Book review: The trophy kids grow up: How the millennial generation is shaking up the workplace

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The Trophy Kids Grow Up: How the Millennial Generation is Shaking Up the Workplace by Ron Alsop (2008) examines the Millennial generation's characteristics and how their traits influence the workplace. Alsop (2008, p.3) used the term "trophy kids" to describe the Millennial generation, born between 1980 and 2001, because they are viewed as the "pride and joy of their parents." Millennials can pose several challenges for managers and corporate leaders due to their exceptionally high expectations and desire for recognition compared to previous generations. Alsop describes these challenges and provides recommendations for overcoming them throughout the book.

The first chapter, "The Trophy Kids", provides a general description of Millennial characteristics. The author describes their high expectations, strong sense of entitlement, willingness to work in various regions of the United States, and heavy reliance on parental support. According to the author, Millennials do not work well under strict time schedules or overbearing supervisors, and will have to learn how to cope with completing routine and mundane tasks in order to succeed in the workforce. Alsop suggests employers can improve the retention of Millennial employees by engaging them while creating a collegial atmosphere.

"Great Expectations", the second chapter in the book, focuses on the high expectations of Millennials. Millennials have a desire for frequent performance feedback, fast promotions, a work-life balance, and the opportunity to do community service. These desires lead Millennials to change jobs often, a phenomenon the author refers to as "job hopping."

Parental involvement is important to Millennials. Alsop details this particular characteristic in the third and fourth chapters of The Trophy Kids Grow Up (2008). The third chapter, "Apron Strings", provides a general overview of Millennial parents and "Take Your Parent to Work", the fourth chapter, describes how those parents, commonly referred to as "helicopter parents," have invaded the workforce by following up on job interviews and escorting their sons and daughters to performance reviews. Alsop suggests employers should set boundaries for appropriate parental involvement.

"How am I Doing?" describes the Millennial need to receive constant feedback about job performance. This need for feedback derives from the constant praise they received from their parents while growing up. While praise can be a source of motivation for Millennials, providing a Millennial with negative feedback may lead to tears or resignation. Alsop encourages employers to provide negative feedback in a constructive and sensitive manner.

The sixth chapter, "Checklist Kids", outlines the Millennial need for explicit directions. Millennials are used to being told what to do and need constant reminders about deadlines, which can make it difficult for Millennials to think independently. Alsop suggests employers should encourage Millennials to take risks and learn from their mistakes.

The seventh chapter, "Master Jugglers", describes the ability of Millennials to multitask using many forms of technology. Alsop believes that employers should recognize that multitasking and using technology may increase or undermine the efficiency of Millennials. Employers should monitor the performance of Millennials when completing tasks and provide relevant feedback.

While Millennials enjoy working in groups, they also value their individuality. Many Millennials demand flexible work schedules and the ability to express their individuality. The eighth chapter, "Free to Be Me", explores this concept and suggests that employers should set guidelines for appropriate office attire that allows Millennials to express their individuality in workplace appropriate ways.

The ninth and tenth chapters of The Trophy Kids Grow Up (2008) focus on the employment of Millennials. "Recruiting in Cyberspace" describes how employers are using technology to connect with Millennials, and in "Dream Jobs" the author suggests employers should reach Millennials at a younger age so that they may take relevant courses in high school and college to prepare them for a particular career field.

The last chapter, "A Generous Generation", describes the desire of Millennials to improve the world around them. Many employers are using social responsibility as a way to attract Millennials, with several employers even offering employees time off to participate in volunteer work. These approaches, designed to engage Millennials, may also assist employers in recruiting and retaining Millennials.

Campus-based professionals, organization staff members, and volunteers will find The Trophy Kids Grow Up (2008) to be a great resource for understanding the characteristics of the Millennial generation. The book is appealing, easy to read, and includes bulleted summaries of key points at the end of every chapter. While the book primarily focuses on the corporate world, Alsop's recommendations can be applied to a college environment. Fraternity/sorority professionals will find Alsop's recommendations useful for improving the way they support and interact with Millennial students and new employees.

References