

ATTRACTING, RETAINING AND MOTIVATING THE INDIAN MILLENNIALS - A HUMAN RESOURCE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Millennials are the people born between 1981-1996. Much research has been done in the west with regard to the characteristics, needs, motivations and attitudes of the millennials but not much work has been done with regard to the same in India. Since India's population constitutes 36% millennials it is pertinent to study their needs, attitudes and motivations as these factors impact the Human Resource Practices of organizations to attract, retain and motivate them. This study is a descriptive study which has been carried out in the following phases: understanding the term millennials, literature review on the nature and characteristics of millennials in the west, studying reports and research work on Indian millennials, Identifying similarities between western and Indian millennials, exploring the human resource practices used in India to attract, retain and motivate the millennials and superimposing the findings of Indian and western research on millennials on the HR practices of Indian companies to attract, retain and motivate the Indian millennials.

Keywords:

Millennials, Flexi Work, Work Life Balance, Mentoring

1. INTRODUCTION

Millennials are the people born between 1981 to 1996. This name was given to them because by the beginning of 2000 they were to complete their graduation and enter the workforce. The word millennial is used because by the end of one millennium and by the beginning of the next millennium they enter the workforce. The millennials/Gen Y form the largest population group globally. Out of a total population of 7.4 billion globally, 2 billion are millennials that comes out to be 27% (Trend-setting millennials, 2018) and thus it is important to study their characteristics for Human Resource Practitioners. They are also known as echo boomers as they are the off springs of baby boomers. They are also called Generation Y as they are born after Generation X and before Generation Z.

Neil Howe and William Strauss coined the term Millennial in 1987. But it is important to note that millennials all across the world cannot have the same characteristics. The period of their birth might be the same but characteristics might vary from nation to nation. For instance, in India, millennials are a group who have seen liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation begin in their childhood and has now become the norm. Thus, they are influenced majorly by technology. This might be a point of similarity and that is why they are called digital natives and tech savvy all across the world as they are always connected as they have Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram in their phones. They are the ones who have learnt on mobiles, laptops and run their errands on apps and online. So, they were born in times of rapid change. Studies indicate that by 2020, Millennial or Gen Y are projected to be 50% of the workforce and by 2025 this number is

expected to reach 75% as the baby boomers are retiring. In India 36% of the population belongs to Gen Y [17].

KPMG's study [10] points out that millennials are a curious generation, the generation always wants to know the reason of anything they do and that's another reason why might call them Generation Y (Why), they are job hoppers unlike their predecessors who usually do only one job throughout their life and retire or die, and they are tech savvy and are known as digital natives. This is one of the most accepting generations, why else do you think more LGBTQs are coming in the open, more divorces are happening? They demand work life balance and ask a lot of questions unlike the previous generations [19].

Table.1. Year and Age

Born in	Age as on today -2019	Age as on 2029	Age as on 2039	Age as on 2049
1950	69	79	89	99
1960	59	69	79	89
1970	49	59	69	79
1980	39	49	59	69
1990	29	39	49	59

The Table.1 clearly shows that all those who have been born in 1950s have retired as on today, all those born in 1960s will retire in a couple of years, those born in 1970s will retire in another 15 years or so and those born in and after 1990s have many more years to serve. Thus, it is important to study their needs, desires, characteristics and motivational backgrounds especially from Human Resource perspective. Millennials are called by different names in different countries. The Table.2 illustrates these names given to millennials by different countries.

Table.2. Names for Millennials in different countries

Country	What are they called
Sweden	Generation Curling
Norway	Generation Serious
Poland	Generation John Paul II
China	Ken lao zu (generation that eats the old)
Japan	Nagara-zoku (the people who are always doing two things at once)
India	Young Focused Individual

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A chronological Literature review method has been followed in order to see the progress over the years. A lot of work has been done in the west on the millennials. An indepth literature review

of the west helped us to identify the following characteristics of the millennial in the west which have been summarized in Table.3. The Table.3 shows that millennials are technology savvy, active learners, emotionally needy, sheltered, confident, multi-taskers, team-oriented and achievers.

Table.3. Literature Review (Western Perspective)

Author	Characteristics of Millennials
Skiba and Barton [15]	Digital natives, fiercely independent, open about emotions and intelligence, inclusive, express views freely (often strong views), innovative, preoccupied with maturity, investigative, desire immediacy, sensitive to interests of others (especially employers), authenticate before trusting, close to parents, value intelligence, need group activities, multi-taskers, first person learners.
Partridge and Hallam [11]	Achievers, team-oriented, strong emphasis on family, society and community oriented, collaborative attitude, Work to live – don't live to work, pragmatic but optimistic, involved, tolerant, sheltered, structured, seek support, technologically savvy, desire constant stimulation, valued education, motivated, desire quick answers, multi-taskers, active learners
Monaco and Martin [7]	Lack professional boundaries, entitled, lack critical thinking skills, unrealistic expectations, desire a "how to" guide for success, want to invest as little time/effort as possible to achieve success, think of themselves as special and winners, sheltered by parents, team-oriented, confident, highly optimistic, multi-taskers, desire immediacy, pressured, achievers, conventional.

Shaw and Fairhurst [14]	Most are technology literate, educated, most ethnically diverse generation, confident, independent, individualistic, self-reliant, entrepreneurial, socially active, collaborative, team-oriented, emotionally needy, seek praise and approval, results oriented, desire work and pressure, high external locus of control, high maintenance, value institutional learning, rapidly assimilate information, active learners
Wesner and Miller [17]	Most educated generation, equate more education to more opportunities, self-confident, embrace new technology, mobile, multi-taskers, not concerned with loyalty to employer, achievement-minded, want to contribute tangibly, desire meaningful work
Bohl [4]	Passive relationship to information, want instant gratification, expert multitaskers, will block out information not seen as immediately relevant, not concerned with order or hierarchy, want mutual respect, strongly reject authoritarian teaching styles, self-perceived expert information gatherers.
Meister and Willyerd [9]	Attention sponges, need constant feedback, in a hurry for success, view work as a key part of life, want a personally fulfilling life, have high expectations of themselves and others, committed to community service, academic overachievers, live a mobile, collaborative, immediate lifestyle.
Twenge et al. [16]	Technologically savvy, like informality, learn quickly, embrace diversity, need supervision

In the next phase an elaborate study of reports and research on Indian millennials was done and that is summarized in the Table.4:

Table.4. Literature Review (Indian Perspective)

Author	Objective	Research Methodology	Findings or/and Recommendations
Aon Hewitt Survey on Generation Y [1]	Identify how to motivate millennials	Sample size 1000	<p>8 mantras to motivate millennials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A well-known and charted career path • Clarity of work • Inspirational and approachable leaders • Differentiating and recognizing effort • Manager should be a coach and a mentor • Cool physical environment • Telecommuting, flexi hours, vacations • Challenging work and initiative
Saha [13]	How to motivate millennials	Based on secondary data	<p>Ways of keeping them motivated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a flexible working environment • Break the big task/ assignment into smaller modules. • Timely and regular feedback. <p>Ways to avoid workplace conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid age stereotypes and avoid judging people by their ages • Seek out mentoring opportunities at work. • Be willing to share control as some of the greatest ideas and results come from situations where the

			<p>generations share control and responsibility for outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn traditional role upside down as re-thinking roles and responsibilities is a great way to bring the generations together
Reetu Raina	Identify the critical factors driving Indian Gen Y, their behavior, motivation, and possible barriers to productivity.	Secondary work was majorly used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title conscious and peer pressure – Creating a role-based organization structure with quick progression. • Create a platform for high awareness and give priority to ethics and moral value system. • Establish mentor programs with senior staff Build managerial capability for continuous feedback • Equality is paramount – ability and performance are only acceptable measures so create transparent policies • Be sensitive to the potential for inter-generational conflict and review policies to be responsive to individual needs and aspirations
Anitha and Aruna [6]	<p>Highlights responsibilities in workplaces for promoting employee engagement of this group and suggests what employers should do to create an engaged Workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore the level of importance of various enablers given by Gen Y in engagement. • To determine the enablers that influence employee engagement of Gen Y 	<p>Sample size 200 Systematic random sampling Gallop Q12 questionnaire and another instrument was used SPSS for descriptive statistics and PLS for structural equation model</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring, team work and nature of working style has significant impact in engaging millennials. • Job Autonomy, career development and work environment does not have a significant impact in engaging millennials.
Bansal and Srivastava [2]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To examine the motivating factors for generation Y. • To understand the work preferences of generation Y. • To understand the attitude of generation Y towards their work-life. 	<p>150 questionnaires were distributed 115 where usable Purposive sampling was used. Content analytical technique was used</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting work, good working conditions and bright future prospects are the most important motivational factors of Generation Y. • Job security, stability, achievements, appreciation, challenges and responsibilities are also important in motivating this generation. • They prefer family over work and have strong desire to maintain work-life balance • They prefer open, flexible and supportive work environment. • They want appreciation for what work they do

After an elaborate search the following programs of various companies were identified which are being currently used to attract, retain and motivate the millennials. The Table.5 depicts these HR practices in detail.

Table.5. HR Practices

Name of the company	Program
Mahindra	Shadow Board program provides employees below 35 opportunities to critique business strategies and suggest changes mHappy provides access to expert counselling to help staff deal with stress related to professional and personal matters They have a compulsory 14-day annual leave policy so that employees can de-stress and spend the two weeks away from work, which makes employees more

	refreshed and energetic when they return, and they are found to be more focused and engaged.
RPG Enterprises	Shadow boards staffed by millennials – gather periodically to brainstorm and interact with senior leaders Internal taskforce comprising millennials and others to suggest sector agnostic people’s policies to management
Vedanta	Put millennials in business steering committees known as ExCos (Executive Committees)
Flipkart	Flipkart’s flexible benefit program includes revolutionary facilities such as customized perks and reward plans, benefits for single parents, child-

	care and elderly parent care, financial support for surrogacy and gender reassignment surgery
Code Nation	provides its employees the benefits of flexible work hours, fully paid training visits to their Dubai location, and international off-shore assignment opportunities.
Sap Labs	Sap Labs has a wide array of employee benefit offerings for its employees, ranging from in-house creche facility to 'Work from Home' option and customizable leaves for parents both pre and post child birth
Bharti Airtel	in-house grocery stores so that the employees do not have to commute to a store to purchase household stuff after a long day's work. The company also provides spa and fitness facilities for its employees and allows workers to take six- month duration paid leave to pursue higher education or for managing work-life balance.
Coca-Cola	"kids@work" which allows employees to bring their children to their workplace and show them how the company works. This initiative addresses not only the issue of less time that parents get to spend with their kids due to long work hours, but also helps the kids get an interest in their parent's profession.

3. RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Plethora of work has been already done in the area of Millennials in western nations but not much work has been done on Millennials in India. The Human Resource practices that western nations follow to attract, retain and motivate millennials cannot be replicated in India because Indian millennials are different than the western millennials. India enjoys the 'demographic dividend'. India has a population of 1.2 billion, of which about 0.8 billion is in the working age. By the year 2026, 64.8% of India's population would be in the working age of 15-64 years. This population will not only serve India but will serve as human resource for other countries as well, thus wherever they go, it is important to study them so that they can be attracted, retained and motivated.

Countries like USA, Canada, France, Russia, Japan, Poland, Germany is going to face strong talent shortage trend. Countries like Italy, Indonesia, India, Mexico, Brazil will have a lowering shortage trend [3]. So, India is not going to suffer any shortage of employees rather it is going to gain from the demographic dividend and also the fact that India is going to suffer from the issues of employability thus Indians are going to migrate to the places where talent is lacking. So it is pertinent to note that Indian millennials should be studied well, by not only Indian HR practitioners but other country's HR practitioners as well.

Is the Indian millennial different from developed nations? The political, economic, social and cultural factors that Indians millenials have faced has had a major impact on them just like any other generation and any other nation. Every nation has different

circumstances and these circumstances contribute in building of characteristics of any particular nation. Thus, these are the reasons to carry out this research.

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Who is the millennial? What made them?
- Why are they so important?

All these questions have motivated the researcher to carry out this research.

3.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To get a deeper understanding of the term millennial.
- To study the factors that have shaped the millennials in India.
- To gain an insight in the characteristics of the millennials especially Indian millennials.
- To study the Human Resource practices of various organizations to attract, retain and motivate the millennial.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive and qualitative as it is based on literature review and secondary data i.e., surveys conducted, research articles published in journals and articles published in newspapers. Hence, secondary data has been used. No primary data has been used and this is one of the biggest limitations of this study.

5. KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Factors that shape millennials: In India, millennials have been shaped by globalization, privatization, liberalization, foreign investment, and explosion of digital technologies.
 - a. **Globalization:** Indian companies are not only operating in India but they have many branches abroad as well. Similarly, many foreign companies are also operating in their own country but India as well. So, the Generation Y is pretty open to move abroad or work with different country nationals, that is why they are very welcoming and accepting also but in the process they lose themselves. As there are so many opportunities opening in terms of outsourcing, rural population has migrated to urban areas as well. In India cheap labour is available hence western countries outsource a lot of work to India and this sudden opportunity provided many employment opportunities to less educated people. As time zones are different so the body clock is unable to adjust and due to pressure, a new culture of partying, boozing, smoking, living in relationships are emerging. A study claimed that Indian millennials are much more stressed than the other country millennials.
 - b. **Privatization:** With the advent of privatization in 1990, working class got an opportunity to work in private companies rather than the older generation which worked in government or public sector organizations. Due to globalization, competition

emerged and thus we moved from permanent jobs to contractual jobs. This also leads to job insecurity and pressure to perform.

- c. Liberalization: Liberalization eased the setting up of companies and offered foreign investors opportunity to invest in India. This also led to employment opportunities.
 - d. Explosion of digital technologies: This led to the information technology boom, offering opportunity to Indians to work abroad in projects. With mobiles, Ipad, Whatsapp, Facebook the world became more connected and today Gen Y is much more comfortable with technology than the previous generations. The information explosion made everything available, not only this, with e marketing this generation does online shopping and makes all payments online through payTM, phonePe, amazon pay, debit card and credit card etc.
2. Similarities and dissimilarities between Indian Millennials and the western millennials: Indian millennials are similar yet dissimilar from western millennials. Indian millennials are less matured in comparison to the westerns as in India the system of joint family system has recently become obsolete and nuclear families have become the need of the hour. Earlier kids were taken care of by the grandparents but now for better opportunities parents had to move out and live independently and, in the process, both parents and kids are learning how to deal with dejection, stress etc. Thus, they need mentors in their lives, these mentors can be at their workplace who help them in dealing with the stress of job as well as that of person life. With people connecting with each other on superficial level i.e., Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram, it has become all the more frustrating. So, no social support is there and hence

lack of commitment to jobs and relationships in common. That is why many organizations are offering the counselling services to their employees as well.

As opposed to the Indian culture, in western nations children move out of their parents’ house when they turn 18 and start earning so they are emotionally more matured. Indians are strong in academic and technical know-how as they don’t have to take care of finances etc. which is taken care of by the parents in India.

But no doubt both westerns and Indian millennials are tech – savvy, both groups are looking for work life balance and need for achievement is also very strong amongst both the groups. The Table.6 shows the similarities and dissimilarities between Indian Gen Y and Developed Nations Gen Y.

Table.6. Indian Gen y vs. Developed Nations Generation Y

Similarities	Differentiators
Technologically savvy	Indian millennials are still in formative years
Work Life Balance	Indian millennials are lower in emotional maturity
Ambitious	Indian millennials are strong in academic and technical know-how.

- 3. In order to attract, retain and motivate millennials companies should incorporate mentoring activities, flexi hours, compulsory vacations, clear carrier paths, open environment, team work etc. as a part of its human resource strategy.

The Table.7 shows the programs being followed by various companies and superimposing them on the characteristic of the millennials as per western studies and Indian studies. The Table.7 shows how each one of this program is specially focused on the millennials.

Table.7. Programs of various companies and characteristics of millennials

Name of the Company	Program	Focus characteristic as per western studies	Focus characteristics as per Indian studies
Mahindra	Shadow Board program provides employees below 35 opportunities to critique business strategies and suggest changes mHappy provides access to expert counselling to help staff deal with stress related to professional and personal matters They have a compulsory 14-day annual leave policy so that employees can de-stress and spend the two weeks away from work, which makes employees more refreshed and energetic when they return, and they are found to be more focused and engaged.	Entrepreneurial [14] Seek support [11] Emotionally needy [14] Pressured [7]	Open environment [2] Spend time with family [1]
RPG Enterprises	Shadow boards staffed by millennials – gather periodically to brainstorm and interact with senior leaders Internal taskforce comprising millennials and others to suggest sector agnostic people’s policies to management	Collaborative [11] Need group activities Involved	Team work [5], interesting work [2], sharing control [1] [8]
Vedanta	Put millennials in business steering committees known as ExCos (Executive Committees)	Collaborative [11] Team oriented Seek praise	Team work [5], interesting work [2], sharing control [1] [8]
Flipkart	Flipkart’s flexible benefit program includes revolutionary facilities such as customized perks and reward plans, benefits for single parents, child-care and elderly parent care, financial support for surrogacy and gender reassignment surgery	Embrace diversity	Differentiating and recognising effort [1], ability and performance as only

			acceptable measures [17] [18]
Code Nation	provides its employees the benefits of flexible work hours, fully paid training visits to their Dubai location, and international off-shore assignment opportunities.	Strong emphasis on family	Work-life balance [2]
Sap Labs	Sap Labs has a wide array of employee benefit offerings for its employees, ranging from in-house creche facility to 'Work from Home' option and customizable leaves for parents both pre and post child birth	Strong emphasis on family	Work-life balance [2]
Bharti Airtel	in-house grocery stores so that the employees do not have to commute to a store to purchase household stuff after a long day's work. The company also provides spa and fitness facilities for its employees and allows workers to take six- month duration paid leave to pursue higher education or for managing work-life balance.	Strong emphasis on family	Work-life balance [2]
Coca-Cola	"kids@work" which allows employees to bring their children to their workplace and show them how the company works. This initiative addresses not only the issue of less time that parents get to spend with their kids due to long work hours, but also helps the kids get an interest in their parent's profession.	Strong emphasis on family	Wok-life balance [2]

6. IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

The leaders of tomorrow are those who unlearn, learn and relearn. Thus, corporates should understand that millennials are going to be the new generation which is going to rule, how so ever tricky to handle them might be, but if companies do not unlearn the HR practices which were used with the previous generations (Baby Boomers, Gen X), learn new HR practices to attract, retain and motivate Gen Y then the companies will cease to exist. Thus, it is pertinent to stay current to get ahead.

- Millennials differ from past generations by their increased dependence on social media to learn about potential employers. This makes traditional recruitment methods such as job advertisements or exposures through marketing campaigns fewer effective tools in attracting them. Talented young employees rely on other sources such as opinions of people they know who work in the organisations or employees' reviews in employer review websites. They consider them to be more credible channels to gather information about a company. This necessitates managements to focus more on their internal branding activities to create a work environment that results in enthusiastic, engaged and loyal employees who in turn become their new brand ambassadors for attracting potential talent [12]. Employer branding, peer reviews and testimonials can be an influential factor for millennials to start working for an organisation. Not only this, they don't read hardcopy of newspapers, they read news also online so the traditional newspaper advertisements have been replaced by e recruitment. Job portals like naukri.com, moster.com, shine.com, and companies' website are used for attracting prospective employees. Also, online recruitment saves lot of paper cost i.e., CVS are submitted online, shortlisted online thus e recruitment is one of the green practices and saves lot of time, money, energy and is environment friendly. This generation is committed to community service and realises that the environment is deteriorating thus is working to improve it.

- Millennials do not look for bosses, they want mentors. A mentor a person who guides, supports, teaches, tutors and advises his/ her protégé. Millennials look for constant and immediate feedback in order to improvise themselves as they are impatient and need quick results. At the same time they do not want autocratic leaders who just order them and tell them what is to be done, how it is to be done, rather a mentor tell why it is to be done. Reverse mentoring is also being used wherein young employees help older employee learn technology and in return old employee helps young employee learn the skills and workings. This helps in building strong relationships, respecting each other and reducing intergenerational conflicts.
- Millennials crave for instant appreciation of a job well done. Many companies have started using social media to recognize their high achievers. Some effective recognition programs in addition to the regular avenues of appreciation are personalised employee rewards, handwritten notes, experiential rewards and "thank yous" from peers, managers or senior executives.
- Millennials are looking for work-life balance. Companies should provide flexi work, telecommuting, creches and compulsory leave as a way to attract, retain and motivate employees.
- Millennials want interesting and challenging work. Millennials are looking for purpose and a strong purpose can be motivating enough for them to stay with a company. As they are job hoppers so to keep them in an organization needs a very compelling reason and this can be either interesting work, carrier development etc.

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