

How millennials prefer to work

Working to live, not living to work: new global research from the Sage 'Walk With Me' report throws out conventions on millennials in the workplace.



Anton van Heerden

The highlights of the Sage youth report into the working habits of millennials – those currently aged between 18 and 34 years - throws up the following highlights:

- Survey from 16 countries shows that millennial entrepreneurs fit into five distinct personas.
- Study gives insight into how to hire, engage and do business with these ambitious young people.
- 61% will sacrifice profit to stay true to their values – rising to 78% in South Africa and 83% in Nigeria.
- 66% in South Africa and 71% in Nigeria say life comes before work.
- Doing social good is especially important in South Africa (80%) and Nigeria (80%).

The young entrepreneurs are driven by a desire for independence, a belief in social good and a commitment to employee happiness. The Sage 'Walk With Me' report examines the key characteristics, attitudes and behaviours of millennial entrepreneurs around the world. Despite sweeping generalisations about how this generation behaves, the study shows that these business leaders have diverse traits which align them with five workplace personality types:

1. **The Principled Planners:** Extremely methodical in their approach to work, they enjoy carefully planning for success. With an ambitious streak, they never take anything at face value and always ask a lot of questions.
2. **The Driven Techies:** Love their work and can't bear the thought of sitting around twiddling their thumbs, they trust in the power and efficiency of innovative technology to keep them one step ahead of the competition. They have a strong belief in its ability to accurately target their existing and future customers.
3. **The Instinctive Explorers:** Cavalier, they love the unknown, as well as exploring uncharted territory. They trust their gut instincts and stick to their guns. A modern image is extremely important to them, and they want to be leaving a legacy behind to be remembered by.
4. **The Real Worlders:** Resourceful, but likely to say they rely on technology in order to succeed. When it comes to their approach to work and making decisions, they tend to alternate between going on gut instinct and taking a more methodical approach.
5. **The Thrill-Seekers:** Easily bored and always on the lookout for the next challenge, they couldn't care less about appearances. They work best around others and believe that making a social impact is

overrated.

More general trends from the study include a desire to make a difference. Doing social good is especially important to young entrepreneurs in South Africa and Nigeria (both 80%) compared to other countries. Respondents in South Africa (30%) and Nigeria (46%) say that the way their business reflects their personal success is what gets them out of bed in the morning.

Millennial entrepreneurs have a huge role to play in the start-up economy and are shaping the modern workplace at great pace. In Nigeria, 36% say they started their own business to become masters of their own destiny and 29% to turn an idea into reality. Among South African respondents, 29% started their own business to become masters of their own destiny, followed by to make money (21%) and to turn an idea into reality (21%).

Global comparisons

When it comes to the work life balance, 66% value work over life. For respondents in Brazil (71%), Australia (70%), Belgium (70%), Singapore (73%) and Switzerland (70%), reducing the amount of hours they spend working and retiring early is a key focus for them. Some 66% in South Africa and 71% in Nigeria say life comes before work.

62% believe they'll be a serial entrepreneur, starting more than one business in their lifetime— with 52% saying this is because they have lots of ideas they want to share with the world. In South Africa, 82% of respondents aim to start more than one business; among Nigerians, the number is an astonishing 94%.

Kriti Sharma, director: product management, mobile at Sage, explained, “As a millennial entrepreneur myself I know first-hand that this business group are shaking things up. We're rejecting established patterns of working and making technology work for us. We see business through a new lens. We're willing to work hard, but want flexibility in how, when and with whom we do business.”

“The opportunity to foster a new economy, triggered by young entrepreneurs, has never been greater and the way millennials choose to operate in the business world is set to become the new normal,” said [Anton Van Heerden](#), EVP and managing director, Sage South and Southern Africa. “It is the entrepreneurial spirit that makes the difference all over the world, so policymakers and big business would do well to listen to the voices of the young African entrepreneurs who are inventing our futures.”

“Millennial entrepreneurs have a huge role to play in the start-up economy and are shaping the modern workplace at great pace,” explained Stephen Kelly, Sage CEO. “But they can't be grouped together as a homogenous stereotype. Our research shows that they fall into distinct camps with specific hopes, fears, concerns and ways of working. They will be our next generation of business builders, the heroes of the economy, and understanding what makes them tick now stands us all in good stead for the future. That's true of the people that want to do business with them, buy from them, hire them or create policy that helps them to grow.”

The full report, including more stats and a full analysis of the five personas, is [available](#).

