



## Crafting Gen Y Workforce and Creating High Performce Organisations

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### ABSTRACT

*As organizations cannot survive the cut throat competition without dedicated and performing employees, they leverage to cater to new work place requirements such as open and causal work environment challenging work and faster career progression opportunities. Gen Y is the fastest growing segment of today's workforce and poised to make significant contributions that will spell future success in businesses. It possesses new skills, latest technical expertise and adequate subject knowledge. As this generation brings fresh perspective and are way ahead of their veteran seniors in terms of work attitudes and operational tactics, knowledge – driven organizations are turning to this mobile and net – savvy generation for achieving excellence. Present young generation is huge and diverse group with a variety of expectations, strengths and weaknesses too. They do not be told what to do. But, need to be mentored precisely on How to do. They need to be coached how to combine intelligence with humility which will make them unbeatable. For understanding how they think and how they should be groomed, employers need to persevere to know the pulse of this generation and consistently keep them in mind to bring out the best. The character, attitudes and values of the younger, hybrid and multicultural workforce are constantly changing. Retaining young generation work force is quite a challenging task for the management. It is depending on an organisation's HR policy, employment value proposition and more importantly the culture practiced by the existing workforce. With organizational re- structuring and right approach by the employers and also by the HR department, organizations can avoid the risk of becoming unequipped to compete in the market.*

### Keywords :

#### Introduction:

Twenty first century is the century of economic changes and advancements in technology that have radically altered the face and structure of many business corporations. Transformation takes place in every workplace – a young generation of professionals is ready to assume new roles, accept more responsibilities and to take the lead. Organisations are increasingly waking up to the reality that the new generation workforce can bring the much needed change and attracting those at all possible ways. No matter how big or small one is, every organization attempt all tricks for wooing potential candidates and for keeping current workforce passionate and committed to the job. Realizing well, the significance of breed of younger employees on whose shoulders future rests; smart employers have started to depart from traditional Human resource practices. As organizations cannot survive the cut throat competition without dedicated and performing employees, they leverage to cater to new work place requirements such as open and causal work environment challenging work and faster career progression opportunities. Present young generation is huge and diverse group with a variety of expectations, strengths and weaknesses too. For understanding how they think and how they should be groomed, employers need to persevere to know the pulse of this generation and consistently keep them in mind to bring out the best. From management point, the key is to identify not only the strengths but also deficiencies of younger employees and guide them to perform their best. While many of the developments in the talent market provide great opportunities to the organizations, they also come with a number of challenges that were nonexistent earlier. Upper management need to recognize the paradigm shift in the expectations of Gen Y workforce from those of its previous generations. For tapping the potential expertise, no single all-embracing approach will be valid. HR authorities should think creatively and should be willing to go even beyond the conventional methodologies.

#### Objectives of the Study:

The present study encompasses the following main objectives:

To define 'Gen Y' and enumerate its traits

To describe the major challenges in attracting and dealing with Gen Y

To delineate the process of managing Gen Y work force.

To suggest the employers few tips for shaping a better and comprehensive approach towards Gen Y.

#### Methodology:

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature. Both Primary data and secondary data were collected. Primary data has been collected through 'Observation of young employees and seeking their opinions in possible cases'. The study was conducted in select companies (10) in Chennai city. Secondary data have been obtained from standard management books, reputed journals and newspapers and also from various websites.

#### What is Gen Y?

Gen Y refers to a new pool of today's young force. The term is used to describe the teenager of upcoming 10 years. Also called in other names such as Millennial, Generation next, Global generation and Net generation, this young breed of candidates are the first in their homes to grow up with computers, laptops and other technological effects. They are marked with an increased use of digital devices and an enhanced familiarity with electronic communication and latest media. Even though vary extensively by education and region, generation Y brings some unique skills and capabilities

that surely set them apart from the rest. In the present 24 X 7 media world, this generation has seen and experienced everything at a relatively younger age than its previous generations like Gen X or Baby Boomers.

In the contemporary organization, Gen Y is the fastest growing segment of today's workforce and poised to make significant contributions that will spell future success in businesses. It possesses new skills, latest technical expertise and adequate subject knowledge. As this generation brings fresh perspective and are way ahead of their veteran seniors in terms of work attitudes and operational tactics, knowledge – driven organizations are turning to this mobile and net – savvy generation for achieving excellence not only in the present but also for the future. Globalisation has made deep roots in India and also made Indian corporate conscious of the need to bring a global face and mindset to the workplaces. For effectively responding to the challenges of global environment and to emerging breed of knowledge workforces, what is needed is to nurture the young talent available in the market. Most of the time spent by employers and HR managers is on creating a fresh outlook for the organization mainly to attract, develop and retain young talent. In fact, a new phenomenon called 'reverse mentoring' is emerging today which enable older, senior employees and even leaders learn latest working styles and trends from Gen Y. As organizations are increasingly compete each other for luring the fresh talent and to derive maximum benefit out of it, they have to adapt to accommodate this most recent cohort entering the organizations.

#### Traits of Gen Y:

Heralded as the harbinger of change, Gen Y is being celebrated for its distinctive traits and latest technical expertise. In order to secure positive response and optimum results from them, the key on management's part is to make a complete diagnosis of their attitude and understand this innovative lot with global mindset. Here are some of the major traits of Generation Y which differentiate it from the rest of the workforce:

- ❖ Innate self- Confidence, Optimistic and enthusiastic about the future.
- ❖ Energetic and tolerant
- ❖ Reliable, rationale and clarity of thoughts
- ❖ Effective in communicating
- ❖ Success hungry, Ambitious and determined to succeed.
- ❖ Result or achievement oriented
- ❖ Educated, Ability to learn fast and inquisitiveness to seek information
- ❖ Inventiveness and constant quest for knowledge
- ❖ Widened expertise and global mindset
- ❖ Out of the box thinking and fresh perspective
- ❖ Less respect for rank and admiration for ability
- ❖ Equates job satisfaction with a positive work environment.
- ❖ Interested in transparent culture; fearlessness -not afraid to question authority.
- ❖ Spirit of competition and unending desire to grow
- ❖ Casual, informal and hesitates paper work and writing
- ❖ Expect enough space for learning and development
- ❖ Participative, possesses entrepreneurialism and seeks out challenges in the workplace
- ❖ Ability to work on parallel lines and interested in faster career advancement.
- ❖ Openness in expressing ideas and issues
- ❖ Information hungry, Internet obsessed and better access to social media.
- ❖ Aware of competitive compensation; demand adequate rewards, respect and admiration from the employer.
- ❖ Less patience, expect instant feedback on performance and wish to rise rapidly in the hierarchy structure.
- ❖ Sense of narcissism.
- ❖ Post emotional; no anger – no ego
- ❖ Prefers instant gratification many times rather than concentrating on sustainable long term growth – do not believe in career – for life.
- ❖ Believes in 'work hard and party hard' and demand flexible working hours.

- ❖ Dislike for monotonous work or to remain as sitting ducks; wishes to have logical discussions and speedy decisions.
- ❖ Job hopping mind set.

#### Managing the Gen Y – An Art:

Generation Y is likely to be more positive than its previous generations on number of matters which makes easier to manage them. This generation has clear ideas and priorities on a number of issues such as work life balance, Performance appraisal etc., Gearing up to pursue multitasks at a time, it has strong work ethics, sociable and collaborative in nature and keep it easy for top management to handle them. As Mr. Amit Das, Senior Vice president, RPG Enterprises points out "The Gen Y can bring much needed fresh perspective to the business aligned with the rapid changes in the talent market and the workforce demographics. Their speed, openness and flexibility of decision making compel the organizations to faster open and transparent culture due to easy accessibility of data availability of information." 1

With organizations going global, last two decades have seen a lot of changes in Indian workplaces particularly in terms of gender and culture. Unlike the past where most of the employees had same outlook, spoke same and had same work styles, present youth – not only from big cities but also from small towns, have higher and varied aspirations in life. They want to achieve everything instantly, expect spontaneous results for their actions and have the mindset of 'winning at all cost'. If they are not handled properly, it can create frustrations, hindering business success.

The senior most generation of Today's workforce consists of traditionalists, who are loyal to the company and remain with the same boss for years. This group prefers a traditional, hierarchical management structure and top – down approach in the operational system. Along with generation X and Baby Boomers traditionalists can bring a lot to the table; can turn in any mutual relationships with Gen Y. By sharing their rich experience and insights, they can help generation next survive, thrive and advance their career. If the younger employees acknowledge the seniors and willing to learn from them, it can directly boost employee engagement, trust and morale. Recently "Reverse Mentoring" is practiced in few work places which help senior learn latest technologies and newer working trends from Gen Y. Proper learning by both the sides helps building enduring relationships across generations, promotes harmony, removes ego clashes and above all reduces attrition levels. Mr. Syed Raza, Head – Recruitments, Fiserv India puts forth another dimension, "Gen Y are usually seen executing organisational initiatives and are center point of all energy in the organization. Their inventiveness and result orientation, besides producing better products, assists an organization to add value to their system, process, culture and overall functioning". 2

In the present multigenerational work environment, the character, attitudes and values of the younger, hybrid and multi-cultural workforce are constantly changing. It differs significantly from previous generation (X) which had much more tolerance, social preference and respect to senior colleagues. The common expectations of present young employees range from higher pay, better recognition, and instant feedback to faster career growth. Today, the gen Y see "Whether the role will enable them to launch their career successfully, the work culture within the organization and ability to move between roles/functions to provide them with an exposure that creates opportunities for them to grow faster", surmised Savneet Shergill, Head –Talent acquisition, Dell India. 3

Gen Y is likely to have values on co-operation, conformity and work climate. A strong value based organization culture, adequate recognition and rewards, sufficient learning opportunities and exposure to modern business environment will keep this attention craving workforce excited at the work place. For this to materialize, organizations must be able to

depart from traditional HR practices and provide operational freedom with personalized attention. Able to convert effectiveness into greatness, this generation prioritizes meaningful work over ordinary, menial 40 hours week job. They want to work progressively and wish to spend their time in useful and purposeful ways. For these young professionals, there is no line exist between job and home. Flexible working hours and working from home have become important elements associated with the work life today. Millennials do not want the work dominate their entire life and actively involve themselves with social media and engage in platforms like twitter and face book. No wonder so many companies, nowadays, are rushing to use social networking for maximizing the work force creativity, talent and experience at all levels and different locations. Developed in recent years, social software is allowing what has never before been possible – the ability of vast number of people around the world to work together and to contribute productively the full range of their expertise. The use of internet made it possible and easier to work together from different places and take advantage of pool of talent wherever it is available.

E- Learning, a tool considered as assistive technology and supplementary to conventional face to face learning by Gen X, has emerged now as a contemporary, fast and convenient technique. It enables the workforce to interact with other professionals and experts in the respective fields. Online learning infuses great deal of discipline among the employees and perhaps it is the best way to gauge employees' capabilities. The employers can be benefited from standardized training, considerable cost cutting and maximized training through advanced technology. However the organizations must understand here that new hype itself cannot always lead to success. They must sincerely attempt to be more agile, create fresh opportunities and even develop new operating ways that can be achieved only by mobilizing fresh ideas, collective talents and honest efforts.

In a few cases, there is a gap between skill levels of Gen Y and actual requirements of the organizations. In spite of possessing enough subject knowledge, Generation next enter the workplace with limited practical skills. A recent study conducted by IMaCS, on behalf of the NSDC disclosed that 'A mere 2 % of the 12.8 million people who join the Indian workforce each year is formally skilled'. There is also a disconnect between on – the – job work experience and desire levels of soft skills like listening, communicating and independent thinking among the workforce. Software industry body NASSCOM has said that, "Out of the 4, 00,000 odd engineering graduates who pass out every year, only 20% of them would meet the requirements of India Inc. The rest of them will have to go through rigorous, formal skilled training before the employers could find a place and use them". It poses new challenges to the HR managers to acquire right talent and use it immediately.

Youngest generation of employees often describe themselves as ' Optimistic' or 'Self involved' ; but their confidence may not be as deeply engrained as it first appears ; especially when faced with repeated criticism and frequent failures. Nurtured by helicopter parents and having never known a world without computers and cell phones, these youngsters have been brought up in a fast-paced world at a time of economic expansion and prosperity. They have been appreciated and praised even for participation, presence and for average performance. These millennials want to achieve everything instantly and absorb the behaviours they have been subjected to, in the workplaces. HR authorities find it tough to monitor this attitude of young employees, to correct troublesome behavior leading to conflict between younger and older worker and to make necessary adjustments required at both the sides. Gen Y employees may appear perfect outwardly, but they can be easily shattered by negative comments of peers and are quickly influenced by others. Organisations can arrange special sessions on these lines, particularly to exhibit how to improve behavior across generations and also managing the generation mix.

### **Retention Gen Y Workforce – A Real Challenge to HR department**

Most of the Generation Next workforce prefers to stay in the same organization than hopping between the companies. They realize well that switching between employers is not an end in itself and look forward opportunities for career advancements within the organizations. While majority of youngsters are not job hoppers, undeniably, a vast majority of Job hoppers are youngsters. They do hopping their jobs when all other options are closed and situations force them to move. As per the results of Kelly Global Workforce Index Survey 2012, "only 40% of Indian workforce regards a Career – for – life with one employer as relevant in the modern workplace". Young employees are demanding many things from organizations, when their demands are not met; they are lured away by better opportunities in other places. This breed of workforce is less committed, non creative and less loyal when they feel disrespect at the work spot. Also get fed up, overtly retaliate and many leave the organization assuming no other option is available. In a majority of cases, the employers are unaware and unsure about how long Gen Y work force will stay with them. "To Gen Y, an organisation's reputation are brand, a meaningful profession and a belief in what the company stands for are important elements in their decision to work for an organization. This generation view themselves as a breed apart and doing things differently and seeks out new challenges", opined Manoj Biswas, Unit HR lead, Accenture India.

Retaining young generation work force is quite a challenging task for the management. It is depending on an organisation's HR policy, employment value proposition and more importantly the culture practiced by the existing workforce. If the authorities at the helm are able to demonstrate the progress made by seniors in terms of position and pay, the young recruits will definitely stick around. The keys in retaining them are providing adequate opportunities for career growth and interesting roles which challenge their skills. Although few companies, recognize the need for keeping younger workforce and attempt a new retention tool called 'Stay Interview', they could not do much. Given such a scenario, it is really a herculean task to get a cutting-edge workforce and establish a comprehensive system for retaining the skilled employees.

Business environment is moving today in a direction where there will be no boundaries for organizations. If any organization is static, then it is very difficult to hold good talent- as the chances for a bright youngster are always on rise. Payment of fat salaries only, will not motivate Gen Y employees. In order to keep check on attrition levels and retain them for a considerable period, here are few tips:

- Provide structured autonomy and institutionalize it.
- Provide fair and transparent culture.
- Create a good workplace with fun and supportive team environment.
- Treat younger employees with sensitivity.
- Avoid doing anything which smacks the authority of Gen Y workforce.
- Provide proper mentorship to nurture the skills of young workforce.
- Create stimulating, novel and enjoyable learning experiences.
- Avoid discrimination by gender, age and caste.
- Provide new and adequate challenges in the work.
- Give the Gen Y enough, quick and constant feedback.
- Communicate in a vivid manner.
- Encourage mobility of work force.
- Recognise the real talent and award it adequately.
- Develop and implement a complete compensation package by linking pay to performance.
- Offer chances for professional development and personal growth of youngsters.
- Provide latest technology and modern methods in the industry.
- Create opportunities to the workforce for maintaining

work life balance. Allow flexi time work schedules. Do not stick with 9-6 or 10-5 work shifts.

- Do not expect the Gen Y to be like the previous generation at least not the way predecessors used to behave and perform their duties.
- Do not assume Gen Y as adversarial and avoid becoming scared of them.

#### Conclusion:

In the present high volatile job market, the attitude of Gen Y employees is constantly changing and a career for whole life is passé today. Time was when Gen X employees working for the same organization for years. The days of permanent loyalty are long gone. But organizations view rising generation workforce as their major assets and they cannot afford to miss out this group. The skills, knowledge, competencies and other attributes of Gen Y workforce are the keys to gain significant competitive advantage. If the employers do not accept this reality, they may find themselves obsolete tomorrow. Realizing the new trends and changing scenario, many organizations have replaced their pyramidal structures with

flatter ones. Dealing with present young workforce has not been simple easy as it seems. It brings unique challenges to fore and the whole process takes time. Only with proper understanding of the situation, major organizational re- structuring and right approach by the employers and also from HR department, organizations can gauge employee morale and avoid the risk of becoming unequipped to compete in the market. As the training expert Garrison Wynn notes "If you can't manage the future, you don't have a future". As the severity of business issues and challenges are expected in the coming years, employers must do more than watching the crisis when they perform a complete anatomy of present organization and plan for a brighter future.

1. Payal Chanania, "Hiring the Gen Y Workforce", Opportunities, The Hindu, Chennai, November 21, 2012
2. Ibid.
3. Payal Chanania, "Managing the Gen Y Workforce", Opportunities, The Hindu, Chennai, November 28, 2012
4. Ibid.

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