Who Is Training Whom?

The Effect Of The Millennial Generation

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This Command College Independent Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future, but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future-- creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

As Officer Smith gathered together the necessary items for the first day of the police academy he thought out loud, "Do I have everything I'm required to bring?" He began a mental checklist-- uniform, stun gun taser, group communication device, miniature computer and, oh yes, the virtual training halo for scenarios, hand-to-hand combat and pursuit training. He was excited because in the recruit orientation he was told that the instruction by the staff was heavily laden with interactive technologies, collaboration with other recruits, and the best part is that he will be able to teleconference from home two days a week. He counted his blessing again about how fortunate he was to attend the police academy in 2010, instead of the early years of the new millennium.

If this sounds a little far-fetched and hard to believe, it shouldn't. This is the future for academies, and is what the "Millennial Generation" will be demanding in the highest level of instruction. Once you have a clear understanding of the new generation, you will realize this scenario will be the norm and not the aberration.

The Millennial Generation

There has been a great deal of information written about the many generations over the last century, from the "Veteran" to the "Greatest" to the "Baby Boomer" and finally, to the "Gen X." Each had its unique differences, and members of each of those generations thought and acted differently than the generation before. They were shaped by common experiences, defining moments, history, demographics, economics and culture (Howe, 2002). The Millennial Generation, the newest to emerge, consists of those born between 1978 and 2000. Also referred to as "Gen Y" and "Nexters" they will be the

1

largest of the generations in the past century. Their numbers will top 80 million people, eclipsing even Generation X's numbers. (Lloyd, 2003).

The label "Millennial" is attributed to this group by authors William Strauss and Neil Howe (2001), and was validated by a survey conducted by them in 1999. That survey of students in the Fairfax County, Virginia, school system, showed that 56% preferred the term "Millennial Generation."   Richard Tiplady, in his article "Millennials", said students chose that name because they did not like being referred to as Gen Y (the generation after X). The students believed the name was appropriate because they are the first generation to reach adulthood in the new millennium.

Mosier (2001), in his presentation to UW-OSHKOSH, identified the Millennial Generation as the children of the "Baby Boomer Generation." They came of age in the 1990's when the technology revolution was exploding, and are extremely technologically sophisticated. Mosier further said they are able to process large amounts of visual information, posses advanced motor, spatial and strategy skills because of game technology (Mosier, 2001).

The Millennials came of age during the technology-driven years when Bill Clinton was President of the United States. They were the first to grow up with computers in almost every household, and to have access to the Internet in a developed and creative form. The Internet provided them with the instant ability to download music, talk to friends with instant messaging and obtain research information at a moments notice. (Wikipedia, 2006).

Technology for the Millennials is an important part of their environment. The younger the age group, the higher the percentage of those who use the Internet for school,

work and leisure. Their comfort in technology has led this generation to perceptions that the technology they are using at their respective learning locations is inadequate (Oblinger, 2003). For those tasked with teaching the Millennials in the academies, this simply means that they should consider the state of their technological equipment, and also expect this generation to want to use it as a part of their learning process. This mindset of wanting to have control over their learning did not arise in a vacuum. In fact, the culture and times to which they were born shaped them in very distinct ways.

A few of the cultural events associated with the Millennials are: a rise in electronic music by using computers as musical instruments, predominant use of video games such as Nintendo and Play Station, blogging and the use of social websites like MySpace, Facebook and Friendster. These cultural events all help to define the technology that drives the lives of the Millennials. This means that the new police recruits will be able to absorb information at a faster rate and that they will reach boredom faster when subjected to old traditional teaching methods.

Newton (2000) in "The New Student", said that Millennial students enter college having had greater exposure to, and more experimentation with "grown up" activities than any other generation. He also said they are part of the "home alone" generation, having spent many hours in the hands of television, the Internet, peer groups, and alternative parent figures. They received rapid exposure to a wide variety and ever increasing level of informational activity, which makes them the most informed generation in history.

Due to the Millennials having greater exposure to activities at a younger age and having grown up more independent, there is a possibility they could be more challenging

with the instructors about their information. The instructors would need to be prepared

for this, and ensure they remain current in the knowledge and skill set they are teaching.

<u>How the Millennials Learn</u>

Perhaps an instructor at the FBI National Academy coined one of the best terms

regarding the process of learning by the Millennials. Kathleen Mitchell (2006) described

what she believed is necessary to effectively train and teach the new generation. She used

the term "edutainment", meaning they must be entertained while they are being educated.

She illustrated that the attention span of the Millennial is approximately 8 minutes (the

time in between commercials) and during that time they want to be entertained.

Attention spans are reducing with the newer generations. GenTrends (2001) notes the

boomer generation will sit for an hour or two and endure a boring lecture while Gen Xers

will last only considerably longer than that of a Millennial.   Mitchell believes methods

must be found to effectively train the Millennials during that eight minute attention span

in order to reap the most benefits and solidify learning.

Millennials have been shown to prefer technological and collaborative

experiences that exhibit clear goals, enhance motivation and involve authentic activities.

They will expect online learning with interactivity, visual effects and rapid access to

information (Wood, 2001). They want to become involved in student centered

collaborative learning where they have control of the actions and become immersed in

the environments where they solve problems, undertake challenges and interact with

virtual entities, or with other game participants in multiplayer games. (McMahon, 2005).

They are more "team oriented", and prefer a classroom setting that emphasizes group

learning and problem solving as opposed to lecture. They expect accountability of their instructors and higher standards out of their schools (Mosier, 2001).

Millennials utilize multi-tasking more than any generation before them. They can research information, listen to music, instant message friends and talk on the phone simultaneously. They are more comfortable reading information from a computer screen than they are reading it from a book (Wikipedia, 2007). They are also more likely to enjoy learning in a collaborative group atmosphere than by themselves. Johnson (2006) argues that the junk culture we're so eager to dismiss is in fact making us more intelligent. He further says that video games have been shown to raise IQ scores and develop cognitive abilities.

Research shows that 94% of Millennials use the Internet for school research and believe it helps them with their schoolwork (Irvine, 2004). According to Irvine, they believe their knowledge of technology is higher than that of their teachers and they are more Internet "savvy". They believe the use of technology their instructors are using is uninspiring and see better ways to use the technology than that of their teachers. The older equipment, administrative restrictions and filtering software used by the institutions inhibit their learning in school (Oblinger, 2003). Most Millennials have technology at home that far exceeds what the learning institutions can provide.

The students of today are often on the cutting edge of technology and, in most cases, are beyond the knowledge of their parents, teachers and even their potential employers. It is important for the academies to realize the amount of knowledge they must have to provide the learning that will provide the most comprehension for the

Millennials. There are, though, actions educators and police trainers can consider when designing a training experience for the Millennial.

Newton (2000) identifies eight significant areas that colleges can improve the Millennial student's comprehension:

- *Faculty may need to recognize that students are already different in their attitudes and behaviors as a result of the social and technological revolution*

- *The learning institutions must still offer deliberate classroom and out of classroom opportunities for student personal awareness*

- *The info revolution has created a situation where there should be less emphasis on the accumulation of personal knowledge and more on tools necessary for informational retrieval*

- *Students need skills to manage their daily life*

- *Opportunities must be provided for students to be able to explore the meaning and purpose of their life*

- *The institutions must find ways to understand, nourish and influence the peer culture*

- *Understand and utilize how students are affected by what they perceive as the normative behavior of their peers*

- *Realize how important it is to model what is important and valued as higher learning to students*

We must understand that although we are preparing these people for a career in law enforcement, they are still in the mode of a student while they are attending the

police academy. The same ideas for learning apply whether they are in a strictly academic setting or preparing for a career in policing.

Raines (2002) describes the preferences of learning methods by the Millennial Generations. They want to learn by using teamwork, technology, structure, entertainment, excitement and experiential activities. She asserts that people who are tasked with educating the Millennials fail them by not meeting their expectations and by feeling threatened by their technical abilities.

If police academies want to effectively train the police recruits of the new generation, they are going to have to break away from traditional learning and teaching methods and embrace new technology driven teaching. A revamping of the curriculum used by instructors will be necessary as well as an education using advancing technology in their presentations.

<u>Traditional Basic Recruit Police Academies</u>

Training in law enforcement really has not changed significantly in many setting in the last thirty years. Although there have been advances in the training techniques of the physical part of our job (such as tactical training), the overall format in which we teach statutory law, principles and techniques has remained constant throughout the years.

Academy training was, and still is, primarily done through the teacher lecturing in a classroom setting. The training or knowledge being taught is usually followed by a traditional written test to assess what has been learned. Based on what we now know

about Millennials, though, this type of training may not be the most effective to get information to the new generation officer hired into law enforcement.

Oblinger (2004) argues we need a balance of individual and active learning, along with collaborative learning and passive learning. This type of learning best occurs in groups and through lectures. A live lecture is a way for a dedicated and passionate scholar to dramatize and embody the intellectual content of a subject and demonstrate the appeal and importance of the material. Although Oblinger is referring to academic institutions in his work, the same can be applied to police academies. It is important for students to see not only what they need to know, but also why it is important. This type of balance would require the increased use of technology in the learning process along with the other types of learning mentioned.

Technologies and strategies are already in place to train the Millennials. The secret to that success lies in tailoring and blending the approaches you take to the training. There cannot be a meaningful learning experience for them without using a varied blend of delivery modalities. (Robert, 2005). One means in use in similar training is the application of game technology to learning.

The United States Army has recognized the importance of integrating gaming technology into the training of their recruits and is actually using it as a recruitment tool. Boyd (2005) a technology correspondent for The World, a BBC World Service and WGBH-Boston says, "We knew that this kind of technology is really good for small unit training. And its design is multi-player and internet distributed, so we knew it could potentially serve a variety of distributed training needs, and that it could also interface with a variety of other existing Army simulations if we did some work." This interfacing

of the technology can also be used in police academies to facilitate learning. The individuals the Army attracts are not much different from the skills and traits law enforcement agencies are seeking. Academies could use gaming technology in different facets of police academy training. For example, tactical, pursuit driving and decision making which would make it more inviting for the new recruit.

In fact, the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) has developed as part of their website "The Learning Portal" to allow members of California law enforcement the ability to complete interactive training modules and access related learning information. Another component available to law enforcement is interactive learning presented by "NinthHouse." This training is primarily directed toward managers, however, possibly in the future could be tailored for basic recruits. On their website they explain the benefits of the training, "Blended Learning combines eLearning tools with traditional classroom training. The combination of self-paced courses, instructor-led application sessions and scalable delivery achieves a flexible, cost-effective training solution that can reach and educate a geographically dispersed audience" (Ninth House, 2007).

Since 2001, POST has been facilitating a revamping of the academy curriculum and the delivery method of information to the recruits. According to Allen (2007), director of the Long Beach Basic Police Academy, in 2005 POST approved the requirement for all new academy instructors to attend an Academy Instructor Certificate Program prior to teaching recruits. This training introduces new instructors to the mandates of the academy, including the requirement to use active adult learning in their classes. In the

sixteen academic learning domains of the basic course, instructors must also employ one of more learning activities as a part of their teaching.

As a result of significant changes approved by the POST Commission, the Basic Course is moving its teaching methodology to that which:

♦ Places the responsibility for learning on the student,

♦ Modifies and expands the instructor's role to that of facilitator of an adult learning environment,

♦ Provides students with a variety of teaching methodologies and opportunities to acquire knowledge and demonstrate competencies necessary for success in field training and beyond (POST website, 2007).

By implementing these changes, POST has recognized the importance of changing their teaching methods to the Millennial Generation. California is not unique in dealing with the new generation of recruits and students and their emerging standards may become the norm for similar programs throughout the country.

The Basic Recruit Police Academy of Tomorrow

For the Millennial Generation to achieve the maximum learning experience, the manner in which instruction is presented must be modified from the past. Raines (2003) said, "A new reckoning must occur in the mindset of the managers and leaders of these institutions."

Based upon research conducted by this author, it is evident that the basic police academy will have to change their learning environment and curriculum to be the most effective teachers possible. If you were to design a curriculum and teaching method for

the Millennial police recruit, it might consist of six separate sections. Raines (2003), describes those sections necessary to effectively impart the information:

1. **You be the leader.** This generation has grown up with structure and supervision, with parents who were role models. The "You be the parent" TV commercials are right on. Millennials are looking for leaders with honesty and integrity. It's not that they don't want to be leaders themselves; they'd just like some great role models first.

2. **Challenge me.** Millennials want learning opportunities. They want to be assigned to projects they can learn from. A recent Randstad employee survey found that "trying new things" was the most popular item. They're looking for growth, development, a career path.

3. **Let me work with friends.** Millennials say they want to work with people they *click* with. They like being friends with coworkers. Employers who provide for the social aspects of work will find those efforts well rewarded by this newest cohort. Some companies are even interviewing and hiring groups of friends.

4. **Let's have fun.** A little humor, a bit of silliness, even a little irreverence will make your environment more attractive.

5. **Respect me.** "Treat our ideas respectfully," they ask, "even though we haven't been around a long time."

6. **Be flexible.** The busiest generation ever isn't going to give up its activities just because of jobs. A rigid schedule is a sure-fire way to lose the Millennials.

You might be asking yourself if you are a director of a police academy or an instructor at one, why do I need to change what I am doing when it is working. The answer to that question is that you may not be doing the best possible job training Millennials in your agency or academy. If the academy is not meeting each of the listed sections as outlined by Raines, it is not teaching to the highest level for the next generation.

The academies of the future must rely heavily on technology with presentations to the recruits and the recruit must be challenged during the process. Academies should attempt to fill the instructor ranks with people who are also of the new generation. By doing so, they will have instructors who understand the advancing technology and the need to be entertained while learning. However, there could be a downside to the hiring of Millennial instructors. By focusing solely on them, there could be the possibility of losing valuable experience, wisdom and knowledge that only comes from time in the profession. Modifying the curriculum to allow for more collaborative projects with other recruits will enhance learning as well as the most up to date interactive technology in training scenarios. POST is moving in the right direction by their attempts to modify the curriculum and requirements of the instructors and the future academies will be better equipped for the new generation.

The Future of the Law Enforcement Academies

A future basic academy could very well resemble what Smith encountered on the first day of training. Smith was told the wristwatch computer could link with the schools computers and the information could be sent to his home computer so there would be no handouts in the classes. He was told the virtual training halo would be essential in the training for the shooting scenarios, pursuit training and the hand-to-hand combat training. As he arrived at the academy, he and other recruits were met by the academy director and the lead tactical officer. After a brief introduction about the academy they were escorted into the main classroom. Looking around the room he saw a laptop computer on every desk, a huge TV screen monitor on the wall and a projector hanging from the ceiling. He saw that the technology used during the classes would be very similar to what he became accustomed to throughout his college education.

The first instructor came into class and Smith realized he was not much older than himself. One of the first things the instructor had the recruits do was break themselves into small groups and said these groups would be used for completing assignments and making presentations. Smith was accustomed to working in groups and appreciated the instructors' creativeness and flexibility in how the class would handle the assignments.

The instructor began the class with a few minutes of lecture at the podium and he then began the first presentation, which was a power-point presentation containing music, videos and photos. He had already instructed the students to synchronize their wristwatch computers with the laptops at the desks so they could take notes on the laptop. At the end of the class the instructor assigned homework and said it was available on the website and told everyone that he wanted it e-mailed to him as opposed

to having it handed in as a hard copy. Smith had high expectations of the instructor and of the course content. After listening to the instructor he recognized that he was no doubt an expert in the field**.**

After this first day, Smith was confident that the learning experience he would receive would meet his expectations when it came to technology and a blended instructional process. Once into the field, he will also find the concepts learned are easily transferable to life in the streets.

Summary

It is obvious that the Millennials are a unique generation having different learning styles, expectations and increased technological proficiencies than the generations preceding them. They have come of age during the technology driven years and have grown up with computers and high expectations.

POST is responding to the new generation by attempting to improve the requirements and curriculum of the academies and to provide a better learning environment to the recruits. The future is bright for the new generation of police recruits because the training they are receiving in the academies of the present and future will meet or exceed their expectations.   This will make their learning environment the experience they expected it to be.

The better the graduate from the academy, the better the officer who will serve your community. Chiefs and Sheriffs place a high degree of importance on the quality of service their officers and deputies are providing. If the academy is producing the highest quality recruit, the job of a police chief becomes that much easier. The advancement of

technologies, new learning modalities and increased interactivity in the academies will no doubt produce a better finished product than if no changes were being made. Is the new generation of police academy graduates any better than those trained from other generations? Only time will tell us that, however, it will not be from a lack of trying on our part.

One thing is quite obvious; if we are not teaching the Millennials to their expectations and providing an adequate learning environment, they will definitely Let Us Know.

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