**Chapter 3: It’s Not Entitled, It’s Entrepreneurial**

Millennials and gen Z exercise entrepreneurial spirit through the questions they often ask in their 9 to 5 jobs, in a continual drive to make the most of their self-perceived potential. While other generations also had youthful entrepreneurs, the barriers to starting a business have greatly decreased with the rise of digital technology.

**One Coin, Two Sides Model: Entitled or Entrepreneurial?**

For this particular stereotype, the observable behavior is that millennials have different expectations for opportunities to contribute to and rewards to gain from the organization. From a traditional perspective, this can be perceived as entitled—when in the past, simply having a job with a regular paycheck was reason to be grateful. From a modern, top talent perspective, growing up has inherently involved entrepreneurial spirit and the idea of pursuing one’s full potential, leading to workplace expectations that are most closely represented in start-up or entrepreneurial environments. In addition, modern talent is deeply aware that having a traditional job is only one of many options to gain a sufficient living in today’s world.

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| **One Coin: One Observable Behavior**  Different expectations for opportunities to contribute and rewards to gain. | |
| **Side 1: Traditional Interpretation**  Entitled | **Side 2: Top Talent, Millennial-Based Modern Interpretation**  Entrepreneurial spirit |
| Supporting Beliefs:   * You should just be happy to have a job. A job is something that is given to you, and not everyone has the opportunity to have one. * A job, at its bare minimum, is a way to earn a paycheck. I want my job to be fulfilling too, but first and foremost, I need to pay the bills. * You should put in the time before asking for any rewards. You need to demonstrate that you are worthy before even asking. Why would the company give you something when you’ve done nothing yet? * There is no difference today in the breadth of skills, knowledge, and experience of new hires or type of work we are tasked to do. Therefore, they still need to put in the time and “grunt work” before moving to strategic work. * I feel threatened. Millennials ask for a lot of challenge and even if, by chance, they are ready for it, there’s not enough room at the top for all of us. We can’t all be senior-level employees. If there are too many people who have significant work responsibilities, I may be out of a job. | Supporting Beliefs:   * I will take jobs with lower pay because I am after experiences that grow me and a life that is fulfilling. I’m not as interested in materialistic things as older generations, because it’s been said since I was a kid that money doesn’t make you happy. I believe in YOLO, and if I only live once, why would I want to work for you? I need a good reason. * Jobs are only one way to earn income. Having a job is not having a special privilege. In fact, seeing how companies demonstrated in my formative years that they do not care about their employees, having a job is somewhat of a misfortune compared to other options today. * I have been contributing my voice and skills since a young age through the Internet. I don’t want to go backwards in my journey of self-development. When I can bring my full breadth of skills to work, I’m more engaged and willing to help the business grow their vision. |

One Coin, Two Sides model for entitled vs. entrepreneurial interpretations of modern behavior. Source: Invati Consulting.

***Exploring the Traditional Interpretation: Entitled***

From a traditional perspective, entitlement sounds like this in the following scenarios:

* **Promotion-related:** “I’ve just started and I’m wondering when I will get a promotion” or “I’ve been here for six months and I think I’m ready for the next level.”
* **Recruiting:** Attempting to negotiate better salary and benefits during the recruiting process.
* **Work plan:** Asking for more challenging work or showing poor performance when doing routine tasks.
* **Flexible hours:** Asking for flexible hours or simply not showing up when expected.
* **Skirting hierarchy:** “Hi, you’re my VP right? I just wanted to introduce myself and maybe we could get lunch some time?”
* **The big picture:** “Why are we doing it this way?” or “How does this connect with the mission?” or “The strategy doesn’t make sense to me.” Wanting to provide input at a higher level or during a strategic conversation.

The definition of entitlement is the belief that one is inherently deserving of privileges or special treatment. Older individuals may believe that, at a young age, one should be happy just to have a job, and asking for more than that is asking for a privilege.

***Exploring the Modern Interpretation: Entrepreneurial Spirit and Maximizing Potential***

Millennials believe there is a distinction between being entitled and advocating for yourself. Self-advocacy is rooted in understanding and pursuing one’s full potential, passion, and purpose.

Millennials live their lives according to the idea of YOLO—you only live once—which describes the reasoning behind the fulfillment-oriented rewards they pursue. Conversely, they are driven by a pain, too, due to all the choices they have for gainful employment: FOMO, or fear of missing out.

Young people today consider traditional 9 to 5 companies to be just as risky as start-ups and entrepreneurial ventures. Entrepreneurship is attractive because the desired rewards from work have changed for modern talent, from just collecting a paycheck to living life to the fullest.

Because of technology, millennials and especially gen Z have many more options outside of a traditional 9 to 5 to make a living. Millennials and especially gen Z have more exposure to what it means to “be in charge” and be a part of a start-up atmosphere than previous generations, through experimenting with businesses at young ages. Having a job is not seen as having a privilege in itself; today it is often seen as a disadvantage. In fact, those that make a living outside of “the system” are the ones who are idolized and respected by other millennials.

There are a lot of positive strengths that come with the entrepreneurial mindset, in addition to the “entitled” questions millennials often ask. These strengths include ambition, persistence, creativity, relentless business focus, independence, and more.

**Leveraging Entrepreneurial Spirit to Build Modern Organizations**

Entrepreneurship is attractive to young people because of the digitally enabled idea of bringing their full selves to everything they do and of living by the philosophies of YOLO and FOMO. In the entrepreneurial environment, this looks like having the ability to:

* Work in a fun culture
* Be part of a fast-paced environment
* Wear multiple hats
* Have a lot of responsibility and autonomy fast
* Work on something that matters (to society and to themselves personally)
* Always see the big picture
* Be part of a goal-focused culture that is highly productive
* Always see the results of the work put in
* Potentially make a lot of money

The key intervention to creating this sort of environment in an organization is to move from naming the behavior as entitled to harnessing entrepreneurial spirit by cultivating an “intrapreneurial” culture, where the high motivation and purpose-driven focus of millennials is encouraged, nurtured, and baked into the culture of the company.

Some ways to capture intrapreneurial spirit include allowing a portion of employee work plans to be free, providing ways to capture innovations, and allowing everyone to feel as if they are an owner of the company. In a successful intrapreneurial culture, employees don’t feel as insecure about being promoted, gaining benefits, or gaining access to senior leaders, because they have the security that their ideas are valued, that they are allowed to have experiences outside their direct line of work, and that they can work effectively within the larger vision of the company.

**Tales from the Trenches**

***Social Physics: Alex Pentland’s Model for Idea Flow***

MIT professor Alex Pentland, one of the foremost authorities on data science and a serial entrepreneur, deciphered how ideas flow in today’s digital world in his revolutionary book *Social Physics*. To cultivate idea flow, organizational elements include creating time to find and spread new ideas, providing connection to a diverse range of people, having forums to turn information into ideas, and creating safe spaces and a positive team culture, where “failing” and experimentation is okay.

***Intrapreneurship at Work: Cisco’s “Innovate Everywhere” Culture***

In 2015–2016, multinational tech giant Cisco rolled out an initiative called the Innovate Everywhere Challenge across the entire workforce to harness the entrepreneurial spirit of its employees. It was a six-month call to every employee to innovate outside of their direct jobs, with guidance, clear goals, and judging criteria. The goal was to create a grassroots movement from within and to harness the collective innovative power of the entire workforce rather than a select few. Cisco encouraged every employee to ask why, to be strategic, to be a business owner, because it saw the benefit to the business, not only to create the next game changer for customers, but to make significant improvements to everyday work processes.

**Summary: From Entitled to Creating a Thriving Intrapreneurship Culture**

In today’s fast-paced, highly cognitive world where young people don’t have to get a traditional job and bring a different skill set to the table, millennials have evolved different expectations of workplaces that leverage their innate entrepreneurial spirit, tied to the philosophy of YOLO. By embracing the idea that it’s okay to ask questions and focus instead on the ideas that emerge, companies engage, retain, and get high productivity from modern employees who seek to live a life of fulfillment and be entrepreneurial in their careers.

**How Modern Is Your Culture?**

Take the [“How Modern Is Your Culture?” diagnostic](https://goo.gl/forms/Me6MhSMeUv8tzBaI2) to determine if your organization is leaning toward a traditional perspective of entitlement vs. entrepreneurship that is at risk of disengaging modern talent.

**10-Minute Champion**

[View and contribute](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1t8JXUyYyyjSBjqOii3UkM6AKxGf_Fm7nR05TqhtKreY/edit?usp=sharing) ideas for actions you can take in 10 minutes or less.

**Chapter 3: Questions for Further Discussion**

1. What expectations of work have emerged because of the ability to be more entrepreneurial at a younger age? How are those expectations perceived by those who are already in the workforce?
2. Do you think the YOLO (you only live once) philosophy is self-indulgent or admirable? If it’s the former, list three to five counterintuitive reasons why such a philosophy could be admirable and/or beneficial.
3. What benefits could entrepreneurial mindset bring to the workplace? Where may it bring consequences that should be managed?

**Chapter 3 Resources and References**

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