**EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

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**Abstract**

Employee Engagement changes generationally and in today’s world Millennial is questionably a societal force. The biggest challenge for any organization is to be open and willing to make a shift. It must bend to accommodate the millennial mindset. Of course, the need for young talent is enormous. Competition is fierce to recruit and retain the best talent. One of the most attractive qualities in a work place to this generation is its ability to help them achieve a healthy work life balance. According to Gallup’s Research, Millennial are the least engaged generation in the workforce. Only 29 percent are engaged while 55 percent are not engaged, and 16 percent are actively disengaged. This study is directed because of the rising issue of employee engagement among Millennial that have different importance and opinion towards their job.This paper explores best employee engagement practices in leading the upcoming millennial generation in the workplace.

**Introduction**

With every passing decade, organizations are taking stock of generational realities which have been impacting the workplace and hence, evaluate organizational strategy. While a lot has been said about dealing with millennial, it is important to recognize that each generation brings with itself a certain set of behavioural traits and expectations according to their experiences.

These need to be considered while designing the people strategy of organizations. So, thinking about millennial and how to engage them in organizations is a natural and logical question, because millennial is set to make up approximately 50 percent of the global workforce by 2020. So what does a manager, a CEO or an HR head keep in mind while answering the question of how to engage millennial? This topic, which is in vogue, overwhelms us. So the trick is to follow certain fundamental guidelines or questions while dealing with this topic.

So, for now a question arises as to what engagement means in one’s organization?

This question could generate a varied set of answers from different Chief Human Resources Officers.  For some it could simply be an ongoing channel of communication, for some it could be enjoyable work environment and for some a combination of enjoyable work, communication, transparency in terms of career progression, developmental opportunities etc.

It is first important to define the scope of what engagement means in an organization. Millennial have taken over the workforce. They are techno geek, flexible, and innovative. But they also have uniqueness in their set of expectations and demands. And so far, few organizations are living up to them. Millenials have been transforming the workplace in a very intensive manner.

Their capacity to absorb fresh ideas and ability to embrace innovations offer new opportunities for businesses to thrive in today’s era. Thus, other than securing the company’s financial stability, businesses must adjust to this generation to attract and retain talent. They try to find diversity in the workplace and work-life balance, and are not afraid to ask questions and challenge the system.

As the name indicates, millennial grew up during the Millennium period, a time of rapid change. Naturally events that took place during this period have shaped them, giving them a unique set of priorities and expectations which turns out to be different from previous generations. At present millennial account for over a quarter of the global population. Most of them will be out of school and will become part of the work force by 2020.

It’s clear that millennial will be a powerful generation of workers and that those with the right skills will be in high demand. They may be able to command not only creative reward packages by today’s standards, but also influence the way they work and where and how they operate in the workplace. They may also represent one of the biggest challenges that many organizations will face. Given that millennial is one of the most studied generations, the factors that influence their decision whether to join a certain team or not are uncovered.

It is crucial for the companies to recognize things such as culture, working experience, open and honest communication, and flexibility and know how to properly address them so they can attract millennial and gain a competitive edge. Millennial prioritize the culture of a company how the employer portrays the overall experience of working for them is a key differentiator when they decide which positions to apply for.

Companies need to focus on cultivating the working conditions that foster creativity and morale. Quick wins like introducing a pool table in the office, early finish Fridays or allocating time for them to pursue personal hobbies during the working day would do the trick. When it comes to working experience, companies need to focus their efforts on ensuring that millennial are enjoying every minute of their work.

Moreover, the best part is millennial are brutally honest with one other, and they expect the same from their employer. They want to feel that their opinion matters, and that their insights are contributing to a bigger picture that allows the company to develop. In such a case, companies need to adopt a transparent communication policy. So, that it gives them a chance to be more dedicated towards their own work and they feel homely.

So, before we start about what sort of employee engagement for a millennial should be, let us first know about the primary generations. As in a workplace we just do not have millenials but there are also different generations working. Of course, no generation is one monolithic group of people who all behave exactly the same way. And members of each generation do have traits that differentiate them a combination of characteristics largely based on the circumstances in which each cohort came of age.

**Traditionalists (born approximately from 1928 to 1945)**

*Common characteristics:* loyal, cautious, formal, proud

*Workplace influence:* Most traditionalists are now retired, but their influence can still be seen in workplace structures that have a top-down hierarchy with clear reporting structures and the “uniform” of a suit and tie. In fact, the cautious, rule-following traditionalists are the reason for many organizational practices that persist today.

They also were known for their company loyalty and the practice of working at one place your entire career. Much of this is due to the fact that 50 percent of men of the traditionalist era shared the experience of serving in the military (compared to [less than 1 percent](http://www.npr.org/2011/07/03/137536111/by-the-numbers-todays-military)of our population today). Most women of this era did not work outside the home

**Baby boomers**

*Common characteristics:* optimistic, self-focused, competitive, forever young

*Workplace influence:* Boomers until very recently the largest generation in American history created more competition in the workplace as women and minorities began to take on jobs previously held only by white men in the Traditionalist era. Although some Boomers in their 50s and 60s are retired, others are still heavily involved in the U.S. workforce, thanks to their “forever young” natures and the global recession that began in 2008 and forced many boomers to postpone their retirement plans. Many Boomers prioritized work over family obligations, and they did not have the technology available to work from anywhere but the office, so they can sometimes be less supportive of flexible work policies.

**Generation x**

*Common characteristics:* independent, sceptical, tech pioneers

*Workplace influence:* A generation almost as small in size as the Traditionalists, Gen- X has felt overshadowed by the Boomer predecessors for most of them. They grew up independent, self-reliant and supportive of technology that helped take care of themselves, such as microwave ovens, video games and personal computers. When they entered the Baby Boomer-dominated workplace, they felt alienated and unimportant, knowing that we would never be a big enough group to have a huge impact at work. That helped fuel the independent instincts that led many to move to Silicon Valley and do their own thing ([Gen Xers are the most entrepreneurial generation](http://www.blackenterprise.com/small-business/here-10-rules-becoming-top-tier-company/)). Sandwiched between the massive Boomer and millennial generations, one could say that they have a hint of an inferiority complex, which is why they often see themselves as independent, self- sufficient and out of the mainstream.

**Millennials a.k.a. generation y**

*Common characteristics:* self-expressive, group oriented, global, tech dependent

*Workplace influence:* Other generations often criticize millennials for acting entitled, demanding constant feedback and thinking they deserve a trophy just for showing up. Gen Ys were parented and taught; they grew up in an era in which children received a lot more attention and coaching. Also known as digital natives, many of today’s young professionals grew up with the Internet, and that has a major impact on how they see the world and interact with others think texting and IM vs. face-to-face or phone communication, as well as the expectation that infinite information is just one click away.

So, let’s now get into how to engage millennial employees in a workplace.

Employee engagement is a workplace approach resulting in the right conditions for all members of an organization to give of their best each day, committed to their organization's goals and values, motivated to contribute to organizational success, with an enhanced sense of their own well-being.

Employee Engagement is actually not all about fun and entertainment rather it has a deeper and softer aspect which often cannot be measured directly.

Employee Engagement is a validated psychological state, often measured by increased performance and productivity amongst other positive business outcomes.

A Quote says-

*“Employees First, Customers Next”!*

Because engaging employees is all about creating personal, emotional and psychological connections with employees by giving them a feeling that they are not just working for a firm rather than make them feel they are working with their own people and with their own family.

It’s rather making the employees realize that this my own company and I would be passionately working for it to achieve the goals. As employees truly are a company's best asset, then leaders and managers should make caring for them a priority.

Organizations have a valuable opportunity to transform their employees' work experiences into ones that are fulfilling and motivating -- and that allow workers to bring their best to work every day. And ultimately a good and healthy working environment will increase the profits, decrease the turnovers and of course the key talent is then attracted and retained and so it should also go on with millenials as they are the people who are mainly group oriented.

**Data and findings**

It's important that we recognize the realness of employee engagement. Some of the ways to engage the employees are by the prioritization of-

1. Recognition

2. Planning

3. Communication

4. Contribution

So, the above initiatives should be taken up in order to engage the employees and ultimately drive results.

1. *Recognition*

Both recognizing and rewarding employee efforts does indeed drive engagement, but engagement is also cultivated when organizations, managers and employees take recognition efforts seriously because at the end of the day everyone wants to be recognized.

1. *Planning*

Engagement doesn’t happen on an impulse. Discovering what drives engagement requires research and observation, and then carefully designing a plan to ensure its effectiveness.

1. *Communication*

While each employee has a subjective opinion on what engagement is and how it can best be fostered, the common denominators can only be discerned through communication. Ensure there is an opportunity for each voice to be heard, which ironically, also fosters engagement. Make every employee feel that even their opinions are also considered.

1. *Contribution*

Organization leaders need to do their part by working to remove obstacles, and managers and team members must be willing to participate in initiative trials.

So let’s discuss few ideas on How to engage millennial employees-

* Involve employees in your business planning process: By [promoting transparency](http://www.gethppy.com/employee-engagement/business-transparency-is-key) and offering them a strategic insight into how the company is being managed, one can also foster loyalty, for example- Google
* Create a knowledge sharing system: You can have a mentorship program mainly by the C-suite executives, pairing experienced employees with newly hired ones. Create a learning program template that they should follow, giving them enough space to test their own learning methods.
* Create excitement about upcoming opportunities: If they’re excited about what’s next, they’ll do their best and reply with a “*No, thank you*” to those irritating poaching emails from your competition. Keep in mind that a career processes should be driven by individual potential as well as current opportunities.
* Create your own internal magazine: Create your internal employee-focused magazine with fun columns, news, featured stories and opportunities. Who wouldn’t like to be featured on the cover as Employee of the Month? It can be an online magazine or a printed one. Or, it can be both, a monthly online issue and a quarterly printed one.
* “*I am my own hero*” Encourage individuals to design and own their career paths, instead of relying on the company or on their manager. Employees need to take initiative and set a career goal for themselves. For this activity, managers need to have a guiding role. They can understand and help align employees’ aspirations with the organization’s career development point of view.
* Make on-boarding fun: Have a scavenger hunt on-boarding. Turn information that is usually considered boring or useless into company trivia and learning how to use tools and systems, such as the internal communication system. Include other people in the game. For example, have some of the older employees provide answers and get to know the new hires.
* Let them create their own on-boarding experience: Create a self-guided on-boarding experience. People are much more likely to remember and assimilate information that they get on their own. Set the ground rules; give them basic instructions, a list of objectives and a timeframe. For example a 60 days plan, with some basic milestones.
* Mens sana in corpore sano: Have your own Office Olympics where everyone can get involved and have fun. Promote wellbeing and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle in a fun, competitive way. Get to know each other in a different environment and connect people with the same interests. It’s a great chance to get some of those chair-numbed-muscles going and bond in a friendly competition. Prizes and embarrassing photos are a must.

### Have a hack night: Break monotony with an ambitious working night. Set a clear objective, create your own set of rules (breaks, music, [snacks](https://equipmentarea.com/finger-food-ideas/), etc.) and try to be as productive as possible in just one night. Get everyone together and test the creative and operational limits.

### TEDx: Have your own company TEDx like Talks where you get to share ideas, boost creativity and encourage innovation. Make your workplace less about work and more about the people there, their ideas, experiences and aspirations. Give them a chance to be the source of their own inspiration, boosting morale and creativity for everyone in the company. You can make it an event of its own or include it in another event that you’re already planning.

### The League of Extraordinary Managers: Managers are a key business component and an equally important engagement driver. Create a coaching program for managers and teach them to really care. Coach them towards maximum contribution and satisfaction, align them with the organization’s strategy, mission and values and show them how to recognize attitude, effort and results.

* Other activities: The music band, photography club, painting, acting, movie making, guitar classes, zumba lessons, sports tournaments helps employees hone their skills and develop an overall personality.

When it comes to facilities, working environment and benefits, work-life balance, very few companies can compete with Google.

The company makes sure the employees get the right environment to grow to their true potential.

With a creative and colourful ambience, offices are designed to promote fun-filled innovation as the company believes it is crucial for employees to think creatively and give their best.

“The employees have access to the best and brightest IT specialists to help get their jobs done. The TechStop is Google in-house tech support shop, it provides Google employees guidance with all hardware and software needs and problems at any time,” says a Google spokesperson.

* **Access to best facilities:** The employees at Google get to use the company's products to get work done, and beta-test products that haven't been released to the public yet.
Employees have access to fully equipped gyms across offices in India with trainers and customised health programs.
* Employees can play table tennis, pool, football, air hockey and other games in the recreation area, or go to one of the several sleep pods for a quick nap.

**Implications**

Millennials are the last generation with a front row seat experiencing the change from analogue to digital. Their youthful eyes saw the world turn global and connected. They witnessed to the introduction of the sharing collaborative economy.

Millennials themselves might not be so different from other people, but the change (and pace of change) they represent is significant. [Millennials](http://www.uschamberfoundation.org/millennial-generation-research-review) are an anchor for this change. Millennials have shaped and consumed innovations and they will soon be the most dominant generation in the workforce.

What all we can do to manage these millennials in the workforce are as follows:-

* Creating challenges and rewards. See employees compete in “missions” for badges and points by viewing videos, completing quizzes, or uploading their own submissions, to qualify for prizes or gain time to work on innovative ideas.
* Make rewardspublic (because Millennials like to see their performance relative to others).
* Giveimmediate feedback and comparison (because Millennials like immediate feedback).

The difference between the iGeneration (Generation Z) and Millennials is bigger than any generation gap we’ve seen. While Millennials experiences the difference between an analogue world and a digital world including the transition from one to another, the iGeneration (or heads down generation) will not, they only know digital. They will try to swipe any graphic they see. They will not memorize anything that you can find with Google and some of them will not be able to use a pencil!

By 2025, millennials will account for 75 percent of the global workforce. Millennials are going to make tectonic shifts in organizations over the next decade and most leaders aren't ready for the amount of change that's coming.

Millennials are the most diverse generation and many of them are well-travelled, culturally pluralistic and knowledgeable about the world. Millennials might give you ideas of sustainability. From the environment to fair trade, Millennials are very aware and sensitive to the consumerism’s effects on the world. Millennials can also ignite an entrepreneurial spirit within your company as they are well-versed in crowd-sourcing sites like Kickstarter and Indiegogo.

Purposeful work, personal connection and candid feedback are just as important for millennial managers as they are for those they supervise. We’ve all heard the connection between Millennials and meaning. Millennials look for professional opportunities where they feel they’re making an impact. Younger employees who tell us they make a difference at work are 6 times more likely to plan a future at their companies.

To truly engage Millennials, leaders have to make an authentic effort to connect with their employees on a personal level. We found that when managers show a sincere interest in millennial colleagues as people, they are much more likely to report workplace behaviours linked to agility and innovation.

Here's the bullet list one can take away to better lead, connect and engage your Millennials:

* Make sure they have a lot of opportunity to grow as leaders
* Connect with them in and out of the office
* Create more opportunities for them to collaborate with their co-workers
* Acknowledge that their work is important and makes a difference
* Recognize and celebrate their work as often as possible
* And finally, coach, empower and support them whenever you can.

**Conclusion**

Millennials and their managers have much reason for optimism in today’s workplace. Millennial desires, characteristics, strengths, and interests can be channelled toward ethical, effective leadership, and can positively impact business in myriad ways. These young professionals are posed to contribute greatly to the new paradigm of our ethical companies.

Millennials have seen the world transform from analogue to digital. They are the first generation of digital natives, and their affinity for technology helps shape how they consume. They are used to instant access to price comparisons, product information and peer reviews.

Paying for seniority is outdated, unless you are paying for seniority because they have more experience and thus more added values. Losing Millennials at this pace isn’t just expensive. It threatens institutional knowledge, succession planning and innovation at any company lacking the tools to meet the career needs of this generation.

Millennials are living and breathing the change in our society. From analogue to digital; from local to global; the introduction of the [sharing collaborative economy](http://scn.sap.com/community/business-trends/blog/2015/02/26/who-is-responsible-for-social-collaboration); dedicated to wellness and living longer. They embody our human evolution and are driving force of our economy. To be followed by the I-Generation who will pick up the baton and will together with technology redefine our way of living even more drastically. We can only admire the beauty of this diversity, embrace the benefits in our lives and get prepared.

The Best Workplaces for Millennials are seeing double the average reported engagement rates among young workers, and are finding ways to close the worrisome experience gaps happening among Millennial managers. It’s time for more companies to follow their model and take the action critical to their future business success.

Successfully engaging your Millennials is a lot like engaging those Caribbean reef sharks; you'll need to create the perfect work environment.