

HOW MILLENNIALS ARE CHANGING THE WORLD; HOW COMPANIES MUST ADAPT

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HOW MILLENNIALS ARE CHANGING THE WORLD; HOW COMPANIES MUST ADAPT

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HOW MILLENNIALS ARE CHANGING THE WORLD; HOW COMPANIES MUST ADAPT

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Statement of the Problem

It is estimated that by 2025, the Millennial generation will make up nearly 75% of the workforce. Given that this generation will soon dominate the workforce, organizations need to have a firm understanding of how to attract, engage, and most importantly retain this talent. However, this generation is perhaps one of the most misunderstood generations in modern times. The fundamental gaps that exist between reality and broad generalizations of the Millennial generation, leave many organizations conflicted, and trying to answer the questions of “What do Millennials want?”, “How do employers come to understand these needs?” and ultimately “How do organizations understand and become adept at meeting these needs?” to integrate this new cohort to the workplace.

Key Results and Conclusions

Millennials have high expectations of what they want in the workplace; wants that are altering organizational structures, policies, and processes, perhaps for the better. Millennials believe that their workplace should be flexible, transparent, and have a sense of community. They want to do work that has purpose, for a company that has a high corporate value system. In an ever changing, and globalized market, the difference of a company’s people strategy is what can create the advantage. As evidenced by the grocery store chain Whole Foods Market, a competitive advantage can be achieved by structuring people as a strategy through the use of high performance work systems that create, convert, and capture value competition.

Key Recommendations

Organizations often face the challenge of trying to engage Millennial employees, but must ensure that the prior generations’ needs are still met. Three strategic recommendations to maintain this generational alignment is to stop stereotypes, allow for two way feedback, and accommodate all.

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CHAPTER I

How Millennials are Changing the World; How Companies Must Adapt

It is estimated that by 2025, the Millennial generation will make up nearly 75% of the workforce (Fry, 2015). Due to the fast and furious dissemination of this cohort o the workforce, organizations need to have a firm understanding of how to attract, engage, and (most importantly) retain this talent that will soon dominate the workforce (Nelson, 2012). However, one of the hurdles organizations face is the understanding of what truly personifies the Millennial generation. If organizations do not understand the behavior of this generation and what they value, keeping up with the sweeping changes this cohort is pioneering will prove to be near impossible (Fromm & Garton, 2013). Millennials possess a great deal of knowledge and skills, and are not a generation companies can afford to ignore or misunderstand (Fromm & Garton, 2013). Being the largest group in the workforce today (Fry, 2015), the “strength of the workplace and marketplace depend on what the Millennial generation can accomplish” (Gallup Inc, 2016, p. 4).

The Millennial generation, though unequivocally technologically savvy, is often seen as narcissistic, excessively confident, and entitled (Coussens, 2014). Conversely, as a 2016 Society of Human Resources (SHRM) Employee Engagement Survey revealed, these stereotypes are often misinterpreted; what is being mistaken as overconfidence and narcissism is actually an ambition and eagerness to contribute. As a result of these misconceptions and stereotypes, companies often allocate resources to create programs and strategies that they *perceive* to be what Millennials want (SHRM, 2016).

In response to the Millennial cohort in the workplace, many organizations have implemented perks they believe to be the key to attracting and retaining Millennials; perks such as weekly(pre-paid) visits from an ice cream truck, video games, and ping pong tables (Garrity, 2014). Granted most will not turn down free ice cream, but further data suggested that Millennials are far more substantial than many of these seemingly superficial perks. In their 2016 Harvard Business Review article, *What Millennials Want from a New Job*, Rigoni and Adkins cited that Millennials place little importance on such perks, and in fact place greater importance on a company's ability to facilitate opportunities for growth and advancement. These fundamental gaps that exist between reality and broad generalizations of the Millennial generation leave many organizations conflicted, and trying to answer the questions of *What do Millennials want?*, *How do employers come to understand these needs?*, and ultimately *How do companies become adept at meeting these needs?*, to integrate this new cohort to the workplace.

The purpose of this study is to provide comprehensive and contextual data to answer these questions, and support how the behavior of the Millennial generation is compelling companies to alter and reform their organizational structures, cultures, and behaviors. This study illustrates how three overarching ideologies: flexibility, transparency, and community in the workplace, are integral to engaging this generation and how this employee engagement is vital; now and for the future of their company policies and structure (Tyler, 2013). The framework of the open systems theory will be used to better illustrate the influence Millennials have to an organization's performance (Hayes, 2010) and further give rise as to why organizations need to understand and (ultimately) adapt to the needs of these extraordinary Millennial employees.

As a precursor to understanding the Millennial generation, however, it is first important to profile the key characteristics and values that make up this unique cohort in comparison to

prior generations (Appendix A provides a comprehensive listing of key characteristics and behaviors associated with Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers). An essential component to defining Millennials is to also understand the role technology has played throughout their entire life; they are *digital natives* (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Further evidenced is that a Millennial's relationship with technology is not only a *sixth sense* (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), but also contributes to the generational differences between their cohort and that of Baby Boomers and Generation X.

Next, empirical data of what Millennials expect from their manager and their company is presented; this will provide answers to what Millennials want. Then, an analysis of how organizations are responding (to Millennials in the workplace) to meet the distinctive needs of the Millennial employee. This analysis will include real workforce initiatives that organizations are employing (or could be employing) to better meet the needs of Millennials; all of which corroborate the former discussion of what Millennials want. The analysis will further support how the Millennial generation is driving organizational changes that are consistent with transformational change theories and models of seasoned change agents. And finally, the competitive advantage organizations can create by implementing high performance work systems consistent with Millennial ideologies will be discussed.

To conclude the study, there are three strategic recommendations for companies of how to manage this changing organizational landscape in order to build a coherent, competitive company. Much research exists to delineate all of the denigrating characteristics assigned to this generation by other, older generations of the workforce. However, there is little research that depicts how the Millennial generation is actually redefining the inner workings of companies and

driving substantial change for the betterment of organizations. This study, however, aims to depict just that.

CHAPTER II

A Generation Better Defined

A generation is defined as a group which shares birth years and significant life events at critical stages of development. They share the same historical and social experiences, which ultimately affect the differences in generational groups (Wong, Gardiner, Lang & Coulon, 2008). Baby Boomers, for example, all experienced the Vietnam War in their early adulthood; Gen X was the first generation to enter colleges and universities after the civil rights movement, and not only did Millennials all experienced September 11 in their early adulthood, they are the first generation to be completely immersed with technology (Wong et al., 2008; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Baby Boomers

The US Census Bureau defines Baby Boomers (Boomers) as those born between 1946 and 1964. Boomers are characterized as being loyal, dedicated, competitive workaholics who respect authority and company structure (Gibson, Greenwood, & Murphy, 2008). They further value hard work, success, inclusion, are willing to fight for a cause they believe in, and are open to change. Having worked nearly their entire careers without the use of computers and much of the technology that exists today, Boomers are known to be 'digital immigrants' (Gibson et al., 2008; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Generation X

Generation X (Gen X) was born 1968-1979 (Tolbize, 2008) and is described as being independent, creative, and fun loving. This generation was the first to experience MTV, and with an influx of 24 hour news stations several corporate and government, scandals were capable of being viewed and analyzed around the clock, creating Gen X's need to question authority (Gibson, et al., 2008). Gen Xers further value a work-life balance, and are tenets of accomplishment versus the number of hours spent working; unlike their predecessor Baby Boomers who are characterized as workaholics (Tolbize, 2008). Given that technology has been a part of Gen X's personal and professional lives for the vast majority of it, they are technologically literate and digitally adapted (Gibson et al., 2008; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Millennials

Surpassing Generation X as the largest workforce population in 2015, the Millennial generation (aka Generation Y, the Net Generation, Generation Next, iGen, Echo Boomers, Gen X², etc.) was born between 1980-2000 (Coussens, 2014; Fry, 2015; Howe & Strauss, 2000). While exact titles and birth years may vary slightly, it is evident that "Millennials are a significant part of the population, and an increasingly important part of the business world" (Coussens, 2014 p. 1).

Though often described by negative attributes by preceding generations and popular literature, the Millennial generation is optimistic, confident, and is open to change (Gibson et al., 2008). Millennials are also inclusive, realistic, globally aware, value collaboration, and most importantly desire a flexible work environment (Gibson et al., 2008). However, where Gen X employees aspire for a work-life balance (i.e. life outside of work) Millennial employees seek a work-life blend; blending their work and social lives (Coussens, 2014). This blend can also be

referred to as a ‘work/life integration’ (Milligan, 2016). The notion of blending work and life can be rooted in the Millennial’s view of work being a ‘second home’ and the desire of their coworkers to be like a second family (Tyler, 2013).

Millennials are prone to change jobs frequently (Gibson, et al., 2008). One explanation for this is partially attributed to technology. Millennials’ affinity with technology allows them to meet goals and objectives more quickly than their cubical counterparts from a different generation. This is not to insinuate Millennials are smarter or more competent than Boomers or Gen X, but rather that they enter the workplace already equipped with essential business tools more senior workers may still be learning (PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC), 2012). As a result, they are bored and less likely to stay with companies for an extended period of time without the assurance of a promotion. However, this also creates the stereotype of Millennials being “job hoppers”, or lacking company loyalty; a stigma associated with this cohort (SHRM, 2016).

Digital natives. Born in 1982, the Internet itself is by definition a Millennial (Hershatte& Epstein, 2010). Technology has driven the academic, social, and personal lives of Millennials for as long as they can remember (Hershatte& Epstein, 2010). The first cell phone was introduced when the class of 2000 was a year old, in 1997 when the World Wide Web reached one million sites, the first group of Millennials was entering high school, and when Mark Zuckerberg’s beta version of Facebook was developed, the first Millennials were graduating college (Hershatte& Epstein, 2010).

Millennials are used to having information available 24/7/365 with a few clicks of a mouse and the use of websites such as Google and Wikipedia (Hershatte& Epstein, 2010). According to a 2016 Gallup poll, 71% of Millennials use the internet as their primary source of news, as compared to 51% and 30% of Gen X and Baby Boomers, respectively. Hershatte and

Epstein (2010) also reported that 70% of Millennials are also contributing to content online, compared to 48% of Gen X. It is the Millennial's incessant relationship with technology, often described as a sixth sense, which is used "as a way of knowing and interacting with the world" (Hershtatter & Epstein, 2010, p. 213). This complete and total immersion in technology has led to studies that prove how this generation is (literally) wired differently (Hershtatter & Epstein, 2010).

The brain gap. Dr. Gary Small, Director of UCLA's Memory & Aging Research Center studied the impact of technology to brains. He found that because Millennials are technological experts, their brains are actually mapped differently due to the "repetition of technological skills" (Hershtatter & Epstein, 2010 p. 212). And, because of this constant interaction with technology and devices, it is actually causing the brain to evolve and work differently; it is increasing a Millennial's ability to multi-task, filter information, and respond to visual stimulation in more rapid succession (Cavanaugh, Walsh, & Small 2009).

Small's study went on to explain that the generations considered digital immigrants (i.e. Baby Boomers, and Generation X) that have more face-to-face time, and less "Facebook-to-Facebook time are in a new situation" (Cavanaugh, et. al., 2009, para.4). These generational cohorts must acclimate themselves to new technologies, in order to use it effectively (Hershtatter & Epstein, 2010). This distinction of having to adapt to technology versus it always being a part of one's life, (like Millennials) is what Dr. Small refers to as the *braingap*; as oppose to that of the traditionally coined generation gap (Hershtatter & Epstein, 2010).

Dr. Small's study does not equate acclimation to technology as a distinction of one generation being smarter than another. Rather, his findings support the notion of leveraging this generation's strengths (Tyler, 2013). And further, the belief that these strengths will develop infinitely (Gallup Inc, 2016) and provide an opportunity for organizations to put to use the

Millennial generation's instinctive sixth sense. PricewaterhouseCoopers' (PwC) 2012 survey of more than 4,300 Millennials also supported this view. PwC's survey revealed that 78% of respondents indicated that by having access to the technology they liked in the workplace made them more efficient at their work, which as a result can also benefit the company's bottom line.

Communication and information technologies. Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) suggested that a Millennial's innate sense of technology can also benefit an organization's communication and information technologies (CITs). For example, Rogers (as cited by Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) argued that when an organization is implementing new technology there is often uncertainty and organizations typically look to reduce these uncertainties by seeking advice from *lead users*. Gorman et al, (as cited by Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) further suggested that this role of the lead user can be a Millennial given their predisposition to be technologically advanced. Effectively given the opportunity, Millennials could "become resident experts concerning CITs, offering their more senior coworkers analysis of what works[and] what can work" (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010 p. 232).

This same ideology of Millennials advising more senior employees is similar to the theory of *reverse mentoring* Hershatter and Epstein (2010) discussed. In reverse mentoring, Millennials are assigned to senior level executives, and the learning is facilitated by the Millennial mentoring the executive, by say teaching them how to set up a social media account (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Yet, this concept of reverse mentoring expands beyond technology to provide this younger talent with insight to higher levels of the organization, and a better understanding of the business (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Another added value to this type of arrangement is the potential for Millennial employees to gain exposure and access to more senior level executives, thus accelerating their career path with an organization (Hershatter & Epstein,

2010). And, as later sections will evidence, this type of skill development and defined career path are also key components to engaging and retaining Millennial employees.

Value Add. Epicor software is one company that acknowledges this value add of the Millennial generation's relationship with technology. Celia Fleischaker, senior vice president and chief marketing officer at Epicor Software opined that Millennials are "the fastest-growing generation in the U.S. workforce, and are both technology proficient and digital literate. Businesses that recognize and move to leverage Millennial talent can gain significant competitive advantage in today's age of digital disruption" (Epicor, 2016, para.4). Fleischaker went on to discuss the importance of empowering and building relationships with this generation now, in order to start developing this talent to replace the near 3.5 million manufacturing jobs that will need to be filled in the next 10 years (Epicor, 2016).

There is no shortage of data to describe the Millennial generation's key characteristics and behaviors. Nor is there a shortage of studies to depict how technology has influenced and shaped the Millennial generation. So much so, that the latter has only provided an overview of some of these attributes and differences between the largest generational cohorts in the workforce. Now that the foundational structure of what makes up this generation has been established, it sets the course to better decode the (often mystifying) behaviors and demands this cohort is expecting from to the workplace as employees, to answer *What do Millennials want?*.

The Millennial Generation as Employees: What Millennials Want

Millennials have very strong convictions of what they demand from a manager, and an organization. As one HR manager opined "Oh, [Millennials] want total fulfillment, is *that* all?"(Meister & Willyerd, 2010, p. 1). However, many of these demands are often misinterpreted and result in Millennials being characterized as lazy or entitled, and without respect to business

norms, structures, and processes. For that reason, the proceeding discussion will focus on the two foundational aspects of what Millennials want from their manager, and what Millennials want their company (Meister & Willyerd, 2010) in an effort to objectively identify analyze the demands and needs of this cohort.

From Their Manager

In their 2010 Harvard Business Review article, *Mentoring Millennials*, Meister and Willyerd polled nearly 2,200 professionals spanning various industries. Respondents were asked to rate 8 different managerial skills in order of importance. Overwhelmingly, Millennial respondents wanted continuous feedback about their performance from their managers. However, when 300 heads of HR were asked to rate their company's managers in the same 8 competencies; giving (employee) feedback was ranked last (Meister and Willyerd, 2010). This small, but poignant study illustrates the grave disparities between what Millennial employees want from their managers, in comparison to what is provided. And, there is an old saying that *people don't leave companies, they leave managers*. This, as Meister and Willyerd's study suggested, Millennial employees are leaving their managers because they cannot understand one another.

A coach and mentor. According to research from the National Chamber Foundation (NCF) (2012), Millennials want a close relationship with their manager, and they "view their managers as coaches or mentors" (p.26). Millennials want a manager that will literally coach, advise, and support their performance, similar the 'over-adult-supervised' world Millennials grew up in (Tyler, 2013). Tyler (2013) equated this constant seeking of approval from managers as *in loco parentis*, (Latin for 'in place of parent') that has also resulted in Millennials

being labeled as “needy and high maintenance” (Hershatte& Epstein, 2010, p. 217). Hershatte and Epstein (2010) offered a comparable perspective:

As trophy kids who spent their childhood receiving gold stars and shiny medals just for showing up, Millennials were indoctrinated from their earliest moment to seek approval and affirmation. In the workplace, this has lead to a sometimes excessive propensity to continuously seek guidance and direction. Managers therefore often find themselves in the inevitable position of having to spend a disproportionate amount of time managing people that were presumably hired to help them. (p.217)

Hershatte and Epstein’s (2010) work brought forth many of the same shared beliefs and negative attributes also assigned to this generation by popular literature. However, Wagner (2010) offered that this type of over motivation Millennials have been privy to throughout their lives, should be viewed as an opportunity and continue on into the workplace. His rationale? That this type of encouragement and coaching is what has driven Millennials to develop a sense of purpose and be innovative from an early age. And given the same motivation from their manager, will lead to similar (i.e., purposeful and innovative) results for organizations.

Continuous feedback. A 2016 Gallup poll cited similar discourse around ongoing, continuous feedback being a necessary component to the Millennial generation. “The way Millennials communicate-texting, tweeting, Skype, etc.-is now real-time and continuous....this affects the workplace because Millennials are accustomed to constant communication and feedback” (Gallup Inc, 2016 p. 3). And, as a 2012 PwC survey revealed, by aligning and integrating mechanisms to facilitate this continuous feedback helps Millennials to feel recognized that what they are working on is worthwhile and meaningful; both critical intrinsic motivators that help build employee engagement.

Accenture, one of the world's largest consulting firms, recognized this need for continuous feedback as a trend of their employee population. They came to the realization that their annual performance reviews no longer aligned with the needs of today's workforce and did away with this practice (Wilke, 2015). Their new platform for employee feedback is designed for managers to review employees throughout key project milestones of assignments, as well as at the conclusion of the project, thus increasing the frequency of feedback (Wilke, 2015). The conversations and coaching sessions are digitally-enabled, and can take place anywhere anytime, and from any device (Nanterme, 2015).

This research and recent practice of Accenture provides a direct correlation to the Millennial generation's relationship with technology and how it has influenced their ability to interact with the world around them, as well as the world they work in. Accenture's adaptation to new, more constant practices of providing feedback, is also an indicator of how they are aligning their processes to meet the needs of their employees. Further, this change in Accenture's feedback practice supports the theory of open systems by illustrating a change of external elements (i.e. Millennial employees) causing a change to another element (i.e. communication) within an "organization's system" (Hayes, 2010 p. 95). Subsequent sections will discuss further how changes such as these are benefiting organizations, as well as highlight other practices that companies have implemented to incorporate the needs of Millennial employees.

This continuous feedback can also be a point of contention for other generations in the workforce. Research suggests that Boomers may be insulted by feedback, and actually prefer the freedom of supervision from their managers (Tolbize, 2008). Thus, it is appropriate to correlate these differences to some of the challenges organizations face in trying to understand and meet the needs of the Millennial generation. Boomers, who arguably occupy the senior management

roles within organizations (Tolbize, 2008) are those who would likely be responsible for either managing Millennial employees or determining the strategy for the organization's performance feedback. And, given Boomers' aversion to receiving feedback themselves, it is seemingly more apparent why the Millennial generation is such an anomaly to organizations. That is to say, how are Boomer managers supposed to understand this need of constant feedback, if this has never been a workplace value of their generation?

This is not, however, to suggest that organizations should resign themselves to complacency when determining performance feedback strategies and methodologies. Rather, it indicates that organizations need to evaluate their performance feedback methodologies, and determine if these methods work with their talent management strategies, and be prepared to change what doesn't; particularly as their employee demographics change (PwC, 2012).

From Their Company

Millennials place high importance on work that has a purpose, develops their skills/offers a career path, blends work with the rest of their life, and offer an inclusive total rewards package (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). The 2012 NCF research also examined the ideology of a 'democratized' (p.26) workplace as a need for this emerging young workforce.

Work with a purpose. Millennials value purpose, and research indicates that the Millennial generation is the most "socially conscious generation since the 1960's" (Meister & Willyerd, 2016 p.1; Gallup Inc, 2016). They want to do meaningful work for a company and place emphasis on the social value of a company, versus that of its share value (Coussens, 2014; Ferri-Reed, 2014). Millennials want to actually be doing the volunteer work and not donating money to a cause (Ferri-Reed, 2014). This, albeit an admirable quality of Millennials, can create difficulty for some organizations to build an employer brand (to attract members of this cohort)

which publicizes their moral integrity at every level of the organization; it must be genuine and demonstrated consistently (Higginbottom, 2016).

This same ideal of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and charitable work Millennials expect from their employers (or potential employer) also parallels the Millennial consumer behavior (Lumesse, 2016) As consumers, Millennials place a high value on products that are sustainable (Lumesse, 2016) and expect a high level of CSR from the brands they shop; the greater the CSR, the more likely a Millennial is to remain loyal to a brand (Lumesse, 2016). Therefore, building a company brand that values CSR can also be a means to build loyalty from Millennial employees, which can equate to greater engagement and tenure (Lumesse, 2016).

Skill development and career path. Much like Millennials have the expectation of their manager to be their coach and mentor, this generation wants their organization to develop their skills for the future, and provide a defined career path (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). Potential for growth opportunities is important to where Millennials will choose to work (and stay), with skill development and opportunities to make decisions being top drivers (Phillips & Hopelain, 2015). Howe (as cited by Tyler, 2013) suggested that Millennials like to learn a variety of skills; they crave variety and most importantly *need* this variety to remain engaged in the workplace. Without this engagement, Millennials become bored and look to switch jobs (Rigoni & Adkins, 2016).

Job hopping. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Millennials will have an average of more than 6 jobs by the time they are 26, and more than 17 in their lifetime. This is a stark comparison to Baby Boomers who have an average of 4 jobs in their lifetime. Data suggests that Millennials perceive themselves as ‘free agents’ and their role within a company as a “stepping stone and a growth opportunity” (Phillips & Hopelain, 2015; Rigoni & Adkins, 2016).

Given their tenacity for overachieving, Millennials “have high expectations for fulfillment and success.....the job experience often isn’t what they hoped it would be and they change jobs looking for the right match” (Coussens, 2014 p. 23).

To build retention and reduce turnover, organizations need to recognize the significant impact and cost of not engaging this cohort—if Millennials are not engaged in their jobs, “profitability, productivity and innovation will suffer” (Gallup Inc, 2016 p. 4). And, if the majority of organizations are experiencing this lag to their internal profitability and productivity, the overall economy will also lag with potentially slower job growth and higher rates of unemployment (Gallup Inc, 2016). Therefore, developing this young talent is not only crucial for retention and engagement purposes, but also for the U.S. economy to develop and grow.

Work life integration. The influx of technology, has morphed the standard 9-5 workday and Monday-Friday workweek into a 24/7 office; one where work and personal lives become interconnected. As a result, “Millennials don’t see work as a location; they tend to view work as a function-no matter where it is performed” (Ferri-Reed, 2014 p. 14). This view of work can create a scenario in which Millennials are working late into the night, but with the tradeoff of spending the afternoon performing community service, attending an afternoon workout session, or other personal activity that is integrated into their life (Milligan, 2016).

Beth Monaghan, CEO and co-founder of InkHouse (a Boston PR agency) explained that this (Millennial) integration of all sectors of their life is what she refers to “triple bottom line thinking” (Milligan, 2016 p.36). However, Monaghan also cited that this is not an ideology that Generation X embraces. Instead, Gen Xers regard home, charitable work, and personal lives all as mutually exclusive elements that do not intersect (Milligan, 2016). With Millennials, “everything is a part of their whole lives” (Milligan, 2016 p. 36). That is to say, environments

of work and life depict an intersection, rather than two separate elements. This notion of intersection is further depicted in the commentary below.

Natalie, a Millennial featured in *The Next America*, written by Paul Taylor in collaboration with the Pew Research Center, described how this work life integration was not only a desire of Millennials once in the workplace, but also how Millennials found the work to begin with

The job searching scene is a blur of friends and connections and tips and false leads. It's gossip over drinks, quick little text messages, occasional trips to jobs websites, scans of [Facebook] news feeds, anything that might prove useful (Taylor, 2014, p184).

Flexibility. The tenet of blending work and life, provides Millennials the type of flexibility and control they crave. This demand for flexibility extends beyond just the *when* to work, but also encompasses the *where* and *on what* (Tyler, 2013). Nelson (2012) reiterated that this work-life blend also encroaches upon the social aspect of the workplace Millennials desire. To that end, Millennials do not view the workplace as just a place to work, but a means of “social interaction and shared learning” (Nelson, 2012 p. 80). Yet, in comparison to the workaholic Boomer generation, the value of blending work and life is a not always shared. Baby Boomers, who now occupy the senior management roles within organizations, continually sacrificed their personal lives for work, and value company commitment and loyalty (Tolbize, 2008). Unlike Millennials, who view technology as a means to do work anywhere, anytime, (these) Boomers only see empty cubicles, and make the broad generalization that those not in the office, are not working as hard as those putting in “face time” (Shultze, 2015).

As Ferri-Reed(2014) cited, this tenet of flexibility extends beyond attracting and retaining employees, it is also about “inspiring employees to do their best to contribute to the

company's bottom line”(p.14) And, if their best work is done from home, at a coffee shop, or at midnight, should it matter that cubicles are empty?(PwC, 2012). Put a different way, Ferri-Reed (2014) suggested it is better to manage deadlines and expectations being met, rather than where or when the work is done.

Inclusive toward rewards package. Research has shown that salary is not the highest of priorities amongst the Millennial generation (NFC, 2012). Yes, they believe that compensation should be fair and equitable, but more than 56% of Millennials indicate that the quality of an employer's benefits package influences their choice of employer (NFC, 2012). In addition to the standard medical, dental and vision benefits, Millennials are looking ahead, and interested in securing their retirement accounts (NFC, 2012). One study indicated that four out of five Millennial employees do not believe that Social Security will exist any longer when they retire. And because of this, Millennial workers place a higher value on what a company will match to their retirement savings accounts (Phillips & Hopelain, 2015)

Moreover, Millennials value a choice and ability to customize their benefit selections; this is a generation that expects to be actively involved (Fromm & Garton, 2013; Hentschel, 2015). According to the 12th annual MetLife Employee Trend Survey, 61% of employees, including Millennials, surveyed agree that having benefits customized to meet their needs would increase their company loyalty; 45% strongly agreed (“U.S. employee benefits”, 2013). This means employers must continually be looking for new and innovative ways to attract and retain talented employees by evaluating the richness of their employee benefits package (Snell, 2016).

Democratized workplace. Millennials value collaboration and a non-hierarchical workplace (Hershatte & Epstein, 2010). They don't associate experience with being qualified to do a job (Coussens, 2014). Millennials believe that work output, and making valuable

contributions to a team should count for just as much (if not more) than ‘paying their dues’ (SHRM, 2016).

Lancaster and Stillman (as cited by Coussens, 2014) explained that by the time Millennials entered the workforce they had already “experienced responsibility and autonomy” (p. 14) through their various extracurricular activities, and have already “played vital roles as members of teams; they’ve organized and run meetings in student government and managed budgets of their sports teams” (p.14). To Millennials, this experience has provided them the same skill set as the more tenured employees and makes it difficult to reconcile why they are not promoted, or placed on key project teams (Coussens, 2014).

As the latter evidenced, Millennials have strong convictions and expectations of what they want from a manager and a company. Much of these ideologies are attributed to their upbringing, the influence of technology throughout their entire lives, and the overall expectation that their work should fit into their life. Now that there is a clear (er) understanding of what Millennials want in the workplace, the question of *how* needs to be answered; *How do companies meet these needs?*

The Organizational Response to Millennial Employees: How to Meet the Millennial Needs

Deloitte & Touche LLP hired nearly 17,000 new employees in 2012 most of whom were Millennials. To understand the needs of this generation, they created a Generation Y council to serve as a sounding board to executive managers (Tyler, 2013). Fortune 500 companies have created corporate social media accounts and blogs, to mirror this cohort’s intimate relationship with technology as a means to communicate to and with this generation (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Though these sound like ideal methods to meet the Millennial needs: hire Millennials, ask Millennials what they want, give Millennials everything they want, and replicate their

communication methods; why is it that a 2016 Gallup poll estimated Millennial turnover costs the U.S. economy more than \$30 *billion* dollars annually? The answer, also reported by the same Gallup poll, is *lack of engagement*.

Millennials are the least engaged generation in the workforce today (Gallup Inc, 2016). And, this lack of engagement causes Millennials to leave their current job, and as a result further gives credibility to the stereotype of this generation being job hoppers. So, what should organizations be doing to better engage this generation, and stop them from ‘hopping’? In her 2013 Harvard Business Review article, *New Kids on the Block*, Kathryn Tyler lists three key ideologies that every organization should be practicing to meet the needs of the Millennial generation: flexibility, transparency, and community. As research and data will corroborate, these three ideologies can be the quintessence of an organization that is best equipped to attract, develop and retain this generation of talent. These same three ideologies will also be the foundation to later analyzing why engaging this young talent can be of great value to organizations.

Flexibility

As previously evidenced, Millennials expect flexibility in the workplace (Tyler, 2013). The challenge for some organizations is *adapting* to a culture that will not only accommodate this need but also be *accepting* of it. Put differently, organizations mustn’t preach flexibility as their culture, but in reality, adhere to a standard 9-5 work schedule. This adaptation and acceptance of flexibility are best depicted by the story of a Dallas based tax preparation company, Ryan LLC. This story also demonstrates and exemplifies transformational changes one Millennial employee pioneered.

Ryan. Since its inception in 1991, employees at Ryan LLC were expected to work 50 plus hours a week, as well as clock weekend hours. And, even if employees put in overtime on one day, but needed to leave early another, it was expected that the employee use hours from their paid time off (PTO) bank (Milligan, 2016). This, of course, was until 2008, when a young Millennial employee went into Brint Ryan's (CEO of Ryan LLC) office and handed him a resignation letter. In their brief exchange of words, the employee said 'I love working here, but it is not conducive to having a life' (Milligan, 2016, p. 30). When asked by Ryan if she would consider staying, she stated that would, but only if "he makes Ryan a place where people could have a life outside the office" (Milligan, 2016, p. 30). The latter conversation proved to be a defining moment for Brint Ryan and the direction he would take his company.

Ryan LLC's work environment was completely restructured, and a new emphasis on flexibility became the focal point of their culture; "including the freedom for employees to work when and where they want" (Milligan, 2016, p.30). As a result of this change, the company retention rates increased, efficiency gains were made, and in 2016, Ryan LLC was named to Fortune Magazine's *50 Best Work places for Recent Graduates* (Ryan LLC, 2016). Moreover, this story also illustrates the effect on an organization's performance, when implementing changes driven by the needs of Millennial employees. This story can be better conceptualized using Kotter's model of integrative of organizational dynamics (Hayes, 2010). Appendix B provides a diagram of this integrative model.

Kotter's model. Kotter's integrative model of organizational dynamics consists of seven core elements that can determine organizational effectiveness; six are structural elements, and the seventh element consists of key organizational processes (Hayes, 2010). The six structural elements consist of

- external environment, including the immediate task –related environment as well as the wider environment which includes public and political systems and attitudes;
- employee and other tangible assets, which can include buildings, inventory and cash;
- formal organizational arrangements such as structure and operating system, and also includes job design;
- the social system, which is an organization’s culture and social structure;
- technology which is associated with an organization's core products; and
- the dominant coalition which includes the objectives and strategies of those who control the policies (Hayes, 2010, p. 96).

Each of these elements and processes can have an impact on another process and element, or potentially be a source of limitation (Hayes, 2010). Kotter’s model also theorizes that if “one or two elements emerge as a driving force, the natural tendency is for others to follow in an effort to maintain internal alignment” (Hayes, 2010, p. 97). This philosophy of dominate driving forces is paralleled in the Ryan LLC story.

The driving force for Ryan LLC was the structural element of the dominate coalition (i.e. policies, strategies and objectives of leadership). The company leadership shifted from a policy that once opposed flexibility, to organizational objective to adopt flexibility. And, just as Kotter’s model predicts, with the emergence of this driving force, other elements followed to maintain internal alignment (Hayes, 2010). In Ryan’s story, this was further evidenced; the driving force was Ryan’s dominant coalition, which caused the other structural elements of social systems (i.e. culture; turnover reduced and morale increased) and formal organizational elements (i.e. job design and operating systems; employees were given the autonomy to create

their own work schedules), to also change to maintain alignment (Hayes, 2010). And this change to alignment was what ultimately redefined the entire socio-cultural system at Ryan LLC.

However, in the long term (defined as more than 5 years), Kotter cautions these same ‘driving forces’ that dominated the change originally, can also restrain a company from making future changes (Hayes, 2010); Kotter refers to this as the ‘deep structure’ (Hayes, 2010, p.97) that “shapes the development of a company” (Hayes, 2010, p. 97) That is to say, these dominate driving forces have now become the new strategy, culture, etc. and can create resistance to future changes, ultimately impacting the organization’s effectiveness (Hayes, 2010). Though, in Ryan’s story, it cannot be definitively known if the driving forces that have reshaped their culture will damage the future effectiveness of the organization. It does, however, present a correlation between the changes Millennials are driving in the workplace, and the resistance of organizational *deep structures* that are preventing alignment with these new behaviors and ideals.

Kotter’s theory goes on to explain that “the key to an organization’s prosperity is its ability to adapt in order to maintain external alignment” (Hayes, 2010 p. 97). The argument can be made that Ryan LLC recognized the need to adapt to the external environment (i.e. the Millennial generation) and has positioned itself and its structural elements to be agile, for when future conditions require adaptability. As a result, Ryan LLC has increased their company’s potential for prosperity, given this agility of their structural elements.

Though seemingly a fairytale, Ryan’s story is not intended to suggest that all organizations need to make an immediate paradigm shift to allow employees to work whenever and wherever they want; as there may be other structural elements that need to be considered (i.e. technology, the external environment etc.) However, their story provides evidentiary support to

the benefits of the transformational changes that can happen by engaging, and valuing the Millennial generation's principles. And further, the story of Ryan LLC demonstrates the shift from the tenets of the Gen X and Boomer dominated workforce, into one that embraces the ideologies of the Millennial Generation. It emphasizes how flexibility while originating as a means to have one employee rescind their resignation, morphed into a strategy with great gains for both the employee and employer. This strategy, as evidenced by their being named to Fortune Magazine's *50 Best Work places for Recent Graduates* (Ryan LLC, 2016) also further builds their employer brand that is genuine and demonstrated consistently, to attract members of the Millennial cohort (Higginbottom, 2016).

Transparency

The second ideal that Tyler (2013) discussed was Transparency. Millennials want as much information as possible and feel that no information should be withheld, but rather widely shared (Coussens, 2014). Lytle (2014) discussed that there are three approaches to transparency in the workplace; full transparency, transparency of process, and a third being a mix of both approaches. Shared information can have a reciprocal effect; employees who have more information will be more engaged and more likely to contribute to organizational success and initiatives (Snell, 2016). The practices of SumAll and Northshore better depict this effect of transparency in connection with employee engagement (Lytle, 2014).

SumAll. SumAll, a New York City based analytics company, is an example of a company that practices this ideal of transparency. At SumAll, employees have access to nearly every company document including employee pay data and partnership agreements (Lytle, 2014). Every employee is able to look up in a data base what every member of the company earns. SumAll's CEO, Dane Atkinson explained that "people tend to have a higher degree of

trust in an organization that is transparent” (Lytle, 2014, The Case for Transparency). He further cited that with such complete company transparency, employees are easily able to see what a company values, and if the company is a right fit for some employees and their career goals (Lytle, 2014).

What's more, is Atkinson noted that this type of transparency has also benefited their recruiting efforts because employees come in the door knowing exactly the pay for a position they applied for; it takes the negotiation process out of the equation (Lytle, 2014). And, this same practice of transparency he credits to dissipating any allegations of gender or racial bias (Lytle, 2014). “When transparency works, it makes people feel they are being paid fairly, which, in turn, drives employee engagement” (Lytle, 2014, The Case for Transparency). And, this engagement for SumAll creates a turnover rate of less than 10% annually (Lytle, 2014). Further, SumAll’s story supports Kotter’s model, whereby a change to one of their structural elements (i.e. dominant coalition) resulted in changes to their social system (i.e. reduced turnover).

Northshore. Northshore-LIJ Health System, in Manhasset, N.Y. shares a similar philosophy of how transparency can lead to engagement. However, Northshore’s way of thinking is to share the process, not necessarily the numbers (Lytle, 2014). As their assistant vice president of compensation, Carol Boyor discussed “engagement stems more from informing workers how their pay is derived...If I trust there’s a process and the process is fair, that drives engagement more than ‘show me the salary,’ ” (Lytle, 2014, The Case for Transparency). This ideology of fairness relates to Millennials placing value on authenticity and honesty in the workplace and being more apt to choose organizations that align with these values (Phillips & Hopelain, 2015).

Lytle's (2014) editorial, though not specific to a generational cohort, provides evidentiary support to Hershatter and Epstein's (2010) research that "Millennials who feel valued, appreciated, and looked after, respond with loyalty" (p. 220). This important correlation, the relationship between transparency and retaining and engaging Millennial employees, also provides parallel to a very basic the psychological contract between employee and employer (Hayes, 2010).

Physiological contract. As Hayes (2010) ascertained this psychological contract is "an unwritten set of expectations" (p.191) between organizational members and the organization which "incorporates concepts such as fairness, reciprocity, and a sense of mutual obligations" (p. 191). Hayes (2010) further discussed how the level of commitment from the employee is dependent upon how their employer upheld their end of the contract. Decidedly, employees who feel their employer has sustained their end of the contract will have a higher level or commitment to the organization. Employees who view their employer as not having kept up their end of the contract will have a lower level of commitment (Hayes 2010).

Applying this theory to the relationship of transparency and engagement the psychological contract would be defined as follows

- transparency(employer obligation);
- leads to engagement (shared obligation, and perhaps even a sub contract);
- leads to employees feeling valued (employer obligation);
- leads to loyalty (employee obligation);
- and loyalty translates to retaining (Millennial) employees, and less *job hopping*.

This same principle of a psychological contract and employee engagement will be referenced in a later section, to illustrate how it can extend into providing organizations a competitive advantage.

Handling transparency. Lytle's 2014 work, though mostly citing transparency specific to salary, also provided a much greater overarching framework of *how* to handle transparency; two of these principles can lend themselves to organizations seeking to implement transparency practices of any sort

- communicate and train— teach supervisors and managers how to respond to questions from employees to be able to answer *why*, or be able to explain why the information can't be shared;
- provide context—do not simply go through the motions of making information available to employees, but provide information that explains the rationale behind a particular decision or change (Lytle, 2014, How to Handle Transparency).

Ferri-Reed (2014) opined similar strategies to meet this need of transparency and advised that "employers need to speak candidly to employees about the organization's needs, challenges, and successes" (p.13). Which, when managed effectively, this type of transparency can also lead to engaging employees to become a part of brain storming processes, and change efforts; it's leveraging new ways of thinking about issues that are at an impasse (Ferri-Reed). Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) shared similar insights about providing opportunities for open communication and dialog. They suggested that this inclusion of Millennial employees in problem solving provided closer "supervisor-subordinate relationships (p.230) and informal opportunities for coaching and mentoring Millennials; which as a result can lead to longer term relationship with the organization (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010).

And further, this type of engagement is increasing the psychological contract by providing potential skill development and opportunities for employees to make decisions; both which are top drivers for where Millennials will choose to work and stay working (Phillips & Hopelain, 2015). Yet, another link that transparency provides to engage and retain talent.

Community

The final ideology Tyler (2013) cited as key to meeting the demands of Millennials, is community. Much like flexibility and transparency, community is another tenet that can lead to engagement for Millennial employees. Millennial workers are “fully committed and contribute their best efforts to the organization when their work is performed in a collaborative manner” (Myers & Sadaghiani 2010, p. 230). They are very social, and more “peer-group oriented” (Nelson, 2012, p. 87) than prior generations. Having grown up playing on sports teams, and participating in school councils and various other collaborative activities, Millennials thrive on teamwork and collaboration (Coussens, 2014; Myers & Sadaghiani 2010). For organizations that understand this, it is also a straightforward way for employers to provide this cohort with their much needed demand for collaboration while building engagement (Nelson, 2012).

Research proved Millennials value philanthropy and seek to join together this value into their work-life integration. Lindsey Pollack (2015), a self-described “Millennial workplace expert” also ascertained that opportunities for collaboration and ‘giving back’ can be synonymous. Charities.org for example views these out of work opportunities as means for employees and their managers to get to know one another outside of the office. These chances for informal collaboration translate to employees feeling more connected through the strengthened relationships they have formed and also provide a greater sense of community when they return to the office (Pollack, 2015). Though, this ideology of community can also

extend beyond just having friends and a social network at the office, it is also is the one tenet that organizations need to *physically* adapt to (Ferri-Reed, 2014).

Workplace design. “Creating an open and flexible workspace is essential to attracting top millennial talent” (Kalman, 2012, para.1). What’s more, is that this theory of community also models the physical characteristics of transparency and flexibility (Kalman, 2012). Ferri-Reed (2014) explained that cubicles assume employees “require certain office basics to be productive—desks, file cabinets, horizontal work surfaces when in reality technology has transformed this traditional office” (p. 14). And, as already discussed, Millennials expect to have work-like integration, which is why offices that feel more like home, versus the traditional office space, are more appealing to Millennials (Ferri-Reed, 2014).

Red frog events. Chicago based Red Frog Events, though arguably an extreme adaptation of this redefined workplace (i.e. they have tree houses and an office zip line) is an organization that has given rise to what it means to build a community. Red Frog does not believe in the traditional “cubicle farm” (Ferri-Reed, 2014 p. 14) of offices, but rather adheres to large, flexible, open spaces (Ferri-Reed). They have several locations around the office where employees can work in small groups, write on walls during a meeting, but also private areas for employees to work and not be disturbed (Kalman, 2012). By allowing Millennials the opportunity to decide where they want to do their work in the office, Red Frog understands that a Millennial's need for not only community but also flexibility can be integrated into the workplace design (Kalman, 2012). This draws the conclusion that workplace design is yet another element to better engaging Millennial employees.

Building community. Though organizations such as Red Frog Events have literally built community into their culture, other less progressive organizations can still make changes to their workplace that will appeal to Millennials. Some of these changes can include

- creating common spaces for workers to collaborate;
- create spaces that offer casual group seating, similar to a coffee shop or living room;
- use warm or neutral color pallets;
- make use of bare walls, and make them writable wall to collect ideas;
- still offer some ‘play’ options (e.g. ping pong tables), but not as the focus and
- offer to provide some private space for employees who prefer solitude (Ferri-Reed, 2014 p. 14).

Shared values. The ideology of community and workplace design can also accentuate an organization’s values. Rachel I. Reiser, founder and principal of Generationally Speaking, explained that “what’s most important for Millennials isn't necessarily rooted in an organization's physical space but in the attitude and culture the organization *projects* to its employees — Millennial or otherwise” (Kalman, 2012, para.16). Thus, the foosball tables and a company bar are nice perks, but it also speaks volumes to the culture and values of the company (Kalman, 2012). Organizations that are able to demonstrate their values through these types of informal spaces and employee interactions will likely be viewed as more authentic by employees. That is, the ideology of community is being projected and practiced organically, rather than just being an ideal that is talked about. Which, as already established, Millennials place high importance in choosing organizations that align with their values (Phillips& Hopelain, 2015).

According to a 2016 Gallup poll, more than 55% of Millennial employees are not engaged at work. What’s more, is that this same cohort also makes up the largest sector of the

American workforce (Fry, 2015) and is costing the U.S. economy an estimated \$30 billion a year (Gallup Inc, 2016). Much has been written about Millennials and their apparent disregard for social and business norms, and what employers must do to *tame* these ideals. Yet, as the latter data substantiated, in order to engage and effectively retain Millennial talent, *organizations* need to make a paradigm shift from the tenets of the Gen X and Boomer dominated workforce, into one that embraces the ideologies of the Millennial Generation. This paradigm shift includes implementing strategies, policies and work environment that welcomes flexibility, transparency, and community (Tyler, 2013).

After contrasting the key characteristic and values of the Millennial generation to Boomers and Gen X, answering the questions of *what* Millennials want in the workplace, and providing evidentiary support of *how* companies can achieve these ideals, it is imperative to conclude this study by analyzing *why* organizations must meet the extraordinary demands of this generation. Arguably, the rationale of Millennials being the largest cohort in the workforce (Fry, 2015), may seem like the obvious answer. Yet, this final section will link employee engagement as a means for organizations to create a competitive advantage, by citing, Whole Foods Market's high performance work system that has continually created their advantage over competitors.

The Competitive Advantage of Engagement:

Why Organizations Need to Respond to Millennial Needs

In an ever changing and globalized market, the difference of a company's people strategy is what can create the competitive advantage. Kim and Mauborgne (2009) defined people as one of the "three strategy propositions" (p.4) that must align to achieve a success of strategy (profit and value are the other two propositions) Collins and Porras (1996) ascertained the ideology of an organization's core values being "essential and enduring tenets of an organization"(p.66);

organizations such as Southwest have achieved and maintained their competitive advantage by adhering to a core ideology of creating value for their employees (Hallowell, 1996). Wooton and Horne (2000) further established that when assessing an organization's strategic capability, one of the most important metrics is the employee. That is to say, a competitive advantage can be achieved by structuring people as a strategy through the use of high performance work systems (Snell, 2016).

HPWS

A high performance work system (HPWS) is defined as "a specific combination of HR practices, work structures, and processes that maximize employee knowledge, skill, commitment, and flexibility" (Snell, 2016, p.622). Put another way, an HPWS supports the socio-cultural norms and capabilities within an organization. Similar to what Leinwand and Mainardi (2010) define as a "way to play" for customers, an HPWS defines the way a company needs to play in order to create and sustain value for its employees.

Within the structural components of a successful HPWS, there are four guiding principles that are essential to reaping its full benefits. Three of these guiding principles will be discussed further: egalitarianism and engagement, shared information and trust, and knowledge development (Snell, 2016). Each of these components will be examined to illustrate their integral role in creating a lasting strategic and competitive advantage for organizations. Moreover, how these components connect to the ideologies of the Millennial generation to further demonstrate *why* it is vital to adapt to the changes this cohort is pioneering will be analyzed.

Egalitarianism and engagement. After our basic needs, physiological and safety respectively, have been satisfied, Maslow theorized that people want to have a sense of

belonging (Griffin & Moorhead, 2012). Often status and power differences can often create an “us vs. them” mentality internally (between employees, managers unions etc.). Such conflicts of power lead to a decrease in organizational effectiveness, and can be costly to an organization. Having a more egalitarian work environment, however, can lessen this conflict, and increase collaboration, teamwork, and ultimately productivity through employee engagement (Snell, 2016).

Whole Foods Market is an organization that has upheld an egalitarian work environment. Whole Foods Market has completely decentralized their management strategy to make each store employee run (Snell, 2016). Employees at each store are broken into teams (meat, produce bakery, etc.) and each team is empowered to make decisions about products, pricing, and staffing as it pertains to their particular department, rather than having a store manager, or company executive make such decisions (Snell, 2016). The result? A store that is better able to customize their products to the need of individual communities they service. This strategy provides a competitive advantage (Snell, 2016) to Whole Foods by leveraging the knowledge and ideas of their employees to expand its operating capabilities over those capabilities of a more traditionally run grocery store.

The ideals of collaboration and teamwork are illustrated in the Whole Foods strategy above. And, this strategy is also synonymous with the ideologies of community and the democratized workplace that Millennials place a high level of value on. This can draw the conclusion that by adhering to a people strategy that incorporates Millennial values is one way organizations can gain an advantage over their competition. Hallowell (1996) would equate this to Southwest’s strategy of “creating value, converting value and capturing value” (p.514). That is say, Whole Foods Market *created value* for their employees by their work environment

structure, which was *converted* to employees being empowered to make decisions, which then allowed the grocery store to *capture* this value by means of customizing their products to meet customer needs (Hallowell, 1996; Snell, 2016). This same strategy of create, convert, and capture (Hallowell, 1996) will be illustrated again with the discussion of the remaining guiding principles.

Shared information and trust. “Employees of transparent organizations better understand the rationales for decision making and as a result, more fully support them and learn to make effective decisions themselves” (May, p. 41). When information is shared with employees about the direction of a company (strategies, business performance, future company plans etc.) it further supports employee engagement and builds trust (Snell, 2016). Shared information can have a reciprocal effect; employees who have more information will be more engaged and more likely to contribute to organizational success and initiatives. And, the goals of the company are carried out, because employees are more engaged; thus creating an advantage over competitors (Snell, 2016). Whole Foods Market has taken the “we” approach to store management, versus a top down hierarchy. Arguably, this has already built the foundation of trust amongst employees; their employer trusts them to make key decisions about the overall direction of the store.

Information sharing is also a key strategy at Whole Foods Market; all companywide initiatives are voted on by employees, not stockholders. This, as it turns out, 95% of Whole Foods Market stock is owned by employees (Snell, 2016). So, not only is information shared with employees, each is trusted to be a part of the process of deciding what is best (Hael and Breen, 2007). This characteristic of “Whole Foods Market’s organizational culture strengthens

workers' appreciation of the business to motivate them for higher productivity and minimal turnover" (Rowland, 2015, para. 6).

This same principle of information sharing and trust is tantamount to the psychological contract between employee and employer previously evidenced (i.e. transparency leads to employee engagement; engagement leads to employees feeling valued, and these feelings of value lead to employee loyalty and retention). However, this psychological contract can now be expanded to include the connection to a competitive advantage and the value creation strategy that Hallowell (1996) opined

- shared information and trust(value creation);
- leads to employee engagement (value conversion);
- leads to employees feeling valued (value conversion);
- leads to higher productivity and less turnover (value creation).

Knowledge development. Prior research concluded, that the Millennial generation is a proponent of their organization to develop their skills for the future and provide a defined career path (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). Skills development and potential for growth opportunities is also important to where Millennials will choose to work. (Phillips & Hopelain, 2015). This ideology of development and career path Millennials value also coincides with being a contributor for organizations to leverage an advantage over their competitors.

Statistically, the number of low skilled jobs available is on a steady decline, and the number of high skilled jobs is increasing (Snell, 2016). This means that if employers want to compete through people, they too need to prioritize employee education in order to have the right people in the right places, with the right skills. Not only does this mean attracting and hiring the best and most knowledgeable candidates, it means continuing to invest in their current

employees' education as well (Snell, 2016). As a result, organizations will be able to develop an even greater organizational strength for sustained competition and growth.

Whole Foods Market has designed an online training portal for employees to pursue certification to further their careers with the company. They also sponsor educational cooking seminars, and culinary field trips to broaden employees' knowledge and skills (Snell, 2016). This combination of well educated, well trained employees can be leveraged to create organizational strength that will defy competition; the employee is increasing their knowledge and skill set for career advancement, while the company is benefiting from a better educated and trained employee to meet the increase of high skilled jobs (Snell, 2016).

Whole Foods Market continuously outperforms its major competitors in the grocery industry and has reportedly earned profit margins of nearly 15% above industry-wide profit margins (Roberson, et. al, 2010). And, as evidenced, Whole Foods Market is an organization whose HPWS fosters an egalitarian work culture that embraces transparency and trust, and knowledge development; all of which are fundamental to the needs and values of the Millennial generation. This is not to imply that Whole Foods Market is the only organization that can gain a competitive advantage by employing strategies that meet the needs of Millennials. Rather, Whole Foods Market's HPWS model is an example of strategic alignment between people and organizational goals, driven by their commitment to engaging and creating value for employees. And, it is this value creation and engagement that directly correlates to a sustained advantage over their competitors.

Additionally, not every organization needs to model the same ideals and core values as Whole Foods to leverage this competitive advantage. However, organizations do need to recognize the bigger picture, the advantage of engaging employees, and the need to adapt their

practices, work structures, and processes in order to build this engagement, especially with the Millennial generation (Hershatler & Epstein, 2010; Tyler, 2013). And perhaps most importantly, organizations need to alter and reform these organizational structures, cultures behaviors, and practices to those that will ultimately meet the demands of the Millennial generation; flexibility, transparency and community (Tyler, 2013). The end result is that when organizations create this strategic alignment between people and the organizational goals, they're able to reap the benefits and rewards of their efforts. To put it differently, once an organization has engaged its employees (*created value*), their ability to then *convert* this value (desired employee behavior), is what will lead to organizations being able to *capture* this value to gain a competitive advantage (Hallowell, 1996).

CHAPTER III

Analysis of Findings and Key Recommendations

Millennials are the future of the American workforce and are a generation like no other. Their behaviors, characteristics, and values are what often make this cohort misunderstood by prior generations (i.e. Boomers and Gen X). And, these misunderstandings are what can lead organizations to reject, rather than accept the changes Millennials are demanding of the workplace.

Kotter and Schlesinger (as cited by Hayes, 2010) list four fundamental reasons why people resist change, one of these reasons cites misunderstanding and lack of trust. That is, “when organizational members do not trust change managers, they are likely to resist any changes they propose” (Hayes, 2010 p. 194). Given the overabundance of negative literature written about Millennial behaviors and characteristics, one can reason that other generations in the workforce are less likely to trust the changes proposed by this generation, or invest in

understanding these behaviors. In order to mitigate these misunderstandings and stereotypes, organizations need to first work towards better understanding the needs and behaviors of this generation (SHRM, 2016).

Employee engagement is also key with this generation, and a prominent theme throughout the research. Organizations that want to attract and retain Millennial employees, need to bridge the crucial gap of what will fully engage this generation versus those of prior generations; this study successfully illustrated several emerging ideals. Organizations are at a pivotal point in which they will soon become dependent upon this young Millennial talent to be the future leaders of their organization. By answering the pivotal questions of *What do Millennials want?*, and *How do employers come to understand these needs and become adept at meeting these needs?*; this study better illustrated the connection of engagement as a means to attracting, and retaining the Millennial generation to drive organizations into the next Millennium.

What do Millennials Want?

As research evidenced, Millennial employees segment their wants into two sub groups of what they want from a manager, and what they want from their organization. Though not mutually exclusive, each of these components has a set of distinct needs. For example, Millennials want constant feedback from their manager and want him or her to act more as a coach and a mentor (Meister & Willyerd, 2010) versus the traditional hierarchical role of their supervisor. These ideologies, however, can also be a point of contention and plausible cause of workplace tension Millennials are creating. The shift in traditional manager roles that Millennials expect is not how Baby Boomer have spent their careers. That is to say, Baby Boomers expect the workplace to be a much stricter hierarchical structure.

Millennials want their workplace to be flexible, develop their skills and provide purpose (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). Much like being consumers of industry, Millennials are consumers of the workplace, and will “shop” until the deal is right. This is evidenced by the notion of Millennials having an average of more than 6 jobs by the time they are 26, and more than 17 in their lifetime (US Census Bureau). Similar to what Leinwand and Mainardi (2010) define as a “way to play” to add values for its customers, Millennials are defining the way a company needs to play in order to create added value for its employees. And this added value will ultimately lead to greater engagement and loyalty, and loyalty translates to retaining (Millennial) employees, and less *job hopping*.

It can be concluded that the workplace needs Millennials expect to be fulfilled, are also foundational key drivers to other elements within an organizational structure. And, as the open systems framework predicts “changes to any one of the internal or external elements of an organization’s system will cause changes to other elements” (Hayes, 2010, p. 95). That is to say, organizations that adapt their internal elements (i.e. organizational structures, cultures, and behaviors) will create changes to their external elements (i.e. an employee brand that will attract Millennial employees). Further, the answer to what Millennials want also directly correlate to many of the same ideologies presented from answering the question of how employers can meet these needs.

How do employers meet these needs?

Research evidenced that Millennials are the least engaged employee group in the workforce today (Gallup Inc, 2016). And further data established that an organization’s ability to possess the ideologies of flexibility, transparency and community (Tyler, 2013) will create an organizational environment that will engage Millennial employees. Yet, creating an

organizational culture that adheres to these ideologies, will also require organizations to make a paradigm shift from the tenets of the Gen X and Boomer dominated workforce, into one that embraces the ideologies of the Millennial Generation.

Flexibility. Ryan LLC provided an example of an organization that successfully made this paradigm shift to adapt to and accept a flexible work environment. Given this change to a flexible work environment, Ryan employees were more productive and efficient (Milligan, 2016). Their remarkable story of the impact to their culture and increased engagement of their entire employee base was also the implication of one Millennial employee (Milligan, 2016). And, using the framework of Kotter's integrative model of organizational dynamics, demonstrated that the theory of driving forces and their impact to changes in structural elements holds true (Hayes, 2010).

However, Kotter's model also predicts that an organization's driving forces can cause complacency. That is to say, these dominate driving forces have now become the new strategy, culture, etc. and can create resistance to future changes, ultimately impacting the organization's effectiveness (Hayes, 2010). Though, given the transformational changes and the positive impact of the result of change at Ryan, it can be concluded that this theorized complacency may not necessarily be a negative attribute.

Transparency. Research and data supported that when information is shared with employees about the direction of a company (strategies, business performance, future company plans etc.) it supports employee engagement and builds trust (Snell, 2016). This engagement can be further translated into a very basic psychological contract. And, as evidenced previously, this psychological contract starts with the obligation of the employer and cascades into a strategy that can lend itself to being a strategy of retaining Millennials. This is accomplished by the

notion of “Millennials who feel valued and appreciated, and looked after, respond with loyalty” (Hershatte&Epstein, 2010 p. 220). It can, therefore, be concluded, organizations that recognize this connection and uphold their end of the contract will have a higher level of commitment, engagement, and retention of employees.

Community. The final ideology of community can be developed in both the literal and figurative sense. Millennials view work as a second home, and their coworkers as a second family (Tyler, 2013). They want their workplace to be social and fun, but free from the traditional cubicles and office furniture that has previously donned this space. Building a community within the workplace feeds the desire of Millennials to work collaboratively in teams. And for organizations, that recognize this, it is not only an easy way to enhance innovation and increase productivity (Alsop, 2008, as cited by Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010), but also a straightforward way for employers to provide this cohort with their much needed demand for collaboration, while building engagement (Nelson, 2012).

People as Strategy

In an ever evolving and competitive market, employers must continually be looking for new and innovative ways to attract and retain talented employees. Whole Foods Market’s HPWS model presented an example of strategic alignment between people and organizational goals, driven by their commitment to engaging and creating value for employees. And, it is this value creation and engagement that directly correlates to a sustained advantage over their competitors. Although not every organization needs to model the same ideals and core values as Whole Foods to leverage this advantage; organizations do need to recognize the bigger picture, the advantage of engaging employees, and the need to adapt their practices, work structures, and processes in

order to build this engagement (Hershatler & Epstein, 2010; Tyler, 2013); particularly to those that will ultimately meet the demands of the Millennial generation (Tyler, 2013).

Key Recommendations

This influx of new talent to the workforce arguably presents challenges for organizations who need to engage Millennials to leverage a competitive advantage but also continue to engage prior generations. Three key strategies to do this are stop the stereotypes (SHRM, 2016), two-way feedback, and accommodate all (Tyler, 2013).

Stop Stereotypes

Popular literature has been responsible for creating self-fulfilling prophecies, defining an entire generation as lazy, entitled job hoppers. As a result, Millennials are often broadly characterized by traits that may not even apply to individual employees. Meister and Willyerd (2010) discussed the tactic of reverse mentoring to help bridge this gap. Reverse mentoring allows employees that would not normally interact to learn from one another and help to potentially dispel any preconceived notions about one another. And, this type of engagement also has been proven to have great rewards to the bottom line as well. For example, after Sun Microsystems implemented a mentoring program for employees, their retention rate amongst the Millennial employees, who participated in the program, was 23% higher than non-participants (NCF, 2012). And this retention and engagement also saved Sun Microsystems an estimated \$6.7 million dollars (NCF, 2012).

Two-Way Feedback

Solicit feedback from employees as a means to evaluate what is working, and what is not working with processes, structures strategies etc., within the organization. Create a mixed task force (i.e. managers, frontline employees, Boomers, Millennials etc.) to review and present the

feedback at regular intervals with the larger organization. This will allow Millennials the opportunity to be a part of a community, and build their organizational citizenship. And, for older generations to still be involved in an aspect of the organizational structure they value.

Millennials want continuous feedback, whereas older generations (who may even be insulted by feedback) are less prone to desire such frequent feedback. Though evidentiary support concluded that some organizations are moving away from annual reviews to meet this Millennial need, organizations should review their individual talent management strategies (PwC, 2012). It may not be that the annual review and goal setting should disappear completely, but organizations should make the effort to also provide informal feedback in the time between reviews. This can come in the form of an email, or recognition at a staff meeting, or a brief bi-weekly check in meeting. This strategy accommodates both frequent, and infrequent communication needs, and an opportunity for managers to coach all of their employees at intervals best suited by their need.

Accommodate All

Finally, as organizations implement new initiatives to accommodate Millennials, they don't necessarily have to be Millennial only initiatives. Tyler (2013) cited that some of these changes to practices, work structures, and processes are not only benefiting Millennial employees but every generation within a company's workforce. That is to say, if there is opportunity for all employees to benefit, these are the opportunities organizations should seek out. Deloitte is a great example of one company that did this.

In 2012, Deloitte & Touche piloted a program called, 'Small Things, Big Differences', in which workplace teams are formed to collaborate on projects. Each team is self-governed and decides when and where to work based on the needs and conflicting responsibilities of team members. Though primarily geared toward the Millennial employee and their desire for a

flexible work environment, such a practice provides the workplace flexibility that all generations can benefit from (Tyler, 2013).

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The Millennial generation is reengineering the socio cultural norms of companies and it is for companies to adapt in order to attract, engage, and retain employees. Though often a cohort described by negative attributes, the Millennial generation is optimistic, confident, and is open to change (Tolbize, 2008). Millennials are also globally aware, value collaboration, and most importantly desire a flexible work environment (Tolbize, 2008; Coussens, 2014). Millennials crave feedback from their managers, while Baby Boomers are more likely to be insulted by receiving the same feedback (Tolbize, 2008). Generation X strives to achieve a work-life balance, keeping the aspects of work and life mutually exclusive; Millennials have morphed this principle into a work-life integration of blending the two aspects together.

Technology, often referred to as a Millennial's sixth sense has changed their "way of knowing and interacting with the world" (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010, p. 213). This complete and total immersion with technology has proven how the Millennial generation is (literally) wired differently (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). However, a Millennial's relationship with technology can also be an advantage to organizations that are willing to take notice of their abilities. Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) reiterated this advantage can come in the form of being an advisor to the organization; they are best equipped (than say other generations) to advise on the newer technology platforms that are most efficient or the best media for the betterment of the organization.

Further, Millennials have very strong convictions of what they demand from a manager, and organization (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). This cohort wants a manager that will coach, advise, and support their performance (Tyler, 2013). They want constant, continual, straightforward feedback; a need that can no longer be met by the traditional annual performance review. Millennials place high importance on work that has purpose and develops their skills, they want to do meaningful work for a company, and place emphasis on the social value of a company, versus that of its share value (Coussens, 2014; Ferri-Reed, 2014). It is these same values that lead Millennials to choose what organizations they will work for, and ultimately stay working for (Phillips & Hopelain, 2015).

Millennials are transforming organizational structures, policies and processes. The greater the challenge of social and business norms this generation places on organizations to make changes to their organizational structures, cultures, and behaviors, justifies the need for organizations to invest the resources. As Nelson (2012) acknowledged:

There are many reasons to be frustrated by the newest generation in the workforce, but a greater number of reasons to be excited about what they have to offer to any employer that is willing to meet them at their expectations in the workplace. Perhaps now is the time to consider making your work environment more meaningful for Millennials (p. 7).

Conclusion

Comparing and contrasting different studies, surveys, and literature, revealed there are several different stereotypes and misconceptions that exist about the Millennial generation. Throughout the initial research process, it was often difficult to locate studies or data that perceived this cohort as bearing any positive characteristics or qualities; except for their ability to be more technologically advanced than their generational counterparts. These repetitive findings

begged the question as to whether popular literature was breeding the over generalizations and negative attributes assigned to this generation before they even entered the workforce.

However, as research progressed as did more objective literature that explained why Millennials behave in certain ways, or better yet, *appear* to behave in certain ways. It is because of the former findings and literature, I wanted this study to depict and highlight the positive attributes of this generation. And, how often times these attributes are misunderstood by organizations, as well as bring attention to how organizations can benefit from what this unique cohort is bringing to the workplace. It is inevitable that Millennials are shaping the future of organizations, and now is the time to “focus less on the characteristics society has ascribed to the emerging Millennial generation, and more on policies and practices that support the changing demands being placed on our workforce” (Tyler, 2013, Accommodate All, para. 2).

Finally, this research and study resulted in the originally desired intent which was to better understand Millennials and the changes organizations need to make in satisfying their workplace expectations, in order to attract, engage and retain this generation of talent. However, this research and study also provided an opportunity for future study. Though Millennials are the current and most influential generation in the workforce, approximately ten years from now a new generation (still to be named) will be entering the workforce. And, at the time this new cohort will be entering the workforce, Millennials will be their managers, and running the organizations that they once were such an anomaly to. The hypothesis to be studied is whether there was a role reversal of Millennials that took place as they became more tenured in the workplace. The research would focus on whether the changes Millennials pioneered in their coming of age have evolved to meet the needs of this new generation, or, is this new generation upsetting the socio and cultural norms of organizations in the same way Millennials once did.

That is to ask, has the generation that once caused such great changes, now resistant to changes, much like that of Baby Boomers or Gen X when Millennials first entered the workforce?

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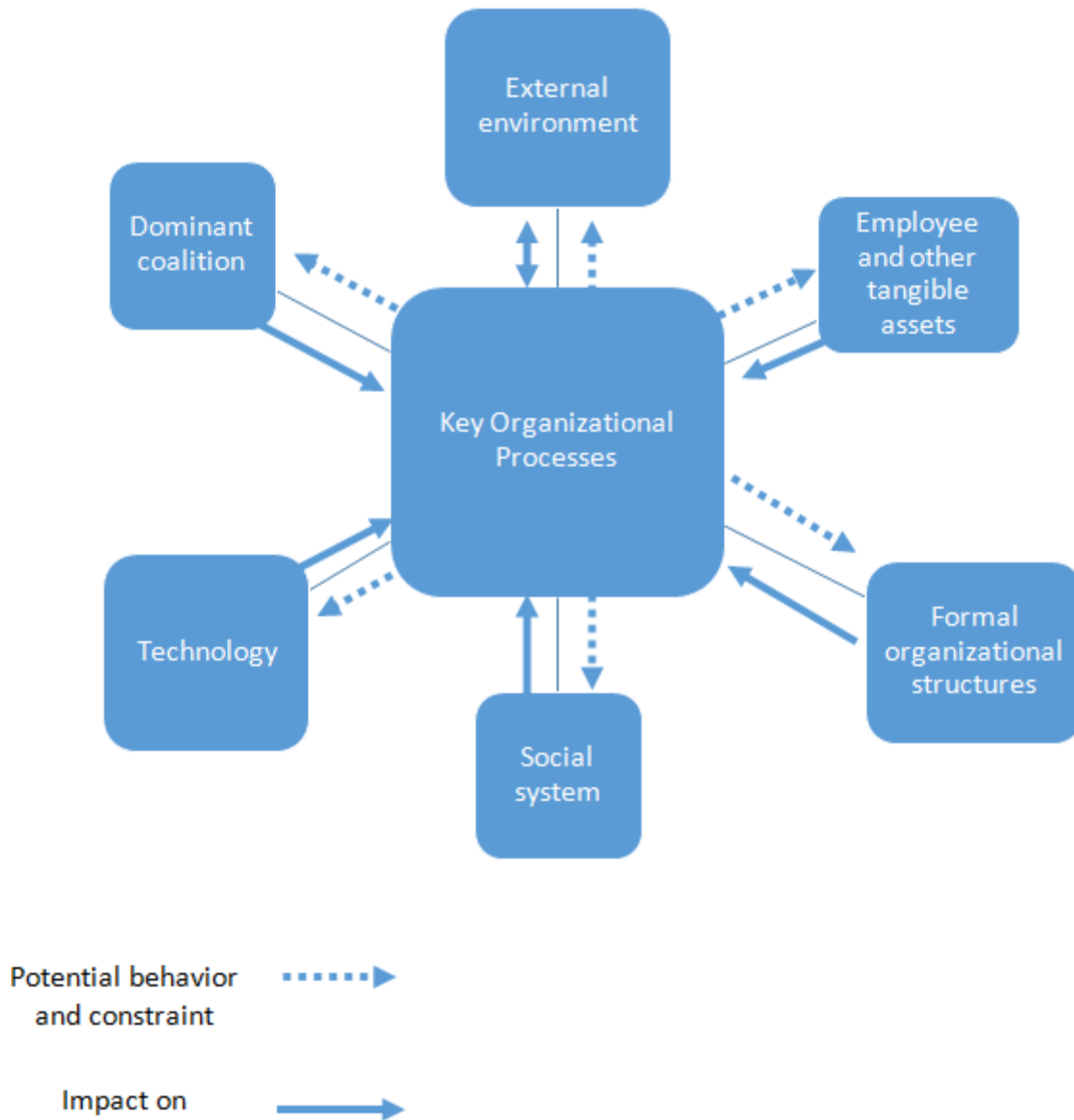
Appendix A

Key Characteristics and Values of Baby Boomers Generation X, and Millennials

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Key Characteristics	Optimistic	Independent	Optimistic
	Dedicated	Entrepreneurial	Confident
	Loyal	Creative	Inclusive
	Respect for authority	Question authority	Globally aware
	Entitled	Fun-loving	Realistic
	Open to change	Adaptable to change	Open to change
Key Workplace Values/Behaviors	Success	Continuous learning	Recognition
	Inclusion	Skill development	Community
	Competitive	Seek a "fun" environment	Transparency
	Workaholics	Work-life Balance	Collaborative
	"Paying their dues"	Accomplishment	Flexibility
Attitude towards Feedback	Insulted by feedback	Like to receive feedback	Thrive on constant feedback
Technology Proficiency	Digital Immigrant	Digitally Literate	Digital Native

Note. Data describing key characteristics, key workplace values, and attitude towards feedback from Coussens (2014), Gibson, Greenwood & Murphy (2008), Tolbize (2008), for technology proficiency Hershatter & Epstein (2010).

Kotter's model of integrative of organizational dynamics



Note. Adapted from *The Theory and Practice of Change Management* (p. 95), by J. Hayes, 2010, New York, NY: St. Martin's Press LLC. Copyright 2010 by Palgrave Macmillan.