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ISSN (Online) : 2455 - 3662
SJIF Impact Factor :5.148

EPRA International Journal of **Multidisciplinary Research**

Monthly Peer Reviewed & Indexed
International Online Journal

Volume: 4 Issue:12 December 2018



Published By :
EPRA Journals

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**EPRA International Journal of
Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR)**

**STRATEGIES TO MANAGE MILLENNIALS
EFFECTIVELY**

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ABSTRACT

The generation of young people who have recently joined the workforce are popularly known as millennials. These millennials grew up in an environment that was vastly different from the earlier one. As a result of being exposed to the changed situational variables the millennial employees exhibit certain specific characteristics which require to be handled adroitly and smartly by managers. This paper explores the important situational variables encountered by the millennial generation and then outlines the key characteristics that emerge in them. The contention of this paper is that because millennials think, behave and work differently they must be managed differently so that they can give their best. If managers continue to use traditional methods of dealing with employees then the millennials will not feel comfortable in the work environment and the result will be low performance and productivity and high attrition and absenteeism. On the other hand if managers adopt a strategy to manage these workers based upon their specific characteristics and skill set it will give positive outcomes. A close look at the characteristics of the millennials reveals that they do possess special skills, talents and abilities and an organization stands to benefit greatly if managers are able to use them to advantage.

KEY WORDS: *Millennial employee, Traditional HR practices, Contemporary HR strategy*

INTRODUCTION

The oldest members of the generation born in the eighties and the nineties and popularly known as the millennials began to enter the work force in the late 1990's and the early 2000's. These millennials –also known as Generation Y –were different from the earlier generation and it is now become increasingly clear that they must be handled differently too. Their numbers are fast increasing across the world and India is particularly being recognized as a youthful country. Population data indicates that by 2020 the median age of an Indian will be 29. Even today, in 2018 there are over 400 million millennials in India which is about one third of India's population and 46% of the workforce. A report of Morgan Stanley Research says that these young people are already the main wage earners in many households and millennial income comprises of 70% of total household income in India! This means that the workplace is witnessing and shall continue to register the presence of a far greater percentage of millennials. The result is that the way work is done is also certain to undergo a complete transformation!

This rising wave of a youthful working population has created a need for managers to understand what really makes them tick.

Environment Variables that Millennials grew up in

Environmental Variables that the Millennials are exposed to and have grown up in:

- The millennial generation has grown up in nuclear families where a one or two child family structure is the norm. These millennials have therefore grown up being the center of their parent's existence and have received their undivided attention. This has resulted in the millenium generation to grow up believing that the world revolves around them and that their needs are of paramount importance.
- A related aspect of the small, nuclear family is that the children of this generation were lauded and praised for the smallest achievement. This is good and positive in that it encourages a high self esteem and sense of confidence among the millennials but on the flip side it also fails to develop amongst the young ones the ability to deal with failure. The struggle of failing and fighting to stay in the reckoning is perhaps the greatest learning. A generation that grows up with 'helicopter' parenting grows up either fearful taking tentative steps while always looking over their shoulder to see if someone is there to 'have their back' or over- confident and rashly

rushing into decisions , secure that their parents will back them up in any scenario.

- The school environment for Millennials focuses on group work and team-work. Their projects and assignments are mostly collaborative and their scoring is grade based encouraging cooperation rather than competition. When students are awarded grades instead of ranks they are more likely to share knowledge and collaborate because they do not feel that the sharing of information or knowledge will result in the other scoring above them...rather they can all be A+ students !
- Focus on positive reinforcement- Child psychology is increasingly nudging parents and teachers towards giving positive reinforcement and focusing upon the strengths of the young.
- Culture of 'participation' is more important than 'winning'. A very good example of this is the trend of 'participation' certificates issued by schools to students who take part in an activity even though they may not excel at it.
- Tight knit nuclear families so children grow up more demanding emotionally as they become used to being at the center of their parents undivided attention. Parents too strive to fulfill every demand of the children and as there are usually only one or two children it so happens that children's demands are always met. Dual Income families impact both the economic environment in which millennials are growing up and the social environment of both parents working has an undeniable effect. Dual income families have not only created greater disposable house hold incomes but also generate a guilt for not spending enough time with children in the parents who tend to overcompensate by buying a lot of material goods for the children.
- Higher I.Q. due to an improved education and advanced learning techniques. It is a well known fact that audio visual aids can stimulate intelligence and thanks to greatly advanced research and use of technology the markets are flooded with resourceful, and interesting toys and devices that definitely ignite the creativity and intelligence of young minds. School curriculums are also being redesigned to stimulate the intelligence and nurture the talent of the young. With the increasing education levels of women, children are getting nurtured by highly educated mothers. Since mothers are the more

available parent to children in most families, even where both parents are working, and spend more time with children, this undoubtedly offers great learning opportunities for the young.

- Greater access to information and resources. Young people today have far greater resources and sources of information. In fact, bulky dictionaries, complicated thesaurus and encyclopedias have become redundant as the information being sought is just a click away. Even the laptop is not preferred as the smart phone is far more handy!
- Cheaper and greater availability of technology. When mobile telephony was introduced even incoming calls were chargeable. Today internet providers, in the race to capture the market, offer data packs and other services at very low prices. Technology based devices are also cheaper and there are several brands and options available to suit every pocket.
- Increased household income and financial stability of parents also mean that children are no longer expected to take on financial responsibilities of parents and are only expected to fend for themselves, and that too with a lot of help from the parents in terms of gifts of movable and immovable assets and inheritance.
- There is an increased exposure to social media. Young people use all sorts of social media – whatsapp, fb, instagram, snapchat etc. Their daily usage of this media is mind boggling and while they seem to effortlessly juggle their time among the several work and pleasure activities, this use of social media has far reaching social, cultural and even financial implications. The pressure created by a constant stream of happy photos of fb 'friends' is manifested in increase in the number of instances of depression amongst the young, excessive spending beyond available means on clothes and cosmetics to keep up appearances, and sometimes even criminal acts to extort money from others!

CHARACTERISTICS OF MILLENNIALS

Certain characteristics that are unique to millennials are seen in their personality as a result of the circumstances that the millennials grow up in and the situations they find themselves in. The characteristics of Millennials that stand out are:

- Expect change and Accept Change as routine. They are neither afraid of change nor daunted by it. Rather they seem to expect things to change and seem bored if they don't!

- Impatient if expectations are not met. Patience is not a virtue that millennials are familiar with. They want things accomplished, they want them done their way and they want them now!
- 'Look at me' attitude-want to be the focus of attention. If they don't get the attention they believe they deserve they are likely to resort to tactics to shock people to catch their attention.
- Extremely Comfortable with Technology. They've probably grown up opening their parent's ipad to see nursery rhymes when they were 1 ½ years old! They are never fazed by the next model of any brand of phone...and most parents will admit that they've taken help from their kids when they couldn't figure out something on their devices!
- Excessive use of social media- They type on their mobile phones using all their fingers and their thumb-at speeds that leave you in a daze. You barely register a sight but a millennial has already uploaded it as a snap chat story!
- They are more collaborative. They grew up doing group projects and learnt through group discussions. Their parents included them in family decisions and valued their opinions so it's not surprising that they are more geared up for collaborative team work.
- They are more entrepreneurial. The millennials are the first generation of adults who grew up free of the baggage of the pre-independence era in every way. Their grandparents had probably seen pre independence days as children and their parents grew up on stories directly narrated to them by their own parents who were direct witness to the pre independence period.
- They plan on their own spending, not on the requirements of their parents. Also, their perspective is more short term than that of earlier generations so they are less interested in investing in a car or house but rather seek convenience and fun. Their spending is greatly impacted by social media and because they are so greatly connected to their peers on social media they face great peer pressure.
- They do not seek job security and are likely to leave their job if they feel bored or don't feel challenged at the workplace.
- They exhibit a curious mix of an extremely high level of confidence at the work place but heart breaking emotional weakness in their personal life.

WHAT MILLENNIALS NEED

From the above discussion we can gather that Millennials at the workplace need the following:-

- They want a purpose. Whatever task they take on, they should be clear about its purpose or its end impact.
- They need to be appreciated and applauded. If they are performing well they seek appreciation as feedback is very important for them. If they are doing something wrong they are willing to be corrected but they desire the feedback to be gentle and not publically given.
- They want to be a part of a network and feel that they are part of a team effort. They are not impressed by concepts like social hierarchy or position power and prefer a more democratic setup. In fact, being frank, bold and outspoken most cannot operate in a rigid hierarchy.
- They need mentorship and prefer to be guided and advised by someone whom they admire and whose opinion they value. One on one interaction inspires and motivates them.
- They do not seek job security and are often willing to pursue passion instead of a pay-check.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH MILLENNIALS

- ❖ A strategy that managers can adopt is to take decisions for employees in context. If employees are kept clued in to decisions will help them to view their contribution holistically. This will help them to give better input.
- ❖ Another strategy that is very useful to manage millennials is to offer employees a stake in the company. This not only means stock options, which is also a good technique but going beyond just that to empower the employees because Millennials want to own a project, run with it, and make a real, measurable difference.
- ❖ Managers must strike a balance between collaborative management and offering autonomy. Millennials respond better to a coach than to a director. This means that if you tell a millennial employee to “figure it out” themselves, it will not work as well as if you weave an additional session of brainstorming and open discussion.
- ❖ Give millennial workers constant feedback because Millennials prefer a steady and constant feedback from their managers and annual performance reviews are not relevant in their opinion. A good strategy would be to

hold regular meetings with them and allow them to talk about their problems, issues and challenges. When millennials find themselves in a mutual give and take relationship with their managers, they are far more willing to work harder. In this situation they become more loyal and committed to their bosses, their team and the organization. These young people grew up in an environment where parents followed their schedules and were highly invested in seeing them achieve success so a strategy of being involved in and involving them in all ongoing projects works well for them.

- ❖ Creating a reverse mentoring relationship with millennials is another excellent strategy for managers dealing with millennials. This is because on one hand Managers understand the task at hand and the skills involved in getting it accomplished, millennials, on the other hand, are extremely knowledgeable and accomplished in tackling new technology. They have been using computers ever since they were very small, constantly use smart phones, and are practically always logged onto social networks. This reverse mentoring will therefore improve productivity and interpersonal relationships.
- ❖ Managers must ensure that they provide an environment conducive to work-life balance. Millennials want family and friends to be a big part of their lives and clearly, they do end up working after work hours especially answering emails and phone calls, because of the access that technology provides. Managers should therefore understand that they need to support them in striking a balance between work and personal life, both of which are important to them.
- ❖ Managers must work towards making work challenging for them because if millennials get bored with their work, they simply leave and high attrition rates are costly for a company. In fact if managers feel that the employee is getting very good at a task, he or she must work towards job enlargement and set new challenges so that the employee continues to feel that they are progressing and learning. Most millennials are adept at multi-tasking so if they are given a chance to work cross-functionally on projects they will feel valued and exhibit company loyalty.
- ❖ Millennials are team-oriented and can effectively collaborate. When they are asked to work in teams their talent and strengths in team work help them to perform well. A team

also enables them to interact with others which makes them happy. The feeling of rooting for a team is engrained in them and if they get the same experience at work they feel motivated.

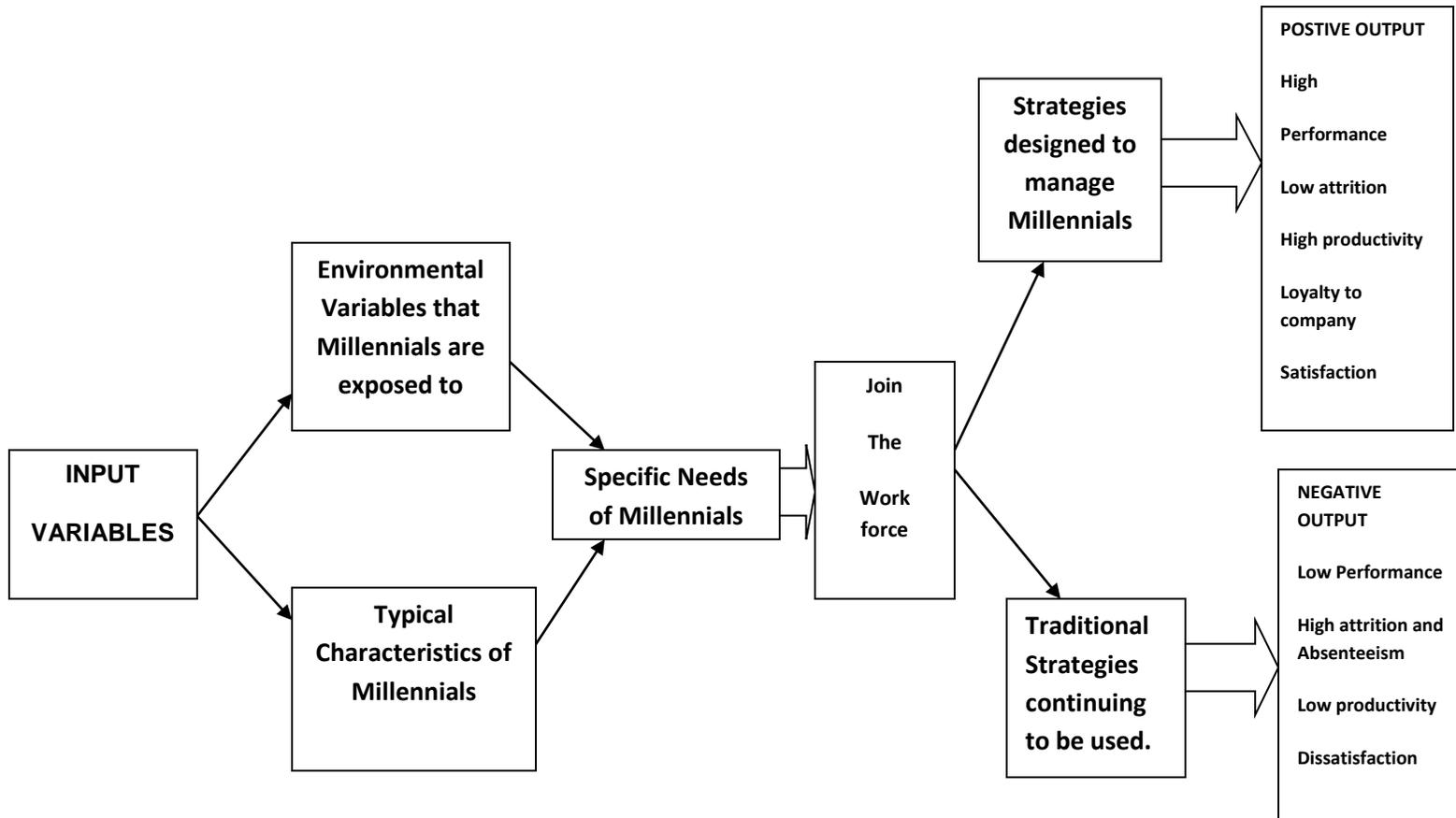


Figure: Importance of Strategy for Managing Millennials

Thus, as the figure above shows, if the strategies used to manage millennials take into account their unique characteristics and the specific environmental variables that they grew up in, then the organization is bound to benefit with the talent, creativity, skills and technology savvy that the millennial workforce possesses. In case the organization continues to use traditional methods of managing the workforce then the outcomes will be negative as a result of the mismatch created.

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