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Mill_Board

The Millennial Advisory Board (aka Mill_Board) is a place for different perspectives on company-wide issues. It is a non-competitive environment that fosters collaboration and co-creation with young people, whose experience is different from many people's of the workplace.

A robust exchange of ideas, with millennials.



Why is the Millennial Board important for corporates?

We have heard it all before – millennials will make up 50% of our workforce by 2020 but they are disengaged in the workplace and feel like their strengths are underutilised. In addition, young people have a sense of entitlement, they are disloyal and they want free popcorn, flexible hours and yet still want to be a CEO by the age of 30. Is this true though? At Springage by Deloitte, our business is helping companies engage, understand and innovate with these young people, and we are on a mission to test some of these assumptions.

Our feeling is that many of the sentiments about millennial originate from countries in the West, so we wanted to understand whether our African millennials are any different. It is clear from first-hand experience, that young people in corporate South Africa lack a constructive, meaningful platform to share insights and ideas with senior leaders in their companies – most high potential accelerator schemes are not much more than a pat on the back. At the same time, CEOs often express a desire to stay “always on” and they are keen to hear more unfiltered views from their young talent.

In response to this, we developed an idea to create a Millennial Advisory Board (aka Mill_Board), based on the idea that normal company boards are forums for a robust exchange of ideas that have a tangible and significant impact the business – why not have the same structure made up of millennials? As such, the Millennial Advisory Board exists as a place for different perspectives on company-wide issues. It is also a non-competitive environment that fosters collaboration between young people, which is different from many people’s experience of the workplace.

In 2017, we approached our very own Deputy CEO, Sihlalo Jordan, to see if he would lead the pioneering first ever Mill_Board at Deloitte, which would be made up of around 10-15 millennials from different business units across Africa. It was important for us to test the concept within Deloitte before we went to market, not only to learn what worked and what didn’t, but also to show that as a firm we believed in the value of the idea.

The Mill_Board was constituted for a year and was given a mandate by Sihlalo, which addressed a specific critical business challenge. Through a set of meetings during the year, Sihlalo and the young people exchange ideas and co-created a solution which was presented to the company’s top executive committee (EXCO) at final meeting.



Participation in the Mill_Board is open to all relevant millennial employees and members are carefully recruited based on criteria that considers what they bring to solving the challenge (from side-hustles to sporting success to academic interests), as opposed to being judged on their boring old KPIs or from nominations by managers.



Since the Deloitte Mill_Board started, we have been working with the following clients: Financial Services, Professional Services and FMCG, on setting up and running their Millennial Boards. We are also currently running Deloitte 2018 cohort.

Throughout this journey we have learned a number of lessons about African millennials, as well as what makes a Mill_Board work effectively, three of which we would like to share.



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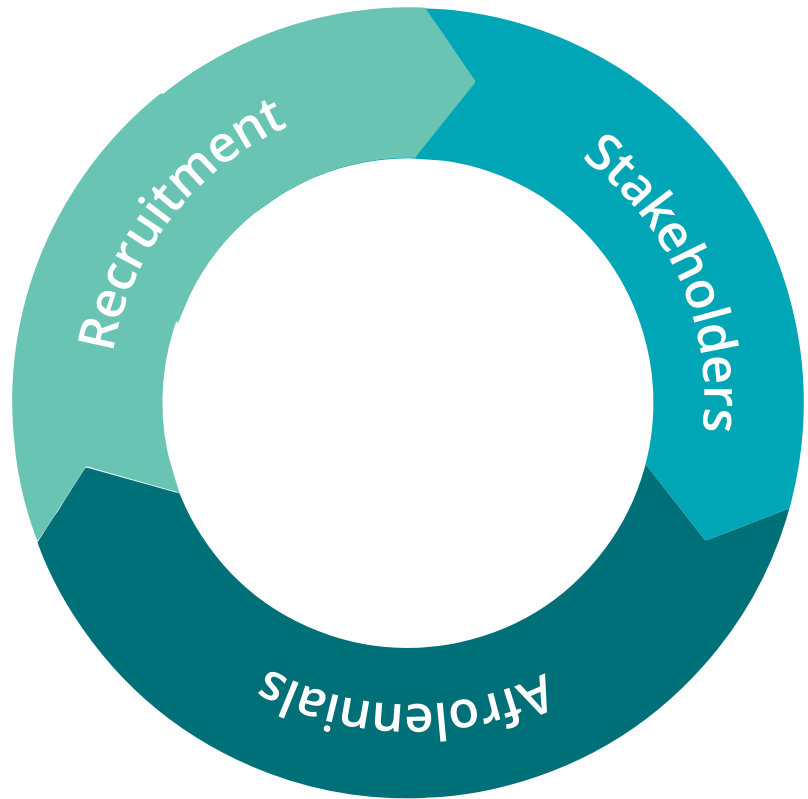
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Firstly, for this platform to truly succeed it needs the engagement of a CEO or Deputy, who is open minded, genuinely willing to learn and who is comfortable in trusting young people. This should not be a tick box exercise for the CEO; Mill_Boards are designed as an ongoing engagement process, not a once-off session. This is an opportunity for CEOs to listen and we often find they like taking notes in meetings, a sight that millennials are not used to, but something is demonstrative of how valuable CEOs find the process.

Secondly, the Mill_Board addresses another common problem faced by corporates – by bringing together young people from different departments it breaks down the barriers between silos that exists within companies and allows ideas that are often sitting within the organisation to flourish.

Thirdly, the view that young people crave an “impact” or “purpose” at work is often interpreted as an altruistic desire to be part of socially responsible activities. Our experience shows that the Mill_Board gives them a chance to see life from the CEO’s perspective and it shows them how their roles contribute to wider corporate strategic objectives, which is what gives many millennials a sense of meaning in their work.



The way the Mill_Board process is facilitated, from recruitment to stakeholder management to the solutions, requires an entrepreneurial mindset and an understanding of the external context in which millennials operate, as well as a well-founded faith in young people that yields results.

At Springage by Deloitte, we have been working with the brightest and best young people across our continent for over seven years. For our clients we are providing a product that they need and value, and [as trusted advisors, we also gain insights into their challenges and priorities, which we can share with colleagues.]

So what's next for the Mill_Board?

As each cohort wraps up, we are building a wider movement, creative young people in corporate South Africa and beyond, who have effected change within their organisations. We want to keep them together and provide other platforms for them to engage with each other, as well as with senior leaders from across the continent. the Mill_Board is about engaging our young people and has had positive results for everyone in the process – we hope that we can continue to do this for the benefit of all.



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