

# Holding On to Millennial Employees

*How to retain the next generation of workers once they're on your payroll*

By Erin Breton

In an industry where turnover rates can exceed manageable expectations, reducing turnover remains a central concern—more than 70 percent of *Cleaning and Maintenance Management's* 2016 *In-House/Facility Management Benchmarking Survey* respondents said it was important to them, and 43 percent ranked it as very important.

In particular, holding on to millennial staff members can be a challenge, as 58 percent plan to stay in their jobs less than three years, according to a 2014 study by talent company Elance-oDesk.

To maximize the investment you've made in employees—and prevent potential staffing issues—try to:

## Offer Opportunities for Advancement

Commercial cleaning professionals often work long hours performing repetitive tasks. Leadership coach Marc Robertson, author of *Working with Millennials: Using Emotional Intelligence and Strategic Compassion to Motivate the Next Generation of Leaders*, says, "They [may] start to lose passion for what they're doing, and then of course, there are more mistakes." He also says, "Having a clear path to take on more responsibility and maybe make more money is a really critical aspect of holding on to millennial workers."

## Provide Input

Student Maids, a Gainesville, FL-based commercial and residential cleaning service that employs millennial college

**“Keeping people happy costs a whole lot less than hiring new people and having to see if they work out.”**

students, posts praise on its office Wow Wall; the company also believes in offering tips for improvement. Company Founder Kristen Hadeed says, "It can be uncomfortable with this generation, because many haven't been given feedback before," adding, "But the more you do it, the more they get comfortable with that feedback and know you care enough to tell them."

## Make It a Team Effort

Remote cleaning work can be isolating. Robertson suggests companies hold regular meetings—and pay hourly employees to attend. "They'll feel management cares about what they're trying to accomplish," he says. "Keeping people happy costs a whole lot less than hiring new people and having to see if they work out."

## Create a Cool Setting

911 Restoration—a company that corrects water and other damage in hotels and commercial buildings—sports a ping pong table and basketball game in its head office; some locations have also hosted post-training parties.

"It's not often you work for a company that asks you how [they] can give you a better environment," says Idan Shpizear, the company's founder and franchisor. "What you're actually asking them is, 'What can I do to help you be more productive?'"

## Be Tech-Forward

Printing out job site directions and storing client information on index cards won't cut it. Provide mobile device-friendly workflow systems and other modern technology tools to get the job done. "Millennials grew up that way; it's part of their expectation," Shpizear says. "If you don't have it, you're viewed as old-fashioned."

However, technology, while important, is just one part of the equation, similar to all of the other retention tips provided here.

## Where to Begin

Mastering employee retention is the second step to engaging the next generation of workers—but first, you need to recruit them and convince them you are worth their while. For more tips on how to recruit millennial workers into the cleaning and facilities management industry, you can refer to *Cleaning and Maintenance Management's* March Personnel and Policies article, "Hiring the Next Generation." 🍌

*Erin Breton is a Chicago-based freelance writer, editor, and marketing consultant who has written about the cleaning industry, business and finance, and other topics for newspapers, trade magazines, and other publications.*