

The Startup Generation

What makes the Millennial generation of business owners different than any other?

It takes quite a collective entrepreneurial spirit for an entire age group to be dubbed the “Startup Generation.” But it’s a fitting title for Millennials, as roughly 70 percent of those born in 1983 or later would like to work for themselves, according to Deloitte’s 2014 Millennial Survey.

So what’s driving the startup frenzy, especially considering that about half of all new businesses survive for five years, according to the Small Business Administration. At the 10-year mark, the odds are even worse, with only about one-third still in operation.

Millennials want their businesses attached to a social mission – and many traditional businesses aren’t wired that way. “Growing up watching events like Enron’s collapse and the 2008 recession has led to an ingrained distrust toward larger corporations,” says Seth Kravitz, co-founder and publisher of [Technori](#), an online education platform for startup business owners. “Millennials are looking at business as more than profits and growth. They are looking to start companies that may have a direct impact on improving the quality of life for those they touch.”

Rather than wait for business to change, Millennials work toward changing business. Kravitz, 31, is among them. He started Technori in 2010 with a focus on helping people – 80 percent of whom are Millennials – launch their own companies. He does this by offering curated content, expert advice and a network of passionate startup leaders.

Starting a Business: Millennial Advantage over Boomers

Today’s startup founders have a leg up on their predecessors, Kravitz says. Never before has it been faster, cheaper or easier to start a new business.

“This is the first generation to experience the full benefit of a highly advanced and globally distributed information technology-based economy. It’s much easier to dabble in a new industry, create a business and shut it down if things don’t go well,” he says. “Millennials don’t believe a business is something they need to be married to for 10, 20, 30-plus years, but rather something more transient and temporary.”

Considering most Millennials can’t remember life before constant connectedness, smartphones and social media, technology has shaped how they approach business.

“They see the power of using those systems as disinfectant against bad business behavior and – the opposite – as a way to widely spread positive messaging regarding their brand,” Kravitz says.

Technology also enables Millennials to achieve their social and charitable goals. “The wealth of charitable and social good options available to a Millennial dwarf the ones that were available to a Baby Boomer at the same age,” says Kravitz. “A Millennial can think both locally and internationally with their community giving, with a high level of transparency, accountability and low friction. And they can do it on their smartphones on their lunch break.”

Technology Can Hinder Millennials in Business

While technology has helped many Millennials start businesses, build brands, connect to global markets and give back, it can actually cripple them in an area where previous generations were firm believers: face-to-face networking.

“Technology has produced a generation that is heads-down, buried in their smartphones with a sense of false intimacy with whom they are connecting. It’s a generation that doesn’t appreciate the power of undistracted, unplugged, face-to-face communication,” Kravitz says.

Millennials could learn something else from previous generations of business owners: focus. With today’s rapid-fire pace of business and a dizzying amount of information at their fingertips, many Millennial business owners struggle with saying “no” to new opportunities and maintaining a single focus as they grow their businesses.

“Boomers could help Millennials understand the power of disconnecting, the importance of silence and downtime, and focusing on building strong interpersonal relationships that will stand the test of time,” Kravitz says.

But Millennials did pick up a lesson from their parents’ generation when it comes to debt, not necessarily intentionally. While they’re active participants in the digital goods economy – buying games, apps, music and videos – Millennials spend less on tangible goods and show less interest in acquiring “stuff” than previous generations.

“They’ve watched their parents struggle or collapse under the weight of mortgages, car loans, credit card debt and student loans,” Kravitz says. “So their spending and savings habits are more frugal and averse to indulgent materialism. They care less about owning physical goods.”

Even though Millennial business owners may do things a bit differently than older owners, their underlying values are the same. “There is universality to being human that transcends age,” Kravitz says. “Both groups value family and friends. Both have ideas for, and motivation to, create a world that is better than the one they entered.”