Motivating Millennials at Workplace

Dr Swetha.N

CMS B School, Jain University, Bangalore

Received: 29 April 2018 Accepted: 22 May 2018

Abstract - It is the first time in history that an organization will comprise of workforce belonging to four generations. Millennials are the newest and most likely the largest generation that can be seen at workplace. Organizations are finding it hard to get the right kind of workforce for its accomplishment of goals. This study aims at understanding the generation of millennials and their motivation that influences the workplace. The concept of Work Motivation Inventory (WMI) is made use of in the study to understand the underlying factors that motivate the millennials in working in the organization. The findings cannot be generalized and much more research is required as and when multiple generations work in an enterprise.

Keywords – Millennials, Workplace, Motivation, WMI

1. INTRODUCTION

Generation refers to a group of people born and living contemporaneously. The cutoff points for the same cannot be stated as a precise science. Generations are usually treated by their respective span but it doesn’t confine to a specific formula for how lengthy the span should ideally be. The first person to use the term “generation gap” was Mead. He used this to explain and differentiate the attitudes, mindsets and belief system among the generations. (Mead, 1970). The theory of generation suggests that the period in which a person was born can have an influencing factor on the world views and development. (Codrington,2008)

This is not the first time that generation related issues are seen in the day to day activities of the millennials. No two generations are the same. Each generation has a different set of views and actions from its peers of the older generation. Plato, a great philosopher had exhibited in his research work as early as 428 BC that the then children loved affluence, consisted of bad manners, disrespected authority and showed no respect to elders. Children are autocrats and certainly not the helpers of their respective homes. They are least bothered and hardly raise when an elderly person walks in their room. They often disprove their parents’ views, gossip and gulp food hurriedly at the dining table, cross legs along with trying to dominate their teachers (Lee Caracher). It has come to light recently that generations and generational progression (Lauren Troksa,2016) will be deliberated as a major instrument of modification. Executing the gaps of generation entrusts exceptional challenges and favorable circumstances to an organization (Lancaster and Stillman,2002).

2. Defining Millennials

Millennials are the people born between 1981-2003. They are growing into the new face for the organization along with extending a variety of challenges to be
encountered with. According to a recent survey by Gallup there are two trends that are seen by the millennials: one is existing 45% of the millennial workforce is expected to grow more than 65% by 2020. This generation has been responsible for influencing many walks of life like politics, media, business and communication at the world level. Their clout can be seen in innovation in markets and customer engagement too.

Some common characteristics of millennials that are highlighted by Ron Aslop in his research work are as follows:

- Excessive sense of sophistication, lower readiness to acquire their keep
- Anticipate a lot very soon; too selfish
- Lazier, extra designated
- Want everything at their convenience
- Interested in jumping the hierarchy too soon
- They do not believe in lot of experience to run a company

Millennials have been brought-up solely in divergent ecosystem compared to their own parents and grandparents. They have not just been inundated but also expedited by technology in terms of communication, education and entertainment. (Lee Caraher).

In order to be competent in the world today, enterprises must be capable of recognizing multigenerational workforce with differences in beliefs, work ethics, values, attitudes, lifestyle and expectations. (Nieniec,2000). An organization sees the presence of many generations. Hence each organization should make attempts to understand the generation gaps better by giving way for them to think strategically along with implementing best practices to retain, manage and utilize the various talents. (Howe and Strauss,2007).

The biggest hurdle for millennials as they enter any work place is with their socialization. (Chao et al,1994; Van Maanen and Schein 1979). Socialization in an organization is reciprocal that involves both new joiners as well as the existing employees’ commitments and evaluation that are both necessary to the organization. (Moreland and Levine 1982,2001; Myers 2006).

The quickest and the state of the art growing segment of the workforce is the millennials. More than half of the employees in the world will fall under this category. (Toossi,2009; Meister and Willyerd 2010). Millennials have many advantages and one such is that they have consistently had access to technology which has been an indispensable part of their lives. These people are pragmatic and give a lot of importance to positive reinforcement, diversity and autonomy (Lancaster and Stillman 2002). Equal importance is given by them to teamwork, personal productivity, self-management, personally fulfilling work and social consciousness (Meister and Willyers, 2010). It is seen in one of the research work done by Henderson (2012) that Millennials have a lot of interest in taking up parallel career move that may or may not add to their work experience; are travel ready for work; inclined towards innate job satisfaction; crave for professional recognition and prefer a working environment that’s positive over pay. There are some other research work that highlights the fact that Millennials are faster in jumping jobs and that organizations are finding it extremely difficult in motivating and retaining millennial employees. (Solomon,2000). Hence it is necessary to understand the
motivation behind the millennials that makes them stick on to a workplace.

3. What makes Millennials Special

As every generation would comprise of both positives and negatives, Millennial generation is no exception to it. Millennials are very confident and this comes from many sources like optimism and trust. (Guha, 2010; Kowske, Rasch & Wiley, 2010). Kaifi et al. (2012) are of the opinion that the confidence that is seen in each generation is fostered and sculpted by their earlier generations. It is this confidence that makes the Millennials to be considered for handling leadership positions in organizations. It is also seen in a research work that Millennials score high in their self-esteem and decidedness when compared to earlier generations at that same age (Deal, Altman & Rogelberg, 2010). Hauw and Vos (2010) discovered that Millennials wish to give in an extra effort that will help in the success of the organization. Millennials are not only achievement oriented but also feel accountable for actions performed by them. Kowske et al. (2010) give a lot of credit to the education system that has been instrumental in installing a sense of accountability which makes them goal oriented. The growth in tolerance level and accepting people the way they are is seen extensively in the millennials which makes them handle diversities at workplace gracefully with varied perspectives. (Andert,2011; Kaifi et al., 2012). This generation are focused on family and thus work towards attaining work-life balance. (Andert,2011). The Millennial generation was drawn towards technology at a very young age compared to previous generations.

A common complaint that is seen with respect to Millennials by baby boomers is that Millennials can turn out to be hard to have interaction, are designated and very service oriented (Deal et al.,2010). Millennials are recognized as “Look at me” generation because of the enormous confidence they exhibit and are worried with their own interests(Sadaghiani,2010). In addition to this it is also found that this generation was anticipated to be impatient, inadequate in workplace ethics, self-centered and untrustworthy. It is observed that Millennials put a lot of effort to gain key positions as soon as they are hired (Myers & Sadaghiani,2010). This many a times makes the co-workers feel that the generation is driven by arrogance.

4. Millennials and Workplace

It is necessary for the organizations to understand how the contemporary generations work when compared to the previous generations. For instance, different generations look for distinct leadership characteristics at work. Ambition was the most valued feature of Baby Boomers and Gen X, whereas Millennials choose to work with a boss who cares more when compared to other qualities (Andert,2011). Kaifi et al (2012) highlighted that Millennials select working in organization where the rules and regulations are less, in short they like working in a flexible environment.

If an organization wants to hire a millennial who will stick on to the organization for a longer duration of time it is suggested to hire the one who has a graduate degree. (Kaifi et al. (2012). They not only stay longer but have higher satisfaction of job too. Recession has played a major role in making millennials understand that there is nothing like “job security” (Hauw & Vos,2010; Kowske et al., 2010) Millennials very well know that job security and retiring from one organization are both impossible these days. This mindset has an influence on Millennials to look out for new opportunities frequently hence they are more proactive in making themselves enticing to the job opportunities (Hauw & Vos,2010)

5. Research Design
The reason behind this research is to deep dive and understand the factors that affect motivation among the millennials that are on the verge of starting their professional life. This talks about the Millennials’ perceptions of five motivational needs that are referred to the Work Motivation Inventory (WMI) which was pioneered in 1967 (Hall and Williams, 2000). The use of WMI can be extensively seen in variety of organizations like accounting firms, universities and government enterprises too. WMI is based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943) and Herzberg’s motivation theory (1959).

6. Motivational needs of the Workplace Motivation Inventory

**Basic** Emulated in involvement for congenial working atmosphere, more free time, more lavish personal property, more salary and wanting stay away from physical burden or discomfort.

**Safety** Emulated in involvement for standards in performance, protected working conditions, benefits like insurance, bonus, retirement plans.

**Belonging** Emulated in involvement for cordial colleagues, scope for interaction and team building

**Ego-status** Emulated in involvement for awards and recognition, accelerated opportunities for growth in the job

**Actualization** Emulated in involvement for taking up more challenging and creative work that gives way for personal satisfaction.

To study about the motivation levels for millennials at work, WMI was carried out to full time employees of various organizations including IT services, educational institutions, entertainment industry, Banks and Hospitals. A total of 389 surveys were circulated randomly among the age group that fits the millennial category. 243 out of 389 were returned with response. 24 out of it was incomplete hence was not included in the analysis. So, the sample size for this study was 219 making 59% of the survey distributed became eventually usable for the study.

Cozby (2009) says that young professionals are highly diverse and Herzberg (1959) argues that motivation is conclusively a personal decision. Earlier research has thrown light on differences in motivation between genders (Lambert, 1991). An organization invariably consists of workforce belonging to different generations. The generation cycle shows that when many generations work together, they come across with many commonalities. (Codrington, 2008). Hence, along with WMI, the instrument used for survey consisted of variables for age, gender, work experience also.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Table 1 – Demographic variables are discussed. The majority of respondents 59% was men. 71% of them had full time work experience. Majority of respondents were from IT professionals (52%), Banks (28 %) entertainment industry (9 %). The age of the respondents was between 18-25 : mean (standard deviation) 19.95 (1.51)

A scale of 0-100 is used to measure WMI keeping the 5 needs of motivation. The higher score that indicates better importance of the specific need is considered.

Table 2 showcases the mean scores, ranges and standard deviations taking the aggregate sample for every motivational need. Respondents scored highest on belonging need. Basic and safety needs have a very narrow score. Belonging need ranges from 29 to 97 highlighting the widest of the lot. This very clearly indicates that individuals differ greatly on motivational need particularly for belonging factor.

The results show that there is stastically compelling differences between the responses for all the five needs of motivation. It is very clearly that Millennials score higher on all of the other motivational needs when compared with
safety. This shows that Millennials are eager to take risks that are related to career which in turn will help them achieve more purposeful and fulfilling work as far as the basic needs are met. (Twenge et al., 2010). Millennials are not interested in permanent, protected and certain jobs by scaling short on safety motivational need. It is required to be mentioned here that the respondents in this study were freshers and very recently out of college. It is seen in a research work by Buckley et al (2015) that Millennials grow up and emerge both professionally and personally. There have been instances where they become very committed in their work as well as the employer. So, an increase may be expected on the safety motivational need to increase with the passage of time.

7. Conclusion

With the natural invasion of the imminent generation, it is necessary for the managers to assimilate their styles of leadership to motivate the millennials. The values highlighted in the review of literature can be useful for the development of suggested guidelines for practice. Organizations will definitely benefit from the focused attitude of Millennials which will make them go an extra mile to help organizations become successful. Managers must create and enhance opportunities at workplace. It is necessary for the organizations to give the right kind of work to these millennials in order to retain them in the organization in addition to giving constant feedback.

Millennials strongly believe and desire in work that has meaning and value addition. Enjoyment in what one does scores over financial gains. If an organization persists to entrust insignificant and vague tasks, they might end up with high employee turnover. Technology integration at work becomes indispensable and companies must strive on providing good opportunities to work in teams.

More affinity is craved from this generation. Hence organizations should work on building more interpersonal relationships. Millennials focus on their private lives too therefore; an organization has to reconsider about adding this as a value in their culture. If companies do not adhere to this shift, it will certainly be unsuccessful in retaining the new generation at work.

It can be concluded that Millennials fall under a different group which differs from other generations but they cannot be generalized easily on the need for motivation. Josiam et al, (2009) concludes that Millennials are very positive in their outlook and are open for collaborations when compared to the earlier generations. They score low on the safety part which showcases for willingness to switch jobs that is more challenging or which gives scope to pursue their passion in leisure time considering the fact of meeting their basic needs. (Josiam et al., 2009; Twenge et al., 2010).

Organizations look for long term commitment and success. Hence they must be prepared to work with various generations by understanding the motivational issues for the Millennials too. A work atmosphere that caters to address these needs are to be kept in mind. It is suggested that organizations should have different ways to handle Millennials by providing and encouraging synergetic, team oriented atmosphere (belonging need) coupled with challenging and satisfying work (ego-status) in the place of regular salary, retirement and other benefits (safety needs). (Russell Calk and Angela Partick (2017). Above all this, the study emphasizes on the fact that Millennials are an interesting lot to work with, in an organization and enterprises have to come out with various motivating factors to create a future generation of reliable and responsible leaders.

References


Lee Caraheer, Millennials & Management, Chapter 1 Overview


Ron Aslop, The Trophy Kids Grow Up: How the Millennial Generation is Shaking up the Workplace (JosseyBass, 2008.)


Table 1 – Frequency distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full-time employees</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stream</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment Industry</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Institutions</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 : WMI –Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>60.62 (9.5)</td>
<td>35-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>55.21 (9.1)</td>
<td>30-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>61.75 (13.1)</td>
<td>28-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego-Status</td>
<td>62.10 (8.3)</td>
<td>43-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actualization</td>
<td>59.9 (10.3)</td>
<td>29-84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>