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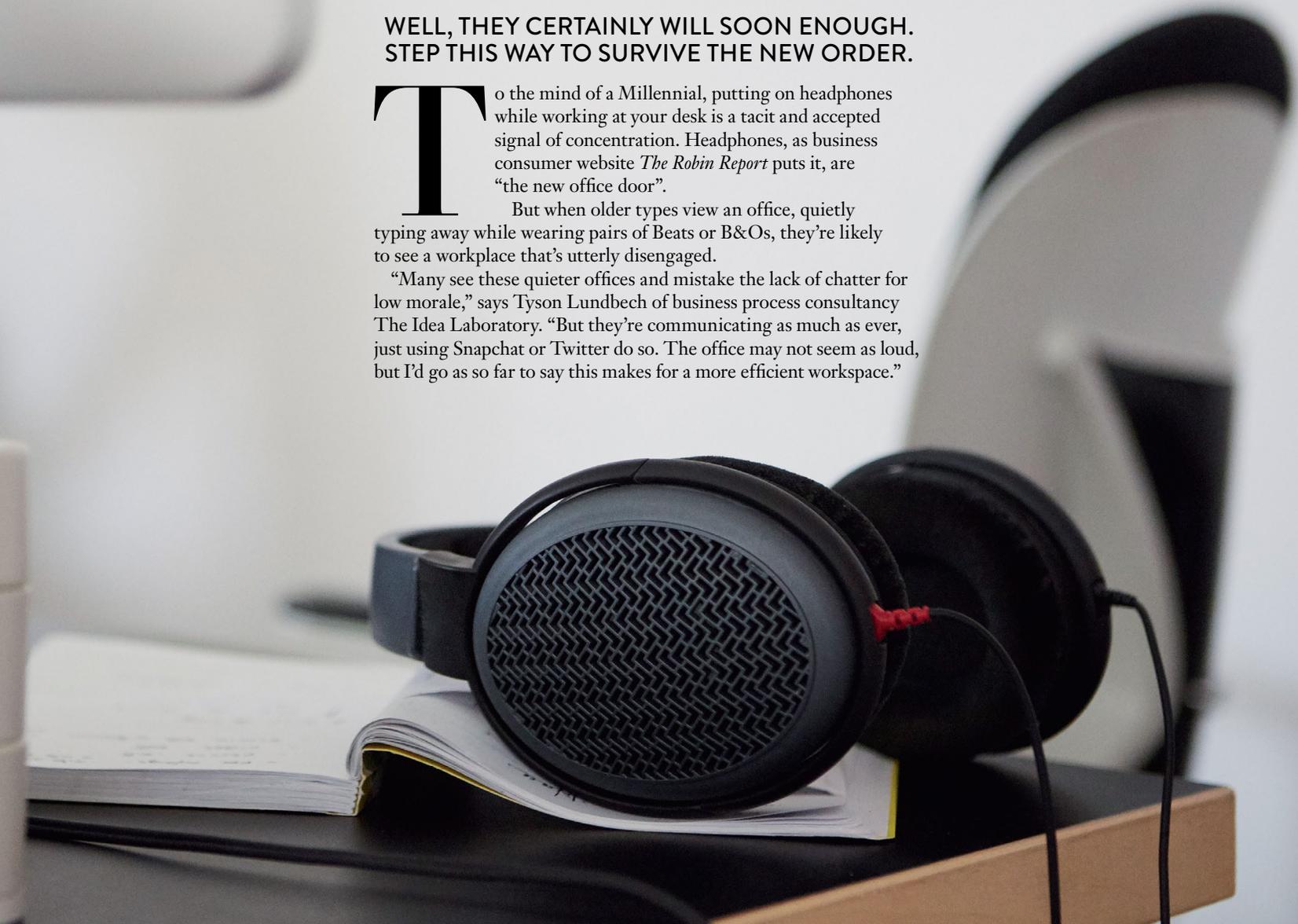
## MILLENNIALS RUN THE WORKPLACE

WELL, THEY CERTAINLY WILL SOON ENOUGH.  
STEP THIS WAY TO SURVIVE THE NEW ORDER.

**T**o the mind of a Millennial, putting on headphones while working at your desk is a tacit and accepted signal of concentration. Headphones, as business consumer website *The Robin Report* puts it, are “the new office door”.

But when older types view an office, quietly typing away while wearing pairs of Beats or B&Os, they're likely to see a workplace that's utterly disengaged.

“Many see these quieter offices and mistake the lack of chatter for low morale,” says Tyson Lundbech of business process consultancy The Idea Laboratory. “But they're communicating as much as ever, just using Snapchat or Twitter do so. The office may not seem as loud, but I'd go as so far to say this makes for a more efficient workspace.”





It's one of the small misunderstandings between the generations – and the tables are about to turn as to who's being misunderstood. According to data from the Pew Research Center, Millennials (those born after 1980) last year surpassed Generation X to become the largest sector of the United States workforce. While we're not quite there in Australia, the day of Millennial reckoning is coming with ABS figures from 2014 revealing they already make up 38 per cent of the Australian workforce. Gen-Xers (those born between 1960 and 1980) are only just ahead, comprising 43 per cent. Meanwhile, Baby Boomers (born between 1945 and 1960) make up 16 per cent.

It's said that Millennials work with you, not for you – which is a big shift in mindset from Baby Boomers, who value loyalty and respect hierarchies, and Gen-Xers who were independent, adaptable and keen on the corner office. As Millennials start to outnumber everyone else, workplaces will change to suit their way of working. So what does a Millennial-heavy workplace look like?

### Wave goodbye to cubicles

Organisational psychologist Judith Lehmann from LifeConnect in Sydney, who consults to the likes of Macquarie Bank, Commonwealth Bank, NAB and Deloitte, and is currently working with JBWere on the subject of 'human capital', tells *GQ*, "One of the key Millennial traits is the need for collaboration, and businesses are responding with flatter organisations and [changes in] physical workplace design." In other words, not only will the CEO's workspace look similar to the interns (a trend that's been playing for some time now), the lack of physical barriers, such as partitions, will mirror the increased access offered by emerging technologies. And the Millennials will have no problem hitting up the CEO with a pitch if they feel their supervisor isn't listening. Because he or she will be seated right alongside them.

### Annual reviews are no more

Last year, the NAB followed Deloitte's lead by scrapping formal annual performance evaluations for its 35,000 bankers. Microsoft, Adobe and Accenture have done the same. Instead, they've been replaced by fortnightly or weekly check-ins for a generation that thrives on constant feedback. What's more, the tenor of these interactions will change to what organisational psychologist and executive director of the Cairnmillar Institute, Kathryn Von Treuer, terms "that of a coach and definitely not a formal management-style interaction".

### Companies with conscience

While there may not be pictures of sponsor children on the fridges in the tea room, companies wanting to entice and retain Millennials will have to lift, or in some cases establish, their game when it comes to corporate social responsibility and contribute more than just a profit to the world. Research conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers' 'Millennials At Work' report found the top two drawcards for job acceptance were an opportunity for personal development and an organisation's reputation. The role itself was the third consideration with starting salary a distant fourth. Whether it's through allowing a set number of days off for volunteer work, establishing pathways for the disadvantaged or other altruistic projects, the intranet of the Millennial-dominated workplace will be increasingly characterised by a 'see what good people we all are' section. We're paraphrasing, but you get the point.

### Disrupted days

Neer Korn, of social and consumer research company The Korn Group, says, "Millennials were raised on a parenting diet of high self-esteem and were taught to unleash their talent. Their expectation is for constant innovation from their workplace, after all, that's been their life experience."

**“MILLENNIALS BELIEVE THAT THEIR RESULTS-DRIVEN ATTITUDE ENTITLES THEM TO CLIMB THE LADDER FASTER.”**

This need for innovation means workplaces will have to hold training seminars and brainstorming sessions more regularly – expect an invite in your inbox as often as once a week. And there'll be a lot more interaction across hierarchies, if you don't mind. Because if there's one bankable generational generalisation, it's the Millennials' unshakable belief in the right to be heard – no matter whether they're entry level, CEO or somewhere in between.

Variety, too, will have to be engineered into the workplace or Millennials will walk. As Korn notes, "Once they've learnt a skill, far from working at it for considerable time until the next promotional opportunity, they seek it immediately. 'Now that I know how to do this, what's next for me?' they ask. 'What skills are you going to provide me with now?'"

### Results – not hours (or years)

Lehmann foresees offices that offer more flexibility than the traditional nine-to-five grind, having reassessed the notion of productivity itself. "This shouldn't be measured by the number of hours worked at the office, but rather by the output and results of their work," says Lehmann. "Getting work done in less traditional ways

## Millennials' guide to getting a pay rise from a Gen X-er

First thing to note – Millennials are also known as the 'everyone gets a trophy generation'. Your Gen-X boss probably thinks you're already too big for your boots and have no idea how long they had to wait for a pay rise in their day. So approach this pitch carefully.

Organisational psychologist Kathryn Von Treuer suggests a Millennial should fight back against any Gen-X bias by researching how they really compare against their peers. "A trap that many can fall into is believing they have gone above and beyond when in fact their effort is on par with contemporaries," she says. "So do a bit of asking around beforehand."

That said, Millennials also have a better handle on analytics that accompany almost every task – including that of getting a pay rise.

"Millennials often have an advantage in these negotiations as they not only have more information than any previous generation at their fingertips, they are better at accessing it," she says. "This makes it that much easier to put forward a strong case on specific areas you have contributed to the business."

Given Gen X-ers feel like they made more of an effort to get ahead, social researcher Neer Korn gives this advice to ambitious Millennials: "See the world through the needs of the company rather than your own perspective. Think about what's valuable to the company and the team. Millennials work very hard – so you want to emphasise your willingness to do further training and gain even more valuable experience."

## How a Gen X-er best motivates a Millennial – without a pay rise

As a Gen-Xer, you likely grew up as a latchkey kid – entertaining yourself after school while both parents worked to pay the mortgage. That makes you more independent and you may prefer to work alone. Millennials, however, grew up with mobile phones and were never out of reach – hence the need for constant feedback.

Korn says the key to managing Millennials is to provide just that. So when knocking them back for a pay rise, remember that Millennials are often after meaning, not just money. “Millennials want things to put on their CV. They want to fill resumé with experience, so think about what training you can provide, what courses they could go on, what work they could do in an overseas office. Ask yourself what you can do to show you’re thinking about their future.”

For a generation that knows little of criticism and has rarely heard the word “no”, Von Treuer suggests framing the pay rise knockback not in terms of a Millennial’s shortcomings, but how they can overcome these going forward: “Organisations need clear policies that reward achievement, as Millennials believe promotion is based on achievement, not time spent somewhere.”

Organisational psychologist Helen Crossing, from Inspirational Workplaces, adds, “Make two things clear: acknowledge what they bring to their team and to the organisation – for many this is almost as good as a raise. Only when this is established, should you move on to the gap between where they are and where they need to be the next time this negotiation takes place. And put a date in the diary to re-evaluate. Even if it’s months away.”

# GENERATIONAL OFFICE DESIGN



### Baby Boomer workplace

Your workspace reflects your seniority (or otherwise) in the company, allowing anyone to walk in and immediately appraise who’s who in the hierarchy – from the guy in the corner office to his secretary, trickling down through the window offices, internal workspaces and the carpet-lined partitions in the middle.



### Gen-X workplace

The power structures are more subtle and at times cryptic. The boss went from an enclosed office to a desk pretty much the same as everyone else’s. Except slightly bigger and with more natural light – perks only those working 40-plus hours would appreciate. The demarcation reflected the Gen-X philosophy that even though they were higher up the food chain as bosses, they wanted to foster the appearance of, ‘See, I’m just like you.’ With, of course, a clear subtext that they’re not – they’re still your boss, after all.



### Millennial workplace

Reflecting the desire for flatter, less hierarchical structures, this office overtly does away with status indicators. This means the kid with the coffee order could be either an intern or CFO. Desks are identical, the partitions non-existent. Perhaps the only indicator of seniority is the speed with which IT respond to calls and the choice of sneakers. Common Projects and Yeezys for the higher-ups trailing through the mass-market runners to Converse for the entry-levels.

doesn’t mean less quality or productivity.” Expect less adherence to the 40-hour working week but greater crossover between home and office life as you no longer have to be in the same space to conference with colleagues or for the boss to get in touch.

### Rapid expenses

The most connected and tech-savvy generation won’t settle for archaic systems, especially when it comes to being reimbursed for expenses. That’s good news for anyone who hates photocopying their receipts. To a Millennial’s eye, anything less than a quick turnaround reeks of being an undervalued, rather than a fairly treated, colleague.

According to *Forbes*, “The most successful brands with high Millennial retention are adopting a cloud-based app, with a mobile component, that allows them to fully automate the expense-reporting process... from anywhere.” Seems like more an annoyance than a career-changing factor, but a survey by HR Industry website TriNet found that Millennials are 21 per cent more likely than Gen X-ers, or Baby Boomers, to have difficulty paying a personal bill because they were waiting to be reimbursed for business expenses. What’s more, over half of respondents said they’d given up the opportunity to attend training or other professional opportunities because an employer’s reimbursement policy made it too difficult. How can that not impact the attractiveness of a working environment?

### Constant moves

Not that you liked them that much to begin with, but you won’t be spending as long beside your work buddies anymore. According to a report on CNBC, the average Millennial job tenure is two years, while that of Baby Boomers was seven. With transience no longer the employment faux pas it once was, anyone who’s done the same role for five years in the one Millennial workplace will be seen as somewhat lacking in ambition.

### Frustrating times

For all the improvements that Millennials have brought – and will bring – to the office, Lehmann says their workplaces will most likely feature an undercurrent of impatience and even frustration at times. “Millennials don’t seem to compare themselves to historic values such as tenure and seniority, but believe that their results-driven attitude entitles them to climb the ladder faster. It generally takes them a little while to come to the realisation that success takes time.” ■