OE Cam

Talking About My Generation

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Harnessing Diversity Across the Generations: Building a Generational Framework
by Hazel McLaughlin
The introduction of more Millennials into the workforce brings into focus the potential disconnect between working styles and preferences across the various generations. How can we get more ‘comfortably uncomfortable’ and harness the benefit of diverse, inter-generational teams? Hazel explains how leaders can develop a generational framework to engage talent of all ages.

Millennials and Digital Transformation: A Match Made in Cloud Heaven?
by Toni Marshall
Generational stereotyping is not useful in the workplace and in undertaking digitalisation programmes, leaders must not underestimate the ‘human’ factor. Toni explores some of the common assumptions we all make about Millennials and addresses the implications for engaging different generations in digital transformation.

The Cyborgs are Coming: Fight, Ignore or Learn from Them?
by Paolo Moscuzza
Cyber anthropology poses some interesting questions about how the new ‘digital generations’ will influence organisational culture as they enter the workforce. How can organisations put in place the right conditions for multi-generational working to thrive and actively contribute to innovation? Paolo shares his views.

Talking ‘Bout My Generation
by Mariam Mirza
If we are to understand the opportunities and challenges of a multi-generational workforce, we first need to understand the various work preferences for the different generations. This table summarises some of the differences in terms of attitude to technology, career and communication.

From the Grafters to the Dopamine Addicts: How to Motivate & Create Career Progression for All
by Mariam Mirza
Building on the latest academic research about styles and working preferences of the different generations; Mariam outlines the opportunities and challenges for more effective engagement strategies. Will your annual reviews work for Gen Z? What kind of feedback mechanism works for Gen X?

Rights & Freedoms in the Gig Economy: Are they Compatible?
by Mark Goodridge
The ‘gig economy’ has meant a fundamental shift in the relationship between the employee and the organisation. There is a strong sense of ‘Me’ as a skill with individuals selling their skills to those who want them the most. Millennials want more freedom but many still seek the benefits and security of working for an employer. Mark asks whether our ideas about work rights and freedoms still hold true.
Talking About My Generation

Welcome to this edition of *The OE*.

Employers have long understood the importance of employee attraction, recruitment, engagement and retention to deliver, sustain and develop high performance now, and in the medium and longer term. The engagement proposition has typically been underpinned by consistency, fairness, opportunity, but is often a ‘one policy for all’ with very little, if any, differentiation for the various generations of employees.

The arrival of Millennials in our workforce seems to have caused a bit of a stir… (also commonly known as Gen Y and includes births between 1980 – 1994). The Veterans and the Baby Boomers have got used to working with Gen X but the Millennials seem to be more challenging. Is this ‘go getting’ generation really so different to the youths that came before? Or could the digital revolution be playing a part in exaggerating difference and leading us to believe there’s a problem?

This edition of *The OE* looks at the opportunities for multi-generational working. We build on previous ideas about harnessing diversity to drive innovation and incorporate insights from our own latest research on digital transformation. We explore some of the assumptions made about Millennials and reveal how leaders can develop a generational framework to engage talent of all ages.

As ever, we welcome your feedback and look forward to hearing what you think.

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**MARTYN SAKOL**

*Managing Partner*
Harnessing Diversity Across the Generations:
Building a Generational Framework

by HAZEL McLAUGHLIN

In uncertain times, it is essential to make the most of opportunities and resources. The world is changing for young and old but it is the youth of today who experience less certainty and potentially less opportunity. Their future is, on paper at least, economically less strong than that of their parent's generation. Organisations recognise the need to keep ahead of the curve, to remain competitive and seize the opportunities inherent in these times of social and economic change. Into this mix comes the younger generation of ‘go-getting ambitious’ people. How are organisations to make the most of the attitudes, approaches and capabilities of this new generation?

In the UK, the Times Top 100 employers plan to increase their graduate recruitment by a further 4.3% in 2017, the fifth consecutive year that graduate vacancies have grown. In addition, with the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in April 2017, organisations across the country are recruiting, training and developing young people. This provides exciting opportunities to grow and develop talent and to gain from the different perspective and ‘generational lens’ of the Millennials and Generation Z. But the introduction of more of the Millennial generation into the workforce brings into focus the potential disconnect of the new generation with the old. In this article, we explore the upsides and downsides of a generationally diverse workforce. How can organisations harness the benefit of this diversity and build multi-generational teams who are working in the same direction?
This provides exciting opportunities to grow and develop talent and to gain from the different perspective and 'generational lens' of the Millennials and Generation Z.

Generational differences have always existed and it is easy for people to see the next generation or the one after, as different, if not alien to their views, values and beliefs. People were scandalised by the racy flappers of the 1920's or the long-haired hippies in the 1970's. Yet many of these same people have evolved into the movers and shakers of their generation. In our consultancy practice we regularly meet with managers who see the new generations as completely different and they are not sure how to motivate, encourage or reward them. Yet diversity in teams can add to a healthy mix of ideas and perspectives. By appreciating and building on the differences, leaders can harness the power of the intergenerational team.

Psychologically, we tend to best identify with those who are similar to ourselves as it is easy to identify and relate to others who are like us. Yet we often fail to understand those who are 'different'. It is one thing to agree with diversity on a rational basis but it is something quite different to make this work in practice. We need to be 'comfortably uncomfortable', to accept that people vary in their motivations, values and style but ultimately we can still have a common way of working. Often it is the business leaders who put up the barriers rather than the Millennials themselves. The new recruits may have different ideas and motivators but they still want to contribute, to add value and to be successful. So how can the leaders of today understand the values, focus and needs of the millennium generation without resorting to stereotypes and assumptions?

continued overleaf...
What makes Millennials different?

Much has been written about what makes the Millennial generation different. We are informed that they seek purpose and want to make a difference to the world of work. A recent international survey (1) indicates that Millennials do not necessarily trust the promises in their respective countries but they see business as a platform for change. Millennials seek purpose and want to see organisations behave responsibly; to be able to see the impact on a social and environmental level. They are more loyal to organisations when they can see that impact. Millennials prefer a flexible environment with opportunities to develop. They want to base the psychological contract on trust and to have plain speaking communication along with energy and passion from their leaders. They seek out opportunities for creative thinking.

This socially responsible attitude with a value on hard work coupled with reward provides organisations with significant opportunities to grow and develop the business through the Millennials but, it should also be recognised that other generations will respond to this approach too. It is not only younger people who want to make a difference or see the impact of their hard work. Change orientation is not exclusively the prerogative of the young. Millennials see the value in growing talent in others and seek to mentor and support Generation Z. But equally, mentoring, coaching and development add significant value across the organisation when implemented well and other generations are keen to contribute. Undoubtedly there is a need for business leaders to respond to the needs and drivers of the Millennials but also be aware of the motivators for the workforce as a whole.

"We need to be ‘comfortably uncomfortable’, to accept that people vary in their motivations, values and style but ultimately we can still have a common way of working."

Embrace diversity: getting a fresh perspective

Diversity, of people and of ideas enables organisations to explore new approaches and solutions. It is a foundation for innovation. By encouraging diversity across the organisation, businesses are able to seek out new opportunities and be responsive to changing demands in the business environment. Millennials can provide a different perspective on what is current, new and possible and can challenge inherent organisational assumptions. It is in the self-interest of the leaders to harness this different perspective and to channel the ideas into a meaningful dialogue within the team. Of course, not every manager will feel predisposed to do this. As one manager said recently, "These graduates know it all. I am the voice of experience!" It is not that they know it all but we can all learn from different viewpoints and ideas. So, bring out the ideas of the older generations as well as the Millennials. Good ideas often come from unexpected sources. Age does not matter, it is capability, talent and solutions that count.

Within each generation we find significant differences and the Millennial generation, is no different. It is not a homogenous group. There is underlying diversity, we seek to understand them as a group but we need to recognise that the drivers and motivators are different for different people whatever their age. Indeed, with recent age discrimination legislation and with no fixed retirement age, organisations have the opportunity to tap into talented people of any generation. This highlights the value of good talent identification and development. Getting the right people in the right roles and building effective teams will add more to the organisation than worrying about ‘being on trend’ with the next generation.
Develop a ‘Generational Framework’

So, look at how to ensure the balance between appreciating the needs and styles of the Millennials whilst encouraging broader diversity and inclusion. Be open and flexible, use technology but in conjunction with good solid leadership coupled with effective HR practice. Attracting a range of applicants and recruit on the basis of talent and potential. Grow talent from all generations in the organisation and provide opportunities to learn, grow and develop.

Listening to our clients’ experiences, the top three tips for a generational framework are:

1. Engage with people of all ages across the workforce - use technology, social media and a variety of communication channels to energise people and gain involvement and commitment. The OE Cam digital research shows that older people take longer to ‘get to grips’ with the technologies but they will get there. The use of a variety of communication channels will open up possibilities. But do not forget the obvious communication options; the water cooler and coffee room discussions are often very fruitful for idea generation and commitment to action. See Toni Marshall’s article on Millennials and Digital Transformation.

2. Encourage learning and development of all generations within the workforce - the Millennials will be attracted by this but other generations will also value a learning culture. The use of blended learning options and Apps to reinforce new behaviours can provide the impetus that people need. Technology is moving at a pace so make the most of it.

3. Build opportunities for growth and empowerment by facilitating cross-silo working groups and teamwork with a diverse range of people - Diversity can bring out conflict but also be rich in terms of solutions. Enable people to challenge their own and others’ thinking. Build on this by considering how to make the most of office/workspace layouts, flexible work patterns and different ways of working. By getting people to work together, to make mistakes but to learn quickly, leaders will foster a team spirit and encourage sharing of ideas and information. This is evident in many less traditional and non-hierarchical organisations but there is more opportunity for this to permeate across different sectors and businesses. The younger generations look for flexibility and respond well to it.

Each generation brings new thinking; it makes sense to embrace the change and to look to smarter ways to operate and gain that competitive edge. Stereotyping people of any age does not add to business success; everyone has their strengths but also makes mistakes. The focus is on learning from the mistakes and moving on.

Make space for the Millennial generation and build on their unique perspective to enhance the flexibility and capability of the organisation as a whole. As Franklin D Roosevelt said “We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build the youth for the future.”

“Diversity can bring out conflict but also be rich in terms of solutions.”

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Why is it that we make so many assumptions about the younger generations?

Particularly with regards to technology. As a Millennial, I have found that the expectation from older generations is that I will be able to fix all their technological issues. It is assumed I am fully literate in all things digital and fluent in technological language. My work colleagues think I will be pro-digitalisation regardless of the context and the feasibility of making something digital, for no other reason that something being ‘online’ and accessible.

Stereotypes - whether you consider them to be a necessary evil or a black mark on the thinking of society, they exist. For Millennials in the workforce, this seems to often be to their detriment with ‘millennial bashing’ being far too prevalent in many seemingly innocent conversations. However, when it comes to digitalisation, it’s clear to see why people assume Millennials are so tech-savvy with a vast array of market research confirming they spend inordinate amounts of time connected to their digital devices.

Research into the impact of digitalisation in the workplace is beginning to shed some light on the inconsistencies between our assumptions and reality. Our own research explored the experiences of over 100 organisations dealing with digital transformation across Europe. “The Digital Wave – Surfing through digital chaos for successful transformation” is the latest report to be created by the OE Cam team and our European partners at SPACE consulting. The report focuses on the human factor, and the possible challenges and dilemmas surrounding the digitalisation journey.

As you would expect, the generational differences of dealing with digitalisation did crop up a fair amount in our interviews. For me, the generational perspective highlighted some important assumptions that many of us make, both rightly and wrongly, and considerations for how to overcome these and allow digital transformation to be impactful.
Our findings highlighted the following assumptions:

**Assumption 1: Millennials are naturally better at dealing with digitalisation at work**

This assumption seems like an easy one to recognise given the staggering amount of time that Millennials reportedly spend on their mobile phones (variable time scales in literature but estimates to be up to 24 hours per week) (1). Millennials appear to be more astute at ingraining digital mediums and technology into their day-to-day lives. However, their use of technology in a personal setting does not provide all the necessary skills required to successfully integrate digital mediums into working practices.

Our research suggested that younger generations are in fact not as digitally capable when entering the workforce compared to the expectations of many of the senior colleagues we interviewed. More than one interviewee commented that “Millennials spend a lot of time on digital technologies for themselves, however do not necessarily transfer effectively into an organisational setting”.

This could be a testament to the over exaggerated expectations we have of the natural capability all Millennials, and I am sure this plays a part, however, it also suggests that the skills for utilising digital technologies in the workplace might be different to those in a personal or social setting. For example, our research also found that the courage and confidence in decision making, brought about by the ability to produce convergent and divergent thinking at the same time is necessary in a digital environment. This type of skill has greater prevalence in the workplace than personal lives and therefore is unlikely to come ‘pre-programmed’ in a Millennial’s repertoire.

**Assumption 2: Millennials will seek digitally astute organisations**

The majority of organisations interviewed for our research consider Millennial talent to have greater engagement with organisations who are perceived to be digitally ‘up-to-date’. This was considered particularly important for attracting new talent. This widely cited assumption has definite underpinning, however there is obviously more to retaining talent in organisations than merely having digitally astute working practices (see Mariam’s article “From Grafters to the Dopamine Addicts”).

What we see in Millennial workforces is an expectation of a baseline level of technical capability. For this ‘digitally native’ generation, digitalisation is a given. They expect a certain level of capability in all environments, which is being transferred to a working environment. Meaning that basic digital processes have become to some extent a classic example of a Hygiene Factor (2) - becoming demotivating when not present but offering little motivational return unless continually updated and appearing fresh and novel. Even then, motivational return is probably short lived and becomes an expectation and so the cycle starts again. Therefore, digitally capable organisations reflect a growing expectation rather than a pull in itself.

“the skills for utilising digital technologies in the workplace might be different to those in a personal or social setting”

continued overleaf...
Assumption 3: Millennials will be better at learning to deal with digital technology than their older counterparts

Our research team was confident to hypothesise that Millennials would outperform their older colleagues when it came to learning to fully utilise digital technologies. As stated earlier, as a ‘younger’ person I experience this assumption that I will be far better with technology than older colleagues and friends. However, our research found a smaller difference in this learned capability than we had anticipated.

Organisations reported, that yes Millennials do learn to utilise new digital technology more quickly, however their older colleagues soon catch up and then the capability seems to balance. The reasoning for this effect was reported to be due to the fact that Millennials showed a familiarity with digital systems - the processes between all digital technologies are reasonably similar. There are, of course, obvious benefits for Millennials’ ability to learn digital working practices more quickly. The pace of change that digitalisation has enabled is unprecedented and our ability as humans to keep up with this pace is becoming a vital skill in the workplace.

Why do we experience generational differences?

As humans, regardless of our generation, we are pre-programmed to look for novelty. Nature has made humans internally wired to look for development opportunities and improve and progress where we can. We see much greater brain activity with new and novel experiences, whether that be images or processes, than we do with those that are familiar to us.

As eloquently described by Brandt and Eagleman (3), there is a balance between the need for the familiar and need to be novel. This might begin to explain why we see these generational differences in speed and, to some extent, willingness to embrace digitalisation. For Baby Boomer generations, digitalisation is much further away from their engrained ‘familiar’ than that of their Millennial counterparts. This could mean that the Millennials biological engagement to the novelty of digital transformations reaches much further forward than Baby Boomers.
What does all this mean for generational difference in the acceptance of digital transformation?

By challenging our basic assumptions of the generational attitudes to digitalisation and understanding more about the biological reasoning for our research findings, we are able to produce clear direction for organisations in ensuring that all employees regardless of the generation can be positive towards digital transformation.

The Dos and Don’ts

• Do ask questions to understand an individual’s true feelings and capabilities towards digitalisation. Do not act before asking vital questions to truly understand the generational needs around digitalisation

• Do ensure that the pace of digital change hits the novel/familiar sweet spot which will keep all generations engaged with the digital transformation

• Do provide Millennials with development opportunities to grow their socially built capabilities into a workplace environment. Do not assume that this will be a given

• Do achieve levels of internal digitalisation in line with growing expectations. Don’t focus only on the customer, as it is likely that the growing expectations of your customer are inline with the growing expectation of your employees.

“...ensure the pace of digital change hits the novel/familiar sweet spot which will keep all generations engaged with the digital transformation.”

1. Marketwatch
2. “One More Time: How do you motivate employees?” (1968) by Frederick Herzberg (HBR Classic)
The Cyborgs are Coming
Fight, Ignore or Learn from Them?

by PAOLO MOSCUZZA
I have spent over 20 years working with a broad range of organisations. In that time the organisations have been across a range of sectors and geographies. I have experienced great changes in technology, office environments, norms around geographic proximity, behaviour and social changes. I have seen organisations evolve in their attitudes and behaviours towards many forms of diversity. However, I believe many are trailing behind on generational differences.

The backdrop for the Gen Y and Gen Z is well documented:

- consuming technology from a young age as a way to keep a child quiet
- parents and teachers using a lot of positive reinforcement
- thousands of ‘likes’ per month on social media posts
- ‘everyone’s a winner!’ mindset
- not experiencing delayed gratification because so much is instant
- fast access to information (though not necessarily accurate information)
- bite size consumption of information
- electronic communications in relationships from which you can log off from when it becomes awkward.

Amber Case, Cyber Anthropologist (1)
Of course, there are downsides when a generation that is living through the cocktail overleaf enters the workplace – the need for instant gratification probably being the most hotly debated. This manifests itself as a strong desire for feedback soon after an event, a desire to share lots and of course wanting instant reactions to what they have shared. Indeed, when I am facilitating senior teams, I generally hear two downsides to every upside; and in some organisations a reluctance to acknowledge any positives about the new generation entering the workplace.

Amber Case also delivered an interesting TED Talk on ‘We’re all Cyborgs Now’; the idea that today’s humans are using technology to adapt to their environment and digital devices have become an extension of our mental ‘self’. Our phones becoming the means by which we manage relationships, plan our day and even store our memories. Without all that data, we’d be lost. Digital connectivity is driving a whole new societal culture and with it comes new rituals, behaviours and ways of interacting.

So as Gen Y start moving into senior positions and Gen Z enter the workforce, they bring with them all these different ways of working which inevitably impacts organisational culture. Whilst some organisations are embracing the diversities of different generations, others are resisting or simply ignoring what’s coming.

This new injection of Digital Pioneers presents real opportunities for innovation – their ideas unfettered by years of corporate control. However, working with people who approach things from such different perspectives can be challenging. Let me give you an example:

The same scenario can be interpreted in different ways by different generations. A Sales Director was getting wound up because he thought one of his sales people was spending too much time on WhatsApp rather than on the phone. He told her to hit her phone call target each week and she replied that some people respond better to electronic communications – which he rejected. His interpretation of her behaviour was laziness and not hitting a target. Her view was that she had a much higher response rate from some customers using WhatsApp than phoning them. His view was that she had to call them more often until she gets through… and so it went on…

The sales director’s response to being challenged on understanding generational differences is to repeat over and over again how he got to where he got to. He is good at finding evidence to support his view and ignoring evidence that goes against his personal beliefs. He is right - ratios in sales work. He is also wrong because he believes that you must apply exactly the same formula, in exactly the same way as in 1992. Technology in 2017 is completely different from 1992 and the relationship people have with technology has changed.

so as Gen Y start moving into senior positions and Gen Z enters the workforce, they bring with them all these different ways of working which inevitably impacts organisational culture
Reverse Mentoring: Cross Generational Working

By contrast, in another organisation a CEO encourages ‘Reverse Mentoring.’ The CEO of this organisation knows that he has to connect with younger generations – both staff and customers. Reverse mentoring is based on the premise that one of the downsides of being at the older end of the workforce is that you have less exposure to the younger end of the workforce and of course younger customers. Coca Cola encourages cross-generational relationships. As part of their Millenial voices group they encourage more open dialogue between senior leaders and Millennials and reverse mentoring is a part of it. Reverse mentoring does not have to be restricted to being within an organisation and there can be benefits of cross sector reverse mentoring.

Typical benefits of reverse mentoring include:

- Closing knowledge gaps e.g. The ‘seasoned executive’ learns more about technology and the Millennial learns more about the commercial application of the technology
- ‘Us’ and ‘them’ becomes more of a two-way street
- Executive learns about future trends today, Millennial learns from past trends
- The Millennial learns about the executive’s business radar which they would not normally get exposure to.

A big focus of our work at OE Cam is on supporting organisations to innovate more effectively. This can be part of growth, adaptation and in some cases survival. Very often people think it is just about bringing the outside in. However, reverse mentoring is a very low cost way to leverage what you have and something we encourage as part of wider cross-generation innovation.

Younger generations are increasingly using technology as extensions of their mental selves. This leads to different behaviours both as employees and the way they work; and as customers and how they shop and consume. I can still recall in the late 1990s a lawyer telling me that websites won’t catch on with law firms, a banker saying that the customers won’t want to transfer money online and a retailer saying that people won’t want to buy fruit and veg online.

The Amber Case quote at the start emphasises that the brain is wired to adapt to the environment for survival. Effective leadership behaviour is akin to wiring an organisation to adapt to thrive or at least survive. I can see some organisations that are wired to adapt but I also see many that are not...

The cyborgs are coming; perhaps they have arrived and you can fight them or learn how to adapt from them. Take your pick!

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1. “The Internet and the Youth of Tomorrow: Highlights from the Pew Survey” (March 2012) Quoting Amber Case
Reports indicate that for this generation it was the norm to leave school and head straight in the world of work as a means to support their families. As such, these individuals are considered 'graffers;' having worked through tough economic times, work to them is a means to an end rather than a journey of personal development. These working norms mean that Veterans have a strong work ethic and tend to remain loyal to the organisation they are working for.

**THE VETERANS OR 'GRAFTERS'**

- Age: 73-95 years
- Attitude Towards Technology: Largely disengaged
- Attitude Towards Career: Jobs are for life
- Communication Preference: Face to face

These individuals have grown up in a time of economic growth, transformation and liberation - most prominent at this time was the civil rights movement and women’s liberation. Growing up in a time of change, these individuals tend to value their health, material wealth as well as gratification. Whilst Veterans see their jobs as a 'means to an end,' Baby Boomers are more interested in career development of the traditional kind; usually linked to increases in pay. Nevertheless, like Veterans, Baby Boomers still feel loyalty towards their employers and are comfortable staying in the same job for longer period of time.

**BABY BOOMERS**

- Age: 53-72 years
- Attitude Towards Technology: Early IT adaptors
- Attitude Towards Career: Organisational - careers defined by employers
- Communication Preference: Face to face ideally but telephone or email if required

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<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Key Characteristics</th>
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<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>38-52 yrs</td>
<td>Digital immigrants, early 'portfolio' careers, work-centric, flexible work-life balance, open to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y or Millennial</td>
<td>23-37 yrs</td>
<td>Digital natives, digital entrepreneurs, work 'with' organisations, preference for bite-sized information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generation Z or iGen</td>
<td>up to 22 yrs</td>
<td>Technoholics, career multitaskers, move seamlessly between organisations, more entrepreneurial, consume more video</td>
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Generation X was the first to experience the personal computer and Internet. These advances promoted a work-centric lifestyle, thus a fresh take on parenting - going back to work after having children. As a result, this generation places importance on having flexibility and a good work-life balance. Their openness to change means that they are willing to learn new skills and appreciate constructive feedback in order to develop.

The 'Millenial' has been a hot topic for some time now, gaining a marmite reputation. Dramatic digital advances have been a catalyst for these individuals and as a result, they want everything at the touch of a button, leading to a preference for bite size information over thick textbook-like style communication. Some of these preferences have led Millennials to be described as 'high maintenance' and high risk, 'self entitled', but also 'high output'.

Generation Z or the iGen were born after 1995 and early market research suggests that they are more entrepreneurial, more connected, consume more video and have a shorter attention span than Millennials.

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From the Grafters to the Dopamine Addicts:  
How to motivate and create career progression for all

by MARIAM MIRZA

Generation, motivation, career progression, innovation. The rhyming would make for a great chant, but like any lyrical composition, what is the meaning behind it all?

Research conducted by EY in 2016 found that Millennials believed they were more entrepreneurial than other generations and considered working for a start-up business as a sign of success (1). This trend was made clear when OE Cam was invited to Google Campus to talk to Google’s start up community about how to build thriving, innovative businesses. Here we were able to speak to young talent itching to get started in business. This drive for self-growth is a reflection of living in the digital age in which stories of ‘how I had my own business at 24’ drives young people to be a part of the ‘CEO before 40’ club. The (Mark) ‘Zuckerberg Effect’ (being successful and dominating your field at a young age) is a goal for many Millennials. As a result, these individuals are less likely to stay committed to one organisation and instead ‘job hop’ in order to develop new skills and make valuable connections.

‘The Zuckerberg Effect’... is a goal for many Millennials... these individuals are less likely to stay committed to one organisation and instead ‘job hop’ in order to develop new skills and make valuable connections...
In a study that looked at generational attitudes to work, Colby & Ortmann (2) found that the average tenure for an 18-35 year old in an organisation is 1.8 years. Here, employers have to decide whether they want to put measures in place in order to effectively utilise these individuals for 1.8 years or try to keep these individuals for longer.

In an extreme example, Harvard Business Review (3) reported that Ctrip, a Chinese travel website, incorporated generational preferences for flexible working into their day-to-day. Ctrip found employees had higher rates of satisfaction and productivity after nine months of remote working in comparison to employees who remained office based. Reasons for these findings included earlier start times as the commute to work wasn’t needed, as well as the opportunity to spend more time with family members. As nine months of remote working isn’t feasible in most organisations, BT incorporated flexible ‘home working’ into their working policies which allowed employees to choose to work from home if they did not need to be in the office. As a result of this implementation, BT found that retention rate after maternity leave was at 99% and absentee rate was 20% below the UK average (4).

These examples highlight the importance, as well as the benefits of creating a workplace that satisfies the preferences for all of the generations.

**Reward and recognition: seeking the dopamine effect**

It is no surprise that all generations want their efforts to be recognised. After all, it is human nature to seek approval from our tribe and we work hard to do so.

Work on the ‘slacker vs go getter’ brain by psychologists at Vanderbilt University (5) has shown that people who were willing to work hard had higher dopamine levels in the striatum and prefrontal cortex — two areas known to impact motivation and reward. The ‘dopamine effect’ describes a neurological process where dopamine is released when humans take part in an activity that they genuinely enjoy. Dopamine is a ‘feel-good’ neurochemical and the association between the enjoyable activity and the release of dopamine creates a craving for another dopamine hit. Naturally, we then make sure we do more of those activities and engage in more rewarding behaviour in order to release feel-good dopamine.

Maslow’s hierarchal needs theory further reinforces this process by highlighting that humans are motivated by physiological needs and ‘if the body lacks a chemical, the individual will tend to develop a hunger for that element’ (6). Therefore, to maximise that feel-good craving, organisations should ensure that they have a reward and recognition system that accommodates generational preferences.

Veterans’ wealth of experience and knowledge accumulated over years of working means that this generation anticipate recognition for their loyalty to an organisation. A recent article by Henry Goldbeck for HR Management highlighted that Baby Boomers prefer to be financially rewarded and recognised by progressing through the ranks (7). Famously it has been said that ‘money talks’ and in this sense it talks to Veterans, Baby Boomers and Generation X’ers. As touched upon earlier in this journal, Veterans were brought up in a time where they worked to live. In a similar sense, Baby Boomers and Generation X’ers are likely to work to support their families thus, financial stability and opportunity for progression is important. However, as a generation that enjoys enhancing their entrepreneurial spirit, Generation X’ers also seek to be rewarded with more autonomy.

On the other hand, in a 2017 survey (8), Deloitte reported that Millennials are less concerned with financial benefits as they prefer to engage with work that has meaning, purpose and wider societal benefits. Millennials’ interest in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) means that this generation is looking to develop and use their skills for the greater good; striving to uphold principles of altruism. CSR refers to organisations initiatives towards social and environmental wellbeing. Essentially, Millennials desire to be part of something bigger and this forms a large portion of their motivation to work.

Therefore, to maximise that feel-good craving, organisations should ensure that they have a reward and recognition system that accommodates generational preferences.
What are other organisations doing? What could you be doing?

Talking of working for a greater good, Autodesk, a software company, has acknowledged Millennials’ preferences in working for companies that have strong corporate social responsibility policies, by giving their employees six week sabbatical every four years in addition to paid time off each month to take part in volunteer work.

Another example of value-add reward mechanisms can be found at Rolls-Royce. Through a tax scheme, employees are supported with the cost of childcare via childcare vouchers. At Virgin, Richard Branson has implemented a ‘non-policy’ for 170 members of staff as his UK and US family offices. This non-policy means that employees can take leave without seeking permission, as long as their leave of absence does not negatively impact the business. This reward approach is similar to companies you’d find in trendy Silicon Valley. For example, let’s look at Google. Google employees are offered a variety of rewards including free food, gym membership and a free shuttle (including wifi) to and from Google offices.

However, we are under no illusion that all organisations are capable of implementing reward schemes at this level. There are some organisations that take a simpler approach to reward and recognition. These include creating a staff WhatsApp group where ‘wins’ and recognitions are shared among the team. This instant reward sharing system feeds humans craving for dopamine; the ‘feel-good’ chemical that is effective for individuals of any generation.

These examples highlight that different rewards speak to different generations but the desire to be appraised and appropriately rewarded is cross-generational. As a result, OE Cam looks at managing talent in a holistic way; ensuring motivations and rewards are satisfied for every generation. We work with organisations to develop succession and development management plans to suit the generations and best develop these generations in line with business and personal development.

These have included:

- Encouraging Millennials to utilise social recognition/organisation community platforms
- Using technology to drive engagement and recognition - whilst maintaining face-to-face time with all generations.

Employees need to be appraised is an important workplace component. Here, organisations must be able to create an environment that taps into multi generational preferences when giving feedback.

Effective feedback mechanisms for multi-generational workforces

Hackman and Oldham’s (1980) well-known job characteristics model emphasises feedback as a core job dimension that triggers positive psychological states and leads to positive work outcomes. But, what does feedback mean for the different generations?

Veterans are less interested in feedback and Baby Boomers won’t necessarily ask for feedback but they are happy to take it. Generation X want frequent feedback and Millennials want instant frequent feedback. Annual reviews won’t suffice for the latter two generations. So much so, 60% of Millennials reported to wanting formal feedback at least every 1-3 months. This constant need for feedback is derived from Millennials desire for instant gratification. In the digital context, the ping/buzz of a phone/laptop releases dopamine which motivates us to ‘post more statuses, take more pictures, to ensure more likes, retweets and followers which validate an ‘I am popular and well-liked’ cognition. This generation want to know that they are doing well, what they can improve and they want to know this as many times as possible. This means that they expect at least a ‘pat on the back,’ thank you for your help’ and ‘how about trying it this way?’ when they work on tasks.
With different preferences, it is important for organisations to have appropriate feedback systems and coaching styles for all the generations rather than one basic feedback mechanism that might work for one generation but is less effective and disinteresting for the rest.

OE Cam takes a holistic approach to designing feedback mechanisms for the generations. The use of 360 feedback is an effective way of stimulating conversations across all the generations. The benefits of 360 appraisal systems include the ability to set the appraisal with a specific focus that is tailored to the different generations. Veterans may prefer their feedback to focus on how they are doing as a mentor and how they are still adding value. Baby Boomers, Generation X’ers and Millennials may want the focus of their feedback to highlight what they need to be doing to get to the next level. Conveniently, 360 feedback systems can now be set up online, meaning feedback can be inputted, received and accessed whenever/wherever-meeting Millennials’ need for immediate feedback. These are some of the conversations OE Cam can help facilitate to ensure they are effective for both parties.

In the age of social media updates, posts, tags and requests, Millennials are not afraid to share information about themselves. The same applies to their receptiveness to feedback. Over time we have seen an interest in learning about and practising peer-to-peer objective setting. Using platforms to share rewards, recognitions as well as reaching out to colleagues for help in specific development areas have become popular. This community-based information sharing encourages individuals to support each other. Posting wins, sharing goals and seeking development all generate ‘likes’, comments and shares. These digital interactions tap into Millennials’ preferences, triggering a release of dopamine and help them feel more engaged.

In a multi-generational workforce, research has allowed us to demonstrate that different generations get their dopamine dose from different sources. With this being said, within your organisation, are you getting your dopamine fix?

Veterans are less interested in feedback and Baby Boomers won’t necessarily ask for feedback but they are happy to take it. Generation X want frequent feedback and Millennials want instant frequent feedback.

OE Cam Delivering Organisation Effectiveness

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1. “Global Generations: a global study on work-life challenges across generations” by Karyn Twaronite, Ernst & Young (2016)
7. “Generational motivation differences at the workplace” by Henry Goldbeck (2017)
9. “13 incredible perks of working at Google according to employees” by Lucy Yang (2017)
As an unpaid volunteer chairing both a charity and school board I’m always amused how I am expected to recognise the rights of both charities’ employed staff. I’m gently told “But I don’t work evenings and weekends” and I’m breaching the invisible line between life and work... As I am a volunteer I don’t have such rights and I’m expected to be available not quite 24:7, but sometimes it feels that way.
I think the issue is more than just about time boundaries, it is a state of mind that for many separates our lives into two – work and life. The words infuriate me as I live at work and enjoy it most of the time. I don’t have a time bound mindset or a set of walls that demarcate between living and working, I live and do lots of things in my life, some get paid for, for others I don’t. My work, family and social lives are all jumbled up. I delude myself I have ‘freedom’ to work when I want to but having taken on a number of roles with an ill-defined set of expectations it all can get rather complicated and time is no more than an enabler. I enjoy my freedom however illusory!

I have the freedom to work or not to work – something that is unimaginable to someone working shifts in an industrial process. When I worked shifts in a steel mill I was mighty grateful for the employee rights that had been built up through a succession of negotiations between the trades unions and the management going back centuries. As a shop steward, I sought to build those rights in the harsh environment of a steel mill. Working 12 hour shifts, 6 days a week didn’t give me much sense of my right to life as opposed to my right to work. I was well paid for my work but my ‘life’ was thin.

One of those rights was British Steel Pension which seemed so secure and inviolable – but now in the pension protection plan it is looking as solid as those wild predictions of how much steel this country needed to produce into the 21st century (60 million tonnes was the forecast; the current reality is 12 million tonnes).

### Generation Me: Entitled to More Rights?

The idea that different generations have a distinct set of values is a popular pastime in academia as well as popular psychology. The distinctions are not as stark as presented though tracking how social values are changing is important.

Studies on Millennials (1) show that they may be more self-centred, more prone to see entitlement to a good life and with this an over-confidence around the rewards life brings. This has accentuated the feelings of being excluded where this agenda has not been realised.

Millennials put greater value on empowerment in their work; they like accountability and influence and are keen to grow their education and learning. The environment is important and so too social justice and social equality.

Millennials value intrinsic rewards of feeling they are doing a good job, able to influence their work patterns and that flexibility in work paradoxically, appears to drive a greater sense of accountability and loyalty to the firm.

As our economy shifts and the nature of work itself moves more towards service and expertise the industrial model that defines work in terms of place, activity (job descriptions) and time (hours of work, payments for overtime) breaks down.
The Gig Economy: Me as a Skill

As our economy shifts and the nature of work itself moves more towards service and expertise the industrial model that defines work in terms of place, activity (job descriptions) and time (hours of work, payments for overtime) breaks down. This pushes us all more towards a gig economy of work flexibility, multiple employment and a strong sense of ‘Me’ as a skill that I need to sell if I’m to reap life’s rewards.

So, in a world where Millennials want the freedoms they are still drawn to the sense of identity and security that working for an employer gives them along with the rights and benefits. The great employers are enshrining more rights and in some ways more freedoms into their staff relationships. Particularly strong in the creative industries, employees enjoy a bumper set of rights and freedoms. However, this puts into even sharper contrast those for whom work is driven by themselves rather than presented by an employer as a ‘job’. Self is the driver of work rather than the employer.

Our rights of work are held in a triangle between employers, the state and me. Ultimately, it is the state that upholds these rights but the individual and employer have major parts to play. My British Steel pension plan was upheld by the state until it failed. The gig economy is pushing us more to providing our own pension and setting our own terms of work. This is no bad thing but with all rights and freedoms if we take them to excess we find that gig economy workers have low wages, few rights and little power to do anything about it. The danger is that their excess leads to poverty, more inequality and the exploitation of those not able to stand up to the might of Uber and Deliveroo.

The issue for me is not whether or not we should have rights – I believe that citizens should have rights and those rights should give protection for work. The question is rather whether our ideas about work rights are still appropriate? I suspect not. They have been driven out of our industrial past have failed to keep up with our more flexible and agile economy. Self-employment or self-work will increasingly be the norm as we sell our skills to those who want them the most.

The Taylor Review (2) of modern working practices is a start to addressing the tension between these rights and freedoms.
1. Our review of generational research included:

... towards a gig economy of work flexibility, multiple employment and a strong sense of ‘me’ as a skill that I need to sell if I’m to reap life’s rewards...
Organisation Effectiveness Cambridge (OE Cam LLP) is a specialist firm of business psychologists and organisation consultants. We maximise the effectiveness of individuals, teams and organisations.

We believe that organisational effectiveness can only be improved through tackling the ‘hard’ with the ‘soft’. We view your organisation from multiple perspectives – the behavioural, the structural, the cultural and the economic so that we get to the essence of your challenge and deliver bespoke, feasible and sustainable solutions.

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We see organisation effectiveness as a combination of organisation development and talent management:

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