



HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGIES: ACHIEVING THE GREATEST RESULTS FROM THE MILLENNIAL AND BOOMER GENERATIONS WITHIN THE WORKPLACE

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Abstract: *A paradigm shift is occurring within Human Resource (HR) practices driven primarily by the influx of Millennials (also referred to as Generation Y, Gen Y or Gen-Yen) joining the workplace and the departure of Baby Boomers (Boomers) from the workplace. As the transition from Boomers to Millennials takes place, a generational gap is forming. The purpose of this paper is to ultimately answer the following question:*

What are the most impactful HR strategies and methods an organization should consider using to bridge the generational gap, attract and retain the best talent, and motivate performance from both the Millennial and Boomer generations?

Keywords: *Human Resource Strategies, Millennials, Baby Boomers, Workplace*

INTRODUCTION

Organizations need to employ two human resource strategies simultaneously as the generation gap closes. One strategy that supports Millennials and the demands they have within the workplace and a strategy that supports Boomers and the requirements they have as they exit the workforce. To answer the main question for this paper outlined above, three areas of importance were identified. Each area was researched and will be discussed throughout this paper. The three areas of importance are:

- A. Work Flexibility
- B. Work Life Balance
- C. Performance Management

Organizations have to engage new Human Resource (HR) practices and invest in human capital management in an effort to attract and retain top talent in both the Millennial and Boomer generations. Each generation is important to the success of an organization. Boomers have irreplaceable knowledge from their years of experience and Millennials have a talent and comfort with technology, resulting from being the first generation exposed to



technology from a young age. An organization must employ different HR strategies in an effort to garnish the best results from Millennials and Boomers.

It could be catastrophic for an organization to focus HR strategies on just one generation. The importance of attracting and retaining the best of the Millennial generation, carries as much importance as retaining Boomers for the wealth of knowledge and experience they have. If an organization can well execute within each of these areas of importance, the results should contribute to the following outcome for the organization: attract and retain the best talent, achieve high employee engagement, motivate the highest level of performance from their employees all of which should lead to greater corporate results.

To manage the generational gap that has developed and continues to expand, HR policies have to evolve to harness the best organizational results from both generations. “The Millennials: A new generation of employees, a new set of engagement policies” written by Gilbert, J (2011) outlines the need for new strategies:

Managers who have developed successful strategies for retaining baby boomers are going to have to put those strategies in the corporate archives. Creating strategies to engage millennials requires a whole different approach – and strategy.

Companies that fail or are slow to adapt their HR practices may experience lower profits, challenged to maintain a competitive advantage and may find a decline in global market share.

The article “Corporate Offerings: Why Aren’t Millennials Staying?” written by Campione, W. A. (2015) discusses the challenges organizations face as they move from a Boomer strategy to a Millennial strategy:

Millennials pose unique challenges for employers, unique in part because they are different from the previous dominant force, the Baby Boomers. Companies must pretty much rethink everything: their recruitment process and offerings, Internships, mentoring programs, supervisor selection and training evaluations and rewards systems, and even operations procedures. All of these must reflect what we know of Millennials and the challenges that they pose to the standard practices of companies and industries.

Each of the three areas of importance, work flexibility, work life balance and performance management requires the implementation of an HR strategy that best accommodates Millennials and Boomers in the workplace. Each area of importance will outline the current



HR methods and policies being executed within organizations today. Within these discussions, the HR methods and policies that would best appease and motivate the Millennial and Boomer generations within each area of importance will be identified. Each area of importance will outline positive and negative views to consider for each generation. Operating two strategies, the Millennial strategy and the Boomer strategy concurrently within an organization will present challenges. Balancing the demands of both Millennials and Boomers internally will require HR departments to understand each generation in depth and employ HR strategies that best accommodate each generation, while driving the best corporate results.

This paper will identify the best HR strategy to implement within each area of importance, in an effort for organizations to maintain a competitive advantage over their competition and excel and profit in today's fast-paced global marketplace. The research conducted for this paper on the Millennial and Boomer generations and research for each area of importance included, peer reviewed articles found using the University of Dalhousie library, online articles, interview conducted with Dr. Reana Saraceni, Registered Psychologist and a second interview conducted with Sherri Wright-Schwietz, Head of Talent and Mastery at ATB Investor Services.

Prior to examining the three areas of importance, it is critical to understand the significant numbers in which Millennials have entered and will continue to enter the workforce in the next decade. Most Human Resource departments would be aware of the vast number of Millennials entering the workplace and Boomers exiting the workplace. Even with this knowledge, many organizations are slow to evolve their HR policies to account for these generational changes. Some studies show that Millennials are soon to be the largest generation in the workforce. According to the article "Organizational Ambidexterity and the Multi-Generational Workforce" written by Woods, K., & Peay, A. (2016). "A common statistic that has been reported in popular media is that members of the Millennial generation will make up as much as 75 percent of the work force by the year 2025".

Human Resource departments identified years ago that clear differences existed between the Boomer and Millennial generations. This generational gap has been managed as of recently by slightly modifying HR practices. Slight moderations may have worked in the past however, as the number of Millennials increase within organizations, a complete



restructure of HR practices will have to take place. A study outlined by the article “Millennials overtake Baby Boomers as America’s largest Generation” written by Fry, R (2016) in the United States showed that:

Millennials have surpassed Baby Boomers as the nation’s largest living generation, according to population estimates released this month (April, 2016) by the U.S. Census Bureau. Millennials, whom we define as those ages 18-34 in 2015, now number 75.4 million, surpassing the 74.9 million Baby Boomers (ages 51-69).

Another article says “Over roughly the next 15 years in the United States alone, 10,000 workers a day will turn age 65, leaving a distinct gap at the senior level of many companies” written by Arms, D., & Bercik, T. “Filling Jobs Wisely” (2015). These numbers, although estimated using the United States population, highlights the significant impact that will take place within organizations. Meaningful change is expected within corporate culture and business transformation is imminent.

Key differences in behaviours between the Boomer and Millennial generations must be recognized prior to assessing which HR strategies, methods and policies should be implemented within each area of importance. Understanding the most significant aspects of workplace psychology, as it pertains to both Boomers and Millennials and the interactions between these generations is imperative to determine the best strategy to apply. Dr. Reana Saraceni, Registered Psychologist has a private practice in Calgary, Alberta and experience working both independently as well as within corporations. Dr. Reana Saraceni describes the underlying reason for the personality differences between Boomers and Millennials:

Millennials are different in that they are probably the first generation that has not lived through or experienced a war. Baby Boomers, specifically in the US, would have experienced or remembered the Vietnam War. I think that has really played on the psyche and in terms of the key personality differences, Millennials actually believe the world is their oyster and they are a lot more hopeful and optimistic then I think Baby Boomers are.

The article “The Millennials: A new generation of employees, a new set of engagement policies” written by Gilbert, J (2011) discusses the differences in personality strengths:



Research has shown that boomers identify their strengths as organizational memory, optimism, and their willingness to work long hours. This generation grew up in organizations with large corporate hierarchies, rather than flat management structures and teamwork-based job roles.

Within the article they further describe Generation Y: 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.

Millennials and Boomers are further described in the article “Organizational Ambidexterity and the Multi-Generational Workforce” written by Woods, K., & Peay, A. (2016).

This generation is perceived as hopeful, inclusive, tech-savvy, ambitious, casual, globally aware, and easily bored, and as employees they tend to value feedback, open communication, diversity, change, and work that is meaningful to the greater community. Baby Boomers are perceived as driven, loyal, self-absorbed, work-centered, optimistic, team-orientated, ambitious, and placing a heavy value on relationship-building.

Technology is an important topic, as technology advancements drive globalization and can create talent retention challenges for many organizations. Losing key employees, specifically Millennials to jobs in other countries is a growing area of concern for organizations. Technology also accounts for a fundamental personality difference between Boomers and Millennials. Technology arguably is responsible for the most significant changes we have seen and will see in the workplace going forward. “Strategies for Leadership Styles for Multi-Generational Workforce” written by Al-Asfour, A., & Lettau, L. (2014) discuss the personality differences technology has created from a Millennial perspective:

There can be no doubt that innovation in the 21st century is dominated by the disruptive forces of mobile, social, cloud, and information technologies, and these disruptors are a main differentiator between the generations. Millennials do not know a world without technology; it is just part of their contextual reality, and it is their reality that is taking over.



This article goes onto discuss the challenges technology has created for the Boomer generation:

Challenges for leadership of the Baby Boomers generation stem from the fast pace of changes in technology. Given that Baby Boomers did not grow up with computers at an early age, they tend to resist new computing skills and operations.

The quote goes onto suggest how Millennials may be able to assist Boomers with technology and how Millennials can also benefit by sharing their tech-savvy ways “mentoring opens up opportunities for the older generations to impart years of knowledge to the younger generations, while the younger generations mentor the older generations with regard to technology”. Understanding the personality differences between the Boomer and Millennial generation is the first priority for HR departments. Next, understanding how technology is a catalyst for consistent change within an organization can assist HR in developing the best strategy to best support each area of importance and drive corporate results.

A. Work Flexibility

Providing work flexibility to employees is becoming a common practice, however, the degree in which organizations are allowing work flexibility varies. Work flexibility has become a strong consideration by Millennials in determining their employer. Boomers also consider work flexibility in their decision to remain or retire from the workplace. The topics outlined to support companies in finding the best work flexibility HR strategy are as follows:

- 1. Corporate Innovation and Workplace 2.0**
- 2. Technology advancements and Globalization**
- 3. Sabbaticals and shift swapping**

The desire for work flexibility started with Boomers, specifically as work life balance was introduced as a concept. The concept of work life balance was derived from the Boomer generation. Boomers decided that they would work for a set number of hours, allowing them the flexibility to be home at a specific time with their families. Boomers would start work earlier, to be home earlier, or work in the evenings after having dinner with their families. The need for companies to allow flexible work schedules to accommodate their employees and customers is a growing request. Employees will continue to ask for greater flexibility, while customers will ask for service at times that are most convenient for them.



The advancement in technology will be the catalyst to ensure that greater work flexibility can be achieved.

1. Corporate Innovation and Workplace 2.0

Technology has allowed many companies to adopt a work from home strategy within their organizations. Reducing office space has proven to be financially beneficial for these organizations, as their overhead costs decrease. An example of a company that introduced a work from home strategy is ATB Financial (ATB). ATB is a financial institution that operates in Alberta. ATB introduced workplace 2.0 within specific departments within their organization five years ago. This corporate initiative was driven by employees asking for greater work flexibility. Many of the employees first involved in the pilot project commuted up to ninety minutes a day. This initiative had financial benefits for ATB as well, which included reduced overhead for office space and employee parking costs.

The pilot started in one branch of the organization and with its success has expanded into other areas. The expansion of Workplace 2.0 extended only to those departments that had leadership to support the concept. Sherri Wright-Schwietz, Head of Talent and Mastery works as an Executive at ATB. Sherri Wright-Shwietz was present when Workplace 2.0 was in the infancy stage. Sherri discusses the results of Workplace 2.0 and how it has been received internally:

I have a mixed bag actually, some people in the Boomer group do it and love it and some people (Boomers) have chosen to keep their offices, so actually it is split. People (Boomers) that have chosen to keep their offices and not work from home, have also chosen to not allow their teams to participate in Workplace 2.0.

Sherri Wright-Schwietz goes on to further explain how Millennials have embraced Workplace 2.0.

I am very grateful that we were ahead of the curve with Workplace 2.0 in having that flexibility because that has been something that Millennials really value. They are drawn to that and they don't want to leave that. Most Millennials tend to move around quickly, ours choose to stay because they love that flexibility inside Workplace 2.0.

When asked to comment on the impact Workplace 2.0 has had and the influence it has had on work flexibility, she ends her thoughts with this comment "There is no way we can go back to 9:00-5:00 people in branches".



2. Technology advancements and Globalization

Technology advancements and the increase of globalization, coupled with the personal desires that individuals have for work flexibility, make it a highly competitive environment to attract and retain talent. The question posed to Sherri Wright-Schwietz was whether or not she feels that Canada is losing some of its best talent to International companies, she responded:

Yes especially in Alberta right now, where there are not a lot of jobs. Will we ever get those Millennials back is more of the key issue for us because they are brilliant and they have great minds. Since there are not a lot of jobs in Alberta, Millennials are taking this opportunity to travel the world, work in other parts of the country.

Millennials seeking out global experiences is ultimately a risk to Canada and Canadian companies. In the article "Filling Jobs Wisely" (2015) written by Arms, D., & Bercik, T. they discuss the simplicity in which people can relocate:

Technological advancements and increased globalization are making the world of work smaller. More and more companies rely on remote workers to complement their on-site teams, while, at the same time, workers are more inclined to relocate nationally and even internationally for the right job.

Millennials are looking for opportunities, therefore businesses are not just competing against local companies, but are competing globally to attract and retain talent. Eric LaCore writes about Millennials and their willingness to relocate in the article "Supporting Millennials in the workplace" (2015) "Mobility opportunities are often sought out and met with great enthusiasm by this generation. In fact, mobility is often viewed as a pathway to professional advancement". The article goes on to say "A separate study found 71 per cent say they want, and expect an overseas assignment during their career."

Organizations should implement an HR strategy that incorporates the use of technology to provide work flexibility to their employees. The strategy should also incorporate the allowance for sabbaticals and the freedoms for employees to job share in an effort to address and fulfill their own desire for work flexibility.

3. Sabbaticals and Shift Swapping

The competitive global job market, emphasizes the key importance for a company to have a sound HR strategy on how to best incorporate work flexibility into the organization. A



couple strategies that are being implemented include the use of sabbaticals and shift swapping. Sabbaticals are traditionally used within organizations periodically, but as the demand for extended time off increases, sabbaticals may become an integral part of corporate culture. Shift swapping is most prevalent in retail, fast food services and health care. Shift swapping allows employees the ability to switch shifts with their colleagues using technology. The article "Need to Swap shifts with a Coworker? Here's the App Starbucks Workers Use" written by White, M. discusses the App called Shyft that has been introduced to facilitate shift swapping. "the app gives people who want to get rid of a shift and ones who are looking for extra hours a forum where they can make their work schedules work for them". This strategy could be used by many organizations, putting the responsibility of work flexibility onto the employee.

Work flexibility is a common desire for both Millennials and Boomers. Many Millennials are looking for worldly experiences and several Boomers are looking to reduce their hours as they approach retirement. As the desire for work flexibility increases across generations, the organizations that have an HR strategy to support work flexibility in the most innovative ways will attract and retain the best talent and will have a competitive edge over their competitors.

B. Work Life Balance

The meaning of Work life balance is evolving from the Boomer generation to the Millennial generation. Work life balance has been studied for years. The article "Manager Behavior, Generation, and Influence on Work-Life Balance: An Empirical Investigation" written by Gilly, A., Waddell, K., Jackson, S. A., & Gilley, J.W. (2015) discusses a survey that was conducted back in 2010:

The youngest generation, Millennials, has received increasing amounts of attention in light of work-life balance issues. A recent survey of 482 college business students revealed that Millennials seek employers who offer flexible work arrangements and work-life balance that will enable them to be better employees and experience higher job satisfaction (Smith, 2010).

Due to the prevalence of work life balance and the influence it has in the workplace, every organization will be required to acknowledge, strategize and implement change to some



degree. The second area of importance for organizations is ensuring a sound strategy is in place to manage the evolution of work life balance. This section will cover the following:

- 1. Generational Differences of Work Life Balance**
- 2. Results-Only work environment**
- 3. Work Life Integration**
- 4. Holistic HR Modeling**

- 1. Generational Differences of Work Life Balance**

The article "Followers and Generations in the Workplace" written by Dixon, G., Knowles, B., & Mercado, A. (2013) "found Boomers to be comfortable with change, loyal, security-orientated, workaholic, and idealistic even to the point of allowing work life to come before family life" (Keepnews et al., 2010). Boomers were known to work long hours at the office. There was, however, a turning point where Boomers began reviewing their work life balance. The concept of work life balance re-shaped how organizations manage their employees. Boomers and Millennials perceive work life balance differently. Boomers wanted to construct their hours differently in an effort to spend more time with family. Millennials, however, are more concerned with the flexibility in which they work those hours.

The article "Corporate Offerings: Why Aren't Millennials Staying?" written by Campione, W. discusses the generational views:

Millennials are clearly rejecting the "norm" established by earlier generations; some say especially the baby boomers, that working long hours is a necessary part of career advancement and proof of organizational commitment. Their negative response to extreme hours would seem to imply that working these long hours is not really their preference per se, but rather either a necessity to achieve workable income (from perhaps multiple jobs) or a requirement of their employer or perhaps both.

The article goes onto say: It could also be argued that Millennials' attitudes seem to get to the heart of the conflict baby boomers lived or in the worse light, the inner hypocrisy they lived. Those "rewards" that seemingly smoothed over and eased the pain of long hours and difficult conditions came at great personal cost. Divorce, stress, mental and physical ailments that Millennials may have observed, may have



also served to orient Millennials to focus on the “price of” and the “means to” money, status, and respect; the costs to themselves, their families, and to society.

The generational difference described above, outlines that Boomers worked long hours to increase income and provide a better life for their families. Contrarily, Millennials are not as motivated by money and therefore, organizations will have to uncover new HR strategies to motivate their Millennial employees.

1. Results-only work environment

Workplace style is the preference and way in which an individual is most comfortable working. Boomers and Millennials have different workplace style preferences. As discussed in “Understanding the impact of generational issues in the workplace” written by Bennett, J. The author describes Boomers as valuing the “Importance of corporate culture and feeling part of the whole, private office, break away private enclaves, collaboration spaces, centralised knowledge centre,” whereas Millennials are described as “They can work anywhere, informal and fluid use of space, space for mentoring: fun open collaborative spaces, plug and play tech environment, no boundaries or hierarchy”. Boomers prefer working longer consecutive hours, whereas Millennials prefer to work those hours at times that they prefer. Boomers have had tendency to lean towards working in a specific location with a private office, whereas Millennials want to work from anywhere.

Boomers may lack trust and can be challenged with a work from home strategy. Boomers are concerned with the productivity of their employees and feel most comfortable when they can see and manage them in a physical setting. This can create a challenge for Millennials that are looking for work flexibility. Ultimately, the resistance by Boomers could create a Millennial retention and hiring issue for an organization. Organizations that are experiencing this challenge may need to adopt a results-only work environment. Dr. Reana Saraceni explains this concept:

A results-only work environment, is where you only hold people accountable for their results and do not micromanage their time. Management trusts that they will do their work. One of the benefits of a results-only work environment is the impact to involuntary turnover. When you only hold people accountable for their results, the individuals that are not performing to the same extent as the others and are non-productive will turn themselves out.



This HR strategy requires that an organization have specific performance measures in place. Technology can allow performance to be tracked more clearly, which provides the framework for work flexibility and a results-only work environment to succeed.

2. Work Life Integration

Another HR strategy that is appealing, is the concept of Work life integration, which is the next evolution of work life balance. As described by Arms, D., & Bercik, T. in the article “Filling Jobs Wisely” (2015):

The youngest generation of workers doesn't just want a good work-life balance; they want work-life integration because they realize how tightly work is woven into the fabric of their lives. While they're highly aspirational, they want to make a positive impact on the world through their work-and they don't necessarily want to do that in a conventional hierarchical workplace.

Dr. Reana Saraceni discusses the difference between balance and integration:

When people talk about work life balance, most people are talking about making sure that what they do at work, does not leak into their private lives. With the progress of technology, it is really tough these days to not have your work leak into your private life. There are many reasons for the overlap, but two reasons I can think of would be the demands of twenty four hour customer service and with the convenience of technology, it is really hard not to check emails 10:00pm.

The difference between balance and integration is that balance refers to sectioning off time between work and personal time, whereas integration is a merger and overlap of the two. The integration for Millennials is that they are want to bring themselves to their work. A big part of who they are, is that they will only do jobs where they can have a significant impact. Not only in their own lives, but in the lives of people around them, the community and perhaps even the planet.

Many studies support that Millennials are looking for work that has purpose and want to contribute to the organization or society in a meaningful way. An individual that is receiving fulfillment from their work, has less of a need to create boundaries between their personal and work life.

3. Holistic HR Modeling

Today, more organizations focus on the health and wellness of their employees. Traditionally in the Boomer generation, work stress, caused by both personal and



organizational pressure was not openly discussed. Open discussion was rare as employees did not want to appear weak to their managers, or ultimately their employer. Organizations are placing more emphasis on health and wellness for employees. Organizations that are serious about health and wellness are hiring in-house health and wellness coaches. The article “Manager Behavior, Generation, and Influence on Work-Life Balance: An Empirical Investigation” written by Gilly, A., Waddell, K., Jackson, S. A., & Gilley, J.W. (2015) highlights coaching within organizations:

Organizations are turning to different forms of coaching as a means to promote work-life balanced. Life coaching, for example, has been defined as a powerful process that encourages people to realize their true potential and to use it to make a positive change in their lives.

Along with using different styles of coaching, organizations may want to consider taking a holistic approach with their employees. “Holistic Human Resource Development: Balancing the Equation Through the Inclusion of Spiritual Quotient” written by Ahmed, A., Arshad, M., Mahmood, A., & Akhtar, S. (2016) discusses the use of a holistic approach.

Human Resources development model needs to be re-designed and consideration of employees entire being (mind, body, and spirit) creates a climate for holistic flourishing of the employees.

Further within the article it reads: There must be a holistic system of personal and cultural values where workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership are encouraged. In fact, employee’s Spiritual Quotient (SQ) is a key contributor or predictor to work performance and builds structural relationships among different variables.

Dr. Reana Saraceni believes that incorporating a holistic employee method could be the next best strategy for executives to consider:

Even though a lot of companies are being cavalier about the impact Millennials are having within the workplace. My opinion is that the next thing will be focusing on spiritual, emotional, physical and mental wellness. When I talk to Millennials they are really about this movement towards a holistic approach that we never heard from Baby Boomers. If I were an executive right now, I would be incorporating a holistic approach for employees focusing on their spiritual, emotional, physical and mental wellness.



Boomers viewed work as a job and were less concerned with being fulfilled than the Millennial generation. Millennials want meaningful work that provides them with purpose. This has resulted in the natural evolution from work life balance to work life integration. Minimal information was discovered while researching the topics of work life integration and holistic coaching in the workplace. These concepts are beginning to appear in organizations, however most organizations embracing this concept are in the beginner stages.

C. Performance Management

Employee engagement and employee happiness should be of top priority for organizations. Most studies of employee engagement support the concept that organizations will benefit from higher performance from employees that are engaged and happy at work. Companies can achieve increased engagement and happiness by providing Millennial and Boomer employees with work flexibility tailored to their needs, work life integration and holistic coaching methods within the workplace. The third area of importance is performance management. Organizations are continuously looking for ways to increase profits, which can include reducing overhead, improving efficiencies and increasing productivity. One of the ways productivity can be improved, is through performance management. The key discussions within the third area of importance will be as follows:

1. Performance Management Styles
2. Managing Employee Strengths
3. Mentorship & Knowledge Transfer

1. Performance Management Styles

Performance management looks different in each industry. For example, performance managing individuals that work directly in sales i.e. the bank, retail or even car sales would require a different performance management style than individuals that work in a factory on a production line. Regardless of the industry or individual, successful organizations have a performance management strategy. They will have methods for both tracking and motivating performance. There are two key differences between the Boomer and Millennial generations to consider when identifying the best strategy that will work for both groups. They are income and purpose.



First, Boomers worked long hours to generate income to better support themselves and their families. The article “Followers and Generations in the Workplace” written by Dixon, G., Knowles, B., & Mercado, A. (2013) describes each generation: “Gen-Xers are said to work to live in contrast to their Boomer parents who are often characterized as a generation that lives to work (Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008)”.

Millennials, however, are not necessarily looking for a greater income, if it requires them to compromise the flexibilities and freedoms that Millennials cherish. The article “Corporate Offerings: Why Aren’t Millennials Staying?” written by Campione, W. states:

Millennials like money, but factoring their increased value of leisure and decline in work ethic, they may only go so far to acquire income. Whereas their predecessors may have disliked working long hours and did in fact push for more balance, they never really embraced their discontent to act upon it. They endured. Millennials are not afraid to express their discontent – ultimately this disconnect will cause them to leave.

Secondly, Boomers were willing to do whatever work was required of them and within their job description. Millennials, however, are only willing to do work that provides them with purpose and a feeling of contribution. Dr. Reana Saraceni explains:

It is more important to Millennials to do work that is fulfilling and meaningful. They are less reluctant to do a “job” than a Baby Boomer. For example, a Baby Boomer may have been more willing to sit in a cubicle or office for many years plugging away at work that was more routine and not very fulfilling. As a result, the work that Millennials do, has to have more passion. Millennials are different, if you offer them more money they won’t necessarily take that job. They will not take the job if it means compromising their interest, talents, and strengths. Millennials will only take a job where they get passion and fulfillment.

In a recent study “Organizational Ambidexterity and the Multi-Generational Workforce” written by Woods, K., & Peay, A. (2016). They discuss that Millennials and Boomers are beginning to share common values in the workplace “both Millennials and Baby Boomers shared the perspective that salary is less important than other considerations such as challenging assignments, a range of new experiences, and explicit performance evaluation and recognition.” This could be driven by the reduction of Boomers in the workplace and



the increase of Millennials. Regardless, it highlights the significance of having employees in the right positions, where they can feel challenged. Sherri Wright-Schwietz provides an example of how they are assisting Millennials within the corporation she works: “We are trying to pull them into a lot of projects around how we attract more Millennial customers and they absolutely adore that, as they feel they are adding a value to the company that is totally unique to them”.

2. Managing Employee Strengths

Boomers were performance managed to improve their weaknesses. To identify areas that are not as strong in order to improve those areas is logical, however this style is not being as accepted by Millennials as it was with Boomers. Millennials are rejecting this style of performance management. The article “Positive Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Designing for Tech-Savvy, Optimistic, and Purposeful Millennial Professionals’ Company Cultures”, written by Graen, G., & Grace, M.

In 2013, big data studies were completed by the University of California and the London School of Business, focusing on what PriceWaterhouseCoopers identified as a critical generational problem (PwC, 2013). Results of these 2-year global studies concluded that existing 20th century talent strategies were in some ways incompatible with the values and expectation of millennial professionals and recommended designing a profoundly different approach.

The recommendation for style of leadership for Millennials is described most effectively in the article “Strategies for Leadership Styles for Multi-Generational Workforce” written by Al-Asfour, A., & Lettau, L. (2014). “Scholars in the field tend to recommend an emphasis on continuous and instant feedback, as this generation expects instant and timely feedback on the work they do.” This article also recommends that leaders:

Use an information communication style that emphasizes the positive. Focusing on an employee’s positive attributes or highlighting what the employee did well within their performance review is nothing new, however there is a movement away from traditional performance management styles.

Strength assessments are being used by some organizations to better identify the strengths of their employees. The assessment results can be used as a tool for coaching purposes. Focusing on the employee’s strengths, as opposed to focusing on improving their weaknesses. Dr. Reana Saraceni describes this method:



If you focus on improving someone's weaknesses and even if they improve, you are only going to make them more average. You are far better off to hire someone who gets great fulfillment out of doing the tasks that this other person is weak at. The other consideration is, even if that person was successful at improving their weakness, that person is most likely not fulfilled by doing that kind of work. Success without fulfillment, is the ultimate failure. When you focus on peoples strengths you will see stronger results. Even if you only improve a person's strengths marginally, the results will be substantially greater than greatly improving a person's weakness. You only have to be great at a few things to succeed.

Millennials are generally attracted to this style of coaching and have tendency to reject and not respond well to performance management that focuses on their weaknesses. Millennials were raised in an environment of positive reinforcement. Coaching that focuses on an individual's strengths, is positive and encouraging and consistent with the Millennial upbringing. Boomers, although accustomed to a different performance management style are reinvigorated by these performance management methods. A positive performance management approach is widely accepted by both generations.

3. Mentorship and Knowledge Transfer

Every organization is at risk of losing the knowledge that long term employees have as they retire or leave the organization. Organizations need to have an HR strategy that supports the transfer of knowledge from Boomers to Millennials. The article "Filling Jobs Wisely" (2015) written by Arms, D., & Bercik, T. discusses this growing challenge organizations face as Boomers exit the workplace:

These workers will take a significant portfolio of intellectual property with them, it's only logical that employers are looking for ways to keep this knowledge in-house, either by finding ways to retain older employees or by establishing work arrangements that facilitate the transfer of knowledge within the company.

Knowledge transfer however, is not one sided. Organizations should have an HR strategy that also supports the transfer of knowledge from Millennials to Boomers. "Organizational Ambidexterity and the Multi-Generational Workforce" written by Woods, K., & Peay, A. discuss the benefits of mentorship and reverse mentorship:



Tech-savvy Millennials are able assist Boomers with the latest digital media, trends, and technologies. In turn, Boomers are able to pass on their knowledge of the industry, history of client relations, status of works in progress and insights related to career advancement. In addition to gaining new insights in technology, reverse mentoring relationships can help Boomers develop sensitization to issues of workplace diversity, subject matter advances, work-life balance, global perspective, all of which can contribute to increasing their levels of engagement at work. Potential benefits for Millennials include information access, appreciation and professional respect, personal fulfillment and satisfaction, power development, improved morale, and reduced turnover.

Mentorship strategies are generally widely accepted by both Boomer and Millennial employees. Mentorship carries significant meaning for both generations and contributes to overall job satisfaction, causing less resistance to mentorship initiatives within organizations.

High employee engagement was found when organizations focused on putting their employees in jobs that best suit their strengths and provide them with purpose. Organizations that support a performance management and coaching model that focuses on employee strengths may see an increase of performance from their employees. An increase in performance can lead to stronger financial results. Lastly, organizations that have HR strategies to assist with knowledge transfer and reverse knowledge transfer between Boomers and Millennials will have employees with greater technological skills. Organizations will also reduce their risk of losing the knowledge Boomers have as they exit the workforce, as their knowledge would have been successfully transferred to the next generation prior to leaving.

CONCLUSIONS

Key differences between the Boomer and Millennial generations were explored throughout this paper, as well as, the impact these differences can have when implementing HR strategies that ultimately can impact the future success of an organization. The leading question was, "What are the most impactful HR strategies and methods an organization should consider using to bridge the generational gap, attract and retain the best talent, and motivate performance from both the Millennial and Boomer generations?" This paper has



outlined innovative strategies that have begun to implement the workplace. As well, a few explored strategies that are within their infancy stage include: Work Life Integration, results-only work environment, and performance management focusing on employee strengths and holistic coaching for employees. The catalyst driving a high number of the organizational changes seen recently and will continue to see, is the advancement in technology and the increase in globalization.

Work life integration, maintaining a results-only work environment and managing employee strengths is the direction forward thinking organizations are going. Focusing on employee strengths and providing coaching for employees that has a holistic approach, will help to drive performance and allow employees to have purpose in their work. Research conducted for this paper had a tendency to focus on how Millennials are changing the workplace. However, many sources refer to the acceptance Boomers have for Millennial driven HR strategies. Although resistance is expected, various Boomers have found different HR concepts to be refreshing and rewarding.

Millennials and Boomers are equally important to an organization. At the present time most organization cannot succeed without both generations. "Understanding the impact of generational issues in the workplace" written by Bennett, J addresses this:

Management needs to find ways to use the strengths that all generations possess, making decisions with input from each age group. The result will be a company in a better position to serve its diverse clientele, one that mirrors the workplace.

Evolution within organizational HR practices is a necessity. Over time, the generational gap will close and Millennials will account for the workplace majority, as their predecessors once had. Until such time, HR strategies will continue to be developed and implemented. Organizations that implement the most innovative HR strategies that appeal to both the Boomer and Millennial generations will excel and profit in today's fast paced global market place.

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