

Job clarity for millennials comes down to setting expectations and priorities. However, millennials are significantly less likely than non-millennials to strongly agree that they know how to prioritize their responsibilities at work (54% of millennials vs. 71% of non-millennials). Perhaps understanding how to organize work comes with age and experience, but managers nonetheless have a pressing need to help their millennial employees set short- and long-term priorities. Without a sense of direction, millennial employees will likely feel lost or try to tackle too much at once. Neither scenario leads to great performance.

When millennial workers do understand their work priorities, their engagement flourishes. Nearly seven in 10 millennials (67%) who strongly agree that their manager helps them establish priorities are engaged, compared with only 27% of millennials who do not strongly agree. It's vital for millennials to receive their managers' help with shaping their workload and heading in the right direction.

MILLENNIALS NEED FREQUENT FEEDBACK AND INTERACTIONS

The relationship between manager and employee represents a vital link in performance management. As is often the case, communication is crucial for that relationship to succeed. Millennial workers are more engaged when their managers provide frequent and consistent communication and feedback. Forty-four percent of millennials who report that their manager holds regular meetings with them are engaged, while only 20% of millennials who do not meet regularly with their manager are engaged. This is similar to older generations; 43% of non-millennials who report their manager has regular meetings with them are engaged.

MILLENNIALS MORE LIKELY TO BE ENGAGED WHEN THEIR MANAGER HOLDS REGULAR MEETINGS WITH THEM

Does your manager hold regular meetings with you?

"Engaged"

YES

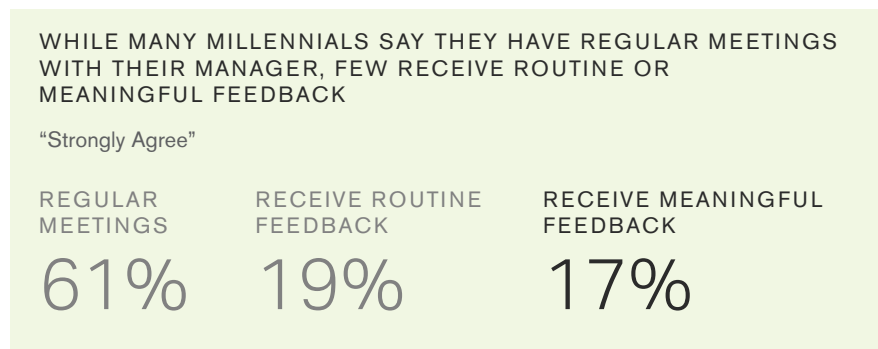
44%

NO

20%

Regular meetings and consistent feedback pay dividends not only in engagement, but also in performance. Employees who meet regularly with their manager generate higher performance for their team and company. They are also more likely to agree that they regularly receive recognition and praise, that someone cares about them as people and that someone cares about their development.

How are U.S. managers doing when it comes to keeping the lines of communication open? Gallup finds that 61% of millennials report their manager holds regular meetings with them — slightly higher than the 55% of non-millennials. However, just 19% of millennials strongly agree that they routinely receive feedback about their work, and only 17% strongly agree that they receive “meaningful feedback” when they make a suggestion about improving performance.



Moreover, it appears that millennials aren't comfortable talking to their managers about their need for feedback. Only 15% of millennials strongly agree that they routinely *ask* for feedback about their work. And 33% of millennial workers strongly agree that they have told their manager the one thing they “need most” to get their work done and why — the lowest of all generations. This makes it even more important for managers to not only initiate conversations with millennial workers, but to also encourage these workers to speak up about what they need.

Effective feedback is rooted in a few essential tenets; chief among them is frequency. While Gallup research indicates that the frequency of meetings is less important to employees than the fact that they happen at all, engagement is *highest* among employees who meet with their manager at least once a week.

The more conversations managers have with their employees, the more engaged their employees become. But Gallup found that only 21% of millennials and 18% of non-millennials meet with their manager on a weekly basis. The majority of employees say they meet with their manager as infrequently as less than once a month (56% for millennials and 53% for non-millennials).

Ultimately, managers should strive to quickly connect with their employees every day. Gallup is not suggesting that managers hold daily progress meetings with their millennial workers in which they go over a checklist of projects, tasks and deadlines. Instead, these ongoing conversations should be treated as coaching conversations, providing employees with an opportunity to tell their manager what they need or what's on their mind and to receive immediate feedback.

Quick connects also do not have to take the form of face-to-face meetings. While all forms of communication are effective, managers who use a combination of face-to-face, phone and electronic communication are the *most* successful at engaging employees. This is good news for managers who increasingly manage employees working remotely or from home, but it still underscores a need to continue having face-to-face conversations — even if that means videoconferencing or using Skype.

Daily connects offer managers and millennials the chance to catch up, but they are not outlets for formalized feedback. Managers should still hold semiannual progress conversations with employees focused on their accomplishments, next steps and growth. But the sticking point here is that millennials need both informal check-ins and formal development conversations with their managers.