforcement officers, so as leaders we should ensure we are putting out accurate information as soon as it is appropriate to do so. This avoids confusion and reduces stress amongst the staff. Millennials have grown up in an era of information being readily accessible and they have seen the corruption that can occur in government and business such as what occurred during the Great Recession that started in 2008. Millennials watched corrupt banking officials be "bailed out" by the federal government and at the same time watched the news stories of these same officials continuing to pay themselves large bonuses with taxpayer money.

We must be better at communicating what changes are going to be made in our agencies and why they will occur. More importantly, we have to allow our personnel, particularly Millennials, to be involved in any major changes. If leadership is looking to make changes within an agency, I believe it is appropriate to gather a council of deputies to present the information to and then get their feedback. If they have the opportunity to provide feedback it is more likely that they will "buy-in" to the change and the entire

process will be that much easier of a transition. In conclusion, I believe a quote from Abraham Lincoln defines the importance of making leadership changes today:

“You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.”  
(Lincoln, Abraham).

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## Appendix A

### Survey

1. Are you currently in a position of leadership within the agency?  
Yes No
2. How long have you been employed with our agency?  
0-3 years 3-6 years 6-10 years 10+ years
3. In your opinion, what do you believe is the leading factor for employees leaving this agency?
  - Conflict with leadership
  - Pay
  - Lack of job growth
  - Type of work
  - Availability of other job opportunities
  - Other
4. How important is it to you, to have a leader who is a good communicator?
  - Extremely important
  - Very Important
  - Somewhat important
  - Not so important
  - Not at all important
5. How important is it to you for a leader to take ownership of their mistakes?
  - Extremely important
  - Very Important
  - Somewhat important
  - Not so important
  - Not at all important
6. How important is it to you that your leader is approachable?
  - Extremely important
  - Very Important
  - Somewhat important
  - Not so important
  - Not at all important

7. How important is it to you that your leader gives you constructive feedback even if the feedback may hurt your feelings?
  - Extremely important
  - Very Important
  - Somewhat important
  - Not so important
  - Not at all important
  
8. Do you believe a leader should place a high value on attention to details in your daily work performance?  
Yes    No
  
9. I am satisfied with my opportunities for professional growth?
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  
10. How well does your supervisor facilitate communication among employees?
  - Extremely well
  - Very well
  - Not very well
  - Undecided
  
11. On a scale of 1-10, rate your overall happiness at work? (1 being least happy, 10 being most happy)
  
12. How likely would it be for you to leave this agency if another organization offered you a 5% raise at a similar position?
  - Very Likely
  - Likely
  - Neither likely nor unlikely
  - Unlikely
  - Very unlikely
  
13. On a scale from 1-10, how challenged do you feel at work on a daily basis (1 being least challenged, 10 being most challenged)
  
14. If you were to leave this organization tomorrow, what would the reason be?
  - I don't feel challenged enough
  - Stress on the job
  - Leadership conflict
  - Lack of promotional opportunities
  - Other

15. On a scale from 1-10, how good is your direct supervisor at recognizing your contributions at work (1 being that they do not recognize your contributions at all to 10 being they consistently recognize your contributions)?

16. Do you feel comfortable providing upward feedback to your supervisor?  
Yes No Undecided

17. How meaningful do you feel the work you do is?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

18. Does your supervision set clear goals for you to achieve?  
Yes No

19. Do you think our organization supports your professional development?  
Yes No Undecided

20. If you could rank qualities or actions you wish your leadership would strive to do better, which would it be?

- Communicate Better
- Set clear expectations
- Be more approachable
- Take ownership of his/her mistakes
- Be more transparent