

Engaging Gen Y in Workplace

**Mrs. R.T.INDUJI, Assistant Professor, Rathinam College of Arts and Science,
Coimbatore**

**Mr. VINOTH KUMAR.K.R, Assistant Professor, OAA MAVMM, School of
Management, Madurai**

Corresponding Author Email Id indujiravi@gmail.com

Article Received: 7th May, 2018 Article Revised: 14th May, 2018 Article Accepted: 25th May, 2018

Abstract

Millennial have a drastically different outlook on what they expect from their employment experience. Millennials are well educated, skilled in technology, very self-confident, able to multi-task, and have plenty of energy. They have high expectations for themselves, and prefer to work in teams, rather than as individuals. Millennials seek challenges, yet work life balance is of utmost importance to them. They do, however, realize that their need for social interaction, immediate results in their work, and desire for speedy advancement may be seen as weaknesses by older colleagues.

Keywords: Millennial, Generation Y, Generation X, employment, workforce, career progression model

Introduction:

The millennial generation is the largest age group to emerge since the baby boom generation, and as this group grows significantly as a proportion of the workforce over the next 20 years, employers will need to make major adjustments in their engagement models. Motivating, engaging, and retaining people will never cease as managerial priorities, but employers will have to carefully consider what strategies they will use to cultivate and retain valuable millennial employees now and into the future

Objectives of the study:

The study has set the following specific objectives

- To know about the common traits of Generation Y.
- To know about the work culture of Generation Y
- To know the effectiveness of engaging Generation Y in work place.

Limitations of the study:

- The study has been conducted and analysed based on set of available information, which is governed by time factor.
- The study rely on secondary data

Gen Y: The generation of people born during the 1980s and early 1990s. The name is based on Generation X, the generation that preceded them.

Members of Generation Y are often referred to as “echo boomers” because they are the children of parents born during the baby boom (the “baby boomers”). Because children born during this time period have had constant access to technology (computers, cell phones) in their youth, they have required many employers to update the hiring strategy in order to incorporate updated forms of technology. Also called millenials, echo boomers, internet generation, iGen.

Common Traits - Gen Y:

Born in the mid-1980's and later, Generation Y legal professionals are in their 20s and are just entering the workforce. With numbers estimated as high as 70 million, Generation Y (also known as the Millennial) is the fastest growing segment of today's workforce. As law firms compete for available talent, employers cannot ignore the needs, desires and attitudes of this vast generation.

Below are a few common traits that define Generation Y.

- **Tech-Savvy:** Generation Y grew up with technology and rely on it to perform their jobs better. Armed with BlackBerrys, laptops, cellphones and other gadgets, Generation Y is plugged-in 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This generation prefers to communicate through e-mail and text messaging rather than face-to-face contact and prefers webinars and online technology to traditional lecture-based presentations.
- **Family-Centric:** The fast-track has lost much of its appeal for Generation Y who is willing to trade high pay for fewer billable hours, flexible schedules and a better work/life balance. While older generations may view this attitude as narcissistic or lacking commitment, discipline and drive, Generation Y legal professionals have a different vision of workplace expectations and prioritize family over work.
- **Achievement-Oriented:** Nurtured and pampered by parents who did not want to make the mistakes of the previous generation, Generation Y is confident, ambitious and achievement-oriented. They have high expectations of their employers, seek out new challenges and are not afraid to question authority. Generation Y wants meaningful work and a solid learning curve.
- **Team-Oriented:** As children, Generation Y participated in team sports, play groups and other group activities. They value teamwork and seek the input and affirmation of others. Part of a no-person-left-behind generation, Generation Y is loyal, committed and wants to be included and involved.
- **Attention-Craving:** Generation Y craves attention in the forms of feedback and guidance. They appreciate being kept in the loop and seek frequent praise and reassurance. Generation Y may benefit greatly from mentors who can help guide and develop their young careers.

Gen Y and Work force :

Gen Y prefers to communicate through platforms such as email, Instant Messaging (IM), blogs and text messages, rather than on the phone or face to face. They speak in tweets, update their statuses and upload their profile pics simultaneously. Gen Y also prefers cybertraining, webinars and telecommuting rather than traditional lectures or training.

They have been constantly surrounded by choice and therefore don't tend to stay in one job for very long. They require constant stimulation and the opportunity to develop their skills – if they don't get it, they will walk out the door and find another company.

With their 'what's in it for me?' attitude, Gen Y focuses on entitlements, rewards, promotions and development. Other generations see them as arrogant, selfish, lazy and unethical. However, provided with rewards, access to training and inspiring leadership, this generation will thrive and be the one to take business through to the future.

They're young, smart, brash. They may wear flip-flops to the office or listen to iPods at their desk. They want to work, but they don't want work to be their life. This is Generation Y, a force of as many as 70 million, and the first wave is just now embarking on their careers — taking their place in an increasingly multigenerational workplace.

Get ready, because this generation — whose members have not yet hit 30 — is different from any that have come before. This age group is moving into the workforce during a time of major demographic change, as companies around the world face an aging workforce. Sixty-year-olds are working beside 20-year-olds. Fresh college graduates are overseeing employees old enough to be their parents. New job entrants are changing careers faster than their Facebook statuses, creating frustration for employers struggling to retain and recruit talented high-performers. Recognising and understanding generational differences can help everyone learn to work together more effectively and transform the workplace from a generation war zone to an age-diverse and productive team. The Baby Boomers are retiring and the next generation, Gen X, isn't nearly large enough to replace the talent. Employers will need to replace their Baby Boomers with members of Gen Y, and when comparing these two generations you're bound to see significant differences.

Unlike the generations that have gone before them, Gen Y has been pampered, nurtured and programmed with numerous activities since they were toddlers, meaning they are both high-performance and high-maintenance. They also believe in their own worth.

Generation Y is much less likely to respond to the traditional command-and-control type of management still popular in much of today's workforce. They've grown up questioning their parents, and now they're questioning their employers. They are willing and not afraid to challenge the status quo and an environment where creativity and independent thinking are looked upon as a positive is appealing to Gen Y.

•**They have financial smarts.** After witnessing the financial insecurity that plagued earlier generations stung by layoffs and the dot-com bust, today's newest entrants into the workforce are generally savvy when it comes to money and savings. They care about such benefits as medical insurance and retirement plans.

•**Work to live, don't live to work.** Unlike boomers who tend to put a high priority on career, today's youngest workers are more interested in making their jobs accommodate their family and personal lives. They want jobs with flexibility, mobile options and the ability to go part time or leave the workforce temporarily when children are in the picture.

•**Change, change, change.** Generation Y-ers don't expect to stay in a job, or even a career, for too long. They've seen the Enron and Lehmann Brothers scandals and they're skeptical when it comes to such concepts as employee loyalty. They don't like to stay too long on any assignment. This is a generation of multi-taskers and they can juggle e-mail on their iPhones, talk on mobiles and surf the web simultaneously. They believe in their own self worth and value enough that they're not shy about trying to change the companies they work for.

•**Conflicts over dress code and technology.** In the workplace, conflict and resentment can arise over seemingly silly subjects such as dress code. As a generation used to casual clothes like flip-flops, tattoos and capri pants, wearing a traditional suit and tie to work seems a bit archaic. We only need to look at Mark Zuckerberg, dressed in his ubiquitous grey hoodie, jeans and trainers. He did not need to wear a tie to become the founder of the most successful business at present and proved that wearing jeans to work could still win him the Times Man of the Year Award. And then there's Gen Y's total comfort with

technology. While Boomers may expect a phone call or in-person meeting on important topics, younger workers may prefer virtual problem solving.

Education is important. A far higher percentage of Millennials than previous generations either stay in or go back to school to obtain a graduate degree and almost all relish and even insist on substantial training and mentoring from their employers. If your organization believes that these young adults should accept your offer of employment because they're qualified and you're offering them a salary, you will struggle to recruit the talent needed. Smart companies are not just mentioning salaries; they are reaching out to potential employees by telling them about company benefits such as flexible work schedules, mobile work stations, full tuition reimbursement and online mentoring tools.

They prefer to IM and text. Not only do they multi-task and regularly use new communication tools like instant messaging and cell phone text messaging in their daily lives, they prefer it. If you want to win over these candidates then learn how to use your iPhone, put up a quality MySpace page describing your organization's career opportunities, network on Facebook, incorporate video into your job posting ads, and publish your instant messaging address. Prove to these candidates that you understand that their needs and wants are different from those of their parents by communicating with them in their own language. Gen Y is used to technology; some were even born with it at their fingertips. They aren't scared of new technologies and adapt fast to new innovations. To attract, retain and engage Gen Y don't shy away from using new technologies that enable fast and easy online applications and virtual work environments. Utilize video teleconferencing, webinars, laptops with wireless access. Technology can be used to encourage group and project based work. Use technology to build in collaboration, create informal team building exercises, and as leverage for positive public relations for your organization.

They want security and rewards. The security they want comes with a good benefits package but they also want to be rewarded for their performance. Some complain that these young adults don't consider a work week to be 40 hours long. Millennials consider a work week to be the time it takes to get the job done. Give them menial work and deny them the opportunity to develop their skills and they will return the favor by not even putting in 40 hours. Give them the opportunity to contribute with meaningful work and

invest in them by training and mentoring them and they will work far more hours and be happier for it, whether they are physically in your office or working from Starbucks.

An open culture is king. Regarding culture, open and honest communication and a culture of performance rewards is a necessity. Gen Y believes that communication is important. To get the most out of Gen Y at work, create an environment where they are encouraged and rewarded for speaking up regarding ideas and concerns, regardless of level in the organization. Add a structured coaching or mentoring program to your organization. Build in monthly or quarterly development updates and create a space for discussion. Communication often leads to innovation, increased trust, and engagement. Gen Y has a low tolerance for political bureaucracy. They believe results drive success, not years of service or level in the organization. Consider changing the structure of your organization to a flatter model with less hierarchy and more rewards based on merit and performance, not tenure and title.

They are who they are. Be prepared to see the Millennials putting in the hours in casual clothes, including flip flops, because they know that their work performance is not dependent upon what shoes they're wearing. If you want the work, then don't sweat the sweat pants. This generation doesn't see the need to be chained to a desk for eight hours a day if they can get their work completed in six. Gen Y want something beyond an all consuming career. They want true work life balance. When recruiting Gen Y highlight the programs in your organization that can deliver on these expectations.

They network but not like Boomers. It is very common for Millennials to have multiple, quality employment offers from which to choose. They don't post their resume on job boards and wait for the phone to ring. They don't go to job fairs as they know they don't need to put up with being treated like cattle, but they do network. Unlike the phone calls to family friends that Boomers make when they're out of work, Millennials network with their friends. Remember the two most popular sites for this generation: MySpace and Facebook – both of which are social networking sites. It isn't at all unusual to meet Millennials who literally spend hours a day on these sites.

Recruitment and Retention- Gen Y:

Generations view things differently and thus expect different ways of being recruited. With an ever changing and more diverse workforce, recruiting must become more unique and customized if organizations wish to attract the best possible Gen Y talent.

First Contact: Gen Y values a personalized touch. If sending an email inquiry to a potential Gen Y candidate, use their name, not “dear candidate.” Take the time to discuss why you think they may be a fit for the role as it relates to their own experience. This lets them know you have actually reviewed their CV and job goals and not just mass emailed based on a keyword search.

Response: Gen Y is a tech savvy generation. If first contact regarding a possible new role peaks their interest, they waste no time in responding. They utilize the technology at their finger tips (Wifi, Blackberry email etc.) to promptly express interest. They expect the same in return. If your organization has high interest in the candidate, then don’t let communication lapse. Respond proactively, promptly, and personalized with establish next steps.

Expectations: Once the time for the first conversation has been set, use that time to set clear expectations with the potential Gen Y candidate. Take the time to explain in detail what they can expect in the new role and from the organization, and what would be expected of them. Be congruent, honest, and transparent about everything from salary and work life balance, to culture and roles and responsibilities. Gen Y is very tuned into organizational culture. One of the main reasons Gen Y talent tends to leave an organization within the first year is because what they were told they can expect is not the reality. Try and prevent this from the first conversation.

Interviewing: Be prepared for Gen Y to ask detailed questions regarding not just the potential role but the organization overall. Gen Y views interviewing as a two way process. Often, they feel that they are interviewing you!

Offer: If the process leads to making a job offer, then do not only do so in writing, but also make the personalized phone call. This call should come from the person who will be the candidate’s direct supervisor. Often disconnects exist between recruiting and the actual departments and managers who the employee will be working with. Gen Y values open

and honest communication in all directions. Having the opportunity to speak directly with the individual they will be reporting to offers them the opportunity to begin to build a relationship immediately and get any last minute questions and concerns addressed.

After the offer is accepted, the next step is on boarding, but it doesn't end there. Recruitment is phase one, once the employee joins the organization focus must be placed on engagement and retention. The secret is not only how to *find* good people, but how to *keep* them. People work for more than the money, especially the X and Y Generation. It's important to help employees enjoy their jobs. You can accomplish this by setting high standards and making sure employees know what you expect. Lead by example and keep communication channels clear. Create a partnership with your team. Give them a chance to grow and learn new skills; reward their efforts, and celebrate their successes. The Millennial generation is probably the most sought after, highly skilled, ready to hit the ground running generation ever to enter our workforce. We are counting on them despite their vastly smaller numbers to replace the productivity of the massive Baby Boomer generation. To recruit and retain this generation, make like Mark Zuckerberg. Trade your suit for your jeans, buy an iPhone, update your Face Book status, tear down the cubicles and make sure you tweet your heart out.

Engaging Gen Y at workplace: create career progression model:

The campaign 'Come home on Deepawali' — students wanting to get back home for the festival—was largely the work of a management trainee. "He was the one who ended up creating the concept and even the advertisement for the brand," says Sameer Wadhawan, vice-president of human resources. Like Coca-Cola and its agency, McCann Erickson, companies are increasingly recognising that engaging younger employees — Generation Y that succeeded Gen X — doesn't mean merely making the workplace 'fun', but is about inclusivity, participation, empowerment and career progression. It also makes sound business sense.

Coca Cola, Accenture, Marico, Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank, Mindtree, Myntra and SAP are among companies pursuing this through technology, cross-functional exposure, challenging roles, global experience, mentoring and reverse mentoring, and social engagement initiatives. "Earlier... fun at work was one of the basic ingredients of engagement.

However, that model has now transformed into how a person looks at engagement at work," says Manoj Biswas, managing director, human resources, Accenture. "From an Accenture perspective, we have engagement woven into the kind of work, roles and exposure we give to the young workforce and how we create a career progression model for them."

Being an IT company, Accenture makes extensive use of technology to get feedback from young employees and incorporate this into policies. It gathers data from social networking sites and the company intranet to understand what younger staff are saying about the work environment, rewards, recognition, leadership and culture. It also encourages reverse mentoring to make sure leaders are engaged with younger staff. "The younger workforce is very open with working with the older generation. It is the older generation that needs to break their mental barriers. Today, GenY wants a much more participative workforce and leaders have to realise how to make it so," says Biswas. The company is also piloting a mobile app that will provide employee feedback on policy, infrastructure, facilities, work environment, etc. "We will do this for a couple of quarters and see the result," says Biswas.

Coca-Cola uses message boards as tools to convey messages and assimilate employee feedback. It has an open door policy and associates across hierarchies have access to senior managers. It also has open forum breakfast meetings hosted by the company's president at regular intervals for junior managers.

Mindtree has based its engagement programme on perceptions regarding the younger staff, says chief people officer Ravi Shankar. "There are three major differences between employees of GenX and GenY. GenY gets bored much more easily, wants to move up faster, and sees itself being placed higher in the value chain, and wants to be more socially engaged," he says.

A year-and-a-half ago, Mindtree felt the youngest employees didn't seem to be emotionally invested enough. "They saw it mostly as a job that paid a salary, and left it at that," says Shankar. The company set up an HR team to look at ways of improving this, coming up with an initiative called K2Y, which connects the youth to CEO KK Natarajan through Facebook. The company also has a C2C programme (campus to CEO), which helps recruits chart their career progression from campus fresher to the top post.

Mahindra & Mahindra is also mindful about what young employees prize. "The primary engagement drivers for young employees in Mahindra are work-life balance, career progression, diverse learning opportunities and empowerment," says Rajeev Dubey, president, group HR, corporate services and after market.

Mahindra Group initiatives include shadow boards for employees below 35 years, involving groups taking up business challenges in consultation with company leaders. Young Mahindra is a platform for younger employees to engage with each other and the leadership in the automotive and farm equipment division, with the aim of empowering GenY to develop entrepreneurial and innovation capability.

Online fashion retail site Myntra also believes that empowerment is the best way to engage young talent by offering opportunities for new ideas.

Companies such as Marico have seen a significant shift in the generation diversity ratio, with the number of GenY employees rising 10 times in the last three years. "We have adopted a multipronged approach," says Ashutosh Telang, executive vice-president and global head of HR at Marico. "This includes delivering on our talent value proposition by providing challenging, enriching and fulfilling roles, conducting annual career discussions, facilitating leadership interactions and leveraging technology to build social meetings hosted by the company's president at regular intervals for junior managers.

Research Studies on Gen X:

Jamie Gutfreund, chief strategy officer for the Intelligence notes, a full 86 million Millennials will be in the workplace by 2020—representing a full 40% of the total working population.

So Gutfreund says it's in every organization's interest to learn to how attract and reach and motivate millennials. A few do it well—but most don't, and they soon may pay a price.

"No organization can afford *not* to recruit the best talent," she says. And that especially includes the best talent from the millennials—even though Generation X finds their younger siblings to be so flighty, so flakey, so unwilling or unable to pay their dues.

We'll look more deeply in the coming days on the differences in generations, and how they arose. But let's first touch on some of the findings of the Intelligence Group, which is a division of the Creative Artists Agency that focuses on analysis of youth-focused consumer preferences and trend forecasting.

Gutfreund says that Intelligence Group studies of millennials have found that:

- 64% of them say it's a priority for them to make the world a better place.
- 72% would like to be their own boss. But if they do have to work for a boss, 79% of them would want that boss to serve more as a coach or mentor.
- 88% prefer a collaborative work-culture rather than a competitive one.
- 74% want flexible work schedules

88% want “work-life integration,” which isn't the same as work-life balance, since work and life now blend together inextricably.

Millennials are, in essence, “*venture consumers*,” Gutfreund says. They're not looking to fill a slot in a faceless company, any more than a good venture capitalist is looking to toss money at a faceless startup. They're looking strategically at opportunities to invest in a place where they can make a difference, preferably a place that itself makes a difference. This may seem like wishful thinking, particularly in the eyes of cynical managers who hail from Generation X.

Gutfreund, herself an Xer, says she's learned far greater empathy for millennials through her own work. “It would help to find ways to coach them to be better employees,” she says. “We need to teach them the expectations [of our organizations] in a way that makes sense to them.

Shara Senderoff, co-founder and CEO of Intern Sushi, which specializes in career services for millennials, is herself a millennial (who has been listed by *Forbes* as one of “30 Under 30” leaders in technology and by *Fast Company* as one of the “100 Most Creative People in Business.”

Senderoff is remarkably non-defensive about the reputation that millennials sometimes have in the working world. She's even empathetic about how older managers may find millennials to be difficult. She finds, though, that conflict comes from a tendency to speak different workplace languages. And she says there are practical ways to begin speaking the same language.

The Millennial difference:

Millennials are creating a change in how work gets done, as they work more in teams and use more technology. Their social mindset, however, is also a significant factor. As Leigh

Buchanon writes in *Meet the Millennials*, “One of the characteristics of millennials, besides the fact that they are masters of digital communication, is that they are primed to do well by doing good. Almost 70 percent say that giving back and being civically engaged are their highest priorities.”

Coupled with the socially minded millennial comes their desire to be creative. Millennials have grown up in a time where information has become available instantly. Through a Google or Wikipedia search, answers to even quite complicated questions can be found. As such, millennials have developed into a group that wants to work on new and tough problems, and ones that require creative solutions. The millennial employee is interested in feedback on his or her performance. But traditional semi-annual reviews are too infrequent for millennials. They want to know that they’ve done a good job, and they want to know now. A 2008 article in *Nonprofit World* provides readers with a checklist on the topic of providing millennial feedback. The list includes: give them checklists, offer plenty of help, reward them for innovating and taking appropriate risks, engage them with frequent feedback, provide them with mentors, create a collegial and team-oriented culture, etc. Feedback must also be given in such a way that millennials are receptive.

Not only are the timing and frequency important, but so too is the way in which feedback is framed and delivered. In Joanne Sujanski’s article “Don’t be so touchy! – The secret to giving feedback to millennials,” she writes, “Instead of feeling appreciated, however, the few short accolades of “good job” were overshadowed in the employee’s mind by the more frequent criticisms he received – without guidance as to how exactly he could improve.” (SuperVision, December 2009). Sujanski reaches an insightful conclusion: Whether positive or negative, feedback needs to be structured in a way that leaves no room for misunderstanding. Feedback needs to be clear and specific to be effective.

Conclusion:

Companies can gain immensely by better engaging millennials, who are very iconoclastic and very ambitious. We just need to find ways to wrangle them into our organizations in a manner that they find compelling and consistent with their distinct values. The best part about working with Millennials is that they are hard working, creative and passionate people. When you start implementing these very simple strategies suddenly managing Generation Y in the workplace becomes the most rewarding part of your day. Suddenly

you realize that you have been looking at this group the wrong way and that they are your most loyal employees, your best brand Ambassadors who will promote your company without you even asking.

References

- <https://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/14636680310494753>
- <https://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/the-millennials-a-new-generation-of-employees-a-new-set-of-engagement-policies/>
- <https://www.forbes.com/forbes/welcome/?toURL=https://www.forbes.com/sites/robasghar/2014/01/13/what-millennials-want-in-the-workplace-and-why-you-should-start-giving-it-to-them/&refURL=https://www.google.co.in/&referrer=https://www.google.co.in/>
- <http://content.timesjobs.com/companies-can-engage-geny-by-promoting-inclusiveness-participation-empowerment-and-progression/articleshow/57912704.cms>