

Article title: ***Why Millennials Demand OKR Leadership From Managers and Leaders***

Millennials think they are unique. Just ask one. However, throughout history there have always been population surges after wars, diseases and migrations. So, what makes the current population of millennials, born in the U.S. between 1981-1996, truly unique? They represent over 75 million people, 25% of the U.S. population, a larger population surge than the post-war Baby Boom, 30% of the voting age, more diversity than any previous generation, and about 50% of today's workforce (see Brookings.edu). These millennials are uniquely qualified to use new tools such as digital technology to communicate, social media platforms to influence consumers and public opinions, graphic images and visual memes, ethnic and racial diversity to describe more inclusive perspectives. The result is massive impact from countless millennials in every workplace and business sector. Examples include social protests, outrage, political discord, lawsuits, reputational attacks. Millennials are agile learners who demand to speak and be heard. That fact requires that learning managers and leaders respond differently than ever.

Millennials are demanding OKR Leadership. Let me explain. *Objectives describe what to do* (e.g., increase sales, decrease operational costs, demonstrate competence). *Key Results describe how you measure what matters* (e.g., track speed to competence of an ethical leadership module in 2 key business examples within 30 days.) *OKR leadership is the process for managers and leaders to practice what matters.* For example, if your team need to increase sales, then you might increase accountability and transparency using OKRs. At Google, OKRs are shared throughout the organization at every level. If you have a desire to meet with a senior leader, but your objective is not one of their OKRs, then why would you waste their time with a meeting request? You may know that OKRs have *driven the largest migration of financial assets and technological innovation ever recorded in human history* to Silicon Valley, California since the 1970s. OKR leadership is a radical process for top-down hierarchical organizations to implement, but it is attractive to many millennials.

Here are the top 3 reasons why millennials demand OKR leadership, and how learning managers and leaders need to work with them. Imagine that Riley is a sales manager who wants to use OKRs. How does Riley do so?

1. Write it. OKRs are public statements that must be written by each person, at each level of the organization. They are not cascaded down by managers (like MBOs, KPIs, or other traditional, ineffective management approaches.) OKRs are statements that can be posted on office doors, lobbies, break rooms. Millennials, in particular, require a sense of control, called agency. Business psychologists like myself know that millennial leaders need to increase agency at three levels: individual, team and organizational. Agency drives your behavior, and my behavior, and will always drive the behaviors of others. When Riley writes OKRs they become public and increase agency. All managers need to maximize the productivity of others, and writing OKRs is a simple process. You can write your OKRs today. Practice OKR leadership by writing yours.

2. Share it. Individuals do not win. Teams win. Organizations win. We share the need to pursue aspirational objectives such as moonshots, global human capital standards, agile learning networks, and well-being flourishing. OKRs need to be shared and practiced. OKR leadership can align teams, focus resources, track for accountability, model transparency and drive innovations. OKRs can be distributed using customized OKR software to nudge desired behaviors and milestones. Managers can start every meeting with a 3-minute OKR moment, when a colleague states their OKR to others as a status update, then requests quick feedback. Millennials are the most diverse population in U.S. history, with over 44% racially, socially and economically diverse populations, typically living in the 100 largest metropolitan areas (see Brookings.edu). OKR leadership can be used to bridge silos between people who need to collaborate. As racial diversity increases in the U.S., millennials will bridge even more generational differences and demand more racial and ethnic collaboration.

3. Provide feedback. How often do you ask for feedback? When I ask my colleagues and clients, “What else can I do for you?” the results are astonishing. When leaders ask for feedback daily, their teams are more engaged and successful. OKR leadership is a process that demands a regular cadence of feedback. It could be daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly, as defined by your business needs. The best sources of feedback are your clients and colleagues, especially those who do not look like you and have different expertise. You may know that millennials have attained higher levels of education than older generations, therefore they have higher expectations for future earnings and well-being. Over 33% of millennials have achieved college educations, higher than any other cohort in U.S. history. All millennial racial and ethnic groups have higher educational attainment levels than ever before (see Brookings.edu for details.) When you provide feedback on OKRs, millennials expect to be heard. Teams and organizations that invest in a more inclusive approach to working together, will likely gain market advantages.

So, let’s return to your career, team or organization. What are three learning objectives you need to focus on this quarter? For each of those objectives, what are 3-5 quantitative measures you can write down? Who can you share those OKRs with this week? How can you provide feedback to one another over the next few weeks and months?

The OKR leadership process is simple to describe, and hard to practice. Detailed steps and research are included in my new book, *Objectives + Key Results (OKR) Leadership; How to Apply Silicon Valley’s Secret Sauce to Your Career, Team or Organization* (2019).

Riley is representative of all men and women, and all millennials, who want agency, accountability and transparency. Millennials are demanding OKR leadership today, and will demand a more inclusive workplace tomorrow. Savvy learning managers and leaders who practice OKR leadership will increase employee engagement, competitive advantages, and innovation in the years ahead. You can practice OKR leadership today.

Author bio: Doug Gray, PhD, is the CEO of Action Learning Associates. Since 1997, Doug has worked with over 10,000 leaders in multiple business sectors, schools and colleges, families and non-profits. He speaks and trains leaders throughout North America. His newest book is *Objectives + Key Results (OKR) Leadership; How to Apply Silicon Valley's Secret Sauce to Your Career, Team or Organization* (2019).