

ATTRACTING, MOTIVATING AND ENGAGING GEN 'Y' IN AN INFRASTRUCTURE ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Attracting, Motivating and Engaging employees have been remained key issues for any organization. Today the proportion of Generation Y (GenY) at workplace is increasing day by day. GenY will be the largest percentage of employed workforce for next 30 years in India. Attracting, motivating and engaging this workforce through robust talent identification, development and engagement plans will be the only way that organizations will reap the benefits of the dividend promised by Young India. This paper reviews recent literature for managing GenY effectively. It explored career aspirations and motivators for GenY employees in a large infrastructure organization. The primary data have been collected from GenY employees using questionnaire survey and focused group discussions about their career aspirations and motivators. The primary results shown that GenY in the organization prefers career which builds their technical & functional competence, provides managerial tasks and variety. Advancement and considerate & sympathetic supervisor are found as key motivators. The paper further discussed HR interventions to attract, motivate and engage the selected group of people.

Keywords: *Gen Y, Career Aspirations, Motivators, Infrastructure, HR Interventions*

INTRODUCTION

It is a proven fact that that knowledge and human capital are increasingly important determinants of an organization's competitive advantage. Some researchers (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Wright & McMahan, 1992) have argued that strategically-managed human resources can provide sustainable competitive advantage. Now a days, GenY (born between 1981 – 1999) -the newest and youngest members of work forces all over the world are making their presence felt, and making organizations re-

think their practices. As organizations in India are taking new leap to the next orbit and preparing for welcoming GenY employees, many faces key challenges in managing GenY. There is no doubt that organizations that embrace such challenges will be in a better position to benefit from their skills and high potential. Therefore, it's essential to have deep insights and understanding about GenY. It is also critical to explore their career aspirations, and motivating factors in order to provide foundation for developing effective people management strategies for managing GenY, enhancing organizational performance.

As it is evident that in order to manage the GenY effectively, organizations need to think and design effective interventions which will fulfill their aspirations and keep them motivated & engaged. After reaffirming the facts that there is a lack of validated Indian studies on Indian GenY population, particularly in Infra domain, this study has been designed. It is an attempt is made to understand the career aspirations and motivating factors of GenY employees working in Infrastructure Sector company which is going through radical transformation, perplexing on how to acquire, motivate and engage its talent to maintain their competitiveness. The sample organization is one of the largest infrastructure conglomerate based in Ahmedabad. It has grown rapidly over last 12 years- from a trading house, it become one of the largest infrastructure conglomerate in the India (see appendix 1). One internal report on recruitment for one of its SBU has shown that organization's yield ratio of offer to acceptance for GenY about 75%. Out of them 91% mentioned shared that they did not join because of higher CTC expectation while 17% shared that they require better designation along with higher CTC. The organization is facing challenge as the turnover in for GenY employees is approximately 27 %, while the turnover for others it is approximately 11-12%. There existed another concerns for this group of employees: How to manage GenY effectively as management sees possibility of future leaders in them? Whether they will be "invaders" and "transformers"? What are they expecting from the organization, their work, in their workplace and way of working? What HR processes will make them engaged? The objective of this research was to explore the career expectations and motivators of GenY on the one hand and how to attract, motivate and engage them on the other. The paper also suggested HR interventions for engaging GenY.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marching of GenY-Rewriting the Workplace Rules: GenY are the youngest generation to enter the workforce. The GenY in India is ambitious, optimistic, embraces change and has a clear sense of where they are headed. It is crucial to optimally utilize their competencies and potential in order to make India Inc. shine. Generation Y at times, bring outsize luggage in the form of multiple digital technologies, their social networks, their tech-savvy culture, new ways of contemplating work, new managerial forms. GenY s are the generation born between 1981 – 199, which have been called entitled and empowered due, in part, to their inclusion in decision making since childhood (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). GenY are also being portrayed as possibly “the best generation yet”, while they being tout as the most “watched-over” generation in history, (Martin & Tulgan, 2001). They are highly collaborative and optimistic (Howe & Strauss, 2000). They want a voice in the workplace as they have become accustomed to having significant influence on family decisions and teams throughout their lives (Alsop, 2008). They are technology-dependent and expect automation in the workplace to support their skills at multitasking. Millennials share their feelings easily. They also share Gen Xers’ emphasis on work–life balance. Today’s GenY have this clear fundamental belief that a good job is a right and not a privilege. They also strongly believe that social responsibility is real and valued and not for only pretending or showcasing. If they do not like a job, they will change the job. If they aren’t stimulated at work, they leave. Certainly their loyalty is not with the organization it is with the job. GenY certainly do believe in mutual respect and integrity. They do believe that respect must be earned; decisions must be ethical, communication frequent and personal values. Few of the firm beliefs of the GenY professionals not only distinguish them in the workplace, but also establish new rules in the organization. Basically these unique characteristics are changing the rules of the workplace. It was also observed that there are many types of personalities, attributes and challenges among all members of the work force, even within a single generation. Organizations leaders and Heads need to be aware of such a dynamic workplace to achieve maximum productivity and cooperation. They need to understand their career aspirations and motivators in order to design and execute successful HR interventions for business impact.

Career Aspirations of Gen Ys

A career involves a process of progress and development of individuals (Baruch, 2004). Arnold (1997) defines a career as a sequence of employment related positions, roles, activities and experiences

encountered by a person. Tymon and Stumpf (2003) defined career as “an ongoing sequence of educational and work activities that are meaningful to the individual and that add value to the organizations in which the individual participates”. According to Nicholson and Arnold (1989), career transition from higher education into employment goes through various phases: preparation or anticipation, encounter, adjustment and stabilization. Baruch (2004) argued that the social context in which people grows and develops influences their values, norms and beliefs which, in turn, influence their career aspirations, career choices, and progress. Kerslake (2005) concluded that GenY have a strong aspiration and drive for faster career success, security, craving opportunity and responsibility. Arthur (1994) argued that boundaryless career for GenY has supplanted the traditional career view of slow upward progression in same function and in single organization.

Today, many organizations have been downsized and de-layered, leading to shrank career options for employees. Many of them are redesigning jobs and roles. People now expect to move between companies more than in the past. As a result, multi-directional career systems (Baruch, 2004) have emerged. This approach focuses on the individual, not the organization, who takes responsibility for their own career. Baruch (2004) contends that it is not restricted to the realm of paid work or work and non-work domains. He also argues that along with the hierarchical ladder climb, other criteria are now held to be important: inner satisfaction, life balance, autonomy and freedom. If we relate these criteria to GenY, it could see parallels between them and the values GenY hold. Arguably, these criteria need to be acknowledged and incorporated into the career structures of the future generation of retail graduates/managers. However, despite new career formats emerging there is still evidence to suggest that promotion is still common in organizational life (Holbeche, 2003), and when thinking of careers, a traditional linear career structure is often considered the most successful and the most sought after. This has traditionally been reinforced by many organizational structures, cultures and remuneration packages along with definitions of success and commitment, which may be opposed to the GenY’s aspiration’s of occupational & organizational identity. (Morton, 2002).

It is also found that more transactional and short-term relationships are common nowadays. People now expect an organisation to serve GenY – rather than the other way round – which might only be for two-to-three years. (Baruch, 2004). Given unique characteristics and attributes GenY employees are certainly instrumental in changing the workplace rules. The paper explored some of the ways in which GenY employees are thinking in terms of their career aspirations.

Motivators of Gen Y

The subject of motivation has always been the prime focus of both researchers and managers as the performance equation is incomplete without motivation. Conversion of work place to work space has enabled a fresh flow of employees in the organization along with shifts in management policies and practices. New techniques of motivation are constantly being introduced. It will help organizations to achieve their goals of higher productivity and exceptional performance. Different methods of motivation have been applied to the workforce which may be broadly classified into two categories – one by fear and other by understanding & empathy. Fear or Negative reinforcement does not produce motivation but only help in the movement of the employees to perform their task. Positive reinforcement though not motivation, has paved the way to developing the techniques of motivating the employees (Herzberg 1987).

The motivational scenario is changing as the expectations of employees and employers have undergone paradigm shift over past 10 years. The employees of the today's organizations are more demanding ever. They are required to perform more sophisticated and multiple tasks. This is because of two main reasons- one, unlike previous generations, the parents of GenY provides financial support for their children and secondly motivators of GenY have paradigm shift. *It requires GenY to be more innovative and technically.* To motivate GenY, organizations must show genuine interest and care. Many organizations experienced that the easiest way to show that you care is to promote two way dialogues. Sporting teams, movies, social events, two way conversations outside work etc. are extremely helpful in building rapport. Work for GenY is a social activity if they organizations can create open and collaborative culture, it will be able to motivate and engage GenY. The organizations need is to be mindful of the environment which is conducive to maximizing GenY productivity. Generally the group will rebel against process and crave flexibility. The less you tell them what to do the better! Focus on output and not process. So wherever possible, be creative and flexible-on dress codes, work hours, work locations etc. It has also provided insights for designing effective HR interventions for managing GenY in an Infra organization.

Research Design

Primary data has been collecting using survey questionnaire and focused group discussions (FGDs). Sample population is defined based on employees' age or date of birth as per their personal records. For this

study, the GenY age group is taken as employees born between 1981-1990. Questionnaires were distributed during the training programs held at the Management Development Centre of the company at Ahmedabad. FGDs were held in the evening for about one hour per batch of 10-12 employees to discuss their career aspirations, motivators and how to attract & engage them.

Quantitative

For the survey total of 140 valid responses were obtained and used for the final data analysis. The details about two instruments used is given below:

- Career Aspirations Scale by Schein (1985) having 41 items. For the sample the value of Cronbach's Alpha α was found as 0.818.
- The Motivational Scale by Udai Pareek (1997) having 14 items. For the sample the value of Cronbach's Alpha α was found as 0.824.

Qualitative

Conducted six focused group discussions (FGDs) (10-12 participants in each FGDs) with GenY participants who came for training. The key objective of FGDs was to collect data on what are their career aspiration and what they want from organization to keep them attracted, motivated and engaged.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Quantitative Results

Data collected from both the questionnaire were indexed to calculate the mean percentile. Data analysis is done using mean percentile is shown in table-I & table-II. It is inferred from the table -I that GenY aspires to join those organizations which will provide them opportunities in terms of developing their technical & functional competence (77.5), managerial task (76.85), and Variety (76.5). The results also been revalidated with the internal company report about causes of not joining and leaving the organization. From table-II results, it can be concluded that GenY are highly motivated by equitable pay (66.23), advancement (65.01) and Achievement (59.98) as intrinsic motivators. It could be further inferred that considerate & sympathetic supervisor (67.74), restricted hours of work (64.44), and sound co. policies & practices (60.59) acted as extrinsic motivators for the selected sample of GenY.

Table-1 GenY's Career Anchors

Career Anchors	Mean Percentile
Technical & Functional Competence	77.50
Managerial Task	76.85
Autonomy & Independence	67.28
Job Stability	73.33
Security-Geographical Stability	60.87
Service & Dedication to cause	74.80
Creativity	74.11
Identity-Occupational & Organizational	73.71
Variety	76.50

Table-2 GenY's Motivators

Intrinsic Motivators	Mean Percentile	Extrinsic Motivators	Mean Percentile
Advancement	65.01	Security	54.48
Interesting Work	53.46	Adequate Earnings	50.63
Respect & Recognition	56.34	Fringe Benefits	54.83
Responsibility & Independence	58.95	Comfortable Working Conditions	57.85
Achievement	59.98	Sound Co. Policies & Practices	60.59
Technical Competent Supervisor	57.24	Considerate & Sympathetic Supervisor	67.74
Equitable Pay	66.23	Restricted Hours Work	64.44

Qualitative Data Analysis

In order to better understand millennial at workplace, content analysis of FGDs have been done. Insights from FGDs have helped to understand GenY effectively and integrate their aspirations and motivation with overall business objectives of the organization. Below are the insights from the FGDs:

- They need clarity of vision, mission and goals of organization at first go.
- They require clear role and job description.
- Career progression is very essential for GenY. They want that their career opportunities should be broadened by access to both *technical and managerial ladder.*

- They value and care for their individual space provided by the company in terms of autonomy and independence.
- They like flexibility to allow them to pursue their many outside interests.
- They prefer in-hand rewards as they are financially savvy.
- They want to learn from older mentors. They resonate most with the Baby Boom and World War II generations.
- They may need to be rescued from difficult situations while they develop these skills.
- Millennial tend to be motivated when their managers connect their actions to their personal and career goals.
- Messages that Attracts GenY:
 - “Thinking Big, Doing Better”
 - “You will be assigned managerial tasks”.
 - “One Vision, One Team.”
 - “Opportunity to learn ‘the whole gamut’ of Infra business.”
- Messages that motivate GenY:
 - “You will be working with other bright, creative people.”
 - “You and your colleagues may give 180 degree turn to this organization.”
 - “You are the ‘hero’ here.”
- Messages that Engages GenY:
 - “You are the star”.
 - “I am entrusting this task on your shoulder”.
 - “You are your own boss”.
- Rewards they like: Awards, certificates, tangible evidence of credibility
- Preferred methods of communication: Instant messages, Chat on intranet, blogs, text messages, emails.

In FGDs, it was found that some of them are having diametric opposite motivators & career aspirations. Even as they need well defined order, they want risk and challenge; they desire responsibility as well as freedom; guidance and supervision as well as the desire ‘to be a king at the age of a prince’ etc.

Attracting GenY

Talent sourcing is very critical in infra business. Attracting professionals with high intellect to remote locations is one the major challenges for the organization. It has been also observed that the yield ratio for GenY in terms of joining when offered is approx. 75%. In order to enhance this yield and attract more suitable employees, organization needs initiate

various employer branding initiatives. It is necessary to develop practices which will provide GenY technical & functional competence, managerial tasks and variety. They need have clarity of vision, mission and goals of organization at first go. They also need to be provided with clear role and job description and faster career progression. In this organization, many of the new GenY recruits are facing serious concerns about the kind of role assigned during their first 3-6 months. Either they are not given the role which utilizes and strengthen their competence or they are given roles which they do not like. It is suggested that HR subsystems like competency based recruitment & selection, socialization for 'person-organizational' role fit and suitable trainings to be provided. The data analysis suggested that GenY also wants freedom to work. They want to establish their own lifestyle, set their own pace, work habits, and schedules. This organization is very rigid as far as work timings are concerns. There is not flexi timing, rather in some units behavior by the line/HR heads found to be unreasonable as far as flexi timings are concerned. In order to attract people to remote places (like Mundra, Tiroda, Badi etc.), it's necessary for company to provide special benefits to this young employees. It was also found that sound company policies & practices and comfortable working conditions motivate GenY. Organization must craft effective and employee friendly policies which will guide them for effective outcomes. Many companies have taken advantage of this by reaching out to GenY employees and making them attract by giving clear and transparent picture about its policies and employee friendly policies as it is the reason for selecting or rejecting the company.

Motivating GenY

The performance equation is zero without motivation. It plays crucial role in creating an environment that fosters the productivity and growth. These groups of GenY employees are highly motivated by advancement equitable play (internal motivators) as well as by Considerate & Sympathetic Supervisor and limited working hours. It has been further observed that many of the GenY employees are found in the officer till night hours (up to 9.00 pm or 10.00pm) in this organization on regular basis.

As per FGDs discussions, it has been also found the GenY having considerate & sympathetic supervisor motivates them. It is also observed that many a times the boss/immediate superior acts as a 'roadblock', particularly for the new ideas and initiatives. It is required that company takes appropriate steps to convey this message to its business leaders. It

is essential that they become more sensitive and approachable. They may be given some counseling and or coaching training. They need to welcome and reward new ideas and initiatives. It was also found that 'Equitable Pay' is having highest mean percentile as a motivator for this sample of GenY. It means that the GenY in this organization do not perceive the pay as equitable. One reason is that there existed disparity in pay and for the same role, the pay is different in many the cases. Salary structure as well as performance related pay is not very transparent. In addition to equitable pay, GenY also gives high weightage for the 'advancement'. There is flexibility to work for different profiles within SBUs but not across SBUs. The organization is working towards new salary structure. It has been also found that GenY gives more importance to intrinsic motivators but at the same time they wants their extrinsic needs to be taken care off. It suggests that business leaders need to provide external motivators as 'hygiene factors' and provide them challenging tasks, responsibility & independence, recognition etc. on regular basis.

Engaging GenY- HR interventions

Practitioners and academics have argued that an engaged workforce can create competitive advantage. Hay Group report (2010) found that companies with high employee engagement levels grow on average 4.5 times faster than those with low levels. Perrin (2007) found that organisations with the highest percentage of engaged employees increased their operating income by 19% and their earnings per share by 28% year to year. It has been observed that in order to keep the GenY actively engaged, they must be given managerial task with options to enhance their personal career growth. Based on survey and FGDs results and interactions with different HR team members, following HR interventions were suggested for attracting, motivating and engaging GenY.

- Tap an outstanding employee from the GenY to talk to the prospective candidates about the company to attract them.
- Effective communication leveraging technology, along with social media for sharing relevant and truthful messages.
- Design and discuss the career pathway and advancement opportunity in careers.
- The role as well as the job description must be communicated to the prospective candidate at the time of interview or posting. Job Realistic Previews (JRPs) may be used for the same.
- Handholding when employees join the organization and provide necessary support and guidance whenever required.

- Instead of 3-7 day orientation, the socialization process should be planned in phases which may be for 3-6 months, providing scope to the new incumbent to learn his/her role and understanding the expectations from the 'significant others'
- Organization need to make work interesting continuous basis.
- Establish process of mentorship to have considerate and sympathetic interactions with the superior/boss.
- *To allow* them for the sabbatical leave as they would want to explore their own interest or pursue higher education or update them.
- Promote and encourage interdepartmental transfers and multiple career ladders as they want to experience different department so as to have overall knowledge.
- Provide an open culture so that they can communicate their ideas and concerns openly and frequently with their seniors.
- Provide specific feedback on implementation which will improve themselves and learn from mistakes.
- GenY is more concerned about how faster he grows in organization than what he will get after retirement. So policies should be more attractive while at work than giving more
- Performance management system (PMS) must be design to communicate regularly about how they are performing. It must be unbiased and equitable in terms of performance based pay (PRP). The PMS would need to based on strong analytics and performance metrics.
- As they are better motivated by intrinsic motivators, appreciation could be in terms of giving more responsibility, certification of appreciation, appreciating by words, a meal etc.
- Provide flexible working hours as they would not mind working for hours but when they need to fulfil some personal commitments at a particular time, they need that flexibility.
- Allow breaks during work as they cannot work continuously at a stretch and therefore they want breaks.
- Develop meritocracy and build supporting organizational structures.
- Develop teams where they have approachable, knowledgeable and competent Manager. They should consider boss as a mentor whom they can approach when they face problems.
- Celebrate their birthdays & other social events as it will encourage their sense of belongingness with the organization.
- Effective horizontal and vertical communication for better clarity on what is expected out of the given task/work.

Recent HR Initiatives

The organization has realized the importance of GenY and initiated few initiatives to attract, motivate and engage its young talent. Some of initiatives are:

- The organization has employee referral program called 'Mitr'(The Friend) which is very popular among GenY. The job postings are made available on intranet and people can refer their friends and earn exciting rewards as well.
- In order to attract and retain the organization has created an environment of appreciation. For managing risks and confronting challenges, each year a team of GET/MTs is awarded as best Trainees' Batch.
- The organization has institutionalized a world class Management Development Center having 'Simulator Training' approach integrated. It is designed for a structured 'Technical Orientation Module' The programme shall run twice in a year for the GenY Talent
- During the training GETs/MTs are given an opportunity to enhance their Technical / managerial effectiveness accordingly a suitable in-house training module for soft skills also imparted. They have been also provided feedback using various psychometric tools like MBTI, Belbin Team Inventory and Thomas Profiling.
- The organization also introduced 'ESRS- Employee Spot Recognition Scheme'. The purpose is to promote a sense of belongingness and motivation among employees by recognizing and rewarding exemplary behaviour/ contribution of employees instantaneously on the spot for demonstrating positive behavior. The employee will be given a Certification of Appreciation signed by Site Head along with a token gift of silver coin (20 gms.).
- In order to motivate GenY, company also has announced 'Higher Education Scheme' in Management (Diploma in Mgt.) & Engineering domain (M.S./B.S Courses). Employees need to pay 25% of fees and company will pay the 75% fees for the same.
- This young talent is engaged through structured career development plan which is driven by psychometric tests for each Graduate/ Management Trainee. It helps to align employees' behavioral attributes with his/her suitability for the given current role as well as future roles. The organization maps career aspiration (3-5 yrs) with clear Individual Development Plans (IDPs).
- For GenY, the organization also experimented with fast track career progression.

- In order to maintain work life balance, all recreational facilities (for Indoor / Outdoor) sports & Gym facilities are provided in all the township and city based offices.

CONCLUSION

The Generation Y in Corporate India is a remarkable group that is ambitious, optimistic, embraces change and has a clear sense of where they are headed. Leveraging GenY's competencies at the workplace will help organizations to achieve its ambitious goals. Many opportunities exist to attract, motivate and engage GenY as discussed above. There are hundreds of touch points where HR can engage on a personal and professional level. HR needs to understand their aspirations and motivational needs in order to tailor-made HR interventions to engage them. HR needs to take a holistic view for each individual- creating an integrated talent management strategy. As findings suggested that GenY employees' aspires to have high variety, technical & functional competence and managerial roles, while they are motivated by equitable pay, advancement, considerate & sympathetic supervisor etc., HR need to work out for interventions which will satisfy make them actively engaged. Suggested HR interventions would help the organization to attract and keep its GenY staff in high spirit. It is firmly believed that, if the organization would nurture the spark & strengthens of GenY, it could take a big leap towards achieving its Vision for year 2020.

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Appendix 1: Organization Brief

The Group is a business behemoth based in India having a global footprint with interests in Infrastructure, Power, Global Trading, Logistics, Energy, Port and SEZ, Mining, Oil and Gas, Agri Business, FMCG products, Real Estate Development, Bunkering, et al. It is a name well established among the distinguished corporate entities of India, with a young and highly motivated taskforce of professionals who are a prized asset of the organization. The Group is engaged in a continuous endeavour to maximise the realisation of potential in its employees and market opportunities by synergising the multiple ventures of the Group; thus creating an optimum business model that benefits both, stakeholders and society. Founded in 1988 with a capital of INR 500,000, is today the flagship company of the conglomerate which posted INR 260 billion revenue in the 2009-10.

The Group has many distinctions to its merit:

- Operator of the largest private port in India;
- Developer of the largest multiproduct SEZ in India;
- Owns the largest edible oil refining capacity in India;
- One of the largest trading houses in India ;
- Largest Integrated Coal Management Firm in India;
- Promoter of India's first supercritical technology based power plant; and
- Operator of the world's largest automated import Coal Terminal having 60 MnT capacity.