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Strategy of Employee Engagement Program for Millennials in the Workplace

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Abstract:

Employee engagement has become a new topic in many HR types of research because it is an essential element in productivity, retention, and innovation. In 2020, it was estimated that the millennial generation workforce would reach 50% of the total available workforce. Moreover, this gradually becomes bigger every year. Therefore, developing an employee engagement program strategy for the millennial generation is fundamental for many organizations to remain competitive. The millennial generation in the future will be the main driving force for organizations to move forward to survive in competition and innovation. This study aims to analyze engagement strategy for the millennial generation since many types of research still focus on developing the overall strategy for employee engagement. The method in this research is utilizing the study of published literature. The results show that the millennial generation is different from the previous generations, specifically generation X and baby boomers. This research will benefit organizations and leaders of this generation, help respond to millennials' needs, and take advantage of their willingness to collaborate and innovate.

Keywords: employee, engagement, millennial, strategy, program.

千禧一代在工作场所的员工敬业度计划策略

摘要:

员工敬业度已成为许多人力资源类型研究的新主题，因为它是生产力、保留和创新的基本要素。据估计，到20

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20年，千禧一代劳动力将达到可用劳动力总数的50%。而且，这逐渐变得越来越大。因此，为千禧一代制定员工敬业度计划战略对于许多组织保持竞争力至关重要。未来的千禧一代将是组织在竞争和创新中生存的主要动力。本研究旨在分析千禧一代的敬业度策略，因为许多类型的研究仍侧重于制定员工敬业度的总体策略。本研究的方法是利用已发表文献的研究。结果表明，千禧一代与前几代人不同，特别是X一代和婴儿潮一代。这项研究将使这一代的组织和领导者受益，帮助响应千禧一代的需求，并利用他们合作和创新的意愿。

关键词：员工、敬业度、千禧一代、战略、计划。

1. Background

Employee engagement and the millennial generation have become topics that have been extensively discussed and researched in recent years. Employee engagement seems to be a new mantra in management and has become quite a popular subject for research (Armstrong, 2012). Gallup (2013) in a study about employee engagement assessments, conducted iteration and meta-analysis proving the evident link between employee engagement and nine performance outputs: customer ratings, profitability, productivity, turnover, safety incidents, shrinkage (theft), absenteeism, patient safety incidents, quality (defects).

Many studies have produced key drivers for employee engagement. For example, MacLeod and Clark (2009) (cited by Armstrong (2012)) found transparent leaders, managers, who appreciate team contribution, freedom to voice ideas and be heard, and organizations which live their values.

On the other hand, millennial today will fill 50% of the workplace in 2020 (Sachs, 2018) and is estimated to reach 75% by 2025 (Ubl et al., 2017). People born from 1980 to 1995 are referred to as the millennial generation (Ubl et al., 2017). Phillips (2019) stated that the millennial generation is different from the previous generations; they have their own values, interests, and passions. They are the most prepared generation, with more education, diverse experiences, and access to information.

Building a program strategy to increase employee engagement that focuses on the millennial generation becomes very important because, inevitably, they become the driving force of the organizations to survive (Nguyen & Pham, 2020).

2. Literature Review

Ng et al. (2010) investigated the career goals and priorities of the millennial generation, which they consider important when making their job choice decisions. The study shows that 71% of millennials are willing to accept a less ideal job to start their careers. 50% want to build their careers at one company. 68% of the respondents wish to get a promotion (career advancement) within their first 18 months of work. For work attributes, at least five major attributes are desired when working: (a) Opportunities for advancement; (b)

Good people to work with; (c) Good people to report; (d) Good training opportunities/developing new skills; (e) Work-life balance.

In their research on attracting and retaining millennials, Cahill and Sedrak (2012) stated that community volunteer activity programs (CSR) and work-life balance programs are provided; hence programs such as job sharing, flexible or remote work arrangements, even seasonal month-off programs can be implemented. Career advancement is provided. Mentoring programs, internships, rotational training, and moving laterally within the organization can help millennial career advancement.

In their research on the millennial generation, Ng and Gossett (2013) examined two issues on millennials: (a) their career goals and (b) what they identify as attractive in potential employers. The survey shows that the career goals of millennials who want to work in the public service sector are balancing personal life and career, pursuing further education, contributing to society, building a sound financial base, and working internationally. Those who choose to work in the private sector aim to balance personal life and career, build a sound financial base, pursue further education, work internationally, and contribute to society. Meanwhile, when viewed from the perspective of employer characteristics, the survey shows that respondents who choose to work in the public service sector choose the following characteristics: high ethical standards, social responsibility, progressive work environment, diverse workforce, and environmental responsibility. Meanwhile, for those who choose to work in the private sector, the top five employer characteristics are innovation, industry leadership, financial strength, high ethical standards, and attractive location. When viewed from the job characteristics, the top characteristics for the private sector are flexible working conditions as the main factor, followed by a clear advancement path, secure employment, international career opportunities, competitive compensation, and rapid promotions. Meanwhile, for those who want to work in the public sector, the chief characteristics are secure employment, flexible working conditions, clear advancement, international career opportunities, sponsorship of future education, and competitive compensation.

Williams et al. (2013) researched millennials to find out the type of management that can engage millennials

by using a theory from McGregor, the X and Y theory in people management. The result is that command and control approaches are ineffective for the millennial generation in non-emergency situations. There are two leadership styles suitable for millennials: the participatory management style by Kaner and Lind (1996) and servant leadership suggested by Greenleaf (2002). Participatory management style encourages employees' involvement at all levels of the organization, such as problem analysis, decision-making process, and strategy development. Servant leadership requires managers to treat employees as their customers: remove the barriers limiting their ability to obtain their work done, provide employees with the resources, use their influence and contacts to make the team more effective.

Carpenter and de Charon (2014) used a grounded research study method and interviewed 18 leaders from various fields to create a model to attract, motivate and retain millennials, divided into four responsibilities: HR, manager, executive, and the millennial. HR professionals' responsibility is providing interesting job descriptions, ensuring millennials transparency, expose employees to various positions and opportunities within the organization, like rotational programs, and networking opportunities. Executive leaders should provide managers with the latitude to attach privilege and reward based on individual performance, communicate and support the importance of flexibility and work-life balance. Manager responsibilities are creating a continuous talent pipeline, establishing a talent pool for career advancement, developing a formalized training program, scheduling one-on-one meetings for the team's career planning in six months' perspective. The millennials' responsibilities are creating openness and graciousness when accepting knowledge transferred, willingness to implement and transfer their knowledge to others.

Nolan (2015) stated four means that can be used to retain millennials in the workplace: work-life balance, meaning, entity, and management styles. To increase satisfaction in work-life balance, companies can offer flexible work arrangements, working from home, part-time hours, and vacation days. To increase a lack of meaning, companies can develop their internal branding and meaningfulness (creating work that matters) for employees by connecting employee job tasks with business goals, company mission and vision. To increase low enticement, the researchers suggest promoting self-development. To improve the management style, managers must invest in and believe in the employees, treat employees as individuals with unique needs and talents, implement reverse mentoring, where young employees serve as mentors to senior employees.

Malhotra (2016) stated that company leaders are responsible for providing their employees with the right learning opportunities, passing on the baton, and grooming them for the future. Malhotra (2016) mentioned

some gen Y characteristics: they want to make the world better, wish to be their own bosses, work in teams, have flexible work-life options, timely feedback, be socially connected, and invest in their careers.

Todorović and Pavićević (2016) conducted a study involving 192 students and showed that career advancement, learning opportunity, good working conditions (work-life balance), compensation, springboard, and working arrangement (collaboration, recreation opportunity) will attract and retain millennials in the workplace.

Costello and Westover (2016), in their research on nine large companies listed on glassdoor.com based on high-volume reviews and two articles listing the top tech companies, published at businessinsider.com, showed four main components to satisfy millennial employees and increase their engagement: (1) coworker interaction, such as implementing group work and team interaction; (2) flexible working arrangement for their work-life balance, changing employee effectiveness measurement from hours worked metric to a task-based metric; (3) hands-off leadership style, which means allowing employees to drive the work process, the freedom to choose certain tasks they would like to work on; (4) offering free food to employees (snacks, drinks, or lunch with catering).

Waldena et al. (2017) surveyed millennials to determine how employee communication and job engagement affect organizational commitment. The research shows that job engagement mediates between employee communication and organizational commitment. This means there should be openness of the organization's internal information and continuous feedback to employees regarding individual and organizational issues.

Carrillo et al. (2017) show that increasing engagement in young accountants is possible by making them feel more excited, valued, and autonomous, providing an opportunity for their individual development, mentoring, brainstorming, encouraging social responsibility, and recognizing their efforts. Those will also handle the stresses and pressures.

Sugirtha and Sneha (2017) stated that millennials are collaborative, teamwork-oriented, purpose-driven, and self-reliant. So, to improve their engagement, organizations should fill their needs, recognize them, create an information accessibility culture, simplify processes, policies, techniques, and jobs for using and adapting, and establish a flexi-time policy.

Holmberg-Wright et al. (2017) used the method of focus groups of individuals from both Generation X and Y. They concentrated on asking individuals and focus groups about job engagement and motivation, decision-making, communication, and leadership. They found that to make millennials succeed, organizations should provide them with a clear career path, coaching,

guidance, leadership, sustainable personal and professional development, a semi-structured environment, training, educational advancement, and flexibility.

Cerf (2017) distinguishes three most important components of improving employee engagement: (1) Interpersonal respect (safe environments, opportunities to participate in decision-making, thoughtful communication, empathy, and relationship-building); (2) Interpersonal trust; (3) Meaningful relationships (worthwhile purpose, mentoring, and intentional listening). This research also suggests that existing policies regarding value recognition, feedback, and work-life balance need re-review.

Nyang'ori (2017) conducted research using a descriptive method to find the strategies to motivate millennials, which shows that millennials will contribute when they understand their role, job, and standardized job process. However, a pleasant working environment, trust, justice, flexible working hours, and continuous training will also retain and engage them.

Jauhar et al. (2017) studied the impact of reward and transformational leadership on Generation Y employees' intention to quit and the moderating effect of job satisfaction. The research shows that transformational leadership and rewards lower millennial employees' intention to quit. Millennial employees tend to stay in the company even though the rewards are not attractive if their job satisfaction is high. However, job satisfaction does not moderate the negative relationship between transformational leadership and intention to quit. Employees will stay if their leader practices transformational leadership even though job satisfaction may be low.

Saeed et al. (2018) found four factors that influence the retention of millennial employees: job security, salary increase, accountability, and working conditions.

Wen et al. (2018) show that three independent variables, employee development, employee reward, and employee work-life balance, were significantly related to job satisfaction. However, the research found that organizational culture was also justified in moderating all three independent variables towards job satisfaction correlations.

Capnary et al. (2018) investigated the effect of workplace flexibility on millennial employees' loyalty and satisfaction with work-life balance. The result shows that workplace flexibility significantly affects employees' loyalty and satisfaction. This research proves that work-life balance partially mediates between workplace flexibility and loyalty. This means that work-life balance does not mediate between workplace flexibility and employee satisfaction. This happens because the flexibility of work increases the working hours so that the millennial generation struggles to maintain work and life.

Zaharee et al. (2018) conducted exploratory research to identify the attributes that attract technical specialists

in an early career at IRI. The result shows that millennials want a quicker rotation through projects and roles, more continuing feedback, and more paid time off. In total, there are six categories of incentives sought by millennials from employers: Salary and benefits, Professional development, Purposeful work, Flexible work, and Organizational ethos.

3. Methodology

The researchers reviewed literature published from 2010 to 2018 using the random study method. The literature was from different countries, such as Canada, Serbia, United States, Kenya, Malaysia, and Indonesia with different organizations, from university students, oil and gas companies, public accounting firms, research and multinational companies, public service, health, and safety organizations, high-tech companies, retail and resort industry and startup companies. The purpose of this study is to explore millennial employee engagement strategies.

4. Results and Discussion

The studies have shown that the focus on the millennial generation in the workplace is inevitable. The baby boomer generation is starting to retire, and it will be replaced with millennials. The studies above confirmed that employee engagement directly impacts organization productivity, retention, loyalty, attracting talent, and customer satisfaction. Table 1 summarizes millennial engagement drivers as per literature.

Table 1. Summary of millennial engagement attributes based on the review of studies

No	Researchers	Engagement Drivers
1	Ng et al., 2010	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Career Expectation and advancement 2. Good people to work with and report 3. Good training opportunities/developing new skills 4. Work-Life balance
2	Cahill & Sedrak, 2012	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community volunteer activity. 2. Work-life balance 3. Career advancement customization 4. Lateral moves 5. Informal Communication 6. Fast-moving, technology-based environments.
3	Ng & Gossett, 2013	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Career goals: balancing personal life and career, further education, contributing to society, building a sound financial base, and working internationally. 2. Employer characteristic: high ethical standards, CSR, progressive work environment, diverse workforce, environmental responsibility, Innovation, industry leadership, financial strength, and attractive location 3. Job Characteristics: secure employment, flexible working condition, clear advancement, international career opportunities, future education sponsorship, competitive compensation, and rapid promotion.
4	Williams et al., 2013	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No command and control approaches 2. Work-life balance. 3. Participative management style 4. Servant leadership style

5	Carpenter & de Charon, 2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Transformational leadership style 1. Providing interesting job descriptions 2. Exposing to various positions and opportunities 3. Rotational programs, networking. 4. Reward based on individual performance. 5. Flexibility and work-life balance 6. Talent pipeline (career pathing) with the talent pool 7. Job competencies and skills 8. Formalized training program 9. Simulating the academic environment 	15	Cerf, 2017	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interpersonal respect 2. Interpersonal trust 3. Meaningful relationships 4. Recognition, feedback, and work-life balance.
6	Nolan, 2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work-life balance 2. Internal branding 3. Matching job tasks with business goals, mission 4. Promoting self-development 5. Treating employees based on their uniqueness rather than generation 6. Reverse mentoring and training programs 	16	Nyang'ori, 2017	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear and understandable job/work role and employees' overall contribution to the company 2. Standardized job process 3. Potential career areas 4. Determining the skills, competencies, and knowledge necessary to advance their careers 5. Continuous training and development 6. Pleasant working environment (Flexible working hours)
7	Malhotra, 2016	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning opportunities 2. Mentoring 3. Timely feedback 4. Social activities 5. Performance management system 6. Career prospects 	17	Saeed et al., 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job security plans 2. Salary increase, 3. Accountability 4. The pleasant working conditions
8	Todorović & Pavićević, 2016	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allowing faster advancement 2. Learning opportunity 3. Good working conditions (work-life balance, working hours) 4. Compensation 5. Springboard 6. Working environment (collaboration, recreation) 	18	Wen et al., 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employee development 2. Employee reward 3. Employee work-life balance 4. Organizational culture
9	Costello & Westover, 2016	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coworker interaction and group work 2. Flexibility to help define work-life balance 3. Hands-off leadership style 4. Food, having free drinks/snacks, or a full cafeteria. 	19	Capnary et al., 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workplace flexibility has a significant and positive influence on employees' loyalty and satisfaction. 2. Work-life balance has a partial mediating influence on the relationship between workplace flexibility and loyalty. 3. Work-life balance does not mediate between workplace flexibility and the satisfaction of millennial employees working for startup companies.
10	Waldena et al., 2017	To foster engagement, organizations should remove obstacles to internal information flow and provide ongoing feedback to employees about individual and organizational issues	20	Zaharee et al., 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quicker rotation through projects and roles 2. More continuous feedback 3. More paid time off. 4. Attractive salary and benefits 5. Professional development opportunities 6. Purposeful work 7. Flexible work arrangements 8. Organizational ethos
11	Carrillo et al., 2017	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making employees feel more excited, valued, and in control of their work (Allowing autonomy) 2. Empowering through personal development and mentoring 3. Creating support groups and recognizing efforts 4. Explaining the bigger picture 5. Creating brainstorming opportunities 			
12	Sugirtha & Sneha, 2017	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Considering employees' uniqueness and recognizing their efforts 2. Creating a culture of information accessibility 3. Simplifying processes, policies, techniques, and jobs to use and adapt 4. Flexi-time policy 			
13	Holmberg-Wright et al., 2017	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear career path 2. Strong coaching 3. Mentoring and leadership 4. Vision and mission that drive the organization 5. Ongoing personal and professional development 6. Semi-structured environment. 7. Companies must be flexible (inc. work-life balance) 			
14	Jauhar et al., 2017	Transformational leadership has a significant negative relationship with the intention to quit. However, job satisfaction only moderated the relationship between rewards and intention to			

From the various studies mentioned above, there are various similarities in the factors of millennial engagement, thus making the millennial generation able to survive, feel satisfied, and ultimately able to provide the best for the organization.

The researcher found at least three significant similarities to be the main strategies of millennial engagement in the workplace: implementing work-life balance, providing career advancement, and allowing learning. Those strategies become the top three millennial engagement drivers, based on the literature discussed in Table 1.

Work-life balance is a factor often found in various studies above. Work-life balance becomes an important factor for millennials. Parkes and Langford (2008) state that work-life balance is an individual's ability to meet commitments to work and family and perform non-job responsibilities and activities. Ng et al. (2010) stated that work-life balance is an important factor for millennials choosing the workplace. Holmberg-Wright et al. (2017) state that workplace flexibility becomes more a norm than

an incentive. Cerf (2017) found work-life balance one of the factors in managing millennial employees. Wen et al. (2018) show that employee work-life balance has become a factor influencing millennial job satisfaction. Capnary et al. (2018) also found the work-life balance to affect the loyalty of millennial generation workers. Based on the literature, the work-life balance program includes job sharing, remote work arrangement, changing to a task-based metric, flexi-time (work start and end times), working from home, part-time hours, vacation days, more paid time off, and seasonal month-off programs.

The second strategy to increase millennial generation engagement in the workplace is career advancement. The studies in this review show that a career-related subject is the second most important factor after the work-life balance. Phillips (2019) stated that millennials are the most prepared generation, with education and diverse experiences. So, it is not surprising that the opportunity of fast promotion is one of the key factors for millennials in choosing an organization or staying in an organization. Ng et al. (2010) mentioned that millennials wish to gain promotion (career advancement) within their first 18 months of work. The average is 15.1 months. The directions that the organization can consider are providing a clear career path or advancement, establishing a talent pool, mentoring for facilitating their employees' career; timely, ongoing, and constant feedback; international career and networking opportunities; rotational program or lateral movement.

The third strategy often mentioned in studies is millennials' training. This is important for millennials because they are the youngest generation in the workplace, so training or educational programs are a major factor in increasing their engagement. Of course, training opportunities are also intended for millennials to prepare for their future careers at organizations. So, there is a close relationship between training and millennials' career advancement. The activities to support the training strategy are further education or future education sponsorship, distinguishing competencies for various positions; formalized training programs for new millennial employees, specific to the everyday functions; preparing various teaching models (lecture-hands-on learning), plant tours, customer visits, knowledge sharing, brainstorming opportunity, and preparing ongoing personal and professional development programs within the organization.

Based on the study, other strategies attracting millennials can be divided into two categories: company perspective and job perspective (Table 2).

Table 2. Characteristics of attractive companies and jobs for millennials

Company Characteristics	Job Characteristics
1) Having a High Ethical standard	1) Interesting job descriptions
2) Social and Environmental Responsibilities	2) Clear and understandable job and role
3) Diverse Workplace	3) More autonomy, valuing employees, respect for them, trust in them, and exciting them
4) Drive Innovation	4) Purposeful work
5) Vision and mission to drive the organization	5) Competitive compensation
6) Organization Ethos	6) Working with the team (team interaction and collaboration)
7) Adapt to new technology-Technology based environment	7) Job match with business goals and the bigger picture
8) Industry Leadership	8) Good leader
9) Culture of information accessibility	9) Using Participation management, Servant Leadership, and Transformational leadership, hands-off leadership style
10) Attractive location	10) Simplification of processes, policies, techniques, and jobs
11) Financial strength – attractive salary & benefits	11) Standardized job process
12) Open and informal communication	12) Support group
13) Progressive work environment	
14) Giving a secure employment	
15) Reward culture	
16) Creating a pleasant working environment	

5. Conclusion

There are at least three main strategies to increase employee engagement of millennials who are increasing in number in various workplaces. The first is to implement the work-life balance program. The program strategies to improve millennial employee engagement are not just working from home, flexible start and end times, flexible or remote work arrangements, part-time hours, more paid time off, more vacation time, but also job sharing, even seasonal month-off programs, special summer hours or vacation days, and task-based metrics. The second strategy is to facilitate and support career advancement and advancement programs for millennials. The programs are mentoring (including reverse mentoring), coaching, constant feedback, rotational programs, international careers, and lateral movements. The company is willing to prepare for a rapid promotion - rapid promotion for millennials, the company has prepared a career at least within 15.1-18 months. The third strategy focuses on creating a culture of learning and support with training facilities and programs. The program strategy that can be run is the training to improve the competencies and careers of millennials that are tailored to career advancement, sponsorship of future education for millennials, and developing formalized training programs specific to the everyday lives of millennials.

Finally, it is also recommended that organizations

consider, select, and gradually change their employee engagement strategy to anticipate and lead the millennial generation, as mentioned above. We believe that changing the workplace environment to engage millennials in the workplace is the key to overall success in the future.

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