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MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP

## There's no Planet B: Why a green culture attracts millennials

Research consistently points to the importance of a green culture to engaging and retaining millennials. How environmentally friendly is your business?



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As you've probably worked out by now, the millennial generation is different. For many leaders earning the loyalty of and getting the best from these younger members of our workforce is a frustrating challenge. The reality is, however, that by 2025 millennials will make up three-quarters of the global workforce. The time has come to let go of criticisms and shift our focus to solutions.

While there are many factors that influence the engagement of millennials, research consistently points to the importance of [corporate social responsibility](#). Socially and environmentally conscious, millennials typically care about the impact their employer has on the planet and the communities in which they operate.

According to a [millennial employee engagement study](#), nearly two-thirds (64%) of millennials consider a company's social and environmental commitments when deciding where to work.

### Building a green culture

Creating a culture in which people hold attitudes and make decisions that are good for the planet starts at the top. Like any other aspect of culture, change demands example and ownership from senior leaders. Ensuring every leader understands not only the environmental but also commercial benefits of a green culture is key. Focus your leaders on the role 'going green' can play in attracting and retaining the best among the millennial generation.

## **Here are some important steps you and your leadership team can take to build a green culture.**

- **Engage your team**

Leverage the millennials on your team to explore how you can build a 'green' culture. Understand how they perceive your organisation's current impact on the environment and the changes they believe are both necessary and possible.

Challenge business operations: Look for changes that can be made to the way your business operates that will have a positive impact on the environment. Encourage every member of your team to look for operational and policy changes that will allow people to go about their jobs in more environmentally sustainable ways.

- **Learn and educate**

Invest in your organisation's understanding of environmentally responsible practices. Support the people on your team to grow their awareness of how they can make a positive difference to the planet through the choices they make at work.

Invest: Be prepared to invest reasonable amounts of time, energy and physical resources into green initiatives. All talk and no action is only likely to erode confidence in the sincerity of your commitment to building a green culture. For example, providing recycling bins or bike racks to encourage people to ride to work is typically inexpensive but can take quite some organising to put in place.

- **Align with your values**

Look for opportunities to align the environmental causes you choose to support with your organisation's values. If, for example, your organisation values responsibility, help your team to understand how initiatives aimed at avoiding waste are aligned.

Make it matter. Reward individuals or teams who commit to green practices or achieve improvement targets. Proactively work to maintain engagement by showcasing the extent to which the organisation values environmentally responsible actions.

- **Play the long game**

Aim to achieve gradual and sustainable change over time. Avoid the all too common mistake of forcing change through myriad green initiatives all rolled out at once. Take a longer-term view of educating and inspiring people to think and act green every day. Reinforce commitment through ongoing review of the approaches you take and initiatives you support.