

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH RELATED TO WORKPLACE  
RETENTION, SATISFACTION AND MOTIVATION  
OF THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

by

Andrew Busch

A Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the  
Master of Science Degree  
in

Training and Development

Approved: 4 Semester Credits

  
Ed Biggerstaff, Ph.D

The Graduate School  
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Author: Busch, Andrew D.  
Title: *A Critical Analysis of Research Related to  
Workplace Retention, Satisfaction, and  
Motivation of the Millennial Generation*  
Graduate Degree/ Major: MS Training and Development  
Research Advisor: Ed Biggerstaff, Ph.D  
Month/Year: August, 2005  
Number of Pages: 43  
Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 5<sup>th</sup> edition

#### ABSTRACT

The next generation entering today's workforce is the Millennial Generation. This generation is someone who was born between 1980 to 2000. Millennials are unlike previous generations. They can be characterized as: better educated, more affluent, high value on team, and more ethnically diverse. As this generation enters the workforce there are many factors that must be taken into consideration if organizations want to retain, satisfy, and motivate this ever changing generation.

It has been estimated that Millennials will experience 10 different careers-not jobs- in their lifetime. This statement alone has raised many questions for corporations of today. Current research has centered itself around generation differences in the workplace and how everyone can get along. To be an effective

organization a deeper look into this multi-facet generation is necessary. The Millennials have just recently entered the workforce, thus there are no proven techniques on how to be successful working with this generation. The purpose of this study was three fold. First, the study defines the generation as it relates to the workplace. Second, the study attempts the answer the following three questions.

1. What does an organization need to do to retain Millennial employees?
2. What will motivate Millennial employees to contribute to an organization?
3. What type of training programs will need to be provided at the beginning of employment?

Third, the results are used to formulate recommendations to human resource executives in corporate America. The study was conducted through a comprehensive review and critical analysis of research.

The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin Stout  
Menomonie, WI

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Where I am today is because of the wonderful people that have come into my life and surround me on a daily basis. I would have had a hard time completing this phase of my life if it were not for the support of my family and friends.

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Ed Biggerstaff, for making this process enjoyable. Ed's motivation, dedication and sincere concern for writing this thesis was truly an inspiration to complete the project.

Next I would like to thank my best friend, Kristy Bohun, her continued support and encouragement during the years of my education have truly been appreciated. You always have a way of getting my mind off the task at hand and truly relaxing. Thank you Kristy for putting up with me all these years.

The two individuals who have had a tremendous influence upon my life and have guided me along life's path, my parents, Dan and Darlene Busch. Thank you for your support through out my education. You are both truly an inspiration to me to be a better person.

Last, but certainly not least, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my partner, Billy Lowe. He has encouraged me through out this process, even when I thought I could not do it any longer. I owe him my degree, my happiness and never ending love for all his courage, strength and understanding. Thank you Billy!

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*...in their lifetime AIDS has always existed. The New Kids on the Block are over the hill. Post high schoolers who tell reporters that virginity is cool again. They are organizers of after school prayer clubs. Bert and Ernie are old enough to be their parents. They are the students teaching their teachers and professors about computers. "Ctrl + Alt + Del" is as basic as "ABC." Banana Republic has always been a store, not a puppet government in Latin America. "Coming Out" parties celebrate more than debutantes. They download MP3 tunes, make custom CDs, and share them with their friends. A "45" is a gun, not a record with a large hole in the center. Daughters going on their Mom's business trips. Teens on a Florida "Truth Train" campaigning against cigarettes. Elementary school kids volunteering for political campaigns and voting in mock elections. Browsers at store windows with "Safe Place" stickers. Individuals who respect their elders, referring to them as Ma'am and Sir. "Spam" and "Cookies" are not necessarily foods. A life expectancy of 77, they will live until 2060.*

There is a new group of individuals' entering today's workforce: the Millennials. Referred to variously as Generation Y, Nexters, the Internet Gen and Millennials (Training, 2001). For the purpose of this study they will be referred to as Millennials. There is increasing evidence from generational researchers that the newest group showing up at the personnel office is indeed new and different (Training, 2001). As a group, Millennials are unlike any other generation of youth in living memory. They are more affluent, better educated and more ethnically diverse. Nearly 35 percent of this group is non-white, one Millennial in five has

one immigrant parent, and at least one in ten has at least one parent who is not a US citizen (Training, 2001). According to a 1999 Time magazine survey, 95 percent of this generation has friends of a different race than their own.

Until the first wave of Millennials reached their teen-age years, the only words to describe them were “Baby Boomlet” and “Echo Boom” which merely referred to their growing size by birth cohort. The only exceptions to this was the “Millennial Generation” first used by Howe and Strauss in 1987 and “Generation Y” used by *Advertising Age* in 1993. The generation did not gain much attention until 1997, when other labels began to appear to describe this new generation. “All of a sudden, marketers, educators, criminologists, politicians, and journalists were straining to say that something, somehow, was different about this new crop of kids” (Howe and Strauss, p. 42, 2000). In 1997, Peter Jennings of ABC News Tonight conducted an online poll and Millennials was the top choice as the dominant label to define the generation.

The Millennial Generation is about to change the face of organizations and the way in which they recruit, retain, motivate and satisfy this new generation of workforce. Millennials will not be lured by promises of climbing the corporate ladder, paying their dues, and cashing out at retirement. They want to know: What value can I add today? What can I learn today from someone who has worked in the organization for many years? How will I be rewarded for my performance? Organizations that cannot answer these questions or will not customize training, career paths, work responsibilities, benefits, and incentives will need a wake up call. Traditionally, a new generation’s complete breakout,

when it attracts maximum social attention, occurs twenty-five to thirty years after its first birth year (Howe & Strauss, 2000). According to this finding, it can be estimated that organizations will not see the full re-percussions of this generation until 2010; there is still time to change and anticipate the change.

### *Purpose of the Study*

Current research has centered itself around generation differences in the workplace and how everyone can get along. To be an effective organization, a deeper look into this multi-facet generation is necessary. The Millennials have just recently entered the workforce, thus there are no proven techniques on how to be successful working with this generation. There are three main objectives of this study. First, the study will define the generation as it relates to the workplace. Second, the study will attempt to answer the three questions of the study. Thirdly, the results will be used to formulate recommendations to human resource executives in corporate America.

### *Research Questions*

The study addresses the following research questions.

1. What does an organization need to do to retain Millennial employees?
2. What will motivate Millennial employees to contribute to an organization?
4. What type of training programs will need to be provided at the beginning of employment?

### *Definition of Terms*

For clarification the following terms are defined.

1. Generation: A group of people who are programmed at about the same time. Individual members of a generation vary greatly, but their shared experiences are what unite them as a group (Raines, 2003).
2. The Baby Boomers: Born from 1943-1960. Those born during or after World War II and raised in the era of extreme optimism, opportunity, and progress (Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak, 2000).
3. Generation X: Born 1960-1980. Those born after the blush of the Baby Boom and came of age deep in the shadow of the Boomers (Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak, 2000).
4. Millennial Generation: Born from 1980-2000. Those born of the Baby Boomers and early Generation X and into our current high-tech, neo-optimistic time (Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak, 2000).
5. In loco parentis: Latin for "in the place of a parent", refers to the legal responsibility of a person or organization to take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent.

### *Limitations of the Study*

While there is much current literature about the Millennial Generation and how they will perform in the workplace setting, there is currently very little quantitative information available about successes or failures. Organizations are continually trying to meet the needs of this newest generation with their training and development programs.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Who is the Millennial Generation?*

In the period after World War II, there was a population explosion in the United States, often referred to as the Baby Boom. As the Baby Boom generation evolved and began to have children of their own, two additional generations emerged: Generation X and the Millennial Generation. The Baby Boomers obviously felt a desire to bear and raise children. This desire was first demonstrated with a quadrupling in the number of fertility-related doctor visits from 1986 to 1988 (Egeler, 2003). This caused an increase in the birthrate in the United States. This came as a surprise to demographers, who thought that the national birth rate had leveled off between 1980 and 1983 with 3.6 million babies being born. It did not; instead it continued to climb, to 3.8 million in 1987, 4 million in 1989, and 4.2 million in 1990.

As the literature was reviewed there were differing opinions of what birth years defined the Millennial Generation; for the purpose of this study the Millennial Generation will be defined as anyone born after 1981 until the year 2000. In current literature, the Millennial Generation has been referred to as Generation Y, Nexters, Generation.com, Generation Why, Echo Boom, and Boomer Babies. In 1997, Peter Jennings of ABC News Tonight conducted an online poll and Millennials was the top choice as the dominant label to define the generation. Millennials are numerous; swelled by a resurgent fertility rate and by the large families of record immigration surge; they are indeed a giant generation, 76 million strong (Howe and Strauss, 2000).

With an anticipated influx of immigrants potentially raising the number to more than ninety million, the Millennial Generation will be 33 percent larger than the Baby Boom generation (Coomes and DeBard, 2004). They are the first generation to grow up surrounded by digital media; their homes were surrounded by televisions, DVD players, computers, MP3 players and video game systems. The research has found that the influential years of their development happened in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Howe and Strauss defined a generation as: "A society-wide peer group, born over a period roughly the same length as the passage from youth to adulthood, which collectively possess a common persona (p. 40, 2000)." Millennials are the latest generation of American citizens; they are the eighteenth New World generation, the fourteenth to know the American nation and flag, the fifth to be born in the twentieth century. Six generations of Americans have members still alive today (Howe and Strauss, 2000). The research suggests that the generation is topping 70 million, the second largest generation after the Baby Boomers. The Millennials began to gain attention around 1997, as the media began to produce stories around the "Class of 2000."

A generation is defined by similarities. The research has examined the histories of vast numbers of people from different backgrounds to develop a comprehensive list of the similarities found within the Millennial Generation. An individual is programmed beginning at the moment of birth. Coded with data about what is right and wrong, good and bad, stylish and geeky, funny or not. As infants, human beings begin a series of programming experiences that create the

filters through which they see the world, especially the world of work.

Generations are made up of tremendously diverse groups of people who share a common place in history (Raines, 2003).

A generation is a group of people that are programmed at about the same time. Witnessing the same national and world events at the same time; experiencing similar societal pressures. While each individual of a particular generation grows up with unique characteristics and experiences, there is much that a particular generation has in common. In a given era, the media has bombarded children with constant and compelling messages, more often having a strong influence upon their belief system. The school system attempts to reinforce another message and set of values. Parenting patterns become unique to each generation, in many instances focusing on what the parent's generation felt was wrong within society. Each era begins to develop its own mood, flavor or tone that infiltrates the perspective of youth.

#### *Demographic Characteristics*

As the research has developed as to what exactly makes up the Millennial Generation, many generalizations have been made. Generalizations are helpful as a way to help develop a basic understanding of someone else and are seen more as a guideline, not as defining characteristics. The researcher has organized six demographic characteristics that have been consistent across the literature about the Millennial Generation. These characteristics are: focus on family, educational reform, diversity, violence, globalism, and heroism.

### *Focus on Family*

In the early 1980s “Baby on Board” signs began to appear on car windows across the United States as Baby Boomers chose to begin starting families. The early 1980s saw the rates for many behaviors damaging for children at an all time high. This sparked a phenomenon to focus more on the children of the time. In 1984, the federal “Nation at Risk” report on education brought to light the failing United State public education system. Parents of Millennials began to focus more on their children’s education, rallying around efforts to start Parent Teacher Associations, and put increasing pressure on America’s educators to do a better job educating their children. As the 1980s progressed into the 1990s, the United States began to see a greater focus on children, from Las Vegas turning to a family destination, to Hollywood turning baby making into a fad. The cover of *Vanity Fair* in August 1991, marked an important event when Demi Moore posed pregnant and nude. Americans began to see restaurants cater to families with added high chairs and entertainment options.

Parental focus began to shift as well; more males became increasingly involved in their family and children's lives. The nation began to see businesses extend parental leave to men. Additionally, ninety percent of fathers attended the birth of their child. The average age for mothers was 27- bringing more maturity and emotional stability to the role as caregiver. The Federal Forum on Family Statistics reported that national attention to children was at an all time high (Raines, 2003). The last time the nation saw attention on children this high was in the 1960s when the Baby Boomers were children. The abortion rate peaked in

1980 and has since shown a gradual decline. Infertility treatment and premature infant care have become two of the fastest growing fields in medicine. From 1986 to 1988, the number of infertility related doctor visits quadrupled. In 1970, a two-pound baby had only a 5 percent chance of living; in 1990, 90 percent survive - at an average rate of \$100,000 per child (Strauss and Howe, 1991).

Although some worry about the state of the American family, a government study shows family togetherness is alive and well. The Census Bureau reports that 76 percent of children under age six have dinner with their parents every day. The figure is 65 percent among children 6 to 17. The bureau also found that more than 90 percent of preschoolers play with or talk to their parents for five or more minutes at least once a day. Children interact with mothers more than fathers because most fathers have full time jobs and spend less time at home (New Strategist Publication, 2004).

As the focus is shifted onto family, Millennial Generation youth report feeling added pressure to succeed. Success is being bred into them every step of the way. Their parents badger schools to get them the "right" teachers. Homework is a family ritual. Book reports, term papers, science projects - as often as not these assignments are done as mutual efforts by the child and parent so that a successful outcome is guaranteed. This commitment to guaranteed success also extends to non-academic endeavors. Success must be attained; failure avoided. And so, the children grow up accustomed to achieving, expecting it of themselves, finding the avenues that permit it (Murray, 1997). The Millennial Generation began attending colleges and universities in the fall of

2000. These institutions of higher education quickly began to see that parental involvement in their child's education was increasing. The notion of in loco parentis began to be developed. The doctrine of in loco parentis was imported from English law as a responsibility and protection for American teachers who felt the need to administer corporal punishment to students. From the outset of public education in the United States, educators have served as parents or guardians. As a result of the changing family structure and a reduction in the influence of social institutions, schools act in a way once reserved for the home and the community (Education, 2000). It can be hypothesized that as the Millennial Generation is entering the workforce employers and managers of these employees may need to set guidelines for performance to act in loco parentis.

#### *Educational Reform*

Parents and teachers began to micro-manage children's schedules, planned things out and left very little unstructured free time (Rhines, 2003). Gone were the days of neighborhood kickball and last minute sporting events. Children were now finding their days packed with organized events, they were signed up for soccer camp, karate club, dance lessons and piano lessons. Technological advances such as pagers and cell phones made it easier for parents to stay in contact with their children.

As parents of the Millennial children began to put more structure into their children's lives, they began to focus on the public school system. The early 1980s marked a decisive turnaround in American's attitudes toward public schools: the beginning of "quality education" as a political issue; the first year

most parents approved of the performance of their local school districts; and the first of seven straight years in which teacher salaries increased faster than inflation - after seven straight earlier years of real salary decline. In 1990, the nation's governors set an ambitious agenda of educational goals for the class of 2000, including a 90 percent high school graduation rate for the "Class of 2000." President Bush began an aggressive agenda for United States to be the first in the world in mathematics and science achievement by the year 2000 (Howe and Strauss, 1991).

The added pressure onto American education and structuring Millennials lives has spurred an increase in extracurricular activities. The Census Bureau has found that among children 6 to 11, 31 percent participate in extracurricular sports. The percent rises to 37 among 12 to 17 year-olds. Participation in extracurricular clubs is 34 percent for both age categories. Children with highly educated parents are most likely to participate in extracurricular activities. Fifty-five percent of children whose parents have graduate-level degrees are involved in lessons, versus 22 percent of those whose parents have a high school diploma or less. Participation in extracurricular activities is higher for non-Hispanic whites and children in married-couple families. Many families cannot afford the cost or time that extracurricular activities demand, particularly the low income, minorities, and single parents.

Millennials began to view school differently than their predecessors. Eight in ten teenagers say it is "cool to be smart." A record number of Millennial students are taking Advanced Placement (AP) tests and these students say they

“look forward to school” and plan to attend college. Compared to students in the late 1980s, current Millennial high school students are three times as likely to take calculus, are twice as likely to take all three major sciences, and are taking twice as many Advanced Placement tests (Egeler, 2003).

The influence of family on the Millennial Generation is beginning to change their perceptions on the typical family structure. The Millennials are becoming less accepting of traditional gender roles. The National Study of the Changing Workforce in 2002 found that two-thirds of Millennials disagree that it was better for women to stay home with children and not work, versus one half of the Baby Boomers surveyed. Additionally, 82 percent of Millennials agreed that “a mother who works outside the home can have just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who is not employed” (Tand, 2005). As the shift in family becomes increasingly important with the Millennial Generation, there has been a shift in career ambition. The Families and Work Institute has found that fewer workers overall wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility-52 percent in 2002 versus 68 percent in 1992. Men are more likely to want to advance in their careers than women. Millennial employees who do want to advance do not necessarily want to do so in their current organizations. More than half of the workers who wanted jobs with more responsibilities were “somewhat” or “very” likely to leave their jobs in the next year (Tand, 2005).

### *Diversity*

The Millennial Generation accepts an increase in diversity as the norm and does not see the need to promote racial understanding. They grew up with

diversity, one out of three Millennials is not Caucasian. Millennials are children of bi-racial and multicultural marriages, creators of customized spiritual paths, and warriors against racism, sexism, and homophobia (Martin and Tulgan, 2001). The Millennial Generation will be the first generation to grow old as the white population of the United States becomes a minority. One of the reasons the Millennial Generation has a racial and ethnic profile different from that of earlier generations is the rising number of immigrants to the United States. According to Howe and Strauss (2000), 20 percent of this generation has at least one parent who is an immigrant. According to the United States Census Bureau, half of those living in the United States who are foreign born are from Latin America, and a quarter are from Asia. This immigrant population is highly concentrated in urban areas and along the East and West coast (Broido, 2004). A very large share of the Millennial Generation are offspring of a steeply rising immigration wave in the United States since the 1960's, thus making them the largest share of second-generation immigrants. In 2000, only 2.4 million Millennials, or 3.5 percent of the entire generation, are themselves immigrants. But some 14 million are the children of immigrants (Howe and Strauss, 2000).

Immigrants to the United States are facing many daunting challenges. A third of them live below the poverty line and have no health insurance. Two in five live in overcrowded housing. Despite their poverty and lack of health insurance, balancing such hardships is typically better than the memories of much darker and less hopeful times in their native countries (Howe and Strauss, 2000). Typically, second generation immigrants have a greater desire to

acclimate into American culture, often times worrying their first-generation parents. From an immigrant's perspective, American youth culture can appear to lack religion and focus on family; many second generation Millennial immigrant youth want to trade the language and culture of their parents' nationalities for the common elements of the American culture.

As the Millennial Generation is more comfortable with diversity, studies are finding increasing statistics that students feel affirmative action is no longer needed. In 1999, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported the following attitudes of college freshman:

- Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America 23%
- Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus 62.5%
- Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished 48.3%

The students' answers to these questions on race reflect the changes in employment law over the past decade. The decrease in the students' perceived need for racial understanding reflects the popular rhetoric on affirmative action in the United States (Cole, Smith and Lucas, 2002). The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) statistics reflect a general increase in the number of complaints received for discrimination based on race or national origin filed with the EEOC during the 1980s and 1990s. This trend, arguably, indicates a greater awareness of and decreasing tolerance for racist and sexist actions in the work environment. For instance, from 1980 to 1989, complaints filed based on race and national origin, as a percentage of total receipts filed, were 1.5% and 0.4%, respectively; from 1990 to 1999, these percentages increased to 6% and

1.9% respectively (EEOC, 2000). The spring 2001 Lifestyle and Media Monitor study reveals that half of today's college students believe we will have a black president in the next 20 years and 58 percent think there will be a female president (Paul, 2001).

Millennials will not limit diversity to just race, ethnicity, or even sex anymore. They will also define diversity by thinking style, educational background, geographic location, generation, avocation, lifestyle, sexual orientation, work experience, and more (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002). An emerging focus on differences among others has come into play with socio-economic backgrounds. The distribution of wealth has become more polarized in the United States over the past fifteen years (Pear, 2002). The country has begun to see a decreasing amount of low-income students attend four year colleges and universities. Higher education is becoming something only upper tier income brackets are able to afford for their children. It can be predicted that Higher Education will become more segregated based upon socio-economic background, than any other form of student diversity. Millennial Generation youth will be challenged with this divide and the privileges that it may hold for them or may not be available to them, based on their socio-economic status.

Additional demographic shifts will be evident in the Millennial Generation. People can become aware of their sexual orientation at any point in their lives. Data has indicated that an increasing number of students are coming out as lesbian, gay and bisexual earlier in life. The Millennial Generation reflects an increasing level of support for the rights of lesbian and gay individuals (Sax,

2001). This generation has grown up with knowing “out” television stars, politicians, musicians, and possibly peers. They have heard discussions growing up about domestic partner benefits, gay marriage and of gay and lesbian individuals serving in the military. In 2004, 59 percent of Fortune 500 companies include sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policies, and 30 percent of Fortune 500 companies offer domestic partner benefits.

While prior generations have learned to truly accept diversity as a natural way of doing business, the difference is that Millennials are way beyond accepting diversity; this is a generation of future workers that will expect it (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002). The Millennial Generation is more likely to engage in behaviors that relate to diversity issues (including voting, community service, protests and demonstrations, and discussion of social and political issues) differently than their predecessors. We can expect the generation to have a greater focus on social change efforts from within the organizations in which they work, given their tendency to be group oriented and accepting of authority (Howe and Strauss, 2000). This generation seems to be challenging viewpoints of the corporations in which they are employed and believe in equal treatment, benefits and pay for all individuals working there. It can be argued that nothing demonstrates an organization’s commitment to diversity more convincingly than a workplace where diversity is apparent. Diversity can be gauged by noticing the employees who join, stay in, and advance within the organization and by noticing who is visible, welcome, and valued (Stockdale and Crosby, 2004). Organizations will have increased pressure to devise employment policies and

procedures and to develop marketing strategies that are inclusive of all areas of a diverse workforce.

### *Violence*

Millennials did not need the atom bomb or nuclear proliferation to feel that the world was an uncertain, scary place. They did not need a Second World War or a Korea or a Vietnam to feel terrified. Their “war” was fought on native soil. Their “enemy” appeared in their homes, in their neighborhoods, on their playgrounds: in adults who sought to abuse them; in schoolmates who might suddenly shoot them (Martin and Tulgan, 2001).

Starting with the early 1980s child-abuse frenzy, continuing through the explosion of kid safety rules and devices and the lockdown of public schools, Millennials are the focus of the most sweeping youth safety movement in American history (Howe and Strauss, 2000). In 1999, the suicide-massacre of fourteen students and one teacher at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado will likely remain an important generational marker separating those Millennials that were grade school at the time from those who were about to graduate. The shootings at Columbine began a series of public-school mass gunfire tragedies, involving individuals born just before and after the first Millennial cohorts. Although school violence actually decreased dramatically during the 1990s and the percentage of high school students carrying a weapon dropped 19 percent in 1997 from 26 percent in 1991, according to the Centers for Disease Control, the attention paid to school violence has increased exponentially since the 1999 shootings (Paul, 2001).

During their most formative years, Millennials witnessed the 1995 bombing and devastation of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people. This tragedy was the first violent act that many Millennials will remember being a national target against children. Their catalyzing generational event—the one that binds them as a generation, the catastrophic moment they all witnessed during their first, most formative years—is, of course, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 (Raines, 2003). Additional events that shaped the Millennial Generation in the United States were: The War in Kosovo in 1999, Princess Diana's death in 1997, The Monica Lewinsky scandal and President Clinton's impeachment trial in 1998 and 1999, O.J. Simpson murder trial in 1995, Rodney King riots in Los Angeles in 1992 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

### *Globalism*

Many companies and organizations today are global or at least becoming international organizations. Increased competition from foreign nations has spurred an onset of organizational restructuring to combat the international competition. Treaties such as the North American Free Trade Alliance and structures such as the European Union are breaking down commercial barriers among nations (Stockdale and Crosby, 2004). Additionally, increased advances in transportation, information, and communication technologies has made it easier for organizations to stay connected with multi-national offices and manufacturing facilities. Labor pools, consumer preferences, and standards for products, services, and communication are becoming increasingly global. Consumers have put increased demand on organizations to provide higher

quality products at lower prices. In the past companies could achieve their results with a lot of hard work, careful long-term planning, and a strong knowledge base. Now successful companies still have to produce those results, but much quicker to keep up with consumer demand. Operational changes have been made to reflect a heightened attention to speed, quality, and customer satisfaction (Bikson, 1994). In 1999 there were more than 10,000 acquisitions of foreign companies by United States firms, and over 7,000 purchases of United States companies by interests in other countries. Stockdale and Crosby state: "The fact of globalization highlights the increasing need to understand how culture, language, and history affect present-day interactions." (p. 15, 2004)

In a response to the increasing globalization of the United States economy, two out of three United States companies have broadened their diversity programs because of the increase in globalization, according to a survey of 1,780 human resource and training executives (Training, 2004). Organizations are beginning to understand that American style diversity training, which typically focused on race issues, is no longer suitable as companies enter Latin American, Asia, or Europe. Organizations will increasingly flourish or fail depending on how well their employees adapt to an internationalized economic environment.

### *Heroism*

Emerging out of those acts of violence, Millennials watched the re-emergence of the American hero. Policemen, firemen, firefighters, and mayors were pictured on the front page of the newspaper, featured on TV specials, and

portrayed in art and memorabilia. In the 10 months following 9/11, the word *hero* was heard more than it had been in the entire 10 years before (Raines, 2003).

History and popular culture are important determinants of any generation's values, beliefs, and behaviors. What develops out of a generation's upbringing and what they have witnessed during their childhood years develops into key values, beliefs and behaviors of the generation. Each generation has its own history, shaped by interactions with popular culture (Coomes, 2004). However, like all generalizations, a generational perspective should be approached with caution. Making broad generalizations about a generation can lead to stereotyping and overgeneralization, it must be concluded that each member of the Millennial Generation is an individual with varying degrees of values, beliefs and behaviors that are in line with what the research has suggested.

#### *Six Beliefs and Behaviors of the Millennial Generation*

The literature has identified six beliefs and behaviors of the Millennial Generation: confident, highly educated, strong sense of teamwork, high value placed on volunteering, technologically savvy and respect for elders. These beliefs and behaviors have significant implications for the design and delivery of organizational training and recruitment plans for the Millennial Generation employee. They also suggest new patterns that may be visible in the workplace or may become more prominent as this generation infiltrates organizations. The Millennial Generation, as well as future generations, will continue to challenge organizations to meet their needs and to develop meaningful, worthwhile work environments.

*Confident*

As American parents began to focus more on their families, they began to focus more on their child's self-esteem. Howe and Strauss state that: "Nearly nine in ten Millennials feel positive about themselves, 92 percent say that the statement 'I am usually happy' is close to how they feel, and solid majorities feel 'very positive' about their own lives. Eighty three percent of young teens are either 'completely' or 'mostly' satisfied with their lives." (p.178, 2000) In the various surveys that have been conducted with this generation, an overwhelming amount have come back to include that members of this generation feel they will be better off than their parents, a sharp contrast from the surveys conducted on Generation X.

It has also been found that individuals in this generation have found a more inclusive life goal, more holistic than defining one goal in life. In the past, generations have defined, "marriage/family" and "career success" as the two highest rated life goals. Millennials are about to change that with the concept of "balance" as being the one thing in life they wish to strive for. The most important being the balance between work and family. Long gone are the sixty and seventy hour work weeks. This generation is demanding forty to fifty hours a week. Research is finding that the Millennial Generation is placing a greater importance on "making a contribution to society" than the notion of "having lots of money" (p. 181, 2000). Millennials have witnessed their parents losing jobs after devoting their lives work to an organization. This has not diminished their outlook on a successful career in their lifetimes. Although it has been found that Millennials

are placing a greater importance on “making a contribution to society,” 75 percent of men and 73 percent of women say that being very well off financially is essential or very important to them. Seventy-four percent of men and 76 percent of women say raising a family is essential or very important to them. Millennials spend up to 20 percent of their time by themselves. Spending a lot of time alone helps a person develop a tremendous level of independence (Martin and Tulgan, 2001).

Millennials demand balance in their lives, no longer will they be like their Baby Boomer parents where their career defined who they were, Millennials will define themselves with their interests and activities outside of the workplace setting. Boomer parents began engraving this concept into their children’s lives since birth. This is in part due to the competitive pressure to beat out the others in their generational cohort. As Millennials began preparing for college, they were encouraged to show a balance of interests and accomplishments on their college application. From after school sports, to foreign-language immersion to learning instruments to part-time work to volunteering, this generation has always been involved with several activities at one time. The challenge is that Millennials will carry over their activity-laden lives into the workplace; the workplace will be just one of the many important activities rather than the top priority (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002). Along with all the activities Millennials are involved in outside of work, the focus on family will be most prevalent. Organizations are beginning to see members of Generation X and the Millennials demand flexible work schedules. Millennials are use to being busy, and they tend to do better with work

schedules that allow them to juggle their varied lifestyles outside of the organizations that employ them.

Millennials have also been accustomed to the feeling of being special and unique, leading to a greater self-confidence in themselves. The feeling of being special comes from a response to boomer authority figures telling members of the Millennial Generation all their lives that they are special and unique individuals. Marketing agencies have put increasing focus on making each consumer feel individualistic and special. Millennials have been made to feel important by those, including the colleges and universities that they attend, who sell them a product or service (DeBard, 2004). We began to see a shift in achievement in the 1990s, when children were given trophies for participation in co-curricular activities rather than trophies for victory. More emphasis was being placed on the team, rather than the individual player.

### *Highly Educated*

Many jobs are now requiring more intellectual than physical skills; it is no surprise that the number of high school graduates attending college is raising. Heavily influenced by their parents who value education, oftentimes not attaining a higher education degree themselves, Millennials are attending college and universities in record numbers. According to research done by Martin and Tulgan in 2001 (p.7):

- Ninety percent of high school seniors expect to attend college.
- Seventy percent of them expect to work in professional jobs.

- Seventy percent of teens believe college is necessary to meet their career goals.

According to the Fall 2002 Cooperative Institute Research Program (CIRP) of college freshman more than 75 percent of the students surveyed indicated plans to pursue a degree beyond a bachelor's. According to the 2003 CIRP data 54 percent of college freshman attend a college that is no more than 100 miles from their home. Only 12 percent are attending a college that is more than 500 miles from their home.

Due to the rising costs of a college education, students are more likely to come from high-income than low-income families. Only nine percent of college freshman are from families with incomes of less than \$20,000, while 47 percent are from families with incomes of \$75,000 or more. Twenty-four percent of college freshman have parents who are divorced or living apart. The 76 percent majority of college students have parents who are white. Nine percent have black parents, and seven percent have Asian parents. A substantial 13 percent of college freshman have immigrant parents, although only three percent are not United States citizens (New Strategist Publication, 2004).

#### *A Strong Sense of Teamwork*

There is little argument in the current literature that an important characteristic of this generation is the focus on team work. The sense of team work has been facilitated in the classroom with team projects, the use of internet chat rooms to stay connected, and living-learning centers in today's colleges and universities. Millennials enjoy congregating and enjoy the sense of team. Part of

the motivation for this is their desire to cooperate and be perceived as being cooperative by those who are in a position to judge them (Howe and Strauss, 2000). The concept of team has consistently been witnessed by Millennials in all areas of their lives. They appear to be most comfortable in group settings and activities. The attraction of group work includes the opportunity not only to demonstrate their cooperativeness, but also to reduce the risk of individual failure. Millennials have grown up working on teams, participating in sporting teams, leading to a sense of attachment to others. Millennials have mastered the art of attachment. They have found multiple ways for staying connected, including talking or texting on cell phones, instant messaging their friends, email, and reading and posting to public on-line bulletin boards. This generation has grown up with team orientated television as well, with MTV airing shows from “Road Rules” to the “Real World.” Millennials grew up with music produced by boy bands, rather than solo artists.

A consequence of these experiences during their childhood is the strong preference by Millennials for structured rather than unstructured activities. Millennials often seem to lack the tolerance for ambiguity that older generations typically regarded as a positive strength (Howe and Strauss, 2000). Millennials place significant importance upon a structured training that focuses on what to do as well as an explanation of the reasoning behind it (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002). The strong team orientation of Millennials presents several challenges to those who will be managing and directing this generation. Their team orientation can give way to group think, which suppresses individuality (Howe and Strauss,

2000). Their desire to work in a cooperative environment can lead these students to avoid confrontational situations and difficult co-workers.

#### *High value on Volunteering*

The team orientation that Millennials demonstrate may also serve as a partial explanation of the Millennials extensive involvement in community service. Millennial students began to see community service as a requirement for graduation from high school and as a beneficial component to getting accepted into a college or university. The 2001 CIRP data indicates that 82.6 percent of incoming college freshman reported having frequent or occasional volunteer work. It can be questioned if this generation will continue their participation in community service when they enter the workplace. Many organizations have begun to offer community service opportunities as team building opportunities for their employees and as a way to positively market their organization to the general population.

#### *Technologically Savvy*

One of the most significant defining characteristics of the Millennial Generation is its technological literacy. They are truly the children of the computer age. Personal computers came of age in the early 1980's (the IBM PC was introduced in 1981, the Apple Macintosh in 1984) just as members of the Millennial Generation were born (Coomes, 2004). The Millennials grew up with the Internet, email and instant messaging. Their computer skills have been consistently refined with the increasing intricacies of video games and systems. According to a 2002 survey by the Pew Project on the Internet and American Life

(Jones, 2003), 70 percent of college students reported playing video, computer, or online games. Survey respondents reported that gaming had “mostly positive and few negative effects on their social lives” and little impact at all on academic performance (Jones, 2003). The Higher Education Research Institute asked college freshman in 2003 various questions about attitudes, experiences, college plans, and life objectives. It is apparent from the findings that technology plays an important role in their daily lives. More than 80 percent frequently use a personal computer, 78-85 percent frequently uses the Internet for research or homework, seventy percent communicate frequently via instant messaging, and 58 to 69 percent communicate frequently via email.

In addition to video games, Millennials grew up watching videotapes, first the Video Home System (VHS) and most recently the introduction of the Digital Video Disk (DVD). As television has become an increasingly form of popular entertainment, society is beginning to see increased levels of parental control over television viewing. A Census Bureau study reveals that 64 percent of children aged 3 to 5, must follow three types of rules in which their parents regulate the type of program, the time of day, and the number of hours they can watch television. The more educated the parent, the more likely it is that the child must follow rules regarding television use (New Strategist Publication, 2004). Their music has almost always come on compact disk (CD) but, is rapidly being replaced by digitized music available online (MP3). This increased importance upon updated technology for this generation has encouraged them to think of how things can be done faster or how they can receive information faster with the

use of technology. First there was FedEx, then email, and then Instant Messaging (Chester, 2002).

It used to be that the company car was the be-all and end-all. Now it is the company laptop with DVD, CD-ROM, and the more gigabytes that are available the better (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002). Millennials are increasingly attracted to increases in technology as a reward system. Giving employees connectivity tools makes them feel that they are indispensable. Companies offering portable personal computers and company-funded home computers are finding that it gives Millennials the perks they want to put in more hours, work from home, and better balance their personal and professional lives. The more tools Millennials have for staying connected, the more they log in. Providing this type of technology to Millennial employees naturally builds in a lot of flexibility, which is something Millennials demand out of an organization.

#### *Respect for Elders*

Parents of Millennials have organized their children's lives to give direction; this effort has been supported by day care options, after-school programs, recreational centers, music and dance lessons, and art programs that have come to occupy an increasing amount of what was formerly free time for this nation's youth (Howe and Strauss, 2000). The end result is that Millennials have come to both trust authority and to count on authority (DeBard, 2004). Because they have been such active participants in their lives and their parents have been an influential part of their lives, Millennials tend to respect authority without being awed by it. It is tough to tell a Millennial not to approach senior vice

president directly with a question when he or she has had the ability to e-mail the president of the United States since the first grade (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002). Millennials think Mom and/or Dad are cool. With the resurgence of Boomer generational items such as Twinkies, Slinkies and Pez making a resurgence into the marketplace, a common link can be found with their parents. While, Boomer women in the 1970's became involved in the women's movement, Millennial girls are actively involved in the new, more informal, but more far-reaching "girl's movement" (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak, 2000). From an early age, young Millennial girls have seen images portraying strong, independent, and capable women. These images have resulted in acknowledgements of a trend to greater empowerment for young women. Girls, for the first time in American history, wield tangible power in dictating popular culture, and they are confident consumers, employees, and secure in their opinions (Coomes, 2004).

### *Conclusion*

A generational perspective needs to be employed with caution; it can lead to stereotyping and overgeneralizations. It has been advanced by human resource development experts that people tend to do in the future what has worked for them in the past. The generational themes that have emerged in this research, can lead way to make predictions about what motivates action in Millennials in today's organizations. Armed with a greater understanding of and appreciation for the unique characteristics, values, beliefs, and behaviors of the Millennial Generation as well as the types of human resource activities they demand as a result, human resource professionals are better prepared to help

this generation acclimate and reach their potential in the workplace. In the years to come, human resource professional must think strategically about redesigning the workplace as the Millennial Generation comes to dominate today's organizations.

## CHAPTER THREE: DISCUSSION

### *Introduction*

This chapter presents a summary of the information obtained in the literature review. Additionally, this chapter provides a critical analysis of the literature, developed around the following three objectives of the study.

1. What does an organization need to do to retain Millennial employees?
2. What will motivate Millennial employees to contribute to an organization?
3. What type of training program will need to be provided at the beginning of employment?

Finally, the chapter provides recommendations to Training and Human Resource professionals who work in organizations that employ Millennial Generation employees.

### *Summary*

They are currently the hottest commodity on the job market; graduating from colleges and universities in record numbers, slowly infiltrating today's organizations. They are confident, highly educated, team-orientated, technologically savvy, place a high value on volunteering, and respect and value those who are older than them. They are arriving in organizations expecting more than any other previous generation, not only expecting, but demanding what they want out of the work environment. They are so well connected with one another that if an organization does not match their expectations, they can tell thousands of their cohorts in just a click of the mouse (Raines, 2003). They are the

Millennial Generation. Born between 1980 and 2000, they are predicted to become the largest generation in American history, with their numbers rising dramatically due to increases in immigration. They are variously referred to as Generation Y, Nexters, Generation.com, Generation Why, Echo Boom and Boomer Babies. Millennials are the first generation to grow up surrounded by digital media; their homes were surrounded by televisions, DVD players, computers, MP3 players and video game systems. In today's economy and highly competitive business environment, it is important that organizations across the United States recognize that to stay competitive they must focus on their employees. The organizations that emerge as winners in the battle for talent will have their fingers on the pulse of this newest generation (Raines, 2003).

Traditionally, a new generation's complete breakout, when it attracts maximum social attention, occurs twenty-five to thirty years after its first birth year (Howe & Strauss, 2000). According to this finding, it can be estimated that organizations will not see the full re-percussions of this generation until 2010; there is still time to change and anticipate the change.

### *Critical Analysis*

There are several research questions that this study attempts to address. The following is a critical analysis of the original research questions.

1. What does an organization need to do to retain Millennial employees?

Few organizations realize that motivation and retention typically go hand-in-hand. It is true that you can have one without the other, but the most successful organizations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will align their motivational

philosophy and retention strategies (Aldrich, 2001). The various sources that were referenced indicate that the Millennial generation is different. Millennials are coming into today's organizations better educated, meaning they most likely have a college degree in hand. Millennials are looking for this education to continue into the organization; this may be in the form of a strong training program or a tuition re-imbusement program. An organization that offers life-long learning will find success in retaining this cohort of individuals.

Millennials are entering the work force having extensive volunteer experience. Their strong sense in volunteering has been rooted into finding greater meaning out of their lives. Millennials career choices and behaviors are driven primarily by their quest for a chance to play meaningful roles in meaningful work that helps others. In essence, they want to be "paid volunteers," to join an organization not because they have to, but because they really want to, because there is something significant happening there (Martin and Tulgan, 2001). Organizations that can link organizational missions and goals to something larger will benefit in retaining this generation. Organizations will see success in developing employee volunteer events or workplace credit linked to volunteer hours in the community. Millennials want to do something worthwhile with their time, while working with a great team.

Millennials have been raised to feel special and wanted. The Millennial Generation is motivated by knowing how each individual job task contributes to the "big picture" within an organization. A formalized professional development plan with each individual in an organization can help place a focus on goal-

setting and professional advancement within an organization. Due to the pressure their parents and educators have placed on them in the past to succeed, many Millennials will enter the workforce with un-realistic expectations for advancements. They have learned to set unrealistically high expectations of themselves and others. Within an organization this translates to setting impossible targets and a cycle of frustration. Organizations that clearly explain what the steps are for promotion will find success in retaining this generation.

2. What will motivate Millennial employees to contribute to an organization?

There is little argument in the current literature that an important characteristic of this generation is the focus on team work. They want to work side by side with committed coworkers. Their past experiences in collaborative classrooms and in organized sports make them candidates to be great team players. Gone are the days of office cubicles separating each individual in the organization. Millennials want the workplace to be designed around a team, a concept linking them formally to others in the organization, where they feel they are contributing to the organizational objectives daily. In the past, personal relationships have been important to the Baby Boomers and friends have been important to Generation X. But the extraordinary close bonds that the Millennials have formed with their friends are striking to some. In the workplace this is likely to mean that groups of peers are an effective way to organize employee tasks and initiatives; belonging to a group is important to Millennials (Cole, Smith, and Lucas, 2002).

Millennials have grown up in an era where family dominated the social structure. Family is number one. Organizations need to take a look at their workplace teams as a pseudo-family for many Millennials who will look to senior management as a role model, immediately entering the workplace. Developing strong mentorship programs and connections with these key individuals outside of the workplace setting should be an important focus of retention.

3. What type of training program will need to be provided at the beginning of employment?

Forget about the idea of a typical classroom setting for this generation of learners. Millennials come into the organization with a mindset of lifelong learning, long gone are the days of a training program designed to be administered over a set given amount of time. Millennials are looking to be developed continually through their tenure with an organization. Organizations are going to have to take a different approach to training and look at different ways of training each individual. Some Millennials will be happy sitting in a classroom setting; some would prefer to do all their learning via the computer. Organizations need to take a closer look at this new target audience and offer a variety of ways to handle the teaching and learning. Millennials prior education has been developed around the team concept, organizations need to embrace this and develop training around the concept of team.

One of the most significant defining characteristics of the Millennial Generation is its technological literacy. They are truly the children of the computer age. Organizations need to embrace this and incorporate computers

into the training programs, Millennials need to be actively engaged and impressed with the use of technology within the training structure. It has been found that more than 80 percent of Millennials frequently use a personal computer, 78-85 percent frequently use the Internet for research or homework, seventy percent communicate frequently via instant messaging, and 58 to 69 percent communicate frequently via email. Today's organizations need to take a look at how they can incorporate these technology components into their training systems.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

While there is much current literature about the Millennial Generation and how they will perform in the workplace setting, there is currently very little quantitative information available about successes or failures. Organizations are continually trying to meet the needs of this newest generation with their training and development programs.

#### *Recommendations*

In order to help assist Training and Human Resource professionals develop programs and policies sensitive to the desires, needs, and wants of the Millennial Generation, the following recommendations are made as a result of the literature review and critical analysis.

1. It is recommended that organizations create incentive programs developed around team performance measures.

2. It is recommended that organizations customize training programs to capitalize on Millennials skills and abilities when entering the workplace.
3. It is recommended that organizations develop a formalized mentoring program, assigning middle management leaders who would take more of a coaching approach than a management perspective, and developing mentor and mentee relationships around shared interests.
4. It is recommended that organizations develop an organizational culture of mutual respect for all employees of the organization. To aid in this endeavor, it is recommended that organizations develop training programs around generational differences in the workplace.
5. It is recommended that organizations provide continuous improvement internally and externally, through computer-based learning, tuition reimbursement, and encouragement to join professional organizations related to the field of work.
6. It is recommended that organizations develop customized career development plans for Millennial Generation employees, encompassing sequence of steps necessary for advancement. Career development plans should be frequently referenced, at a minimum twice yearly.
7. It is recommended that organizations focus on work/life balance and foster meaningful family relationships outside the workplace. Additionally, educate employees on the diversity of families today (i.e.

single parents, same sex parents, and children taking care of their parents)

8. It is recommended that organizations develop company wide volunteering programs, where organizational recognition is given to those who choose to volunteer.
9. It is recommended that organizations continue to re-evaluate the technology that is used in the workplace. Additionally, continuous feedback is needed from Millennials on what they perceive they need in ways of technology to do their job better and more proficiently.
10. It is recommended that organizations set up touch base sessions during the first year of employment, at the one month, three month, six month, and one year marks. Develop a “We want to keep you” type interview format for these touch base sessions.
11. It is recommended that organizations set up interest groups for employees to foster relationships outside of the workplace setting, helping to facilitate a work/life balance (i.e. rock climbing, gay and lesbian groups, sports teams, single mothers).
12. It is recommended organizations develop a system to encourage and promote flexible scheduling, customized for each employee of the organization.

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