

Generation Y at Workplace



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Introduction:

Generation Y, the newest and the youngest member in the workforce all over the world are making their presence felt and causing business to re-think their working practices and adapt their working environment to this breed of employees and managers.

The brain pattern of different generations is different. People born during various times are given various names Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y also known as the millennium generation. The Baby Boomers were born during and after the 2nd World War (1940 to 1960). This generation was known for knowing what to do, and making sure that it is done. The Generation X, born from about 1960 to 1980 respected human values more and felt that their upbringing was too strict. Generation Y is a term used to describe the demographic cohort following Generation X. They are also known as "The Millennial Generation". They are born around the 80s onwards; they are a generation who has grown in opulence compared to other generations. They are the children of a generation who has greatly benefited from the industrial revolution of the 70s where their wealth and standard have dramatically increased and changed their way of life. This generation has been greatly exposed to modern environments (in their days at school and university) and within their personal life. They have a good standard of living. This generation has entered the workforce and brought with them an unexpected change to the labour market.

Characteristics of Generation Y:

- 1. Technology Savy:** The Generation Y has grown up with the Internet and mobile communications. They are the most interconnected and technological friendly generation in the workforce. They are digitally, globally and constantly connected. With the increased accessibility of e-mail and cellular phones, Trunk (2007) suggests, —The line between work and home doesn't really exist...they just want to spend their time in meaningful and useful ways, no matter where they are. Generation Y's rapid take – up of digital technologies, how they use them, and how they prefer to work is challenging for business.

- 2. Continual Learning:** Generation Y is continuously looking for feedback and advice from their superiors – most likely a result of their strong ties to and constant feedback from their parents (Cruz 2007; BSG Concours 2007). A challenging work environment motivates this workforce. On the job, Millennials expect frequent direction from managers regarding their performance. They recognize the role knowledge plays in career advancement and look for opportunities to learn from their supervisors and older generations (BSG Concours 2007). Additionally, Generation Y views failure as a motivator and not a deterrent. Thus, they view failure as an opportunity to improve job performance (Blain 2008).
- 3. Flexibility:** Generation Y desires work and career flexibility. They believe they deserve the freedom to work fewer hours while still taking jobs that are challenging. In terms of career flexibility, Generation Y anticipates changing jobs frequently. Cruz (2007) explains that Millennials have shown a willingness to change organizations when they perceive new opportunities that may offer greater levels of appreciation. They associate themselves more with the type of work that they perform rather than the organization they are associated with. They place more emphasis on work- life balance so have interests in working from home.
- 4. Team Orientation and Individualism:** Generation Y is comfortable in group settings. They understand that a mix of strengths contributes to success. Generation Y prefers working as a team to accomplish independent tasks as they use the skills, knowledge, and resources of team members to satisfy individual needs. However, when interacting with managers, Generation Y feels more valued if the manager works with them on an individual level (Spiro 2006). Literature explains that Generation Y's team orientation refers to a desire to coordinate and share information with other team members, while their individualism refers to a desire to be mentored and coached as an individual (Buanhe and Kovary 2003; Spiro 2006).

Organisations are facing a lot of difficulty attracting and retaining the Generation Y because they need a more challenging and meaningful work environment. They continuously seek feedback in order to improve. They believe in Mentoring, since they feel the need to learn and grow.

Retaining Generation Y:

Organisations feel the need to retain the Generation Y, who, as identified, earlier are not as loyal to firms as they are to themselves. To reduce their turnover companies need to identify how best to engage Generation Y's particular needs, without showing preferential treatment to Ys, as compared to the other generations in the workforce, and without having to spend more on them.

Maslow Needs Theory and Generation Y:

The Indian Millennials are entering between the esteem and self-actualisation levels. Due to Liberalisation and globalization, young India is a global player in the world today. They bring creativity to work, are problem solver and find meaning in what they do.

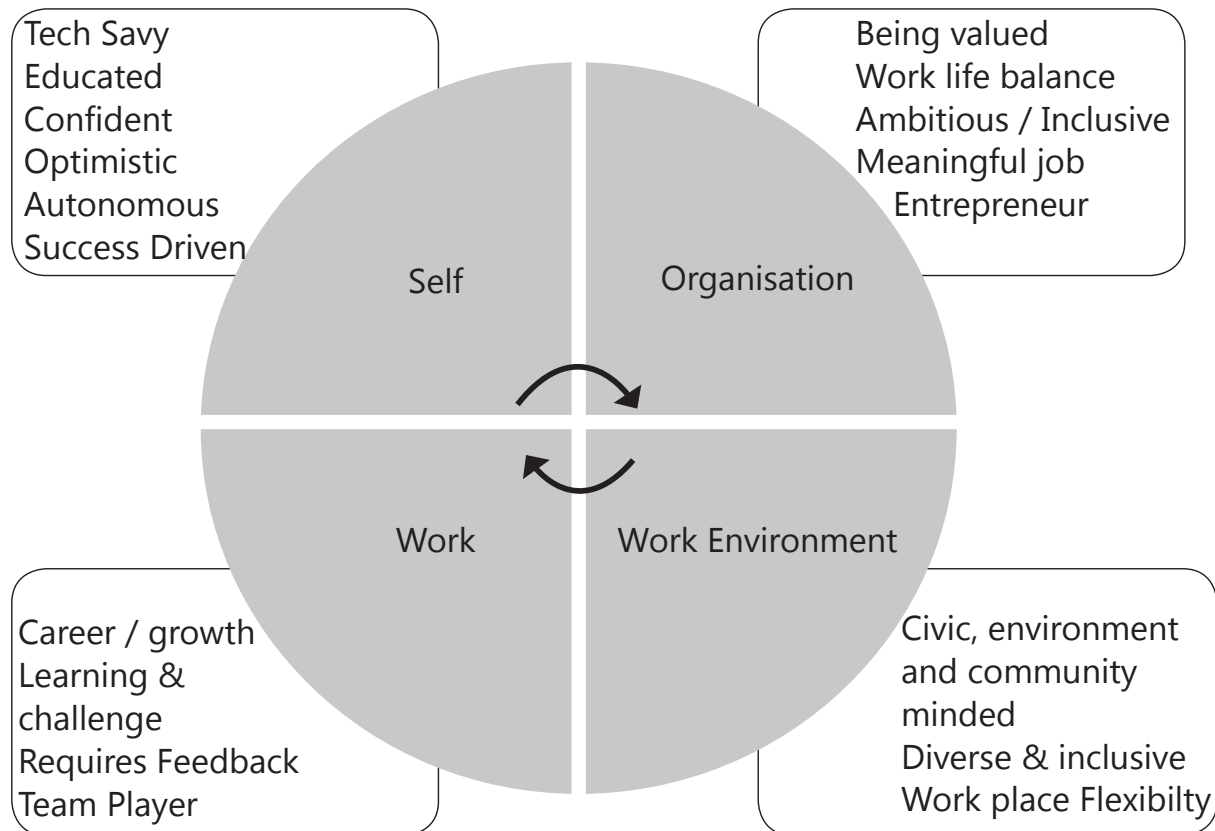


Figure 1 : Characteristics of Gen Y, their attitude/expectations from the organization, work environment and work

Source : The world is stormed by Gen Y, are we ready to capitalize - Srihari Udupa and Dr. Varun Bhaskar, NHRD Network Journal, Issue 4.

They are career oriented and believe in fast growth.

Generation Y place less importance on fixed working hours or environments, wanting flexi time & telecommuting and the ability to decide when and how to complete a job. They concentrate more on work-life balance, friends and social & environmental related activities. If companies want to retain them they need to understand that greater time for personal use serves as a motivator. Companies will not be able to expect more work commitment from them merely because they have been given a new job title.

Training:

Generation Y is interested in training and development initiatives of the organization. The most flexible approach available is virtual training. Generation Y believe in flexibility so virtual training works well for them, with the option to complete extensive training in a medium with which they are comfortable and when they have the time to do so.

Mentoring:

Generation Y seeks continuous feedback. The feedback process need not to be an official meeting between manager and employee, it can merely be a cup of coffee or

quick chat which will let them know what is going well and where improvements can be made and possibly how. They believe in improving themselves and hence they value Mentoring. Mentor, who is a professional "parent" to them, will help them grow. They can turn to them for guidance and ask questions. The company also benefits from performance improving more quickly than would be the case with once a year performance evaluations.

Compensation & Benefits:

One of the Millennial characteristics identified earlier was working pace; doing the work in the time it takes them rather than fixed hours that may not be needed. They were also found to be flexible in when and where they work. This can be a potential boon to a company and could be combined with their benefits package. Companies could introduce flexible working hours, allowing them to work from home, for example at prearranged times. Discounts and vouchers can also be offered as parts of compensation packages. Millennials have an affinity for electronics gadgets and corporate discounts might be attractive. A study by Cisco (November 2011) shows that Generation Y value mobile devices more than higher salaries. Best would be to offer a set of vouchers from which employees can choose what best suits their needs. This would also avoid other generations feeling that the benefits package has been changed to accommodate Millennials' needs. Organisations need to focus on making compensation really attractive to retain the Millennials.

Volunteer Work:

Generation Y demonstrates a willingness to donate their time to some form of public service. Pooley states, "members of Generation Y are generally more civic minded and appear to be predisposed to being more actively involved in volunteering than individuals in previous generations" (Pooley 2005).

A company can support these efforts by allowing employees to take a certain amount of time off to work as a volunteer. To ensure that such work does not contradict a company's policies, the company can choose to support certain charities and allow employees to spend a certain amount of time per month with the charity. It will benefit both the employees as well as the organisation by building its image, demonstrating its commitment to social or environmental causes.

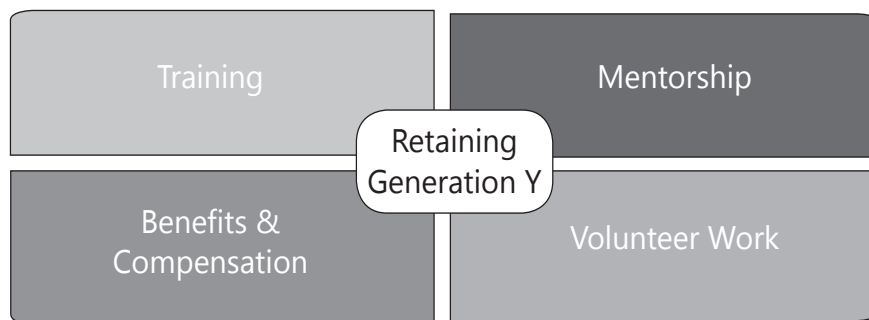
Combining the elements:

There has been a lot of discussion on retaining the Millennials. Their characteristics have caused a lot of changes in Training. E-Learning was one of the solutions proposed which has the additional benefit of being flexible and a medium with which Generation Y is comfortable with.

However, training alone is not sufficient. Salary is important to Millennials, but a strong benefits package would also be interesting to them. By adjusting some of the benefits, in order to meet some of their needs, can lead to a good retention strategy. Volunteer work, makes a two-fold contribution in the organisation. First, it improves the company's image to society. Second, volunteering allows Millennials to do work they feel is meaningful in addition to their job. By combining parts of each section, a

company would engage Millennials needs, which is likely to improve retention.

Figure 2: Retaining Generation Y



(Source: Recruiting and Retaining Generation Y – A New Workforce by Marcel AlsBorngräber-Berthelsen, DK)

Conclusion:

The entry of Generation Y into the workforce has brought a paradigm shift in the thinking of the employers. With each one saying 'I am different treat me as such', Generation Y has added its own dynamics to the workplace. Organisation will have to get a grip on steering its energies. The need is to understand them, for what they are and building deeper relationships with them. "We cannot build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for future" (Franklin Roosevelt). It becomes imperative to unlock the potential of Generation Y and be ready to join hands with them.

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