

RECRUITING AND MOTIVATING MILLENNIALS: EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS FOR MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT

One of the most provoking challenges in the today's business environment is the recruitment and motivation of the generation of digital natives - the Millennials, as multiple pressures around the world are present: the digital transformation, the cost pressure, the demographic decline, the aging of the population and, implicitly, the reduction of the recruitment pool, coupled with the emergence of a new generation of workers with different expectations, accustomed with immediate gratification, and multiple rewards, as it is the case in the digital environment, and often with a different working style and other points of view regarding job stability. This paper is a conceptual one, being based on the empirical study of literature (online, offline, academic, and business consulting), having an explorative character and seeking to identify the main elements that should be considered by any manager when it comes to recruiting and motivating the generation of the Millennials.

KEYWORDS: *digital transformation, management, Millennials, motivating employees, recruiting.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *M12, M54*

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges for global companies in the context of increasing economic competitiveness and digitization is talents' recruiting and retention. In the long run, talent management, understood as a strategic component of the business model, generates product innovation, creating value for the consumer, as well as performance. That is why talent quest never ceases, and companies' investment in capable young people translates into financial performance.

In the contemporary business environment, employer branding is no longer limited to running recruitment and selection processes through efficient marketing campaigns. It has become synonymous with *employee engagement*, as ambassadors of the employer brand are primarily its own employees. In the context of digitization, information about specific aspects such as the corporate business environment, organizational culture, leadership, remuneration policy or career opportunities directly affects the desirable image of the company and impacts therefore the recruiting processes.

On a general background of demographic decline in many countries, simultaneously with the changing expectations of employees in the context of digitization, and with the emergence of the

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new generation of Millennials, employers are increasingly subject to double pressure to attract and retain talents – after all, the new emerging digitized economy focuses on creative, innovative jobs, and less on routine tasks, customizable in various current or future software versions. In such a context, one of the most provoking challenges becomes the recruitment and motivation of the generation of digital natives - the Millennials.

Considering diverse pressures that affect today's business world (the digital transformation, the cost pressure, the demographic decline, the reduction of the recruitment pool, coupled with the emergence of a new generation with different expectations on immediate gratification), we will present furthermore, in this conceptual paper, the main elements that should be known and understood by managers when it comes to recruiting and motivating the new generation of digital natives, the so-called Millennials.

2. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION'S IMPACT ON MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Digitization is not a completely new phenomenon, but we are currently witnessing a profound change at the social and economic levels, with a huge impact on managerial practices. From a historical perspective, we identify three major stages of digital transformation with deep effects on managerial practices. The first wave of digitization corresponds to the automation period of the 1970s and 1980s, which has led to increased generalized efficiency in business. The second wave of digitization was represented by the exponential growth of the Internet adoption in the 1990s, generalizing e-mail and instant messaging and cross-border e-commerce, which has led to a new growth of the business efficiency, but also new to new forms of work, such as virtual teams. The third wave of digitization, specific to the current period, is the one of the Internet of Things, of smart products, interconnected sensors, robotic routine tasks beyond the industrial environment, and the maturing of the first generations of fully literates in the digital environment.

The companies that benefit the most from digital transformation are those that combine digital activities with powerful leadership forms so that technology becomes a vector of transformation, as demonstrated by Westerman et al. (2014), after having interviewed 157 executives around the world, mainly from companies with \$1 billion or more in sales. The three key areas that managers tend to convert digitally are (idem): customer experience, operational processes, and business models. We present them in a summary in the table 1.

Digitizing happens whether or not managers want it and is often pushed by consumers, which leads to multiple implications for companies - from customer relationships, to product and service development, to process efficiency, and to completely new models of businesses, such as those of the sharing economy. We are currently witnessing a phenomenal acceleration of the pressure to digitize businesses, which shows us how important digital leadership is, considering the involvement and the management's top-down support of digital company transformation, in a process of profound change, happening very fast at structural level.

The recent academic literature proposes a series of ideas on understanding the managerial challenges of digital transformation, focusing on the need for management to be agile in redesigning organizational processes and to support, from top to bottom, the transition to the new configuration of digitally modified businesses. Recent papers show how conventional managerial wisdom is challenged by the digital transformation challenge (Kurti & Haftor, 2015) and how all business models can be reshaped or replaced (Downes & Nunes, 2013), but independent of industry or firm, digital transformation strategies have certain elements in common (Matt et al., 2015), such as use of technologies, changes in value creation, structural changes, and financial aspects.

Nevertheless, at the center of all digital transformation remains the leader of the company. The nature of management is transformed in the digitized economy by three technology-driven forces: automation, data-driven management, and resource fluidity: "taken together, these three forces are helping leaders rethink the way work is organized and managed" (Westerman, 2016). Thus, managers have at their disposal computers and software to identify scenarios, as well as possible

problems or opportunities that people see traditionally with difficulty; (Big) data collection and analysis allow innovative approaches that can generate more efficiency, innovation and value than before the digitization era. Moving to the new digital paradigm requires a change management much more human than we would imagine, especially in traditional companies, with a leading role in top management.

Table 1. The main elements of the digital transformation of businesses

	Key area	Elements	Instruments
1	Customer experience	Customer understanding	CRM / Social media / Analytics
		Top line growth	Tablet based presentations / Sales' mobile tools / Concept stores as flagships for digital selling innovations / Digital plug-ins
		Customer touch points	Digital interconnectivity (physical points-website & e-mail & Social media) / Digital self-service / Smartphone apps
2	Operational processes	Process digitization	Automated processes in HR, in IT, in Marketing & Sales etc. / Fully or partially automated plants
		Worker enablement	Remote work / Virtual teams / Tools that virtualize individual work and enable knowledge sharing (mobile, collaborative etc.)
		Performance management	Digital tools for a more detailed vision on results and that allow to extend strategic planning sessions to more people in different geographic locations
3	Business models	Digitally modified businesses	New additional digital services / Important share of turnover from new digital areas (e-commerce, m-commerce etc.)
		New digital businesses	Internet of Things / Sharing economy
		Digital globalization	Truly globally operations, promoting efficiency and reducing risks

Source: adapted from Westerman et al. (2014),
<http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-nine-elements-of-digital-transformation/>.

In addition to the above mentioned aspects, there is a dual pressure on human resources: how to adapt existing employees to the new digital framework and, more recently, how to integrate the Millennials employees into business strategies, given that they have a profile different from other generations, and that in many cases managers do not hesitate to declare that they do not know how to work with this new generation. Even more, the first generation of Millennials managers just started to take their new leading positions in business.

3. MILLENNIALS AT WORK: HOW DIFFERENT ARE THEY?

In recent years, the issue of integrating Generation Y members, also called the Millennial generation, into the labor market has become an increasingly important theme among employers. The Generation Y or the Millennials are the first people literate in the digital environment and

recent debates differentiate between them and new digital natives, such as Generation Z. In this paper, we have chosen to consider only Generation Y, or people born between 1980 and 2000, and we have used alternatively, but with the same meaning, terms of 'Millennials', 'Generation Y' and 'digital natives'.

One thing is certain: by the year 2025, Millennials will account for 50% of the global workforce. Therefore, their professional aspirations and attitudes towards their workplace, as well as their digital skills will redefine organizational culture and ways to do business in the 21st Century (PwC, 2011). Millennials are considered different from their predecessors, posing new challenges to employers in terms of retention and professional development, that we will present furthermore.

At the level of the literature and academic studies, Generation Y is called Nexters (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000), Millennials, Echo-Boomers, Thumb Generation, "MySpace Generation" (Rosen, 2007), "Generation We" (Greenberg & Weber, 2008), "NetGeners" (Tapscott, 2009), "Generation Me" (Twenge, 2009) or "Go Generation" (Ernst & Young, 2016). Generation Y denominations indicate several defining features (skills, values, aspirations, lifestyles) to which it is associated, that directly affect their attitude to the workplace.

Digital natives are highly connected to technology and social media, which implies a major need for socialization and collaboration, requiring constant feedback and appreciation for personal and professional development, appreciating transparency in organizational communication. Generation Y members use digital literacy skills for information and socialization, but thanks to a wide range of options, they need guidance and help to understand a context and take a decision. This is because they were raised by "helicopter parents", who, unlike previous generations, are actively involved in personal life and professional development of the Millennials - education being oriented towards self-development and extra-curricular activities (Lythcott-Haims, 2015; Pînzaru et al., 2016).

Applying the Hogan Personality Index to 7,598 subjects, of which 2,255 Romanian Millennials (considered as age-related, less than 29 years at the time of the study - a criterion for choice according to the stages of digital development in Romania), Pînzaru et al. (2016) have shown that part of the characteristics of the Millennials observed internationally are also observable in Romania: less ambition, less career orientation than previous generations, and a higher level of sociability. In the same time, other characteristics of the Romanian Millennials are similar to those of previous generations, such as prudence, learning or interpersonal sensitivity. In other words, the Millennials do not necessarily have a different personality but have other expectations on the world and, consequently, on jobs (figure 1).

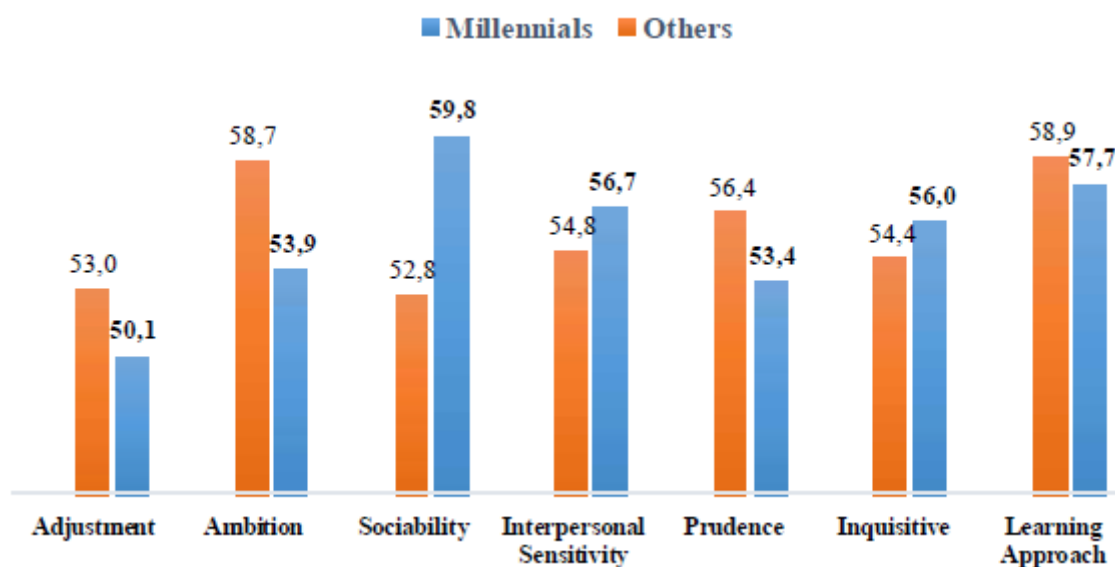


Figure 1. Hogan Personality Index mean scores for Millennials versus other generations
 Source: Pînzaru et al., 2016

As a direct result of the natural use of digital instruments from very early age, members of the Generation Y are multitasking, proving a high degree of adaptability to change and flexibility in carrying out different tasks, but this does not necessarily mean a higher degree of efficiency at work (Meyer, 2016). However, digital natives prove to be more individualistic and narcissistic compared to other generations (Twenge, 2009; Stein, 2013), which coincides with an overestimation of their own qualities, knowledge, and skills (Pinzaru et al., 2016). Consistent with the positive self-image, when considering choosing a job that suits their needs and requirements, Generation Y members tend to have unrealistic or exaggerated expectations. They have a low level of patience, want opportunities for fast promotion, and believe that everything is rightly theirs (Hart Consulting & SNSPA - Faculty of Management, 2016). That is why they want to go on a fast track to leadership positions (often without considering performance criteria), have a flexible work schedule but do not like to follow rules and procedures and tend not to respect the hierarchical authority (Alsop, 2008). Digital natives are, apparently, as we previously discussed, less committed to their career than previous generations. The Ernst & Young consulting company (2016) names Millennials the "Generation Go" because they are willing to make sacrifices and take difficult decisions to maintain work-life balance. Because they are supporters of the make-up philosophy and appreciate the mobility that technology gives them, these things make digital natives choose flexible jobs to work from home (Alsop, 2008, p.6). Management of the private life-to-work ratio is difficult for Generation Y, in the context in which "salary did not increase much, but spending does" (Ernst & Young, 2016). Compared to other generations, Millennials often change their jobs if they are not motivated by concrete benefits, such as fast-paced opportunities, competitive salary or flexibility. Finally, Generation Y internalizes a set of post-materialistic values (freedom of expression, gender equality, tolerance, generosity), they are characterized by high hedonism, and they are very pragmatic when discussing professional development. Their desire to affirm and make a difference is reflected in volunteer activities in which they engage as employees; they generally prefer to work in companies that are actively involved in social responsibility projects and programs (Alsop, 2008, p.7). Millennials seek to express their personality and freedom of expression including at work - behavioral differences, attitudes, clothing are significant in relation to mature generations, often resulting in organizational conflicts and tensions. The personal values that Millennials believe in (ethics, respect for the employee, clients and society) are more important to them than organizational goals (Deloitte, 2016).

Thus, we identify, in fact, a paradoxical profile of the Millennials employee, but which also presents a range of opportunities and challenges for managers: the digital natives want independence and guidance; they prefer clearly defined structures and openly assigned tasks; they have high arrogance and narcissism; they want their opinions to matter; they get bored fast and prefer variety; they need professional life balance – a so called private life; they get tired fast (Hart Consulting & SNSPA-Faculty of Management, 2016). In the context in which the Millennials are a dynamic, talented and demanding generation, it is increasingly difficult for employers to gain their loyalty.

4. EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS FOR MANAGERS ON RECRUITING AND MOTIVATING MILLENNIALS

Millennials are a complex generation, not necessarily psychologically different from the previous ones, but who chooses employers according to the extent to which the business model and organizational culture resonate with personal values, the desire for affirmation and the opportunities for professional development.

For Millennials, although making profit is an essential component of organizational performance, a company becomes relevant in their eyes depending on how their employees are treated at the workplace and on the positive impact that organization brings to social level. Millennials believe

that the focus of all competitive organizations should not only be limited to global expansion and profit, but first of all, it should focus on aspects such as the professional and personal development of employees, competitive salary, increasing employers' satisfaction at work, creating new jobs, gaining customer loyalty, and investing in constant product innovation (Deloitte, 2016, pp.11-14).

Millennials are probably the first generation to expect concretely that the firms they work for are responsible, and managers to be mentors. Are current managers ready for such a style? For the Millennials to become effective, innovative and involved in the workplace, employers must provide the following elements that contribute to their professional development and make them consider remaining in the company:

1. Coaching and collaboration. The generation and development needs of Generation Y are implicitly different from those of the mature generations. Despite the preferences for independence and autonomy, Millennials are the followers of clearly defined organizational structures and objectives (PwC, 2011, p.18), and in some situations, although very familiar with current digital tools, they need training to use the oldest, where they are still in use, and managers need to understand the intuitive way they understand how to work - so they need to show how to work, not just to tell them what to do (McBride, 2013). If deadlines are clear and Millennials actually understand what they are asked for, they are open to constructive ideas, have team spirit and are tolerant.

2. Evaluation. Millennials need constant feedback and want to be familiar with the career assessment and promotion criteria (Hart Consulting report & SNSPA - Faculty of Management, 2016).

3. Relaxation, balance and competitive salary. Millennials want to work in an open and comfortable organizational climate through which they can freely express their opinions and encourage them to express their creativity without being criticized. The fun part in the workplace is important for them, regardless of the industry they are engaging in, and not just for young people working in creative industries such as advertising or IT. For Millennials, the balance between personal and professional life is very important (Pînzaru et al., 2016; Ernst & Young, 2016), and career is not ranked first in the top priorities, as in previous generations.

4. Engagement, personal and professional development, career opportunities and mentorship. Narcissists and creatives (Twenge, 2009; Hart Consulting & SNSPA - Faculty of Management, 2016), Millennials prefer the workplace tasks to be interesting and relevant, promotional opportunities to be explicit and quick, and managers to be models and mentors. Though, if necessary, they put forward their own values, and less the organizational ones or the procedures and rules at work (Alsop, 2008; Deloitte, 2016).

Millennials' recruitment is more difficult than in the case of previous generations because they have much higher expectations, they are more mobile and they have a real possibility of choice – in many markets we can observe a demographic decline, which in some cases makes the supply of jobs higher than demand - and thus offers negotiating power to young prospective employees.

The employer's brand counts in the decision that Millennials take when accepting a job position if they perceive the company in question as responsible, innovative and with a flexible and respectful organizational culture with employees. Romanian digital natives, for example, choose their employers according to the wages and benefits package, the company's reputation as well as the package of training and development programs they can access within the company (Catalyst Solutions, 2015), which makes them often focus on multinational companies. For Millennials, mobility opportunities offered by multinational companies are essential for their professional development. That is why mobility has become an essential component for attracting, retaining, developing and involving talents. Recent developments in global mobility indicate that relocation is no longer a feature of this process involving the transfer of know-how and professional experience. Thus, traditional forms of global mobility such as rotation in positions, involvement in projects or programs, work in transversal teams are gradually being replaced by virtual mobility. In this context, the employer brand plays an extremely important role in defining the mobility strategy.

Global companies such as PwC, P&G or Unilever offer prospective employees the opportunity to benefit from international mobility from university years, which automatically involves them in customized talent management programs (PwC, 2012, p.22). The preference of Romanian Millennials, for example, for multinationals is influenced by the "cool" headquarters and employer's reputation - criteria that increasingly consider, besides an attractive salary and various benefits - such as bonuses, development programs for obtaining diplomas or certifications (Voiculescu, 2016). Millennials recruitment involves not only a good reputation and a well-positioned employer brand but also marketing tools that are used correctly and modernly, such as effective and professionally filmed and edited recruitment videos (Vaccaro, 2017). In other words, HR departments must learn marketing to attract Millennials, more visual by nature. In this new framework, companies are choosing to be more innovative in the selection process, such as L'Oréal who has introduced the gamification component in the recruitment process as early as 2010 through the Reveal by L'Oréal game, where young graduates targeted by the company for employment can chat with company employees and participate in virtual assessment centers.

Due to the increase in economic competitiveness, digitization that directly impacts the way potential prospects find out about company and recruitment process, as well as an acute shortage of high-potential employees, the recruitment of valuable employees and future talent enters a new stage of development. Thus, the HR department evolves from the traditional recruitment and selection of staff function to a strategic high-potential recruitment function focusing on creating a strong employer brand, recruiting through social networks and developing new skills and abilities. Companies like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or Google are investing heavily to attract new employees to create online talent communities or aggressive marketing campaigns at job fairs or universities (Deloitte, 2014, pp. 66-68; LinkedIn, 2016).

The retention of Millennials at work and their motivation is not necessarily an easy-to-manage phenomenon, mainly due to the discrepancy between the aspirations and expectations of Millennials vis-à-vis of employers and the concrete work experience at work. Therefore, managers should work, in some situations, differently with the Millennials than they have done with other generations (PwC, 2011, pp.24-25), favoring aspects such as:

1. concrete explanations of expectations, results, and how tasks should be done;
2. customizable benefits, often non-financial (though salary must be attractive);
3. opportunities for innovation and free speech, causing Millennials to propose new ideas for streamlining processes or products;
4. constant, real-time feedback;
5. flexibility in the program, but with clear instructions, measurable objectives, and clear communication;
6. training, mentoring and coaching in programs whose effectiveness should be constantly evaluated;
7. real possibilities for rapid career advancement - the Millennials do not positively appreciate the need to expect over the years for promotion based, for example, on seniority in the workplace.

Finally, what is to be mentioned is that, given both the values that guide them and the fact that there is a whole context that allows them to increase mobility at the workplace, it is less likely for the Millennials compared to other generations to remain loyal to the same company in the long run, and this perspective must be obvious to managers.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER DISCUSSIONS

Digital transformation is inevitable, it is here and now, and it puts a very high pressure on managers, who must choose which business areas to be digitally prioritized, have to redefine their strategies and processes, must pursue the empowerment of digital employees and at the same time find solutions for recruiting and motivating a new generation of employees, the Millennials, with other expectations and other behavior towards work. The automation of routine processes is already

a fact for a growing number of companies, so the recruited Millennials must be as creative as possible, real talents that can bring added value to employing companies through creativity and innovation. Or, in general, talents are hard to find, even more if markets face a demographic decline and, as a result, with smaller selection possibilities than in the past.

If managers have very high expectations from young employees, the same is true for Millennials who, in their turn, have very high expectations from companies where they choose to work: responsible organizational culture, actual values of respect for the balance of personal – professional lives, flexibility, managers to play mentoring, constant feedback, real opportunities for rapid career advancement, as well as pleasant atmosphere.

For Millennials, always looking for the next big thing and eager to quickly get into leadership positions, talent management programs are a good opportunity for career development. The choice of employers' and Millennials to match their requirements and aspirations is grounded both on pragmatic and emotional criteria, so employer branding in such situations is no longer a simple concept of internal PR, but it becomes a necessity for recruitment, motivation, and retention. Equally necessary, however, is the organizational flexibility both in reconsidering managerial and working practices and in understanding that, by definition, the Millennials are mobile and their long-term loyalty to a single job is rather rare than the norm.

Speaking of Millennials, the main challenge for contemporary businesses is to manage their activities by managers from previous generations and to harmonize very different working styles, dynamics, expectations and values, but soon there will be a new challenge for the environment business: Millennials as managers, subordinated teams of other Millennials, employees from older generations, and often with limitations inherent in the very process of digital transformation of companies. How prepared companies are to move to digital leadership, integrate Millennials employees and redefine strategies, processes, products, and consumer experiences into the new digital paradigm remains to be seen and analyzed in future papers.

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