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Values in the Workforce: Millennials and Generation Z

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Abstract

The rate at which women are entering the workforce is beginning to increase exceptionally. There are 109,000 more women working than men according to the U.S. Bureau of Statistics. While, men and women are found to value the same aspects of work, they tend to rank them differently. This study will aim to explore the similarities and differences between women in different generations. The three main questions for the study are: 1) How are women in different generations similar and different depending on their perceptions on values?; 2) Are there differences in personality across generations?; And 3) What perceptions do employers have about these new generations and how are they preparing for the Millennials and Gen Z in the workforce? While workplace values have been widely studied and also compared between genders; no study looked specifically into how women's values and personality might vary across generations. In order to address these questions, an in-depth survey was conducted across Generation Z, Millennials, and Gen X along with interviews with several companies. Key findings show that generations are similar and different depending on their values; there are slight differences between the personality traits Neuroticism and Conscientiousness; and companies are not changing their training based on the incoming generation. Based on these findings, the study provides several recommendations that can help HR at companies understand more about Generation Z.

Introduction

Over the past decades, generations and generations have been at the forefront of employer conversations. Management has had to understand the values and traits of every generation in order to recruit and retain these new potential employees. The newest generation to be discussed by companies in conversation is Generation Z. This generation is just beginning to enter the workforce as there are over 72 million people born between 1995 and 2012 (Stillman, 2017). Generation Z and Millennials can often be considered the same for those who do not understand this new generation. Millennials consist of 82 million people born between 1980 and 1994 (Stillman, 2017). Gen Z is the first generation to be raised in the era of smartphones and other technology from birth giving them an edge going into the workforce, they are prepared and ready for innovation (Stillman, 2017). Millennials strive on teamwork while Gen Z is more independent, but both generations love feedback in the workplace (Stillman, 2017). These generations while slightly similar can also be very different. There even were many environmental and historical events that occurred causing a shift in how they perceive the workplace differently among generations (Stillman, 2017). On top of this, their upbringing affects their values, such as how Generation Z is the product of Generation X who have tried to give their children a safe and secure childhood that they never had (Stillman, 2017).

Literature Review

What HR Needs to Know about Generation Z

A generation is defined as an identifiable group that shares birth years, age location, and significant life events. For instance, Americans born between 1909 and 1933 are referred to as the World War II-ers (Wey Smola, 2002). When baby boomers and generation X were most prevalent in the workforce, a study concluded that work values change with the times. It showed that values change over time within generational groups as a result of our societal environment and the maturation process of individuals (Wey Smola, 2002). Over the years, there has been many sources about Generations and their personalities in the workforce. A paper identified some important characteristics of Gen Z include loyal, compassionate, thoughtful, open minded, responsible, and determined (Puiu, 2017). They also have been described as financially conscious, global minded, and tech savvy. One other article discusses seven traits they use to describe Generation Z and they include phigital, hyper-custom, realistic, *FOMO*, weconomists, DIY, and driven (Stillman, 2017).

One study researched that there are five things HR needs to know about the incoming Generation Z. The first thing to know about Generation Z is that they are the first true digital native generation (Lanier, 2017). This generation has been connected to technology from birth, unlike any other generation. Another note is that diversity is an expectation of Generation Z, through social media, this generation has a connection to others from different cultures, backgrounds and circumstances. HR also needs to know that Generation Z is more pragmatic than you might expect. Having lived through a global recession, Generation Z is focused on sensible, stable careers. They look for security, safety, and privacy. Some Gen Z-ers though may be more drive

by traditional opportunities for advancement and development, improved economic security and better benefits. The fourth note is Gen Z is more entrepreneurial than Millennials (Lanier, 2017). The article states that managers can cultivate these entrepreneurial goals at work by encouraging a sense of agency at work, fostering innovation, autonomy, and project ownership (Lanier, 2017). The last note is to avoid the digital to reach Gen Z. In this research they revealed that 51% prefer in-person communication with leaders.

While the sources discuss the personality and values of Generation Z and how they will do in the workforce, there are many factors that need to be analyzed and compared with the other generations. Generations have been extensively studied for many years now. However, as Generation Z comes into the workforce, managers will have new challenges, and this will affect all generations. There are a lot of stereotypes that the older generations have about younger generations entering the workforce. A stigma that all generations have when they were Millennials looking at the younger generation is, they believe they have poor communication skills and seem entitled (Deal, 2010). This has been a stigma for generations, but we see language has increasingly shifted in the form of different slang as the years continue. Most articles written on this topic focus on each generation separately. However, there is a gap in these sources as the newest Generation, Generation Z begins to enter the workforce.

Values and Attitudes

According to Generational Theory, when a new generation is born social forces of socialization such as laws, schools, families, acquaint the newcomers with the society to which they now belong (Kowske, 2010). These generation's values and attitudes are developed throughout their environment and how they grow. They hold onto these values throughout their life and use them to make their decisions in the future. Historical events that are currently happening or in the past,

people at various developmental stages can tend to interpret them differently (Kowske, 2010).

Before Generation Z, internet access was a privilege now it has transitioned to an attitude that it is a human right. Another example of attitudes that have changes is, failure before was avoided and now has transitioned to people embracing these failures and accepting them (Puiu, 2017).

Some believe that Millennials are full of dreamers while Gen Z is full of realists.

When discussing differences in work related values, generations are more similar than different. It was found that: Boomers value learning new things and freedom from conformity, Gen Xers value freedom from supervision more than boomers, and all three generations value comfort and security as well as professional growth equally (Kowske, 2010). There have been no clear, consistent patterns emerging from these studies though which leaves a gap in this research. One study discusses the growing trends of expectations and preferences that change as culture and worker demands begin to change. Generation Z is found to share some connecting traits to the other generations as a result of shared external conditions (Lanier, 2017). In relation to training, Gen Z needs ongoing, essential training while Millennials expect the continuous training (Puiu, 2017). For leadership style, Millennials find they want a partner while Gen Z prefers a teaching style (Puiu, 2017).

Managing the Generations

Positive and Negative Feedback

It has been said that if managers are going to give feedback in order to be effective, negative feedback to Millennials needs to be consistent and ongoing. The Millennials must perceive this feedback as benefitting them now or in the future (Anderson, 2016). Millennials struggle to accept negative feedback. Managers must be sensitive but assertive enough to make sure the

employee understands the criticism at hand. Many managers give Millennials the stereotype that they are high maintenance and need a lot of guidance, even saying young people are over indulged and protects that they are incapable of handling the most mundane task without guidance or handholding (Hershatter, 2010).

Hiring the Right People

When discussing recruiters, an article suggests that they understand that this generation is more dynamic and will not have one job for their whole life. Solutions can include new challenges, opportunities, rewards or incentives to make them stay there longer. Through a study this article conducted it showed that Gen Z was more driven by financial fulfillment and when choosing a college, they looked for one that will help them find a better job. There are aspects that should be considered when hiring Gen Z such as they have their strengths and weaknesses to address before including them in the company (Puiu, 2017). As described in an article, describing Gen Z as “phigital” it discusses considering recruiting tools that combine the digital with the physical, such as skype and jobsnap (Stillman, 2017). Gen Z is found to be very realistic and it is important to note when recruiting to try to reflect realistic messages and be honest about work hours and rules (Stillman, 2017). Gen Z is also very do-it-yourself personality. Recruiters should watch for Gen Z to be entrepreneurial and put that to work internally rather than lose their skills (Stillman, 2017).

Job Satisfaction

It has been found that the ability to redefine an organization role in order to fulfill personal needs will increase job satisfaction in the workplace (Gong, 2018). With a better role-person fit allows the person to use their strengths and can lead to a higher performance and lower turnover. It has

been found that Millennials are reporting higher levels of overall company and job satisfaction (Kowske, 2010). It is already noted through this research that consultants said that people must take special precautions to retain Millennials. Generation Z has a large amount of *FOMO* which means *fear of missing out*. It is important to remind employees what they are learning, how they fit into the larger picture, and the achievements they've had to help combat career *FOMO* (Stillman, 2017). In order for Gen Z to be satisfied, the company needs to notice they are very driven and in order to retain them it is keen to continue their learning and growing rapidly to avoid losing them.

Organizational Accommodation

A way for Millennials to feel more involved, practices were used such as reverse mentoring which gave Millennials a voice in the decision-making processes of an organization. One article even insisted that they found that a reduced organizational commitment was found to be associated with increased role innovation. The boomer generation are Millennials parents and Millennials do not view their careers as a lifelong employment relationship like their parents (Gong, 2018). Managers need to be aware that Millennials are most of the workforce right now and with increasing levels of role innovation is expected for Millennials. Gen Z is found to be very hyper-custom and people are beginning to allow employees to create their own job titles, customized job descriptions, incorporate coaching for training (Stillman, 2017).

Technological Innovation

As stated above, not only is language changing but technology has changed society fundamentally because of these innovations it affects generations preceding Millennials as well. With new technology software's not only in the workplace it changes the way humans can

communicate with each other (Deal, 2010). Now with social networking platforms it makes it easier to interact no matter where you live. Management had many challenges with Millennials, trying to learn if Millennials are ready for innovation in their roles at work. With new technology coming out in society, organizations are trying to find new ways to stay competitive. These managers also have to find ways to meet Millennials demands for an accommodating environment with this new increase in technology (Gong, 2018). Millennials are even described as the incorporation of technology to them as a sixth sense, calling them digital natives (Hershatler, 2010).

Research Questions

The three main questions for the study are: 1) How are women in different generations similar and different depending on their perceptions on values?; 2) Are there differences in personality across generations?; And 3) What perceptions do employers have about these new generations and how are they preparing for the Millennials and Gen Z in the workforce?

This research is timely and important to address as the beginning of Generation Z is just starting to enter the workforce. This research will be sufficient to provide a recommendation on how companies should utilize training practices to best engage and retain Generation Z in the workforce according to their values they highly prioritize. My hypothesis is that Generation Z going into the workforce is highly creative and innovative and prioritize their need for creativity which many for-profit companies are beginning to implement practices to fit those needs but at a slower pace than how many people are entering the workforce. Therefore, companies' programs for training and retainment will be greatly improved by implementing practices that fit the values of this new generation.

Currently, there is limited literature on this topic as Generation Z is just entering the workforce in the last year. A majority of the literature focuses on Millennials, but not in comparison with Generation Z and there is little literature on just one gender. Most of the research focuses on what defines Generation Z, rather than the training and retaining practices that management goes through to satisfy the values Generation Z is seeking. Select sources have analyzed the extent that Generation Z's personality and how they are growing up, mostly quantitative studies. These sources have failed to consider the root of what this generation prioritizes and how it affects their decisions going into the workforce.

Methodology

Data Collecting Procedures

To answer the three main research questions of the study, primary data was obtained through interviewing recruiters through the Bryant Career Fair and through a survey of different generations. The Bryant Career Fair is where companies come to the College to recruit the next generation for possible full-time jobs or internships. A survey was conducted with 35 questions derived from existing scales and rank questions on personality and values.

Sample

This sample was obtained through a survey sent out to all individuals who fell in the age range of Gen X, Millennials, and Generation Z. The survey was randomly sent out to people at Bryant University who then sent it to people they know as well. In order to qualify for the study, participants had to be Gen X, Millennials, or Generation Z. Gen X is born before 1980, Millennials born 1980 to 1994 and Generation Z born 1995-2012. The study also only looked at survey responses from women. The sample size consisted of 175 female survey responses and 5 company interviews. Out of the 175 survey responses, the study had: 54 percent born before 1980, 17 percent Millennials, and 29 percent Generation Z.

Interviews

The interviews took place at the Bryant Career Fair at Bryant University in Rhode Island. They were all in-person interviews and started with an oral consent and a confidentiality assurance of the identities of the interviewees. The interview questions were constructed before meeting with the recruiters and consisted of 5 open ended questions discussing their preparations for

Generation Z and what they have seen with this incoming generation. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes depending on the recruiter's willingness to contribute to the interview questions. Once all of the interviews were complete and the responses were analyzed the researcher identified similarities and differences between the recruiters.

Findings

Key Findings on the Generations

Reason to work for

When asked in the survey questions about ranking their most important reason they would work for, meaningful work was one of the main reasons for all generations. It had 64 percent Gen X, 60 percent Millennials, and 46 percent Generation Z responding this as their most important reason for work. Generation Z had 26 percent respondents saying opportunities for advancement to them is very important.

Engagement with Manager

Given the choice between “listening to and valuing your ideas” and “mentoring and giving quality feedback regularly” Generation Z had 84 percent respond that they want mentoring and giving quality feedback regularly when a manager engages with you. Generation X (59 percent) and Millennials (54 percent) prefer engaging with a manager through listening to and valuing their ideas.

Method of Communication

Effective method of communication is interesting to look at across generations, since Gen Z is very stereotyped that since they are a digital native they love to communicate through their phone, even by sending text messages. What is thought-provoking is all three generations said that in person is their most effective method of communication. This was 70 percent for both Millennials and Gen Z and 81 percent for Gen X. Gen X was then split between email, instant message, and phone as also an effective method of communication for them while Gen X had 0

percent say phone was effective for them. For Millennials and Gen X email is there next most effective method of communication.

Generational Struggles

It is common knowledge that every generation is going to struggle with something when they enter the workforce. One survey question was able to dig deeper on what the generations think they struggle most with in the workforce. All three generations were split between struggling with resolving conflict and negotiating. What is interesting is Generation Z actually responded that 14 percent of them struggle with working with other people and 8 percent said they struggle working on a team. Millennials on the other hand responded with 0 percent saying they struggle with teams or other people at all.

Big Five Personality Trait Findings

The Big Five Personality traits consist of: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. There were questions in the survey that let the participant answer it on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. There were three questions per personality trait, and they were from establish surveys. Through ANOVA testing it was able to show some significance for two of the big five personality traits. The two traits that had some significance across generations was conscientiousness and neuroticism. Since the distribution was not a normal distribution for many reasons such as there being a sample disbalance and looking at only one gender; Kruskal- Wallis Test was used to test the significance amount of each trait again.

Neuroticism

The questions that were asked in the survey that relate to neuroticism include: (1) I see myself as someone who worries a lot; (2) I see myself as someone who gets nervous easily; (3) I see myself as someone who is relaxed, handles stress well (reverse coded). The tests showed there was slightly a significance between Gen Z and Millennials and Gen X. Gen Z is shown through this testing to worry more, be more nervous, and less relaxed than the other generations. It had a P-value of 0.436412 but through the Kruskal-Wallis test one can see some significance.

Conscientiousness

The questions that were asked in the survey that relate to conscientiousness include: (1) I see myself as someone who tends to be lazy (reverse coded); (2) I see myself as someone who does a thorough job; (3) I see myself as someone who does things effectively and efficiently. The tests showed that there was a slight significance between Gen X compared to Millennials and Gen Z. Gen X is shown through this testing to be more efficient, less lazy, and more thorough. Conscientiousness had a P-value of 0.660335 and through Kruskal-Wallis test it showed a small significance for this personality trait.

Interview Findings

Similarities

The recruiters had a lot to say about their employees and what they have seen between generations in their organization and how they work. One thing they saw very similar was Millennials and Generation Zs technology adoption. They saw with Millennials working that they knew a lot about technology because that was something that really innovated during the end of that Generation. With Generation Z they see a huge rise in how employees of that

Generation have a vast array of knowledge on software and other tools to help them excel in the workforce. Generation Z has had technology since they were born giving them a little bit longer than Millennials to experience and learn everything it has to offer. Companies also give the same training to all generations. They do not structure their training programs based on the new generation. Most of these companies have a standard training program and believe it is up to the individual to get the most out of that training based on how much they want to learn.

Differences

A common difference that was found between generations was their ability to communicate effectively. It was stated that Generation Zs communication is related to a kitchen table conversation. Kitchen table conversation is more laid back and not as professional. They tend to use a lot of acronyms, especially in their emails, looking more like text messages. Other generations in the workforce know how to properly write an email with it looking professional; Generation Z may need to cut back on the acronyms to start sounding appropriate at work. This new Generation is also more interested on making an impact right away at the company. They look for companies that are environmentally friendly, where they can do good for the community. They also want to know what the company can do for them in terms of benefits. Generation Z often is stereotyped as entitled but companies see it as they have more courage to ask for better benefits packages.

Limitations

This study did have some limitations when conducting this research. The first limitation was there is a cusp point. There were many similarities between Generation Z and Millennials because many Generation Z that conducted the survey were at the beginning of this generation. Individuals apart of Generation Z that responded were born between 1995-2002 making them

very close to the age range of a Millennial. The second limitation is there also was a single method bias where all the information is from the same person. The last limitation is that the sample was imbalanced as the sample size for the generations was significantly different. For the survey there were 54% respondents that were born before 1980, 17% Millennials, and 29% born in the years of Generation Z.

Discussion & Implications

This study makes several contributions to the literature. This study helps close the gap between generational values between women. Most of the existing research was very limited and did not discuss only women's values.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations have been formed. These recommendations include (1) talent acquisition will be able to offer the benefits that Generation Z wants, (2) tailor compensation benefits and impact motivation based on this new generation, (3) train managers to have effective communication methods with all generations.

The first recommendation is to suggest that organizations offer the benefits that Generation Z is found to want when working. As suggest earlier in the findings, Generation Z wants to make an impact right away and they want a work position that will be meaningful for them. They also want a role that will give them opportunities for advancement and continue to develop their professional career. They want that workplace flexibility because they really prioritize having a work life balance. They also want to make sure that they are trained for the roles they are entering in the workforce. Another recommendation is to impact the motivation of these incoming employees. Organizations can do this by focusing on what Generation Z values and how this will motivate them in the workplace. An organization can increase their support for this generation and give them that continual feedback they need to feel motivated and encouraged in the workplace. Lastly, managers need to be trained on how to best approach and work with this new generation. While the study found all generations do like in person communication, organizations reported in the interviews conducted that this generation is not as professional

when they communicate. Managers will need to be able to best help this generation adjust to other employees who do not use as many acronyms and have more professional communication. Managers will need to learn how generation Z does not like working in groups or with other people like Millennials. They will need to train this new generation how to feel comfortable working in this setting. This can even be done through a mentorship program where this generation is paired with other generations in the workplace and will help build their confidence.

Appendices

Appendix A: Figures for Key Survey Questions

Figure 1. Amongst the following which ones would be your most important reason that you would work for? Please Rank

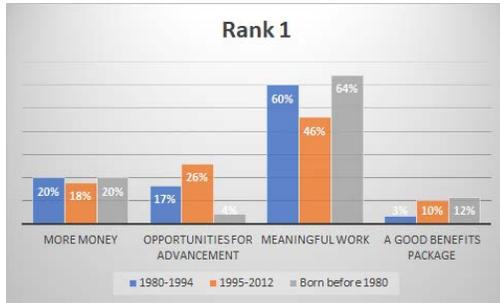


Figure 2. How do you want your manager to engage with you?

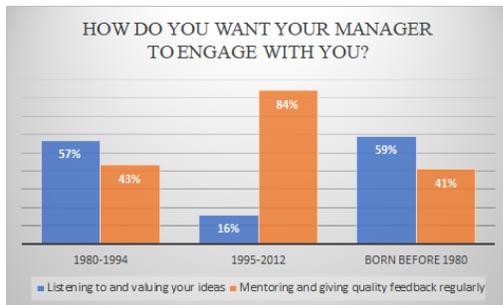


Figure 3. What is your most effective method of communication?

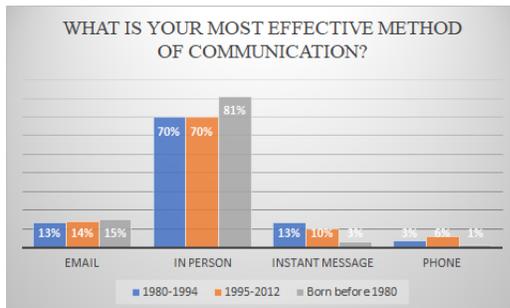
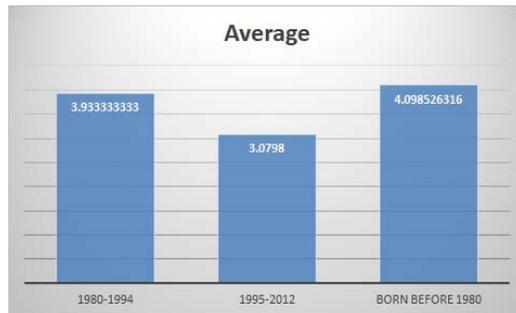


Figure 4. Which do you struggle most with? Please Rank

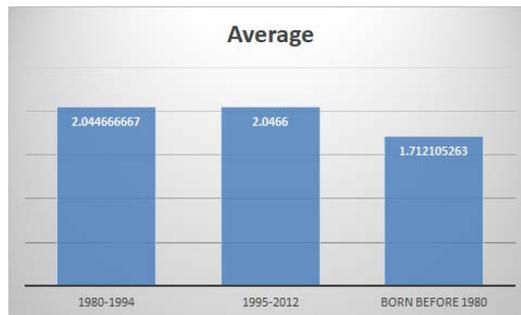


Appendix B: Big Five Personality Trait Findings

1. Neuroticism



2. Conscientiousness



Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Have you seen any similarities or differences between Millennials and Generation Z when they first begin to work at your organization?
2. What is challenging about recruiting Generation Z?
3. Does Generation Z transition well into your organization?
4. What do you find are the most common values that Generation Z has when asking about their full-time job offer?
5. What preparations are you making as an organization to recruit and/ or transition Generation Z and how is it different from what you were doing for Millennials.

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