

Becoming the Future Leader Now

By Charlie Lang, Managing Partner & CXO Coach at Progress-U Asia



“I’m really frustrated about these young people!” Devika, the business development director of a Singapore based supply chain management consulting firm was obviously quite upset. One of her key team members, Kelvin, just resigned from his job after only two years to take on a – what he called – unique opportunity in another consulting firm.

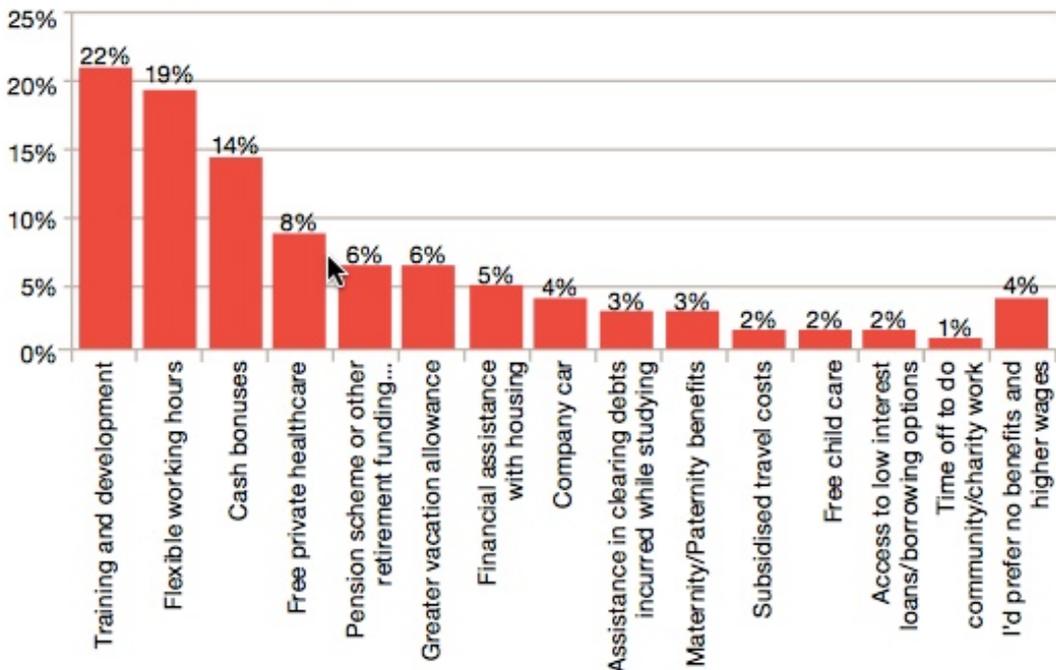
“Kelvin was so demanding in terms of expected attention, fast promotion - I promoted him after only one year from account manager to a business development manager role, fast pay increase and better technical tools. If all my employees would be like Kelvin, I would not be able to get my job done.

And now, after all these efforts, he’s quitting. How ungrateful of him.”

Kelvin, 30 years young, is a typical representative of the group of Millennials, typically born around 1980 and called Millennials because they reached adulthood around the year 2000. Most Millennials are now in the work place and increasingly move into management roles.

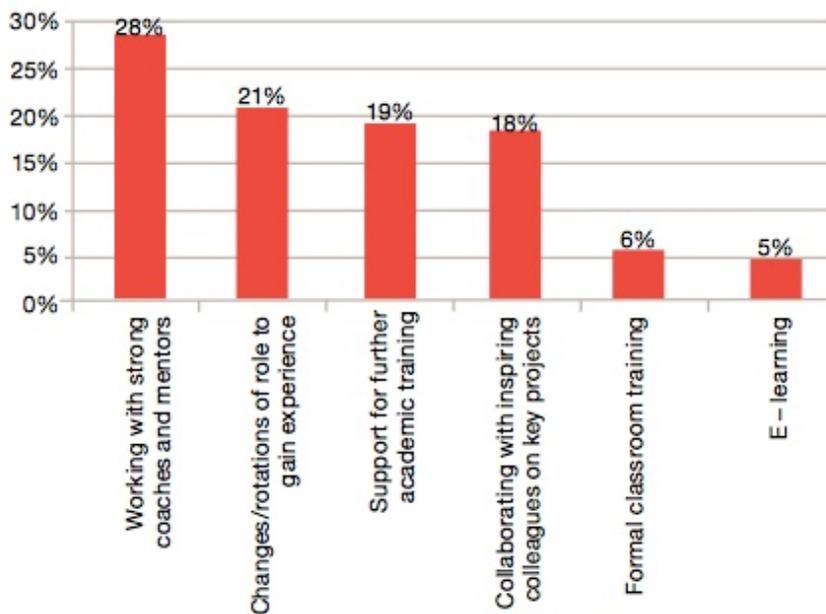
PriceWaterhouseCoopers (pwc) conducted an extensive study in 2011 on Millennials in 75 countries and found some interesting trends:

Which three benefits would you most value from an employer? – % ranking each 1st place



Base: All graduates

Which of the following training/development opportunities would you most value from an employer



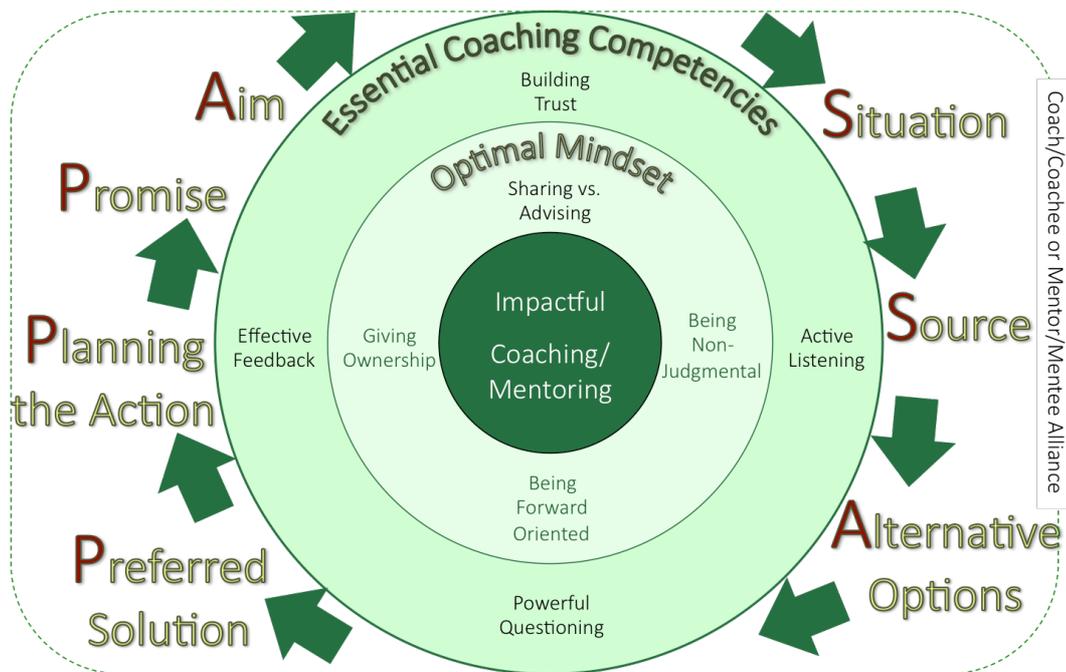
Base: All graduates

While money seems important for a number of Millennials, significantly more important are Training & Development opportunities. And the way they like to receive that is primarily through working with strong coaches and mentors.

What does that mean for a leader who wants to successfully lead Millennials?

While it's dangerous to generalize that all people belonging to a group are the same – because they are not – it means that leaders who want to be successful in the future, will need to enhance their leadership toolbox with effective mentoring and coaching capabilities, because chances are high that they already have or most certainly will have direct reports who expect capable coaching or mentoring from their managers.

In our experience, the vast majority of leaders actually does not really know what effective coaching or mentoring really means. Progress-U developed a framework for coaching & mentoring that shows what it takes:



What is the difference between coaching and mentoring?

There are many definitions and distinctions out there and we do not claim that our definitions are correct while others' are wrong. What we found most useful is to define: "Mentoring = Coaching +"

It means that for us a good mentor is also a good coach but additionally has more relevant experience or knowledge to share and may also connect the mentee to her or his professional network.

These two aspects are less prominent in coaching but may occur there, too.

Having supported leaders in developing coaching and/or mentoring competence since 2004, we found that leaders often struggle most with the coaching mindset, namely with the concept of 'Giving Ownership' (inspiring the coachee to discover solutions rather than providing them) and 'Being Non-Judgmental' (giving the coachee the benefit of the doubt even when we think they are 'wrong').

Leading successfully Millennials requires leaders to develop professional level coaching & mentoring skills. A 1-day course won't do the trick.

We found that a majority of Millennials will be highly engaged if they receive regular and proficient coaching and/or mentoring. This approach also helps Millennials gain a reality check and adjust their expectations to a more realistic level which ultimately benefits all involved.

Devika felt she gave a lot of attention to Kelvin, however, as it turned out, the quality of attention Kelvin received was not what he expected. He wanted to be coached on a professional level which Devika didn't know how to do. The result was frustration and the sense of having wasted her time – which was probably the case.