Self-focused; entitled; technology-enabled; committed to causes important to them and to bringing about positive change; seeking flexibility, efficiency and work/life balance; and value being listened to and having influence. These are some of the seemingly conflicting characteristics often used to describe Millennials, the largest living generation in human history. Defined broadly as individuals born between the early 1980s and late 1990s, Millennials are a growing force to be reckoned with in today's workplace and also are making their way into the boardroom.

Because of this generation's size and increasing influence, Millennials are being surveyed and studied to better understand what makes them tick and how they may play a role in fundamentally reshaping how we live, work—and govern—our organizations.

Understanding Millennials

Large-scale, longitudinal studies of Millennials can provide useful insights to help untangle what, on the surface, may seem confusing and contradictory about this maturing generation. Such data also provides perspective on how Millennials can productively engage with older generations in the workplace and the boardroom.

A Snapshot of Millennials' Beliefs and Perspectives

According to the Deloitte 2017 Millennial Survey:

- Millennials have been viewed as willing to change jobs more frequently to follow their personal interests or needs. However, Deloitte's 2017 survey data indicate they, currently, are less likely to leave the security of their jobs, prefer full-time employment and demonstrate increasing loyalty and a desire for stability in a world they perceive to be tumultuous and uncertain.

- Survey respondents view business as a positive force for change. They say, while businesses are in general having a positive impact on society, multinationals could be doing more to address society's biggest challenges.

- Millennials feel accountable for many issues in society and believe they are most able to make an impact through the workplace. Employers who enable Millennials to be involved in good causes provide them with a sense of empowerment and influence.

- When it comes to leadership, Millennials prefer leaders who speak plainly, are passionate about their views and opinions, and seek inclusiveness. They also prefer gradual change and do not support leaders who are divisive or radical.

- According to the Deloitte survey findings, Millennials also believe that use of technology offers more opportunities than risks.

Source: The Deloitte Millennial Survey, 2017

Findings from Deloitte's ongoing Millennial Survey, the sixth of its kind reporting feedback from some 8,000 respondents across 30 countries in 2017, are a case in point. Key results appear in the sidebar on page one.

These data suggest that today's Millennials could be more willing to assume leadership and board roles within organizations that enable them to bring about positive change. They can be passionate, committed advocates for addressing challenges that have broad impact and will more likely devote their efforts to organizations that efficiently use their time and allow them to be heard and have influence.

This picture of the Millennial generation resonates with the experience of Nico Tejeda, CEO of the Hospitals of Providence Transmountain Campus and Sierra Campus in El Paso, TX, who has developed opportunities to involve Millennials in leadership and governance roles.

Tejeda describes himself as a "tweener" that belongs to the age group falling between the slightly older Generation X and the Millennials. He led the creation of a Millennial Advisory Board to better understand what this generation looks for in a health care experience. His organization asked established governing board members to nominate, for service on the advisory board, Millennials who were beginning to emerge as community leaders.

Tejeda draws on his experiences with Millennials and older generations in his organization and on his board to provide a unique perspective on differences among these generations and how they might engage effectively.

"Older generations may not seek out Millennials for leadership positions because they perceive that they are not ready to serve in these roles," Tejeda says. "It's a little like parents who are reluctant to give their children the keys to the car."

Millennials, Tejeda notes, are mission-focused and very connected to the broader environment and can provide useful feedback and perspectives to health care organizations. However, he says they will not be effective in board and leadership roles unless they become comfortable communicating in their own voice and have the fortitude to work alongside older generations, some of whom can be condescending or dismissive. "Millennials can't afford to remain quiet as organizational leaders or on boards, because they risk being perceived as unengaged," he says.

Luanne Stout, governance consultant and recently retired Chief Governance Officer of Texas Health Resources (THR), based in Arlington, TX, believes that while the differences between Millennials and older generations are blurring, an investment in understanding how to engage Millennials can pay dividends for health organizations and their boards. In her role as CGO, Stout conducted interactive discussions with 16 governing boards at THR that included Millennials in governance roles to determine their learning preferences.

American Hospital Association®

She found that Millennials:

- Want presentations and discussions on important issues during board meetings versus waiting for a retreat to explore these issues.

- Prefer to have longer meetings and meet less frequently, rather than have shorter, more frequent board meetings.

- Would opt to build education into board meetings, rather than attend separate education sessions three or four times a year.

- Want shorter board retreats that conclude in one day versus a day-and-a-half or three half days.

Stout suggests that new Millennial board members can greatly benefit from a thorough orientation to both health care and governance, because they may have little or no prior board experience. She also points to the critical role board culture and board leadership play in effective interaction among board members.

"Ensuring a safe and respectful board culture is key to successful engagement in governance for Millennials and all board members," she says. Millennials tend to spend more time thinking and may weigh in less frequently than older generations who jump into board conversations more quickly, she observes. This means that board chairs need to be sensitive to and manage these differing dynamics.

Engaging Millennials in Governance

J. Jeffrey Spahn, founder and CEO of Leading Leaders, Inc., affirms the importance of establishing a governance and leadership culture that supports and enables meaningful work. He suggests an approach to governing that encourages engagement and values everyone's contributions.

"One way to think about culture is development of 'shared meaning', which is very important to Millennials," he says. Spahn, who works with multigenerational leadership groups in several sectors, suggests boards can benefit from engaging in dialogue using a process he calls "curious conviction." This approach asks all participants to enter into discussions simultaneously playing the roles of both leader and follower in the same moment. Many leaders are comfortable playing these roles at different times during an extended exchange or discussion. However, doing so simultaneously requires learning and practice.

Leading and following as a single action is similar to putting together a puzzle with multiple

©2018 American Hospital Association | www.aha.org
April 2018

American Hospital Association®

pieces where the outcome is not yet clear, Spahn says. Pieces often initially appear facedown and are in the hands of various people putting the puzzle together. As the work of assembling the puzzle begins, pieces are turned over and revealed and all individuals let go of their pieces and move them to the center of the table. Participants understand that if they want to complete the puzzle, they can't hide or hold back any pieces or believe that their pieces represent the whole. Rather, they work together to mix and match pieces to form meaningful connections. Eventually, the group begins to see a more complete picture of something they have all contributed to creating.

Productive and meaningful board discussions among older generations and Millennials are like assembling a puzzle. Everyone brings their pieces, or points of view, to the table and commits to honestly sharing their opinions and convictions about an issue. At the same time, they express interest in hearing perspectives from other participants to enrich discussion. Spahn says the board chair can play a pivotal role in framing and advancing these discussions.

"The chair might begin by saying, 'I'd like to frame our conversation about this issue as a puzzle'," Spahn says. "All points of view are encouraged and welcomed and sharing them provides our board with an opportunity to gain input, build understanding and develop a shared perspective about the issue, which can help us create a common foundation for addressing it." The board chair should share his or her convictions about the issue, letting the board know how strongly held they are. At the same time, the chair should be clear that addressing the issue in the best way possible depends on the collective wisdom of all board members. The goal is to get everyone's views on the table, especially those that differ from the chair's, without judging them. The chair ensures that all board members are heard and advances discussion by summarizing individual perspectives and inviting board members to identify which points of view are commonly held. In this way a shared perspective begins to emerge and forms a foundation for decision making.

Not all governance issues may require or benefit from this more open-ended approach to board discussion. For example, fiduciary governance often requires decision-making based on compliance with pre-established standards, laws or regulations. However, as boards use strategic and generative modes of governance, understanding can be built and decisions can be formulated over time. In these governance modes, discussion inspired by "curious conviction (speaking plainly and passionately with a sincere interest in considering different points of view) can yield meaning and satisfaction for participants of all generations. As Spahn suggests, "Millennials want what we all want: purposeful engagement, to be treated as equals and to learn and grow."

If Millennials are going to have opportunities to effectively serve and hold leadership positions on boards, roles must be identified for them, Tejeda observes. For example, Tejeda believes a Millennial board member may be an ideal leader for his governing board's Patient and Family Advisory Committee. "This is a very visible position, and if the work is

performed well, will lend broader legitimacy and credibility to Millennials as board members," he says.

Tejeda also views the Millennial Advisory Board as a source for potential governing board members, which led him to suggest Jessica Goldman, a member of the advisory board and attorney for the El Paso Electric Company, for membership on the governing board of his organization's downtown campus. Her participation on the advisory board and the organization's broader interest in Millennials has made Goldman's governing board service a positive experience.

"The board, CEO, clinicians and employees have been very welcoming, and board members are willing to listen to what I have to say," Goldman says. "The board chair invited me to lunch before my first meeting and the CEO made sure I was prepared. Board members are encouraged to get to meetings early

Tips for Effectively Engaging Millennials in Board Service

- Intentionally seek out Millennial leaders with the competencies desired by your board to participate in hospital and health system governance.

- Work with community organizations that engage Millennial leaders to identify potential Millennial candidates for participation on hospital or health system advisory groups or boards.

- Consider bringing more than one Millennial onto the board to broaden the board's exposure to perspectives from this age group and to provide a "support system" for new Millennial board members.

- Provide a thorough orientation that includes mentoring, as well as other opportunities for new Millennial board members to get up to speed on governance issues and get to know their fellow trustees.

- Ensure a board culture of open-mindedness and respect.

- Prepare board and committee chairs to effectively engage all board members and manage the dynamics of multi-generational governance.

- Encourage Millennials to routinely share their views and participate in board debate and discussion to ensure their voice is heard and helps shape the board's feedback and focus.

- Look for opportunities to make board meetings as efficient as possible, including use of technology such as board portals, laptops and tablets.

- Develop ways to advance board interaction and decision-making in a timely way when all board members are not able to meet in person.

- Consider ways to make board meetings and education sessions more engaging: less presentation and more discussion; information conveyed concisely using visual/graphic formats; use of executive summaries that clearly and succinctly outline complex issues and decision factors.

- Periodically survey board members about their preferences for board and committee meeting length and frequency. Make sure all respondents understand that new ideas and change are welcome to implement an approach that works best for everyone.

- Ensure Millennial trustees participate on board committees that both reflect their interests and provide opportunities for them to grow in their board role.

- Identify board leader roles for Millennial trustees that provide greater visibility and engagement in board work and give them a chance to build their leadership skills and experience.

so we can all socialize. We also rotate where we sit at each meeting so everyone gets to know and interact with other board members."

Goldman also appreciates that board meetings are efficient and that trustees can prepare for and participate in them through use of a board portal, laptops and IPads.

Additional suggestions for steps to support effective participation of Millennials in governance, from those who participated in this article and other sources, appear in the sidebar on page five.

Goldman believes that service on a hospital or health system advisory group or board is a good way to connect to the community and work to make it a better place.

"We need to think about how to connect younger people with hospitals and health care before they or their family members experience a hospital stay," she says. "Younger individuals may not even think about the value of having good health care available in their community until they have a personal experience with it. That's why our organization's Millennial Advisory Board and opportunities for Millennials to participate in governing board service are so important."

Mary K. Totten (marykaytotten@gmail.com) is a Senior Consultant on Governance for the American Hospital Association and a member of the board of Silver Cross Hospital in New Lenox, IL.

American Hospital Association®