

BETA

# The Future Of Work: Job Hopping Is the 'New Normal' for Millennials



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f The average worker today stays at each of his or her jobs for **4.4 years**, according to the most recent available data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, but the expected tenure of the workforce's youngest employees is about half that.

Ninety-one percent of Millennials (born between 1977-1997) expect to stay in a job for less than three years, according to the Future Workplace “**Multiple Generations @ Work**” survey of 1,189 employees and 150 managers. That means they would have 15 - 20 jobs over the course of their working lives!

So what would all this job-hopping do for young workers' careers? For applicants, job instability on a resume could come at the cost of the dream job. For years, experts have warned that recruiters **screen out chronic job-hoppers**, instead seeking prospective employees who seem to offer longevity.

Talent acquisition managers and heads of Human Resources make a valid case for their

wariness of resumes filled with 1-2-year stints. They question such applicants' motivation, skill level, engagement on the job and ability to get along with other colleagues.

These hiring managers worry they'll become the next victims of these applicant's hit-and-run jobholding. For companies, losing an employee after a year means wasting precious time and resources on training & development, only to lose the employee before that investment pays off. Plus, many recruiters may assume the employee didn't have time to learn much at a one-year job.

### **The Upside of Job Hopping**

But for newly minted college graduates, job-hopping can speed career advancement. According to a paper out of the St. Olaf's Sociology Department entitled "Hiring, Promotion, and Progress: Millennials' Expectations in the Workplace," changing jobs and getting a promotion in the process allows Gen Y employees to avoid the "dues paying" that can trap workers in a painfully slow ascent up the corporate ladder.

Job hopping can also lead to greater job fulfillment, which is more important to Gen Y workers than it was to any previous generation: A [2012 survey by Net Impact](#) found that 88 percent of workers considered

"positive culture" important or essential to their dream job, and 86 percent said the same for work they found "interesting." Job-hopping helps workers reach both of these goals, because it means trying out a variety of roles and workplaces while learning new skills along the way.

And economic instability has erased, especially for younger workers, the stigma that has accompanied leaving a job early. That's because strategic hopping been all but necessary for as long as they can remember. Workers today know they could be laid off at any time – after all, they saw it happen to their parents – so they plan defensively and essentially consider themselves "free agents.

If that freedom seems an undue privilege, think again. The downside to the freedom they enjoy is financial insecurity worse than any other generation in the past half-century. That's a sufficient price to pay.

So while Baby Boomers started working with an eye on gaining stability, raising a family, and "settling down," today's young workers take none of that for granted. Instead, as shown by [Net Impact's survey](#), they are **more concerned** than their predecessors with finding happiness and fulfillment in their work lives

Indeed, since humans have been proven to be terrible at predicting what will make us happy (as shown by Harvard happiness guru

Daniel Gilbert), it's crucial that we find it through trial-and-error.

So what does a Chief Human Resource Officer do in the face of the perceived advantages of job-hopping amidst the potential cost to the organization? Here are three tips:

### **1. Offer Workplace Flexibility**

According to [research by Future Workplace](#), flexible hours and generous telework policies are even more important to younger workers than is salary. To keep your employees around for more than a year, give them the chance to adjust their schedules when the situation calls for it.

Understand the future of work and the demands prospective employees place on employers today. In the Future Workplace study "[Multiple Generations @ Work](#)," workplace flexibility trumped both compensation and career progression in importance. Yet managers interviewed did not rate this as one of the "perceived" top five levers of attractiveness. So ask yourself, do your managers understand the importance of workplace flexibility to engage new hires? Are your employees leaving for reasons other than job promotions?

### **2. Listen To Your Employees**

More than previous generations, Gen Y workers crave the chance to contribute

creatively to the company and have their ideas heard, according to [survey results](#) from Future Workplace. This helps them grow professionally in each position, which will entice them to stick around longer, since personal development is a main reason workers job hop in the first place.

### **3. Communicate The Company's Mission & Values**

Increasingly; employees want to work at a company whose values match their own. The same [Net Impact](#) survey mentioned above found that 58 percent of respondents said they would take a 15% pay cut in order to work for an organization "with values like my own."

In order to maximize the number of your employees who achieve that goal, and therefore stick around for the long haul, make sure to communicate your company's values during the recruiting process. If applicants know what they're signing up for when they pursue positions at your company, the ones who would leave due to value differences will weed themselves out.

### **A Marker of Ambition**

But above all else, keep an open mind about job-hopping applicants. Many forward-looking hiring managers have done so, and have embraced a positive outlook on job-hopping. Barrie Hopson, an author and

career consultant has noticed this in his own research. "Before, if you wanted something other than the single-track you were considered unreliable, a dilettante," said Hopson in a recent interview. "But now employers are beginning to understand the benefits of employees who wish to develop a broad skill set."

So, hiring managers, before dismissing a scattershot resume, consider the context; it may demonstrate ambition, motivation and the desire to learn new skills more than it shows flakiness. More employers are realizing that this is the new normal, and coming around to appreciating its advantages.

Readers: If you are an applicant, do you worry about having too many positions on your resume? Human Resource Officers: have you ever hired a job-hopper? Did his/her previous work experience predict outcomes at your company? •



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