The Louisiana Small Business Development Center, partnered with America's SBDC, hosted a professional development conference designed to explore, engage and elevate Millennials in the SBDC network on June 8-9 in New Orleans, La. The mission was to target and engage Millennials in order to enhance the SBDC workforce, as well as improve the consulting process for millennial entrepreneurs. This conference also intended to help SBDCs develop a strategic plan to help retain Millennials in the network and position them for leadership roles in the future.

Over 60 persons attended the first-ever event with some coming as far as Oregon, Iowa, Michigan and Pennsylvania to the great city of New Orleans. The committee was able to solicit eight major sponsors that supported in a variety of ways and allowing the Louisiana SBDC (host SBDC) to close the event with a net income of $3,535.32.

Here's what a few sponsors thought about the event:

"Terrific event! Eager, real, authentic and highly engaged participants. The topic of "Maximizing Millennials Minds" was both timely and necessary. Our workplaces…our families…our communities, beg for us to be more tolerant of diversity, to be more appreciative of each other. Let's use sessions like this to challenge the places where we find ourselves, to be curious about finding ways for us to be "more similar than different!" Sincerest appreciation for the leadership, the vision and the opportunity. OpEx is ready to "Help You…Help Them!" – Bill Lewis, OPEX Realization

"I was very happy to be a speaker for the #M3 Maximizing Millennial Minds conference. A great inaugural conference to better understand this creative generation and engage with them. The event was highly energetic, motivating and incredibly well put together. I encourage anyone who works with millennials in either an employee or customer role to take a look at this conference. It will change the way you think about working with others, make you more effective and approachable. Add it to your list of must-attend conferences." – Kim Walker, 5 Stones Media and Constant Contact

"I believe this was a tremendous opportunity to capture what is important to millennials as well understanding it is not about targeting or excluding a particular generation but more about adapting, evolving, partnering and collaborating to bring about significant impact relating to entrepreneurs. Thanks again." – Romalise Robertson, LiftFund

"I thought it was an excellent event with some very valuable information." – Fred Crispen, Sr. Vice President, Celtic Bank

The event garnered national media attention for America's SBDC and Louisiana SBDC as Yahoo News shared the news release, as well as multiple Louisiana State media outlets such as New Orleans City Business and Baton Rouge Business Report.

The event proved to be a success – and it was done the millennial way! Take a look for yourself here and get a glimpse of what happened!

- **SBDCs represented:**
  - Fairfax, Virginia
  - Kirksville, Missouri
  - Eugene Oregon
  - Norfolk, Virginia
  - Benton, Arkansas
  - San Angelo, Texas
  - Washington D.C.
  - Arkadelphia, Arkansas
  - Kutztown, Pennsylvania
  - Ames, Iowa
  - Stephenville, Texas
  - Allendale, Michigan
  - Pensacola, Florida
  - Cape Girardeau, Missouri
  - Niceville, Florida
  - Shreveport, Louisiana
  - Lafayette, Louisiana
  - Baton Rouge, Louisiana
  - Hammond, Louisiana
  - Thibodaux, Louisiana
  - New Orleans, Louisiana
  - Lake Charles, Louisiana
  - Monroe, Louisiana

Something to consider:

- First-time event
- Garnered national and state media attention for SBDC
- 63 persons attended
- U.S. Senate Small Business Committee sent a representative
- Made a net monetary gain
- Uncovered an SBDC network need for a millennial strategic plan internally and externally
- Discovery and Discussion is ongoing

What resonated most:

- Is there an effort to develop and retain millennials in SBDC network?
- How to counsel millennial clients?
- How to communicate effectively with leadership in other generations within the SBDC?
- They want more conferences like this!

In closing, the following remarks show the feedback and desires of the attendees in hopes this information can and will be used to develop a strategic SBDC plan to help recruit and retain Millennials in the network and position them for leadership roles in the future.

Would you attend another event like this hosted by the M3 team?

- I would come back tomorrow. I would like to work with you on your next event. Maybe FL, AL, LA and TX could work together to create one mega event and market that to all of our centers and our clients. Did you give professional development certificates? Might be worth looking into.
- I would love to be considered as a speaker and or team member for next year's conference.
- Of course!
- Yes, yes, yes
- The conference was well organized. Thankful to have met other SBDCs staff and network with resource partners.
- Overall a wonderful experience!
- I think this was a great start to the conversation and can certainly be built on to focus more effectively through alternate programming and a slightly different approach.
- Event was great. Really enjoyed it.
- I enjoyed the M3 event! It was a valuable conference and it was nice to meet other millennial SBDC employees.

What do you wish we talked about today but didn't?

- Could have been interesting with a more in-depth discussion of the latest technologies and ideas for how the next five years will look like in the workforce.
- Building rapport with millennials and reading their minds. Maybe more clarity: Keeping Millennials in the SBDC and some strategies
- What Millennial businesses will look like
- How our SBDC clients can engage and market to Millennials.
- I would've liked to have expanded on the cost of employing millennials, especially since they are switching jobs so often. The conversation comes up often with the business owners I know and consult with.
- I wish the speakers not only had talked specifically about Millennials and how to maximize their growing impact, but that they had actually been Millennials. It is frustrating to have a bunch of people define the largest generation in American history in a few statistics, a sarcastic video that is actually frustrating to watch as it is completely stereotypical and prejudiced, and in a way that says we are the older and wiser generations, we know all about you and how horrible you are.
- Work styles, strengths, how to run offices with millennial on tiny budgets to maximize money and their strengths. I would have liked to know more about counseling our clients on employing millennials.

- I would have liked practical knowledge sharing about successfully integrating millennials into the SBDC ranks as advisers and center directors.
- I wish we could've had more time to dive into how to recruit and retain millennials. We talked a lot about who they are, but nothing really on what SBDCs need to do to engage them internally.
- Attracting and retaining Millennials in the workplace. How to highlight and integrate them into the organization?
- In-depth marketing strategies. It seemed that there was a heavy focus on social media. I would have like to learn about a broader scope of marketing strategies, specifically how SBDCs can market to small business owners within our service areas.
- Overall, the conference was great. I did, however, feel like the message of "retaining millennials within the SBDC" was lost through the breakout sessions. The sessions were informative and I enjoyed them, but the theme was lost.
- I would have liked more action steps to take back to truly help train our peers on working between the generations.
- How to integrate millennial workers into the SBDC office environment. What functions, roles and areas are best suited to a younger professional perspective? How do you create an environment of inclusion and collaboration while not having to shift the entire operation to "accommodation" mode, thus alienating staff that has been there a long time (and may be from an older generation)?
- Management - Would like actual tools/techniques that could be used when dealing/working with different generations and communicating with them. I feel my opinion is not being heard like it should.
- Marketing - Maybe a few techniques that could be helpful when dealing with millennial clients or clients that is not social media inclined. How do you show the value of social media?
- There are many ways we can dive deeper and have discussion regarding how to engage millennials within the SBDC network, as well as how to better counsel millennial entrepreneurs. Here are a few topics I'd love to discuss:
    - Tools for inter-generational communication within the workplace
    - How SBDCs can leverage new media outlets to target millennial entrepreneurs
    - Developing SBDC trainings and curriculum for millennial entrepreneurs
    - Peer to peer roundtable discussions for SBDC employees: strategies to target millennial entrepreneurs, challenges millennials face in the workplace, etc.

What was missing from today's discussion?

- A bit more time for Q&A...I know this is difficult, since most presenters end up going over time
- Team activities

- Specific topics about Millennials was completely lacking. Presenters who were good at presenting were non-existent other than Blair from ARPR. The biggest lack, in my opinion was speakers that were Millennials. We are an amazing generation, utilize us!
- I suppose handouts were missing. Or a cloud-based document sharing site?
- Wish it could've offered a little more insight on how to better work the relationships of the different generations within the SBDC.
- Lots of speaking "about" millennials but not as much talking "to" millennials about how to navigate starting a business or about integrating into the SBDC program as staff.
    1. Legislative techniques
    2. More elaboration on how to contact stakeholders
    3. Management and HR techniques I should know for when I become a supervisor for the SBDC.
    4. How to handle different generations management techniques. Techniques on how to manage staff (across generational gaps).
    5. How to incorporate federal or state metrics into your everyday work plan to be the most efficient.
    6. Questions to ask or statements to make when delegating duties to different employees that make it clear and precise in what I am asking or wanting.

Online participant feedback:

- The fact that I could attend/view remotely in any capacity is a huge step forward. Big high 5 for putting the work and thought into having that available. In general, I had to bounce around between Twitter and Facebook (and a little on periscope) to get the live feeds. Officially hosting all feeds from one account will help. You can then post the feed link across all the accts associated with the events.
- I remember there being a ton of good questions, and that part of each session was just as valuable as the content itself. I couldn't always read/see what was on the screens. If the presenters have a PowerPoint or something ahead of time, throwing that in a drop box folder that's accessible to all would help remote viewers. I think the quality of the streaming was just fine.
- On the whole, I bet if you built an Online Pass for participants you could make some extra money. You'd have to build it along with opportunities to ask questions during streaming, or recordings of sessions, but it could work. There's a ton of value in it, and I know others would be willing to pay!
- On content: There was plenty to learn especially for someone new like me. I didn't get as much of a focus on specific millennial information as I would have liked though. There was plenty of content that is applicable when working with all types of clients that included new technology like crowd funding and social media tips. I do remember a few points during the sessions that I did get some straight advice on succeeding as a millennial in the SBDC workforce. That was very valuable. I definitely wanted more info

on how to better market and communicate to millennial entrepreneurs and business owners. I'm not a business analyst, so that kind of info would be better for me. I could then share that with the people who do the individual staff for each center within our region. One of the speakers has a staff made almost of entirely young people (I think) and he had some great info. I know I missed a ton by not being there in person so I bet more things were covered that I didn't get L.

- Still, being able to catch any of it without getting a plane ticket to Louisiana is awesome. All in all, I enjoyed the event, and the more I listened the more I wished I was there in person. Great event, and I'm planning on attending the next one you have.

If you have any questions as it pertains to any of the information presented above, feel free to contact M3 Creator DeRon Talley at dtalley@lsbdc.org.

Thank you,

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