

**Navigating the Next Generation:
A Guide to Working with
Millennials and Gen Z**

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Introduction

In almost every industry within the U.S., employee turnover rates have continuously increased since 2013 (U.S. Labor Statistics, 2018). For smaller businesses, the impact of voluntary turnover rates of employees is a significant problem, as many of them lack the resources to handle the high turnovers. Among the problems caused by employee turnover are loss of revenue, productivity loss, and low employee morale. Moreover, employees voluntarily leaving an organization can create a work environment where culture and values depreciate, weakening confidence, integrity, and the ability of the organization to compete at a high level (Carucci, 2017).

The issue of job turnover is especially relevant when it comes to Millennials. According to Gartner, the pace of Millennial employee turnover is forecast to be 50–75% higher than companies have experienced previously, and the issue is compounded by the current length of time it takes to fill roles – 18% longer than pre-pandemic (Tupper & Ellis, 2022). In a survey conducted by Deloitte, findings indicated that 43% of millennials saw themselves leaving their positions within two years. Furthermore, only 28% of millennials saw themselves staying with the same company

beyond five years (Emmons, 2018), while Hoffman (2018) indicated that 56% of millennials said they would quit a job if they did not like the work atmosphere. Twenty-four percent of millennials reported that they were looking for a new place of employment around six months after being on their current job, and 25% of millennials indicated they would probably leave their job within one year (Maurer, 2021).

While there are many factors that are known to contribute to this phenomenon, including the inability of some leaders to connect with Millennial employees in a way that decreases the chances of their leaving their jobs (Fields & Calvert, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2008) and Millennials' perception of what makes work meaningful to them, there is generally a lack of knowledge and understanding about the perceptions and lived experiences of Millennial employees and how that impacts their attitude to work. In studying this occurrence, researchers have employed various theories, such as motivational theory, job characteristics theory, net expectation theory, leader-member exchange, and person-organization fit, among others (Callanan & Greenhaus, 2006), to attempt to explain the increase in voluntary turnover.

Though researchers have applied these theories to gain a better understanding of the problem of voluntary turnover as it applies to work environments overall, one specific topic and concern that companies have is the relationships between managers and Millennial employees (Reina et al., 2018) and how the manager-employee relationship affects job turnover. Thus, the original overarching intent of the study I conducted, which ultimately led to this book, was to provide a greater understanding of the precipitating events and experiences within companies that lead many Millennials to quit their jobs. The focus of the study was on Millennials employed in the IT industry and included, in the course of interviews, topics such as their attitudes towards work, the manager-employee relationship, and their views on work-life balance. While the interviews were conducted with employees in one state, additional research has shown that the findings from the study are applicable throughout the U.S. and within different companies and organizations. The individuals interviewed were ideal candidates for the study, as they had firsthand knowledge of the problems that were addressed and were able to provide insight and personal reflections on the rationale used for deciding to leave their places of employment.

My initial interest in this topic arose from conversations I had over time with small business owners. Being a small-business owner myself, I have often had meetings with other owners who have discussed and identified concerns they have with employees, specifically millennials. During those conversations, a common theme that has come up is employee retention. Many of the owners have expressed their frustrations with having to constantly replace employees and the problems that this has incurred for their companies, such as cost of training, cost of recruiting, loss of revenue, and the stress associated with having to continuously hire and train people. These discussions provided the impetus for the original study. However, while the original focus of the study was on millennials in the workplace, this book has been expanded to include Gen Z as the next rising workforce and their attitudes to work, life, and their place within the larger world community. My hope is that this book will provide insight for employers regarding the hiring of Millennials and Gen Zs, help them gain an understanding of how and why millennials and Gen Zs differ from past generations, and the best ways to attract and retain them.

Chapter One: The Problem of Employee Turnover

Background

Voluntary turnover has been an issue for organizations for hundreds of years. In 1918, Paul H. Douglas, in his article “The Problem of Labor,” wrote about the problems of “labor turnover” and described its impact on industry. Tracing how the workforce evolved from the Middle Ages, he identified how the Industrial Revolution changed the landscape of labor markets around the world. According to Douglas, with the onset of the Industrial Revolution in the United States and the growth of factories and mass production, people were able to stop working on farms and start working for industries that gave them more opportunities and higher wages. However, with these new opportunities for employees came new problems for employers, as employees had options for where they wanted to work. As Douglas pointed out, high employee turnover stemmed from employees who were more transient, moving not only from one district to another but to cities and states. There was also an ease in which “employees ... could easily find positions in other industries. The workman could leave one plant to enter either another plant in the same industry or one in a totally different industry” (Douglas, 307). In *The Labor*

Market, written in 1923, Don D. Leschohier commented that labor turnover was often the result of employers who were “careless about their labor because they could easily get more” but that, in many cases, “most employers were clamoring for more men while they let those they have slip through their fingers.” Employees, for their part, could “lightly throw up their jobs’ because many others are doing the same thing and they could therefore secure other employment” (Leschohier, 19).

The problem of employee turnover in the past parallels what is happening in the workforce today. It is a complex, continuous problem that can weaken an organization in many ways by compromising the organizational climate, reducing performance, negatively impacting productivity, and reducing the number of qualified individuals available to work (Alatawi, 2017).

Within an organization, there can be numerous reasons for high turnover, ranging from company structure, inadequate working conditions, poor management, or money (Beynen, 2016) to diversity issues within an organization (Makhdoomi & Nika, 2017). Many organizations, moreover, employ people from different cultures, races, and ethnicities, which can lead to differences in expectations and approaches to work.

From the outset, let me point out that while the focus of this book is on the negative impact of employee turnover on companies, there are some instances where employee turnover can be beneficial to an organization. For instance, turnover is considered advantageous to an organization if the benefits from the turnover exceed the costs related to attracting, hiring, retaining, and training new employees (Lee, 2018). Hiring new employees, in that case, can lead to an influx of new ideas and perspectives and help with competitiveness (Westfall, 2017). There have also been occasions when organizations have created policies to purge a percentage of employees whose performance was not up to expectations and replace them with high performers. For example, Jack Welch, when he was CEO of General Electric, implemented policies that would require the dismissal of low performers. Other benefits of employee turnover include reduced complacency amongst employees. However, the question we address in this book is what happens when a company experiences continuous employee turnover and has difficulties attracting and retaining its employees.

Turnover

Turnover is the process of replacing one employee with another one. Employee turnover, whether in large or small companies, is impacted by the ability of the leaders of an organization to meet their perceived expectations (Dobrev & Kim. 2019) and by the benefit level and benefit determination satisfaction perceived by the employee (De La Torre-Ruiz et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2002).

Many theories have evolved over the years to explain the problem of turnover. Each approach is a little different from the other and is helpful in different situations. Turnover theories present ideas designed to justify the intent to leave an organization by an employee and are developed by examining the impact of predictors, such as role strain, work-life balance, and organizational climate, on various variables, such as seeking promotions, seeking leadership roles, and intent to quit (Ellinas et al., 2018). Understanding these variables is vital to being able to understand why people decide to leave their jobs.

For instance, Holtom et al. (2008) have identified a process flow (i.e., a sequential representation of a process and its components, including operations, timelines, people involved, and resources needed) to better explain the

turnover process. This process indicates that voluntary turnover is a time-based incident that follows a causal chain: distal influences (e.g., job and individual characteristics), which leads to intermediate antecedents (e.g., job satisfaction, job embeddedness), which leads to direct antecedents (e.g., job search behavior, intent to leave), and eventually ends with actual turnover (Holtom et al., 2008; Li et al., 2016). This process flow is useful for discovering why millennials or any other group of people quit their jobs.

However, overall, the turnover process is challenging to define precisely because of the many variables involved, including people's attitudes and emotions, work environments, income, families, community, and leader engagement (Alatawi, 2017; Lewis et al., 2018). A proper understanding of why people decide to leave their jobs requires looking at all the factors that play into their decision.

Why employees quit their jobs

While it is difficult to identify specific reasons for why employees leave their jobs, certain trends have been identified that lead to an understanding of voluntary turnover.

In the 1980s, most researchers believed that employees quit because of either salary issues or work ethics (Laser, 1980). In the 1990s, that notion changed when Lee and Mitchell (1994) identified four reasons employees might decide to leave:

- Unexpected change at the organizational level: This could be the result of new ownership, new management, or new policies instituted that were not favorable to employees within the organization.
- Family issues: This would be indicative of health problems by a spouse or parent.
- Layoffs: Indicative of a company losing contracts, losing customers, or just trying to be more competitive in the marketplace.
- Expected change: This indicates an employee is looking to make a change or the organization provided employees with ample notice that change was coming and that they needed it to start looking for other employment.

Taking into account these reasons, managers were encouraged to reevaluate their approach to employee turnover because, as March and Simon (1958) stated, organizations are systems of interrelated social behaviors of people, and these behaviors form the stimulus used to guide

individuals in the decision-making process. Therefore, discovering what there was about an organization, i.e., its culture and expectations, that prompted turnover was important for ascertaining the causes for employees leaving their jobs.

In the 2020s, managers and leaders of organizations are still trying to better understand voluntary employee turnover. Current research indicates that reasons for intent to quit can be quite complex. Among some of the causes are those noted by Pattnaik and Sahoo (2018), who write that academic qualifications might be a possible explanation. Their research indicates that employees with more academic skills are more likely to job-hop. Within the IT industry, certifications can significantly determine the salary that a person can request or expect to receive, thus, it impacts employee retention. Academic qualifications (degrees) also come into consideration when applying for higher-level positions or meeting a specific labor category.

Ertas (2015) discovered that team members with different personality traits from their managers tend to have higher quit rates. The effects of those differences depend on whether the differences violate traditional social roles and workplace hierarchies. According to Thomas and Terrence

(1994), an employee's decision to quit can often be related to receiving unexpected work-related news. This can come in the form of losing a contract that an individual was working on or a severe stock price decline, both of which might result in people being confused or uncertain about their futures at the companies. In situations where people do not feel secure in their positions within an organization, the intent to quit can increase.

An employee's intention to leave may also be affected by the amount of diversity in an organization and how management deals with that diversity in the workplace (Makhdoomi & Nika, 2017). In many organizations, leaders have developed diversity programs to address these issues and give employees a means of finding more ways to communicate with their peers. Diversity in an organization can impact the attractiveness of an organization (e.g., good reputation, friendly atmosphere) through perceived organizational support, organizational commitment, particular nature of the job, the culture of the organization, leaders' interaction with employees, and leadership styles (Alshammari et al., 2016; Ryan, 2016; Wang et al., 2014).

How employees can alleviate the stressors involved in employment

While the focus of employee retention research is often on what companies and organizations can do to retain their employees, other studies have taken another perspective and examined what methods employees can employ to help them balance their job and work life. One such method is practicing psychological detachment. Psychological detachment refers to the act of disengaging from work-related activities outside of work, including not thinking about work (Berga & Muzikante, 2017), in order to recover from the stress and strain of the job. Being able to disconnect from work after leaving for the day can be beneficial to employees' well-being and job performance, as well as to the organization, in many ways:

- Detachment can help employees have higher mental well-being and feel more satisfied with their jobs;
- Impact changes in an employee's levels of contentment, cheerfulness, fatigue, depletion, irritation, and job performance;
- Mitigate responses to stressful work situations;
- Detachment during off-work hours can increase task performance and proactive work behaviors (Defoe, 2013).

The ability to leave work at work and not think about anything work-related is essential for employees to recover mentally from stressful situations (Shimazu et al., 2014).

Being able to consciously relax can also help employees manage work and non-work life and improve an employee's feeling of well-being (Sianoja & Syrek, 2018). According to the Mayo Clinic (2023), there are several ways in which employees can learn to relax within their place of work and at home to mitigate stress in their jobs. These can be done through:

- Adhering to a healthy sleep schedule, eating nutritiously, and/or taking part in stress management techniques such as meditation or yoga.
- Having a role model that one can turn to for advice and encouragement. This can be a friend, family member, or even a co-worker.
- Strengthening one's growth skillset through times of adversity or failure. Rather than giving in to discouragement, learning to recognize, accept, and aspire to grow will help in future situations and regulate one's brain's flight or fight response when facing challenges.

- Remaining realistically optimistic. This can be aided through stress management techniques such as meditation or functional or adaptive mental health techniques.
- Pursuing a purposeful activity, such as participating in a community event or having a goal unrelated to work, can help reset one's thinking.

Another key to relaxation is perception, because if employees believe they are happy, they are not actively looking for other employment. Levine et al. (2016) have indicated that people who have perceived happiness in their lives are more relaxed and experience lower risks of burnout at work.

How employers can alleviate stress for employees

One way organizations can help employees relieve stress is by ensuring that they are given breaks during the day, thereby giving employees time to relax and replenish reserves depleted during regular work hours. Studies have found that providing employees with frequent breaks during their day helps keep workers focused and engaged. Randolph (2016) suggests that during these breaks, employees should “(a) take a short walk, (b) stand up and stretch, (c) take phone calls standing up, (d) change positions

at the workstation, or (e) drink some water or eat a healthy snack.”

Other researchers have looked at ways in which businesses can alleviate work-related stress by incorporating various programs, such as wellness programs, to help employees deal with the stressors associated with work. Findings from a 2016 well-being survey indicated that about a third of American workers regularly take advantage of these company-sponsored programs (Singer, 2016). The programs further provide leaders with opportunities to show employees that they are concerned about them and help their productivity.

Self-mastery and self-efficacy

Another option available to employees is mastery experience. “Mastery experience” refers to the ability to increase self-efficacy, which propels a person to believe they can succeed, helps to build their confidence (Kaufman, 2019), and has been linked to increased perceived confidence and better coping skills (Raeder et al., 2019). Mastery experience is the belief in one’s self that drives some employees to keep striving to achieve their goals. Self-efficacy is a person’s belief they can successfully do what is necessary to achieve the desired outcome in a situation (Yancey, 2018). Improvements in self-efficacy are

achievable by examining four sources of data: enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological state (Kim, 2005). These four sources of data provide a wealth of valuable information to individuals looking for a boost in their self-confidence:

- Enactive mastery experiences refer to when an individual makes efforts to complete tasks (Lippke, 2017). Enactive mastery experience provides the best realistic evidence indicating whether a person has what it takes to succeed at what they are doing. That feeling a person gets after the successful completion of an activity is an “inactive mastery experience,” which relates to a person’s personal experiences.
- “Vicarious experience” refers to expertise or feelings gained through someone else’s experiences or life actions. Vicarious experiences allow individuals to feel like they have achieved things they usually would not be able to achieve. For instance, vicarious experience is when parents identify or associate their success with the activities or achievements accomplished by their kids, or when something happens to someone whom someone knows, or one sees something sad on TV and empathizes with the characters.

- “Verbal persuasion” relates to situations where someone can convince someone else to do something to help achieve a goal or mission. In research conducted on patients with neck problems, verbal persuasion led to increased self-efficacy (Söderlund & Sterling, 2016). Salespeople are excellent users of verbal persuasion. In some situations, the job of a salesperson is to convince a consumer to purchase a product to help them meet a goal.
- A “physiological state” refers to one’s physical conditioning, which includes fatigue, muscle strength, and endurance. Factors that influence physiological self-efficacy include fatigue, anxiety, positive/negative moods, and stress (Capa-Aydin et al., 2018). Remember, self-efficacy mirrors the perception of what a person believes their capabilities are and not what they can actually do. Being able to separate opinion from reality is a challenge some people deal with regularly.

Control

All people strive for control in some form or fashion. Some people just want to control themselves, while others want to be in control of everything. Control is one of the four main goals of psychology, where people try to control their

behavior and, in some cases, the acts of others (Bernstein, 2019). Control can come in many forms, including visual, internal, external, and behavioral. Part of being in control is having the ability to recover quickly or people's ability to return their functioning practices to a stable level where stress is significantly reduced (Shimazu et al., 2014). For many people, work is stressful, and being able to control what one can control is a challenge. However, an important note to remember about control is that one should focus only on those things that one can influence and not get caught up in worrying about things that are outside of one's area of influence.

A sense of self-control is crucial to employees when dealing with stressful situations and environments in the workplace for them to be able to determine coping strategies for dealing with those situations (Troup & Dewe, 2002). Millennials, more than people from other generations, want to be in control of their circumstances, with 21% of millennials admitting to changing jobs within the previous year and 60% of millennials saying they are always open to a new job opportunity (Wells, 2018). These numbers show that if there is something about a job or the environment that millennials feel is outside of their control, some millennials will not hesitate to leave that position or organization.

Generations in the Workforce

There are currently four generations making up the U.S. workforce today: veterans, baby boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y (Clark, 2017). What sets these generations apart from each other is that, as Srivastava and Banerjee (2016) describe, each has their “own unique set of values system, work ethics, priorities, traits and orientation towards power, loyalty, expectations, and work culture” that are influenced by “their own historical events and defining political timelines which bring about certain changes in the then existing thought process.” In this study, the focus is on Generation Y (millennials). However, in order to better understand the impact that millennials have had on today’s workforce, one should have an understanding of how preceding generations have approached the matter of employment.

The first group is the veterans or traditionalists. They were born between 1922 -1945 and are sometimes referred to as the silent generation. Veterans typically have the following characteristics:

- They are the oldest generation, with about 5% still in the workforce.
- They respect authority and are known for having family values that keep work and home life separate.

- They are motivated by money and believe in self-sacrifice.
- They are thrifty, loyal, disciplined, view education as a dream, and learn best through instructor-led training events (Clark, 2017; Wiedmer, 2015).

The next generation is the baby boomers. Born between 1946-1964, they are considered the wealthiest generation and have the following characteristics:

- They are work-centric
- Independent
- Goal-oriented
- Competitive
- They equate self-worth to the positions they hold within an organization.
- This generation also believes in having a structured hierarchy.

In many cases, baby boomers were the first in their families to be educated, and most were motivated by money, power, and recognition. They expected to be valued and rewarded for their efforts (Clark, 2017; Wiedmer, 2015). Baby boomers comprise the generation responsible for the culture in many of the organizations that exist today. They control

two-thirds of the U.S. disposable income, and many consider themselves entrepreneurs (Frankel, 2017; Wiedmer, 2015).

Born between 1965-1980, Generation X, the generation coming after Baby Boomers, has often been generalized by the older generations as lazy and entitled. As Cordeniz (2002) describes Boomers as equating “work with self-worth, contribution to society and personal fulfillment. Their competitive nature drove them to aspire for higher monetary compensation and titles.” However, while Boomers were raised during a time of prosperity, economic stability and typically were raised within nuclear families, Generation X grew up in an era of a decline in America’s global power, corporate bankruptcies and downsizing, and a doubling of the divorce rate. As a result of these difficult social, political, and economic times, Generation X has a new set of values that significantly differ from the Boomers. These are manifested in a loss of faith in the business and corporate structure that the Boomers have, less emphasis on monetary rewards, and a view of “great diversity in family situations, relationships, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender roles, religion, and political affiliation” (Wiethoff, 2004). As a group, Generation X tends not to follow “traditional professional rules, possibly overlooking many organizational or social boundaries.” Furthermore, within

the work setting, Generation X prefer to “participate in non-traditional, diverse, multi-tasking and fun work teams where individuals act as equals - regardless of their age, experience, race, or gender (Zemke et al., 2000). Among some of their characteristics:

- They welcome responsibility but hate to be micromanaged.
- They value having a work-life balance.
- Many have a family-first mentality.
- Are vocal about social engagement and promoting social justice.
- This generation includes more diversity in the workplace (Clark, 2017; Katz, 2017; Wiedmer, 2015).

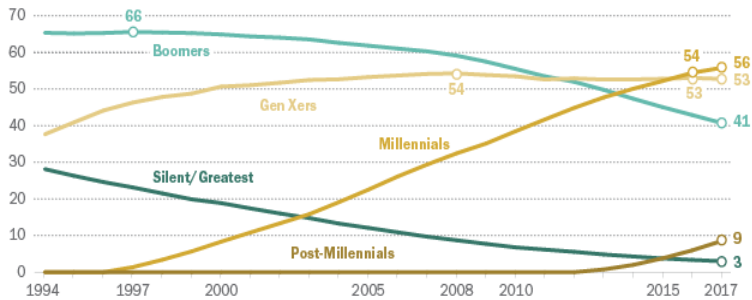
Generation X can be considered to bridge the gap between baby boomers and millennials, typewriters and computers, and the predigital and digital ages.

Millennials, or Generation Y, born between 1981 and 2006, are the largest generation in the workforce today. This generation grew up with digital technologies, including the internet and social media. The Millennials' attitude to work illustrates the earlier statement that “values system, work ethics, priorities, traits and orientation towards power,

loyalty, expectations, and work culture” change according to the times. While Millennials may be considered by the Baby Boomer generation to be job hoppers, lazy, or entitled, what drives Millennials is the need to identify meaning in the work they perform (Hoffman, 2018). Research on millennials has emphasized their preferences for unconfined careers, work–life balance, and extrinsic over intrinsic rewards (Greenberg & Weber, 2009; Howe & Strauss, 1993, 2000; Taylor & Keeter, 2010).

Millennials became the largest generation in the labor force in 2016

U.S. labor force, in millions



Note: Labor force includes those ages 16 and older who are working or looking for work. Annual averages shown.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of monthly 1994-2017 Current Population Survey (IPUMS).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Adapted from Pew Research Center:
<https://www.pewresearch.org/topic/generations-age/generations/millennials/>

Though Millennials are known to change jobs within a relatively short time frame, their reasons reflect their attitudes to employment and what they expect from it. The common reasons Millennials give for deciding to leave a company include an unproductive atmosphere, no engagement, no ability to take leave, outdated technology, inflexible work schedules, lack of mentorship, lack of social activism by leaders of the organization, and finding the job was not as advertised (Fritsch et al., 2018; Hoffman, 2018).

Millennials are a diverse generation with a higher percentage of minorities than previous generations (Ross & Rouse,

2015). Forty-seven percent of Millennials actively seek to work for diverse organizations and support inclusion (Nelson, 2019). To Millennials, diversity means more than people from different demographics; it also refers to having various identities, ideas, experiences, and opinions (Penn State, 2017). Having more diversity in the workplace can create more challenges and opportunities for employees and managers. However, variety in the workplace requires managers to be trained in diversity issues and to be aware of customs and courtesies associated with different cultures and how to deal with them.

Millennials in the workforce are more educationally focused than other generations, thus focusing on educational and technical qualifications that may impact job satisfaction and the desire to stay with an organization.

Contrary to the perception of older generations that Millennials are irresponsible and entitled, in fact, Millennials are generally ambitious, positive, flexible, and have a clear sense of direction. In that light, one employee interviewed for this study commented on the difference between the attitudes of Millennials and older employees, saying that for Millennial managers, it's "what they can do, what they know... what I'm making happen" as opposed to

the older managers who have the attitude of “I already know this.”

Chapter Two: Employee Motivation

Theories behind Employee Motivation

Understanding what motivates people can be vital to getting them to do or act a certain way. “Motivation” is defined as the process of initiating and sustaining goal-directed activities (Cook & Artino, 2016). These goal-directed activities can be anything that an individual or group identifies as important and can be motivated by personal or professional reasons. Goals include making it to work on time each morning, finishing writing a dissertation, or becoming the employee of the month.

A big part of the research I conducted focused on human personalities. Using human characteristics and lived experiences for evaluation, as well as understanding dissatisfaction-induced decision-making (Haman et al., 2007), can help clarify why employees decide to leave their jobs. The guidance for this study came from several theories, including Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Herzberg’s two-factor theory, Vroom’s expectancy theory (1964), and job characteristics theory. These theories were used to gather background data to support a better understanding of some of the concepts used in the past to help explain why people make the decisions they make. They also supplied the

foundation for this study, highlighting the importance of gathering more knowledge to help better understand turnover and the impact leadership practices have on millennial tenure at small organizations.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow (1954), in his theory of motivation, known as the hierarchy of needs, outlined the driving factors for humans. Maslow believed that all humans have five needs that drive or motivate them. These needs include the following:

- Physiological needs: food, water, clothing, and air; these are the basic requirements that are required for existence.
- Safety needs: emotional, environmental, and physical protection.
- Social needs: belonging, love, care, friendship.
- Esteem needs: confidence, self-respect, achievement, recognition, award; and
- Self-actualization needs: the need for growth and personal development (Cherry, 2019).

Maslow (1954) believed that understanding what truly makes people happy is the key to understanding how to motivate people and elicit the most productivity from them. Maslow further believed that there is a hierarchy to these

needs. He classified them into high and low levels of needs, with lower-level needs being comprised of physiological, safety, social, and esteem needs, while higher-level needs included self-actualization. According to Maslow's theory, low-level needs must be achieved before a person can think about higher-level needs. As a person achieves success with lower-level needs, they gain the confidence to proceed to achieve a higher level of needs.

Stewart et al. (2018) looked at how the hierarchy of needs could apply to the workplace, suggesting that from a work perspective:

Physiological needs are satisfied by the wage given to the employee. Safety needs involve job security and defined responsibilities or structure. Love needs can be satisfied by a positive work culture that lets employees establish rapport with one another. Esteem needs can be satisfied by a positive management relation with employees that makes them feel trusted and capable in their jobs.

Self-actualization, involves management actively engaging motivated employees with

work that meets their potential. An example might be the promotion of a motivated employee into a more challenging position.

Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation

Our next motivational theory, Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory of motivation, explains what Herzberg considered key motivation indicators of why people were making decisions about work. Herzberg's theory takes motivational (intrinsic) values and hygiene (extrinsic) factors into account when evaluating job satisfaction among employees (Butt, 2018). The two-factor theory seeks to clarify why certain factors in the job result in happiness and others that cause people to be dissatisfied. For Herzberg, motivational factors included awards and recognition, sense of achievement, promotional opportunities and growth within the organization, ownership of work, and meaningful work (Butt, 2018; Jarupathirun & Gennaro, 2018). Herzberg believed that if the right set of motivational factors were present in a workplace, employees would perceive that it was an excellent place to work and have the needed motivation to perform at their best and stay with that organization.

Herzberg (1959) identified that the following factors were linked to the hygiene of an organization: pay, corporate governance (policies), fringe benefits, physical working

conditions, status, relationships amongst employees, and job security (Butt, 2018; Jarupathirun & Gennaro, 2018). An absence of these factors in a workplace, according to Herzberg, can indicate an increased probability of employees feeling dissatisfied, resentful, and having more thoughts of finding work elsewhere. The hygiene factors can be addressed or impacted by leaders and managers. Leaders who understand and embrace practices that address hygiene issues are better able to motivate employees to try harder to attain organizational goals.

Vroom's expectation theory

Vroom's (1964) expectation motivation theory seeks to shed new light on the motivation of employees. The theory suggests that behavior results from conscious choices made between alternatives to maximize pleasure, minimize pain, and gauge value against an employee's performance, which is directly related to individual factors, such as skills, knowledge, experience, personality, and abilities (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Vroom's motivational theory, in contrast to Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two-factor theory, argues that employees will do things to motivate themselves (Ward, 2019). The expectation motivation theory suggests that employee motivation results from

behavioral choices made in support of the self-fulfilling desires of employees.

Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory has three main components: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Vroom used these three factors to calculate the motivational force of employees. Vroom surmised that motivational force is equal to expectancy X , Instrumentality X , and Valence. Expectancy: Effort \rightarrow Performance ($E \rightarrow P$): The concept supports the notion that the harder one works, the more one will be rewarded. Instrumentality: Performance \rightarrow Outcome ($P \rightarrow O$): The concept supports the idea that performance dictates outcomes. If employees do their jobs well, good things will happen because of their effort. The valence $V(O)$ concept refers to the value that an individual places on an expected outcome. Valence is the process of identifying what results individuals desire most (Vroom, 1964). Valence is like a process used by most parents to motivate their kids by finding out what they care about the most and using it as a reward or punishment to keep the child focused. Porter and Lawler (2019) reviewed Vroom's expectancy theory and found some issues that were not aligned with what they saw. Porter and Lawler's (2019) expectancy theory is a modification of Vroom's expectancy motivational theory in

that it suggests that motivation does not equal satisfaction or performance. Rather, effort and motivation are impacted by abilities, traits, and role perceptions that ultimately show that happiness derives from performance (Learn Management, 2018). The Porter and Lawler model has the characteristics of effort, performance, and satisfaction. Porter and Lawler explained that motivating individuals is a complex issue that requires managers to be more involved, engaged, and attentive to the needs of their employees (Mohanty, 2018). Mayhew (2019) observed that Vroom's expectation theory suggested that an employee's level of effort is based on performing at a necessary level to earn rewards from an organization. Weiner (1974) later noted that past performances could also influence an individual's level of motivation.

Job embeddedness

Embeddedness in the workplace occurs as a collection of forces entangling individuals into a psychological field or life space summarizing a range of environmental, psychological, and social forces that influence decision-making (Allen et al., 2016). Job embeddedness theory examines why people stay in jobs and why they leave while factoring in two different categories of embeddedness: on-the-job and off-the-job (Halvorsen et al., 2015). Job

embeddedness focuses on connections made by people with other people and groups at work and in the community and the benefits and connections that employees would lose if they left an organization (Porter et al., 2019). These interactions and relationships made with other individuals can be deciding factors for employees faced with the decision to leave an organization.

Individuals who are passionately entrenched within an organization display a more reliable connection to the organization and are less likely to leave that organization (Yang et al., 2019), whereas, low levels of embeddedness of employees might reveal their reasons to quit (Nica, 2018).

Job embeddedness is a concept that includes on-the-job and off-the-job factors that focus on retention rather than turnover (Ghaffar & Khan, 2017). Job embeddedness suggests that organizational and community connectedness play a significant role in an employee's decision to stay or leave an organization (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006). Working to identify the job embeddedness of an employee requires examining factors such as the mindset of employees.

Proximal withdrawal theory

Proximal withdrawal theory identifies four mindsets or states that are influenced by the attitudes of employees that guide their decision-making process (Olubiyi et al., 2019). These four states of proximal withdrawal suggest that turnover rates are also affected by the amount of control a person has over their ability to stay or leave an organization. Nica (2016) shows that the relationship between perceived job autonomy and perceived supervisor support changes the degrees of turnover intention. Empowering employees to do their jobs and providing minimal intrusions can give employees a sense of ownership and the perception that their managers trust them to do their jobs.

- Reluctant stayers are individuals who stay with an organization for as long as they must or until there are no obstacles left that would prevent them from quitting.
- Enthusiastic leavers are individuals that want to leave but are waiting on something to happen before they decide to leave.
- Reluctant leavers want to stay but must leave.
- Enthusiastic stayers stay with an organization because they like working there and stay there until they can retire or something happens to the

organization that forces them to leave (Olubiyi et al., 2019).

As a life strategy, withdrawal is more likely a possibility in resource-rich societies, but it is more challenging to sustain in resource-poor ecologies (Norasakkunkit et al., 2017). People who have financial freedom or independence are more likely to withdraw from the workplace because they can afford to.

Job satisfaction theory

Job satisfaction is the degree to which a person is content with their employment and focuses on three components of organizational behavior: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Hoffman-Miller, 2019). “Cognitive” refers to perception, thinking, and learning, whereas “effective” refers to moods, feelings, attitudes, and behavioral refers to reactions made to inducements. One variation of job satisfaction theory suggests that employee happiness relates to the perceived availability of motivating job characteristics. Another variation of job satisfaction indicates that individual differences in traits influence the degree to which employees react positively to the perceived availability of motivating job characteristics while performing work (Oerlemans &

Bakker, 2018). Job satisfaction is hard to measure because of the subjective quality of an individual's rationalization. Do better jobs equate to higher job satisfaction rates? Organizations that are perceived to have more top-quality jobs are less likely to have high turnover rates because the employees have a higher perception of their job satisfaction (Holman, 2013). When dealing with millennials, the higher their job satisfaction, the more likely they are to stay with their current employer for at least two years (Ivanovic & Ivancevic, 2018). Job satisfaction measures factors such as pay and recognition, and happy employees tend to stay with their current company (Ward, 2019). Job satisfaction reflects a person's attitude toward their job (Stanley, 2019).

Job satisfaction can be a crucial aspect of employee retention. Employees that are unhappy and disgruntled frequently choose to leave an organization. If they decide to stay with an unsatisfying organization, some external factors are probably keeping them there. Employees who are happy working for their organization tend to stay longer, have low absenteeism rates, and have higher production rates (Stanley, 2019). Finding ways to keep employees happy can cause some employees to stay with an organization. The Organizational Environment

Person-Organization Fit

How well an organization handles interactions and communications with its employees provides vital information and is taken into consideration when potential employees think about working for an organization. In other words, potential employees are looking for a good person-organization fit. If there is a low P-O fit, several situations might occur. According to Mehtap and Alnıaçık (2014), “the individual’s values may change by resembling those of the organization’s; organizational values may change; or if there is no change at all on both sides and P-O fit cannot be provided, then the individual leaves the organization.” The authors go on to point out that, in the case of high P-O, when individuals and organizations have the same values, individuals will work hard for the organization. However, as Mehtap and Alnıaçık (2014) suggest, while a high P-O fit is looked for by both organizations and potential employees, sometimes too much fit can be a detriment as “too much connectedness between the members and the organization may prevent them from recognizing outer environmental changes or may prevent them following innovations, so that they fall behind in improvements.” Two characteristics define person–organization fit: supplementary fit (i.e., employee and organization share similar fundamental

characteristics) and complementary fit (i.e., one group provides what the other group needs) (Myung et al., 2018). As discussed, in order to retain employees for the long term, companies have to be willing to adjust their work attitudes and practices to fit the needs and expectations of new generations of employees. For instance, among the characteristics that Millennials are looking for in a place of employment is the atmosphere or culture of the workplace. How well that fits with the Millennials' ideals can be a leading factor in their intent to stay with or leave an organization (Hoffman, 2018). As an example, Millennials who believe they are working for a company with a high-trust culture are 22 times more likely to have an intent to stay with that organization for an extended period (Emmons, 2018). However, if Millennials perceive mismatches between their expectations and the rewards they receive in the workplace (Rani & Samuel, 2016), they are apt to leave the company for another that better meets their outlook. In that regard, one common complaint of older generations of employees is that the Millennials' insistence on their perspective of person-organization fit comes from a sense of entitlement. Not only can this cause friction among co-workers who may regard Millennials as slacking or unwilling to work, but it may also be a cause of concern for

managers who are used to employees willing to go along with the already established culture of a business.

Another issue that can create a divide between Millennials and older generations in the workplace is the use of social media. While some managers from Generation X may use social media as a tool that is minimally employed to support work, many Millennials see social media as the primary tool in their lives where they can assess reality and address anything they want to do (Dabija et al., 2018). Understanding the importance of social media in millennials' lives can help managers better understand and relate to that generation of employees (Popescu & Georgescu, 2015).

How diverse a business or organization is can also affect whether Millennials are willing to work for a company. Diversity, also called organizational demography, refers to the dynamics of the employees of an organization. Discriminators include gender, race, religion, age, or experience. The demographics of an organization can affect job satisfaction, turnover rates, or job performance. For Millennials, demography factors and employee engagement simultaneously affect organizational commitment, (Hasanati, 2018).

Leader–Member Exchange

Along with person-organization fit, leader-member exchange plays an important role in attracting and retaining new generations of workers. The leader–member exchange theory (LMX) evolved from the basis of the relationships that supervisors have with their subordinates and how those relationships impact their ability to create a thriving work environment (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). LMX explains how these relationships can have a positive or negative impact on the members of teams (Lewis et al., 2018) and how the perception of leadership by employees can significantly influence an employee’s decision to stay or leave an organization (Haque et al., 2019).

Having untrained and unqualified leaders is easily a cause of friction between employees and managers and can result in employees leaving their jobs. For employees, not being able to trust one’s manager creates an unhealthy environment and can cause friction for other team members and people within the organization. Leaders who cannot operate in different work environments cannot be influential or effective, which can lead to distrust and lower satisfaction levels among employees (Zargar et al., 2019). Managers who cannot develop a connection with their employees risk not getting the most out of them and are often unable to retain their

services. In a survey that looked at reasons employees, in general, left their jobs, a total of 45% of respondents identified a lack of trust in leadership as the most significant issue impacting their work performance (Span, 2019). One way to mitigate some of these conflicts is for managers to receive proper training before leading teams of people where the focus can be on improving their managerial skills, increasing employee engagement, and improving corporate culture.

As we know, poor employee performance can be detrimental to the success of an organization, leading to losses in capital, increased costs, and weakened relationships with customers (Li et al., 2018). Often poor employee performance can stem from a lack of satisfaction with and commitment to their job, which can develop when there is poor leader-member exchange. Conversely, having positive exchanges between leaders and team members can have a positive and significant impact on employees' organizational commitment (Putri & Gorda, 2019). Trying to find the right level of exchange is an ongoing effort that requires both parties to be willing to communicate openly. Understanding communication and how it aligns with organizational goals and the connection between communication and corporate activities is important for employees to perform effectively

(Kheirandish et al., 2017). One of the critical aspects of LMX is communication. Determining the best method to communicate with employees can be a challenge because managers must be adaptable in their approach to communicate with a diverse workforce.

Communication has become an even greater task for managers, who many have to deal with as many as four generations of employees. Each generation has its tendencies when it comes to communicating. Millennials, the predominant workforce group today, prefer to communicate using electronic means, such as text or instant messages. In contrast, some older generations prefer other communication methods, such as email or phone calls (Braga, 2016). Effective communication requires understanding the barriers that exist and finding ways to work through or around them.

However, breaking the communication barriers requires managers to understand that there are different types of barriers involved. These include organizational factors, human factors, and technical barriers (Kheirandish et al., 2017). Organizational factors that impact effective communication include formal communication channels, authority structure, cultural differences, and leadership styles (Jenifer & Raman, 2015). In order to mitigate

problems caused by a lack of communication between managers and employees, as mentioned earlier, businesses and organizations would benefit from having managers undergo training and workshops to learn how to understand the factors that cause these barriers and learn to overcome them.

Chapter Three: How to Address Millennial Turnover

The original study I undertook to gain an understanding of why there is such a high turnover of Millennials in the workforce included the perceptions and lived experiences of 12 millennials working for small IT companies in Charleston, SC. While the study may appear to be narrow in its focus, in fact, the responses of the interviewees reflect the concerns of the broader population of Millennials. What was revealed from the data is that when some Millennials feel that they are overlooked, underappreciated, and misunderstood in their work environment, then it is time to switch jobs. Unlike older generations, where an employee might remain in their place of employment in spite of their dissatisfaction, many Millennials have no problems changing companies as often as necessary until they find an organization that they feel meets their needs. Furthermore, in the past, when an employee who jumped from job to job was considered a risk, as it reflected poorly on the character of the employee and their ability to maintain a job, research shows that blind loyalty to an organization is not something that concerns Millennials today.

What arose from this study and my interviews with the participants when considering what is important to Millennials in a job setting, illustrates what millennials expect from their jobs and why they are willing to change employment if the situation in their present employment becomes untenable or if they feel they have nothing left to gain from their jobs.

Communication

In terms of communication in the workplace, as discussed in the section on leader-member exchange, many research participants indicated that communication was essential for retention, and 58% of participants identified communication as the number one issue when deciding to stay with an organization. This correlates with other research that has shown that having a voice in the workplace and having managers and leaders who listen, mentor, and provide feedback were factors that kept some millennials satisfied in their current workspace (Smith, 2017). From another perspective, as we know, a person can have the best ideas in the world or be the most innovative person, but if they cannot articulate that idea to others or if no one is listening to them or taking them seriously, neither that person nor the product or service they are offering will be understood or carried through (Wienclaw, 2020). In the case of managers, this is

especially true if they expect their employees to realize any concepts they have with any degree of success. Several participants noted that one aspect that made their jobs difficult was that those in supervisory positions were often unclear about what was required of them and then blamed them when a job wasn't carried out to their satisfaction.

Interestingly, one participant in the study revealed that when working for small companies, he felt more attached to the organization because he could communicate directly with leaders at all levels, including the owners. Because of that open communication, he expressed a feeling of high job satisfaction and stated that if the job sustained communication that was open, honest, and positive among teams and management, he would stay with that organization. This participant expressed that communication was, in fact, more important to him than salary.

When it comes to the retention of millennials, one possible strategy businesses could undertake is to incorporate millennial communication professionals into the strategic planning processes for organizations (Meng & Berger, 2018). These millennial communication professionals could create strategies that help organizational leadership attract millennials, engage millennials while working for the organizations, and identify and develop processes to help

with millennial retention. The mission of the millennial communication professionals would be to provide a direct connection for millennials to express their concerns and issues and to help them navigate current and new opportunities within an organization.

Respect

Respect is a social and emotional feeling that is important for self-development and interpersonal relationships (Nakatani et al., 2020). Based on the data collected for this study, Millennials want and demand respect in the workplace from peers and managers. Fifty-eight percent of the participants in the research study indicated that respect was a significant factor in determining if they would stay with an organization. Many of the participants who cited respect as a factor for leaving the place of employment stated that they did not feel respected by the leaders in the organizations where they worked. The perception from Millennials in the research indicated that they did not think that their managers respected them as people nor respected their work. In some cases, respect from others on the team was also a factor in deciding to stay with an organization but not nearly as much as respect from leaders.

As with the subject of respect, being shown disrespect was a cause for leaving a job. Disrespect can manifest in different

forms. One form of disrespect is personal mistreatment, which includes such issues as not receiving attention or credit for ideas or work performed, being a target of demeaning remarks, and being invisible to leadership (Walsh et al., 2018). One participant stated that not being acknowledged or given kudos for the exceptional work they were doing was very upsetting to them and other team members.

By not giving credit to the people who were doing the work, the manager knowingly or unknowingly began cultivating an environment un conducive for getting the most out of the Millennials. The perception that the manager was not fair led people to feel that there was no reason to work any harder than needed to get the job done. Millennials in the research study indicated that when they felt that their level of effort was undervalued or disrespected, their level of effort oftentimes diminished to the point of performing poorly.

If companies want to keep Millennials, organizational leaders should recognize that the negative or dismissive attitudes of managers can be a severe problem in the workplace. There are many training programs and materials available to help managers and leaders become more aware of the consequences when Millennials feel they are not

respected. Creating a training program to better educate managers and leaders on how to manage and address Millennials and awarding exceptional performance in the workplace could prove to be helpful toward retaining employees.

Personal Growth

Data from the study indicated that Millennials working for organizations want the opportunity to grow personally and professionally in their field. Millennials expect organizations to have programs that promote continuing education, whether earning degrees or passing IT certifications, to help them advance within the organization (Watts & Dieffenderfer, 2020). Millennials were raised when parents felt that they needed to be more supportive, protective, and provide what was needed for their kids to be successful. The outcome is that many Millennials expect organizations to handle them the same way that their parents did. Millennials anticipate that organizations will provide the necessary resources to help them advance and grow (Baiyun Gong et al., 2018). Working for organizations that do not meet these expectations presents challenges for Millennials, and ultimately it can become an incentive to seek a position with another company. Fifty percent of the Millennials interviewed in this research study indicated that

they would leave organizations if growth opportunities were limited or absent.

The lack of promotional opportunities was often coupled with the issue of not being treated fairly when it was time to be promoted. A participant interviewed stated that seeing someone else placed in a higher position when they were not qualified for that position was a leading factor in her deciding to leave that organization. Instances where leaders decide to show favoritism and promote unqualified people or friends instead of deserving Millennials can create a destructive environment. The perception from the Millennials included in this study was that once a manager was known as someone who was not going to treat them fairly, especially when it came to promotions, they would either stop working hard or start looking for another job opportunity. Either way, production decreased, and there was an unhappy person in the workplace, or there was potential for degradation of the culture in that workplace.

In order to combat the issue of unfair promotion or lack of promotion, companies should ensure that managers are trained in how to treat employees fairly and not show favoritism in the workplace. The creation of a rewards and incentives program could provide a possible avenue for millennials to feel like they have a better opportunity for

promotion, therefore encouraging them to perform their jobs better. Leaders could also have regularly scheduled counseling sessions with Millennials where goals and objectives are discussed and allow Millennials to express the issues or frustrations they are having. Having counseling sessions can provide a clear understanding for Millennials regarding what they need to do or what is expected of them to be promoted to the next level.

Work-life balance

Work-life balance is a theme that came up time and again in this study and a value that differentiates millennials from the older generations of employees; that is, balancing work life with home life. Work-life balance can be defined as the extent to which work demands begin interfering with personal life or the extent to which personal life starts to interfere with work progress (Berglund et al., 2021). Some of the millennials who participated in this research study indicated that having a work-life balance was essential. With more people working from home, maintaining a balance between work and home life has become harder. Not being able to maintain that balance can negatively affect employees and organizations.

Twenty-five percent of participants in this study indicated that working in environments where work interfered with

their personal lives was demotivational and a leading factor when they decided to leave that organization. One of those being interviewed indicated that his work-life balance was tilted heavily toward work and began affecting his relationship with his family, causing him emotional distress. The participant indicated that he informed management of his issues, but they refused to make any changes to address his concerns. The participant expressed that he felt that he had no other choice than to remove himself from that organization. The impression from the conversation was that the participant felt that he had to choose between his job and his family, and he chose his family over the job.

Working from home because of COVID-19 increased the problem of balancing work and life in many ways. Many people had to work from home while schools were closing and kids had to be homeschooled. An interviewee mentioned that work schedules could have been modified so employees could better adjust to this new dynamic. The participant further expressed that as companies had to make abrupt changes in how they operated during Covid, it would be a good idea to maintain the momentum newly established when it comes to employee flexibility and expectations of working hours. Citing her own work demands as an example of what was expected from employees, she stated that, at

present, her working schedule was burning her out as she found herself bringing work home with her on more than one occasion and spending countless hours at home working. Another participant also mentioned that working the extra hours caused one of her millennial coworkers to quit because the stress he was experiencing from work almost resulted in his having to be hospitalized.

One of the other issues identified in this research with work-life balance was the problem of continuing to work after hours but not being compensated for the extra hours spent working. Some Millennials indicated that they are often hired for one position but find themselves doing a lot more than what is included in their job description. It was revealed in the research study that often, Millennials are required to work more than 40 hours but are only paid for 40 hours. A possible mitigation for this issue is through policy creation and training. Employees should report every hour that they work on their timesheets. In fact, most companies have policies that identify how and when employees are required to work and record time worked. If a manager is telling employees not to record time, that person should be reported to HR.

Culture

The importance of culture in an organization cannot be overstated. Culture can be defined by how employees and leaders think of and interact with each other within an organization (Bourgault & Goforth, 2021). In looking for a position, one of the most important things Millennials generally want to know about an organization concerns its culture and values (Roepe, 2017). Some Millennials look to work for organizations that portray a sense of belonging; they want to know that the core values of the organization they might work for are aligned with their values. Twenty-five percent of the participants in this research study mentioned that if the culture of an organization was not what they thought it was going to be or if the culture drastically changed after they started working for the organization, they would leave that organization as soon as they possibly could. This research study focused on small companies, and as such, many of the companies mentioned in this study were considered as having a family-type culture by the millennials interviewed. A participant indicated that the culture of the environment that he worked in was inviting and that it provided a sense of being wanted and a feeling of being valued for the work he was doing. He also noted that culture was one of the main reasons he was planning to continue his

employment with that organization. However, another participant mentioned that while the environment where she was working had originally been one where she felt valued, within a period of time, it had turned toxic to the extent that she did not feel excited about going to work and eventually decided that it was best for her to leave that organization. To avoid employees leaving because of different perceptions or even misperceptions about an organization's culture, leaders and managers should seek out their Millennial employees' view of the current culture of their organization and identify the aspects of the culture that the Millennials appreciate or dislike.

Chapter Four: Why Millennials Quit

In order to better understand the precipitating events and experiences that lead many Millennials to quit their jobs, my study included interviews with 12 millennials who voluntarily chose to stop working at small IT companies in Charleston, SC. The research study was guided by the following overarching research question: “What were the perceptions and lived experiences of Millennials working for small IT companies in Charleston, SC, that led to their decision to quit their jobs?” The Millennials interviewed included those of diverse ages, education, marital status, and genders.

There were 10 overall themes that emerged from this study: (a) communication, (b) personal growth, (c) salary, (d) respect, (e) tedious work, (f) training, (g) mental health, (h) work-life balance, (i) teamwork, and (j) culture. The 10 themes mentioned above expressed the rationale behind the four main questions of the research study: (a) experiences that led Millennials to the decision to quit, (b) motivational factors that would entice Millennials to stay, (d) dissatisfaction in the workplace, and (e) knowing when it was time to leave.

Out of the 10 overall themes, much as we saw in chapter three, the top five themes were communication, respect, personal growth, work-life balance, and culture. These five themes can be linked to attributes identified in Herzberg's two-factor theory and Vroom's expectancy theory. Herzberg's motivating factors explain that themes, such as personal growth and communication, can have a positive or negative impact on an employee in the workplace. Vroom's expectancy theory illustrates how some employees feel that personal growth and rewards are expected outcomes based on their performance in the workplace. The job characteristics theory identifies issues, such as culture and respect, as being critical to employees when making decisions about staying with an organization.

Top five themes

In the course of the study, five themes emerged that best defined the reasons why millennials quit their jobs: communication, respect, personal growth, work-life balance, and culture. (Table 1).

Table 1

Theme: Top Five Overall Experiences %

Research Constituent	Combined Participants	Percentage of Combined
-------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------

Communication	11	31%
Respect	4	39%
Personal growth	13	36%
Work-Life balance	7	19%
Culture	9	25%

Inadequate or no communication with management played a significant factor in the intention to quit. As a participant indicated, retention for him was about communication with managers. More specifically, he stated that managers should be more engaging and incorporate activities to help boost employee morale. He stressed that it can be a challenge for Millennials to work in environments where managers are ineffective communicators or make it difficult for Millennials to know where they stand with their managers.

Another participant gave an example of a situation where she tried to talk to her manager about problems in the office. She stated that when she told her manager about a specific problem, the response from the manager was that the problem that she identified was not only a problem in their organization, but it also was a problem all over America. Because the issue was so big, the manager told her that there was nothing that he could do to resolve her issue. The participant stated that she felt as if the manager dismissed the issue and was not going to do anything to resolve it. The participant indicated that she felt helpless and unheard.

Another participant interviewed stated that his desire to leave stemmed from a lack of communication with his

manager. He stated that his manager was not fully engaged with the team and did not participate in hands-on opportunities. He went on to say that his manager was quite indifferent to his decision-making, which gave him the impression that the manager did not care about the work they were doing or about the team. One of those also interviewed noted the importance of having open and honest two-way communication between leaders and employees.

In the course of the interviews, 25% of the participants in this research study indicated that communication was a significant factor in deciding to quit.

A number of those interviewed cited the lack of respect for their abilities and contributions by management. One stated that his decision to quit was primarily based on a lack of respect from his manager and the feeling that his knowledge was taken for granted. Another explained that one of the teams that he worked on was very friendly initially. That teammates were very helpful and patient toward each other, which made for a great work environment. Still, another participant noted, however, that he did not want to come into the office anymore once respect was gone in the workplace. As a result of the lack of respect felt in the workplace, he

indicated that he knew it was time to find employment elsewhere.

An interviewed participant expressed that many managers tended to group all millennials in one category and argued that as all millennials are unique, they should be handled uniquely. The participant mentioned that some managers automatically thought of him negatively because of the negative connotations associated with millennials.

Another stated she felt that she was not getting the proper respect or given the proper title for the amount and type of work that she was doing and expressed that she felt as if she were treated as free labor for the organization. A participant also described how she was overlooked for a promotion simply because she was younger than the other people who applied for the position, even though she was the better-qualified candidate for the job. She explained that her leadership disrespected her work abilities and would not allow her to advance professionally because of her age. She stated that they promoted older people who were less qualified because they had been working for the company longer.

One interviewed participant stated that he knew it was time to leave one organization when an unqualified person was

promoted to a higher-level position over more qualified personnel simply because they were friends with one of the managers. Another added that she knew it was time to leave when the company owner kept bringing political conversations into the workplace that made her and others feel uncomfortable.

A participant indicated that she had worked for a small company that did not value her but valued her work. The perception was that her managers respected her work but did not respect her as a person. Anytime there was a possible promotion available, she would be overlooked. She also mentioned that her managers would not give her credit for the work that she was doing, but rather, credit would be given to other people in the workplace, specifically men who were friends with the manager.

When Millennials were making decisions to leave an organization, the most significant factor identified was personal growth. A lack of personal growth (i.e., development) was also the highest-rated demotivational factor for Millennials. Several participants mentioned how they were overlooked for promotions for various reasons or never considered for promotions within their place of work. One expressed how distraught she was when her manager

told her that he never considered her for a possible promotion because two other people had been working with the organization longer. Another explained that he was assigned work that was above his pay grade but was never given a promotion or title change to reflect the work that he was doing. A participant said he left an organization because he had reached his ceiling with that organization and that there was no advancement available to him. Moreover, he knew that there was a lot more to learn, but for him to grow his knowledge, he would have to leave that organization, adding that he wanted to put himself in a position to learn new things and grow. Similarly, another said that she left an organization when she felt there was no opportunity to improve and did not have the freedom or flexibility to grow as a person within the group.

Lack of growth opportunities within an organization would influence a participant's decision to stay with an organization. This participant stated that having an opportunity for training, professional development, and taking a leadership role would influence his decision to stay or leave an organization.

Another participant pointed out that millennials are eager to progress. He stated that millennials do not want to stay still

in their career development and that millennials feel they need to keep progressing or be left behind. If they are working for an organization that does not provide opportunities to progress their career, it would be hard to stay with that organization.

A participant explained that she felt constrained or “confined to a rigid box” while working for one company, going on to say that she felt there was no opportunity to improve and that she did not have the freedom or flexibility to grow as a person within the group.

Speaking with research participants about work-life balance and how it influenced their decisions was interesting. One of those interviewed stated that having a good work-life balance was more important than salary. He went on to say that he valued his privacy and disliked it when work crossed over into his personal life. Another explained that when his work-life balance was off, it negatively impacted his home life, particularly his relationship with his wife. Still, another expressed that he was emotionally affected when his work-life balance was off. This occurred when he was bringing work home with him and working 14–16 hours a day. He mentioned that the stresses of his work schedule and the

effort required to complete his work were starting to negatively impact his relationship with his family.

Interestingly, one of the participants observed that younger millennials and older millennials seem to be from two different generations. He expressed that younger millennials do not put work as the number one priority in their lives.

The culture of an organization plays a critical role when millennials decide whether to stay in or leave a company. A participant interviewed stated that millennials are more accepting of people's different beliefs, lifestyles, and other life choices in the workplace than older generations. Another observed that the culture of organizations in the Charleston, SC area was somewhat similar when it came to looking at how race is evaluated in obtaining employment, salaries, raises, promotions, and treatment in the workplace.

There was one participant who stated that working in a business where the political views of leadership were forced upon employees was a reason for leaving. She indicated that she felt that many of the conversations held in the workplace should not have been tolerated, except that management was mainly responsible for those conversations. She did not feel like there was a lot she could do. She expressed feeling disrespected and that managers were not considerate of what

they were saying, regardless of who was in the area. For her, the type and frequency of inappropriate conversations were the main reason the company could not retain her services.

Subquestions

While the research study was guided by the following overarching research question: “What are the perceptions and lived experiences of millennials working for small IT companies in Charleston, SC that led to their decision to quit their jobs?” The following four subquestions emerged to support the overarching research question of this research study:

Subquestion 1: What are the experiences of millennial employees who have worked for small IT companies in Charleston, SC?

Subquestion 2: What motivational factors could induce millennials to continue working for small IT companies in Charleston, SC?

Subquestion 3: What demotivational factors contribute to millennial dissatisfaction in the workplace of small IT companies in Charleston, SC?

Subquestion 4: What lived experiences lead millennials to know when it is time to leave an organization?

Subquestion 1: What are the experiences of millennial employees who quit working for small IT companies in Charleston, SC?

Table 3

Experiences of millennials

<p>Themes</p> <p>Culture</p> <p>Teamwork</p> <p>Training</p> <p>Growth</p> <p>Communication</p>
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The purpose of subquestion 1 was to examine the experiences of millennials who had decided to quit working for small IT companies in Charleston, SC. Themes that emerged from the research in response to experiences of millennials in the workplace included (a) unproductive culture, (b) inadequate or no communication with management, (c) teamwork, (d) lack of advancement, and (e) low salary. Two main themes related to the experiences of millennials who had quit working for small IT companies in

Charleston, SC were related to personal growth (development) and respect. These themes identified the rationale used by millennials when deciding that it was time to quit working for their organizations.

A participant expressed that he decided to look for new employment because he did not feel that he could grow his skills working in Charleston, SC. He stated that he never wanted to move to Charleston, SC. However, the work sounded interesting in the interview, so he decided to give Charleston, SC a chance. After working for the company for a while, he indicated that his desire to leave resurfaced. This time the desire to leave because of a lack of opportunities for personal growth was accompanied by an unstable work-life situation, which caused him to leave the organization.

Another participant stated that his desire to leave stemmed from a lack of bonding with his team, with his manager. He stated that his team was very dysfunctional. There were team members that had knowledge or access to knowledge but wouldn't share it with others. This person continued to say that instead of team members working together to complete work, it was more like every person for themselves. He felt that members of the team felt that they had to outperform other team members to keep their jobs.

This situation was not very comfortable for this person, so he decided to seek employment elsewhere. The decision to quit was primarily based on a lack of camaraderie between team members.

A participant interviewed noted that as a Millennial, he felt disrespected in the workplace. He stated that all millennials are unique, so they should be handled uniquely. Employers should not think of, or refer to them as a “millennial.” The participant mentioned that some managers automatically think of him negatively because of the negative connotations associated with Millennials. Another, conversely, mentioned that managers should not cater to Millennials. The participant mentioned that the mindset of millennials is such that catering to them is futile because many of them do not care and millennials are going to do whatever they want to do. Leaders must be effective communicators within the complexity of their organizations (Chatman et al., 2020). Twenty-five percent of the participants in this research study indicated that communication was a significant factor in deciding to quit. In comparison, 50% of participants identified respect, specifically a lack of respect, as the significant factor in deciding to leave an organization.

Subquestion 2: What motivational factors could induce millennials to continue working for small IT companies in Charleston, SC?

Table 4

Motivational factors for retention

Themes
Communication
Team Cohesion and Development
Culture
Work-life Balance
Salary

The purpose of subquestion 2 was to examine retention methods that could help employers to retain millennial employees. Themes that emerged from the research in response to retention included: (a) better communication with managers, (b) inclusion of initial counseling and regular reviews with employees, (c) positive culture, (d) home/work balance, and (e) salary improvements. The two main themes related to the retention of millennials working for small IT companies in Charleston, SC were related to communication

and respect. The themes show that things need to be addressed in the workplace to improve the chances of millennials deciding to continue working for organizations.

One participant stated that communication was a big deal when it came to retention. The participant stated that it is vital to have open and honest two-way communication between leaders and employees. Another noted that having growth opportunities within an organization would influence his decision to stay with the organization. This participant stated that having an opportunity for training, professional development, and taking a leadership role would be beneficial when deciding to stay or leave an organization. In the case of another participant, he indicated that retention for him was about communication with managers. More specifically, he stated that managers should be more engaging and incorporate activities to help boost employee morale. He indicated that it is a challenge for millennials to work in environments where managers are ineffective communicators or difficult for millennials to know where they stand with their managers.

One of the participants went on to say that retention was also about respect. He stated that managers should treat millennials with respect. He explained frankly, that

Millennials are an awkward generation, with older Millennials and younger Millennials seeming to be from two different generations. He expressed that younger millennials do not put work as the number one priority in their lives. Another indicated that millennials are eager to progress, expressing that millennials do not want to stay still in their career development. Another agreed that millennials feel they need to keep progressing or be left behind. If they are working for an organization that does not provide opportunities to progress their career, it would be hard to stay with that organization.

Subquestion 3: What demotivational factors contribute to millennial dissatisfaction in the workplace of small IT companies in Charleston, SC?

Table 5

Demotivational factors:

Themes
Salary
Respect
Uninteresting Work
Training

Advancement

Communication

The purpose of subquestion 3 was to examine factors that lead to millennials' dissatisfaction in the workplace. Themes that emerged from the research in response to demotivational factors in the workplace included: (a) low salary, (b) lack of respect, (c) tedious work, (d) lack of training opportunities, (e) overlooked for advancement, and (f) lack of communication. The top themes concerning demotivational factors were personal growth, work-life balance, and low salaries. The themes describe issues that millennials feel were detrimental to their success and further help them decide to leave an organization.

One participant mentioned that paying commensurate with the amount of work performed was a big issue when identifying demotivational factors in the workplace. This participant believed that he was being tasked to do work that was not in his job description. Another stated that being overlooked for advancement was very demotivating, going on to explain in her case that there was an open position that they were qualified for and, for whatever reason, her

manager never considered her for the position, even though she had received excellent remarks on all her reviews.

One of those interviewed indicated that the most significant demotivational factor she identified was the inability to grow professionally. She indicated that she worked for a small company that did not value her but valued her work. The perception was that her managers respected her work but did not respect her as a person. Anytime there was a possible promotion available, she would be overlooked. She also mentioned that her managers would not give her credit for the work that she was doing. She indicated that the credit would be given to other people in the workplace, specifically men who were friends with the manager.

One participant stated that she found it quite demotivational when politics came up in conversation, often instigated by management, which she thought was inappropriate. She did not feel like there was a lot she could do. She expressed feeling disrespected and that managers were not considerate of what they were saying, regardless of who was in the area. She stated that the type and frequency of the inappropriate conversations were the main reason the company could not retain her services.

Subquestion 4: What lived experiences lead millennials to know when to leave an organization?

Table 6

Time to quit

Themes
Promotion Opportunities
Mental Health
Personal Growth
Culture

The purpose of subquestion 4 was to examine millennials' perceptions and lived experiences that indicated to them that it was time to leave an organization. The research identified the following themes relating to millennials and deciding to quit: (a) lack of team cohesion, (b) no growth opportunities, (c) negative impact emotionally, (d) work-life balance, and (e) lack of communication with leadership. The two main themes concerning knowing when it is time to leave organizations were personal growth and respect. These themes specify issues or circumstances that millennials have identified as being so wrong or out of sync in their workplace

that they felt their only recourse was to remove themselves from the environment voluntarily.

One of the participants stated that he knew it was time to leave his organization when an unqualified person was promoted to a higher-level position over more qualified personnel simply because they were friends with one of the managers. For another, it was when politics kept being discussed. For yet another, he knew it was time to leave when his work-life balance schedule was off. Another mentioned that he was bringing work home with him and working 14–16 hours a day. He mentioned that the stresses of his work schedule and the effort required to complete his work were starting to negatively impact his relationship with his family.

One participant stated that she knew it was time to leave when an opportunity for promotion was available, and her manager never considered her for it. She stated that the new position would have been a pay increase for her, and the position would require more responsibility. Another participant stated that her manager told her that she did not need the promotion, which she felt was disrespectful. She stated that she started looking for new employment soon after that incident. A desire for personal growth was a main

factor for one participant when deciding to leave an organization. Another stated that he had reached his ceiling at one small IT company in Charleston, SC and that there was no advancement available to him. He explained that he knew that there was more for him to learn, but for him to grow his knowledge, he would have to leave that organization. Another stated that he wanted to put himself in a position to learn new things and grow.

Table 7

% Retention Factors

Theme: Retention Factors %

Research Constituent	Number of Participants	Percentage of Total Participants
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Communication	7	58%
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Personal growth	2	16%
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Salary	1	8%
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Respect	7	58%
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Uninteresting work	2	16%
Training	1	8%
Mental health	1	8%
Work-life balance	3	25%
Teamwork	3	25%
Culture	4	33%

The data for the retention theme came from the responses participants gave to interview questions dealing with retention. The data shows that a significant number of participants identified communication and respect as two things that would be considered when deciding to stay with an organization. One of the participants stated that communications should be open and honest between managers and millennials. He mentioned that millennials should be able to voice their concerns about their wants and needs. Another mentioned that managers should treat millennials with respect and get to know them. He also stated that millennials are of the mindset that **(a)** work is not the

most crucial thing in their life and **(b)** that they work to live, not live to work.

Communication has been a significant theme throughout this research. One of the participants gave an example of a situation where she tried to talk to her manager about problems in the office. She stated she told her manager about a specific problem, and the response from the manager was that the problem that she identified was not only a problem in their organization, but it also was a problem all over America. Because the issue was so big, the manager told her that there was nothing that he could do to resolve her issue. The participant stated that she felt as if the manager did not care about the issue and was not going to do anything to resolve it. The participant indicated that she felt helpless and unheard.

Table 8

% Demotivational Factors

Theme: Demotivational Factors %

Research Constituent	Number of Participants	Percentage of Total Participants
----------------------	------------------------	----------------------------------

Communication	1	8%
Personal growth	5	42%
Salary	3	25%
Respect	1	8%
Uninteresting work	0	0%
Training	1	8%
Mental Health	1	16%
Work-life balance	3	25%

Teamwork	0	0%
Culture	2	16%

The data for the demotivational theme came from the responses participants gave to interview questions dealing with culture, working relationships, team characteristics, and managers. The data indicate that personal growth was one of the most significant issues millennials identified as a demotivational factor. A participant explained that his primary decision for leaving one company was for personal growth. The participant mentioned that he wanted to find a workplace where he could grow his knowledge, skills, and abilities. Another said that she felt constrained or “confined to a rigid box” while working for one company, while yet another went on to say that she felt there was no opportunity to improve and did not have the freedom or flexibility to grow as a person within the group.

Table 9

% Time to Quit

Theme: Time to Quit %

Research Constituent	Number of Participants	Percentage of Total Participants
Communication	3	25%
Personal growth	6	50%
Salary	2	16%
Respect	6	50%
Uninteresting work	1	8%
Training	3	25%
Mental health	2	16%
Work-life balance	1	8%
Teamwork	1	8%

The data for the decision to quit theme come from the responses participants gave to interview questions dealing with incidents that made them think about leaving an organization and incidents deemed the final straw that resulted in them leaving the organization. A substantial number of research participants (50%) indicated that their decision to leave their place of work was based on their ability to grow and not receiving respect in the workplace. For one participant, it was important that he grow his skills to better himself. Another expressed that he felt that there was no ability to progress with the company he was working for and that he needed to make a change to continue growing his skills. Still, another stated that he wanted a different challenge and explained that he felt like he had reached his ceiling with that company and there was no room for advancement. He expressed that he wanted to find a better opportunity with more challenges.

A participant interviewed stated she felt that she was not getting the proper respect or given the proper title for the amount and type of work that she was doing. She expressed that she felt as if she was treated as free labor for the

organization. Another stated that she felt disrespected in the small company where she was employed. In one example, she mentioned how she was overlooked for a promotion simply because she was younger than the other people who applied for the position, even though she was the better-qualified candidate for the job. She explained that her leadership disrespected her work abilities and would not allow her to advance professionally because of her age discounting her abilities. She stated that they promoted older people who were less qualified because they had been working for the company longer.

While there is some overlapping of responses, the themes that emerged reflect the frustrations some of the Millennials interviewed felt in their jobs, which eventually led to leaving the businesses they worked for. What also became apparent was the discrepancy between the leadership practices of managers, who were often of an older generation, and what the millennials expected from them. This conflict between employee expectations, leadership practices and how that impacts retainment will be discussed in the next chapters.

Chapter Five: Millennials and Gen Z in the Workforce

Hiring and Retaining Millennials

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that, by 2030, millennials will make up 75% of the workforce, replacing the baby boomers who are retiring. However, the strategies businesses and organizations once used to recruit Baby Boomers in the past will have to change in order to attract and retain millennials. As I've focused on in this book, what is important to millennials, their attitude to work and their worldview, is not the same as it was with their predecessors. Their values and expectations, as well as sense of self-worth, mean that they will not continue to stay in a job that doesn't fulfill them, not only on a financial level but in terms of personal satisfaction. According to LiveCareer.com, here are the top reasons Millennials plan to leave their current organizations in the next two years:



Adapted from Live Career. Com:

<https://www.livecareer.com/resources/special-reports/stats/millennials-in-the-workplace>

As we've discussed, a constant turnover of employees within a business or organization results not only in high costs economically but low employee morale where people are stressed, exhibit negative behaviors, and have low motivation. However, neither Millennials nor Gen Zs are willing to stay in jobs where they are unhappy in the work they do or where they feel unfulfilled or unappreciated. So, in order to attract and retain the next generations of employees, businesses that hope to prevent frequent employee turnover will have to change their outlook regarding hiring to accommodate the needs and expectations

of Millennials and Gen Zs. In other words, many businesses will have to become flexible and be willing to change their work culture and, by extension, attitude to and expectations of employees. Below are listed certain issues that employers should take into account when dealing with the Millennial workforce.

Attracting Millennials and Gen Z

Attracting Millennial and Gen Z job seekers begins with the ads a company puts out to capture their interest. The ideal ad should convey the following:

- **Highlight transferable skills-** Remember that many potential millennials or Gen Z employees have not been in the workforce that long. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, they are apt to leave jobs that no longer interest them or where they feel they are not treated with respect. The older generations' view of cradle-to-grave employment won't apply to these younger generations. However, what they have to contribute to the companies they work for are IT skills, fresh perspectives, and a willingness to learn new things.
- **Stress the impact that they'll have-** For Millennials and Gen Zs, a job has to be meaningful. They don't

just want a paycheck. They want to work for a company where they feel they will be able to make a mark on the company and also contribute to the good of the community or other stakeholders.

- **What growth opportunities are there?** For Millennials and Gen Zs, this means not only promotion and advancement within a company but constantly learning so that they will grow both professionally and personally.
- **Stress employee diversity-** This would include showing that your company welcomes and values employees of different races, religions, genders, backgrounds, and beliefs and encourages those with disabilities to apply. Companies like Sodexo make a point on their websites and in their literature to explain about their “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” policy outlining their nine “Employee Resource Groups” and explaining their ongoing vision for a diverse workforce (Sodexo, 2023).
- **What are the perks?** The perks consist of not only the benefits package but reminders that the job fits into their lifestyle and their concept of work/life balance. Thus, Millennials and Gen Zs are looking

for flexible hours, time off, a relaxed dress code, or whatever else a company might offer to make them feel that they are valued for what they contribute to the job.

- **Be clear about company culture-** The company's culture needs to be positive and have a shared image that reflects the internal values and the public image of the company. Potential employees need to see how the company's culture meets their personal philosophy and outlook.
- **Potential Millennial and Gen Z-** Employees need to know that it will be a place where they can fit in and feel comfortable working and being associated with that organization. These potential employees want to know that they will be treated with respect and can share their opinions without being ridiculed or ostracized.
- **Be brief, precise, and to the point in your wording-** Millennials and Gen Zs are not interested in verbiage or wading through dense language. They want to be able to see pretty much at a glance what the job requirements entail, whether they have the skills needed for that job, and if the job reflects their personal work/life philosophy.

- **Be transparent-** If an employee finds within a few weeks of taking the job that there is no follow through on what was advertised, they will walk. Include as many details as possible about what will be expected of them on a daily basis and what they will get in return.

The Millennial and Gen Z environment

Millennials and Gen Zs expect a work environment that differs from what past generations of employees were satisfied with. Newer generations of employees require managers to be less micro-managers but more communicative. If you can provide an environment that satisfies their desire to be heard and communicated with, you will have a workforce that has energy, enthusiasm, inventiveness and is tech-savvy.

Management attitude

- Millennials and Gen Zs expect to be respected and valued for what they can do. They expect to be recognized for their contributions and successes.
- Employees want to work in an environment where leadership values them as individuals and nurtures their well-being. This means listening to their

employees' concerns and addressing them. An effective manager is one who listens and acts.

- In today's work arena, managers should keep open lines of communication with their employees about their prospects with the company, opportunities for advancement, and what employees want. For millennials and Gen Zs, employment is not static but a stepping stone to advancement. If managers want to keep their younger employees, they should help them visualize how they can advance within the company and discuss with them the prospects of doing so. This is where company culture may have to change. In talking with employees in IT firms for this study, one of their major complaints was that some of their colleagues were being given advancements based on their longevity within the companies rather than their capabilities. As far as they were concerned, advancement should be based on quality and skill, not longevity within a business.
- Leaders and managers should be trained to be effective communicators when assigning jobs. They need to establish clear goals. Millennials and Gen Zs need to have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. A number of employees interviewed

for this study commented on the fact that often management was not clear about what was expected from them. This was both frustrating and annoying, as they were in a constant state of uncertainty about how to address the assignments they were given or their place within the company.

- Millennials and Gen Zs don't want to be micro-managed. Once they are given an assignment or project, they expect that they will be trusted and given the freedom to get on with the task.
- Millennial and Gen Z employees want to be given a variety of projects to do. Remember that younger employees are easily bored and are eager to advance their knowledge. They need to feel engaged with what they are doing. Giving them tasks that utilize the skills they already have and where they will have to learn new ones will keep them challenged and interested.
- Millennials and Gen Zs value work environments where collaboration and teamwork are encouraged. They appreciate a work atmosphere in which they can share ideas with their colleagues. They want to collaborate with others from all different

backgrounds who bring different perspectives and skill sets to the table.

Growth in the workplace

For Millennials and Gen Zs, being able to prove their worth and be recognized for their accomplishments is important. They want to learn new skills and face new challenges. This can ultimately benefit the company as the skills they learn can contribute to the company's success. The following are suggestions a company could adopt:

- Offer ongoing feedback and assessment. Yearly professional evaluations aren't enough. Millennials and Gen Zs want the opportunity to learn and improve as they work. One way to do this could be breaking projects/tasks down into small segments that allow employees to start on a task and receive feedback faster (1, 2, or 3 weeks depending on what the tasks are). On-going feedback and regular discussions or meetings also allow employees to regularly connect with their managers and leaders.
- Along with being assigned a variety of tasks, Millennials and Gen Zs want to keep updating their skills so that they are competitive in the workforce. Opportunities for them to do so should be offered in

terms of training, professional development, mentoring, and coaching. For instance, companies such as Seattle Genetics or Marriot International Inc. offer a variety of training programs for employees to encourage career mobility and tuition reimbursement (Thottam, 2023).

- Companies should also consider plans to provide flexibility for employees who are pursuing higher education. What they learn in gaining further certifications, degrees, or even upgrading their skills will benefit the company.
- Managers could help individual employees identify the skills they need to develop and facilitate the training and learning needed for the employee to succeed within the company.
- Businesses could consider having a per-person budget for external training.
- Employees should be encouraged to be innovative. Inspiration, innovation, and experimentation can be part of the learning process, especially when ideas are discussed and debated with team members and managers. Employees who are creative and innovative will be an asset to the company.

Respect work/life perspective

One significant difference between the baby boomer generation and the younger work generation in terms of their attitude to work is that while baby boomers value a paycheck and a stable job, Millennials and Gen Zs look for work/life balance. Companies wanting to attract and retain the millennial workforce should bear these differences in mind when considering what they have to offer to their employees. Though to older generations, these expectations may seem unreasonable, or they may have the outlook that the younger generation is being pampered, for Millennials and Gen Zs, the reasoning is that as long as it doesn't interfere with productivity or successful outcomes, there is nothing problematic about working in an environment that values their happiness and wellbeing.

Among some of the expectations that Millennials and Gen Zs have are:

- Workplace flexibility. This can be in the form of options for remote work or the ability to work one day of the week from home. This is especially true for Millennials or Gen Zs who have families and who may need to take time off

because of an at-home issue. For instance, as part of their workplace policy, Dell offers flexible work schedules and arrangements to their employees. Their Connected Workplace program “is a strategic business initiative which allows employees to choose the work style that best fulfills their needs on the job and in life in a highly mobile, collaborative, and flexible work setting” (Dell, n.d., p. 2).

- Millennials have grown up in an era where technology and social media are inherent to their lives. For them, the freedom to make phone calls, text, or use the internet for non-work related matters, even in the workplace, is expected. Like working one day a week from home, they feel that as long as they are productive and their work is satisfactory, there should be no barriers to using non-work related technology or engaging in social media in the workplace.
- Motivation using time off. In some instances, companies reward a project that is turned in early with a couple of extra days off. Research has shown that Millennials and Gen Zs value days off

over bonuses, so the promise of extra days has more impact than monetary gain.

- Prioritizing health issues. Most Millennials and Gen Zs are aware of the stress and anxiety that can come from workplace pressures and expect that the company they work for respects the importance of engaging in activities that relieve some of the stress they are under. This can take the form of allowing time for exercise, offering yoga and meditation classes, or allowing employees to take several breaks during the day as needed. Companies like Chesapeake Energy offer fitness and nutrition programs and include in their Employee Assistance Program confidential counseling sessions for employees and their families, as well as provide “referrals to help employees and their families cope with different life stages and challenges, such as prenatal planning, child or elder care, financial guidance and resources, and legal support” (Chesapeake Energy, n.d.).

Engagement in the community

Many Millennials and Gen Zs want to work for companies with a strong corporate social purpose. They are looking for

companies that contribute to the betterment of society and foster a socially oriented culture. A philosophy of social purpose reflects not only on the company but on the employees who work for that organization. Companies can attract millennials by tailoring opportunities for them to participate in corporate-sponsored programs. Some of the incentives for millennials could be:

- Encouraging Millennials to volunteer for organizations and services that they are passionate about and that are meaningful. In a study conducted with United Way and the Junior League, one participant commented that “It was more meaningful that we were able to do things that were literally helping...Not monetarily—you can put two dollars in a jar and be blind to what you’re doing. But when you’re thinking it’s going to be cold soon and there are homeless people who need blankets—or those children need blankets—that’s really meaningful” (Rodell, 2021).
- Integrating millennials into the implementation of service projects.
- Listening to their ideas and solutions for meeting the company’s social responsibilities

In order for businesses to attract and retain millennials and Gen Zs, it is important to understand their attitude to work and what they value and respect. As noted in chapter six, the millennial and Gen Z worldview is different from that of the older generations. This does not mean that they are not willing to work and commit to their jobs. However, the work they do needs to be fulfilling and have meaning for them, as is having work/life balance. They also have to have respect for the company they work for in terms of what the company contributes socially and within the community. Businesses and organizations willing to make changes and provide the workplace conditions that millennials and Gen Zs are looking for will find that they have a workforce that is dedicated, hardworking, and committed to their jobs.

Gen Z: A new generation of employees

The generation of young adults born after 1996 is referred to as Generation Z. As noted earlier, Millennials grew up in a time that included the tragedy of the 9/11 attacks, the election of the first black president, and the height of a recession. It was an era of rapid development of technology, including Wi-Fi, mobile devices, and cellular services, which on the one hand, dramatically changed how the world communicated and, on the other, affected the Gen Z lifestyles and world-views (Pew research). In turn,

Generation Z has grown up in a technical environment where these once-new innovations have become commonplace, the 'norm.' Just as political, economic, and social events influenced the expectations and outlooks of millennials, so is the environment Generation Zs are growing up in having an effect on how they perceive the world. So, what are some of the characteristics of Generation Z? To begin with, they interact easily between the real and virtual world. They continuously share information and can find and check information easily, commenting among themselves about issues that are important to them through social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, blogs, and internet forums. In fact, they are more informed about the world than previous generations (Benitez-Marquez et al., 2022) and have "greater freedom of expression and greater openness to understanding different kinds of people" (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

As active media users, Gen Zs and Millennials "have many contacts and they mainly live their everyday relations through these channels (personal meetings are also important to them, however, keeping the online contacts have an equally important role)" (Csobanka, 2016, p. 68). In the case of Gen Zs, Francis and Hoefel (2018) assert that Generation Z's behaviors are all founded on the search for

truth, going on to elaborate that Gen Zs “value individual expression and avoid labels. They mobilize themselves for a variety of causes. They believe profoundly in the efficacy of dialogue to solve conflicts and improve the world. Finally, they make decisions and relate to institutions in a highly analytical and pragmatic way.” According to Schroth (2019), diversity, equity, and inclusion are also more important to both Millennials and Gen Zs than previous generations.

In terms of the workplace, Generation Zs are described as highly ambitious, entrepreneurial, motivated, and apt to change jobs to expand their skills. Like Millennials, they look for meaningful work, working within teams, as well as work flexibility and work/life balance. However, while Generation Zs have high technology skills, this does not necessarily mean that they have interpersonal or relationship skills. Though few studies have looked at how the workplace has adapted to the needs of Generation Zs, partly because they have only recently joined the workforce, some of the assets that Gen Zs look for in their place of employment include:

- A friendly working atmosphere
- Keeping up with the latest technologies

- Ambassador programs
- Internships
- Benefits
- Corporate social responsibility activities (Benitez-Marquez, 2022).

Furthermore, as Schroth (2019) emphasizes, Generation Zs value positive attitudes from their bosses, clear targets, and having their ideas respected.

While in the past, teenagers had already gained some work experience before entering adulthood, fewer Generation Zs have held jobs as teens. Schroth (2022) cites several reasons for this shift, including Gen Zs having grown up with higher median household incomes than the generations before them, being involved in more extracurricular activities to increase their chances of being accepted into the college of their choice, and lower-level jobs being taken by older workers. The result is that many Generation Zs lack basic work experience, which fosters unrealistic expectations of employment, lack of commitment to the job, and higher turnover. Therefore, it is important that potential employers explain exactly what is expected from their new employees.

One notable difference in Gen Zs approach to employment from generations past is that while once employees,

especially recent graduates, might have felt pressure from their universities, colleagues, and families to attain high prestige or high-status jobs, these kinds of jobs may have less relevance for Gen Zs. Rather than join firms and organizations where the stress level that accompanies the positions is high, Gen Zs focus is on work-life balance, autonomy, and flexibility.

One aspect that sets Millennials and Gen Zs apart from previous generations is that many of them are aware of and interested in entrepreneurship. Part of this stems from their respect for originality and their wish to make a positive contribution to the world (Gray, 2022). As Buford (qtd. in Gray) explains, “There's evidence that they are more interested in, if not being an entrepreneur, having entrepreneurial skills, mindset, and approach to their careers.” When it comes to setting up businesses, Segreto (2022) suggests that their interest is not only an outcome of Gen Zs being more adventurous than past generations but also, from a practical perspective, that a “lesser amount needed in setting up shop as online entrepreneurship does not need that much financial support. In addition, the mushrooming of start-up companies has encouraged bolder business moves.” The various characteristics that Millennials and Gen Zs possess, such as being tech-savvy,

independent, original, and practical, are those that are needed to develop businesses of the future.

Final Words

The world is changing and evolving at a faster pace than ever before. For businesses to meet the demands of this new world, they too, must evolve and change. Thus, the key to a business that survives and grows is the ability to be flexible, innovative, and forward-thinking. To do this means hiring employees who will not only help them develop and grow but who also have a finger on the pulse of today's world. Millennials and Gen Zs have grown up surrounded by rapidly expanding technology; therefore, from a business sense, their contributions in terms of technological know-how, social media awareness, as well as a concern for social and environmental issues can only be an asset to employers. However, businesses wanting to attract and retain these new generations of employees have to be prepared to accommodate their needs and expectations, which, as discussed in this book, differ from those of previous generations of employees. This book will hopefully provide insight and guidance about the Millennial and Gen Z mindset, in general, but also what they expect from a work environment. Understanding how Millennial and Gen Z employees think and being able to meet their expectations, from workplace flexibility to providing opportunities for further training to mentorship and coaching, will ultimately

benefit businesses, as they will have employees who provide valuable skills to a company, thereby helping the company stay relevant and succeed in the marketplace.

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