

## Aspirations & Wants of Generation Z — A Study on the Work Force of the Future

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**Abstract:** Generation Z is the demographic cohort following Generation Y, also known as the Millennials or the Millennial Generation; other names suggested for the cohort include iGeneration (iGen), Gen Tech, Gen Wii, Net Gen, Digital Natives etc. Generation Z is comfortable with technologies that are fairly recent for older generations, and Gen Z has grown up in the current environment of ubiquitous mobile communications. In the workplace, Generation Z expects greater flexibility and the capacity to work remotely, collaboratively and seamlessly across their various devices. Making a meaningful contribution to the world is also important to the cohort. Gen Z individuals expect to have their input welcomed and respected, and are less tolerant of authoritarian environments such as a hierarchical corporate culture. This paper majorly explores the career aspirations of Generation Z, the various traits of generation Z and the surroundings that affect the way they aspire when it comes to professional growth or their careers. During the process of writing this paper it became evident that this generation although young in years is exhibiting strong leadership, innovative, smart working, extremely challenging and active decision making skills. What they need from the society, teachers, mentors and their parents is the support to imbibe in them the values, ethics, commitment, customs and listening skills to help them balance their personal, professional and spiritual life. This is the young, vibrant work force that is at the nation's disposal. To understand the career aspiration of this multi skilled and multi tasking workforce efficiently and engaging their mind and talent to its optimal capacity is what India as a nations needs to prepare for.

**Key words:** generation Z; creative; work life balance; tech savvy; digital education; empowered

**JEL code:** Z

### 1. Introduction

Every generation has individual career aspirations. Career aspirations are often the result of our social, economical and educational background. The long drawn history on India proves that we have a strong tradition of following family trades and thus a Brahmins child followed his father's trade and a solders son followed in his foot steps. Even today it is a widely accepted trend that a businessman's child will take-up the business, a doctor's child will take up medicine; an engineer's child will go for engineering. It is generally the fear of the unknown that encourages people to be safe in selection of their professions and thus they prefer to follow the professions of their elders.

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Since independence India has seen several phases in individual growth and career building. To begin with there were not many high qualified people who were degrees holders, there were few and thus only a few the opportunity to grow but there were many to aspired to be educated and lead a life of betterment. Education and vocational trainings became the need of the hour to provide steady financial income for all, since there was lot of people who were displaced immigrants from different states and as a result of partition.

This gave way to a middle class society in the 60's which was mainly very secure in government jobs but had high aspirations for their children because they were being disillusioned by the way the country was functioning and thus believed that if their children were well educated they could leave the country and settle in more advance countries with a better future this was a generation that concentrated mainly in acquiring a sound education.

The 90's saw a change in leadership in India and the country adopted several reforms this gave rise to several industries which were not mainstream in India till then, there was the Information Technology boom which changed the way the masses in India thought. The IT boom gave India a whole generation of internationally recognized youth who had totally different working norms and ethics. This was a generation which the HR personnel were not used to and are still at large when they have to deal with them.

The generation born after the millennia is a generation that is not yet ready for the work place but they are a generation that is very different from all other they have not struggled like their earlier generations, do not thing life without education is doomed, are far too knowledgeable for their age and are quick to learn what they want and stubborn not to learn what they think is of no use to them. They are innovative, creative and highly competitive but they are not confirmative. This makes them very difficult generation to put under labels and fixed working norms.

India today has a unique composition of Baby boomers, gen X, gen Y and gen Z all working together and hence there is a need to understand how corporations, business houses, Investors and entrepreneurs can work synergistically in order to optimally utilize the uniqueness of the current age spectrum of the available workforce.

### **1.1 Multi Generations and Their Approaches towards Jobs/Work**

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|---|---|
| <b>Baby Boomers</b><br>(Born between 1946-1964) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job Security</li> <li>Hard working</li> <li>First time users for Personal computers</li> <li>Believed in life time employment with the company: Jobs are for life</li> <li>Early information technology adaptors</li> <li>Face to face communication but telephone &amp; Email required</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Generation X</b><br>(Born between 1961-1980) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work-life balance</li> <li>Digital immigrants</li> <li>First career loyalist- loyal to profession not necessarily to the employer</li> <li>Communication medium preferred- Email &amp; text messages</li> <li>Possessed strong technical skills</li> <li>Adaptive to job instability in the post downsizing environment</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Generation Y</b><br>(Born between 1981-1995) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freedom &amp; flexibility</li> <li>Digital natives</li> <li>Digital entrepreneurs: work with organizations not "for" them</li> <li>Technology oriented: tablets &amp; smart phones</li> <li>Global Centric generation: Social media&amp;online networking</li> <li>Preferred communication medium online &amp; mobiles</li> <li>Appreciation for Diversity &amp; common values of patriotism</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Generation Z</b><br>(Born after 1995)        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technoholics: completely dependent on IT, seems absoultrly disoriented in the absence of IT</li> <li>Career multitaskers- will seamlessly move from organization to thier own popup businesses</li> <li>Preferred meduim of communication is "hand held" or intergerated communication devices like google glass, smart watches etc.</li> <li>Digital communication through face time, skype.</li> <li>Most likely to opt for entrepreneurial ventures</li> <li>In employment expect high perks in exchange for loyalty and advanced technological skills</li> </ul> |

### **1.2 The Baby Boomers (Born between 1946-1964):**

Baby boomers in India were in the colonial mindset and were not able to think and operate freely. They were used to getting orders from seniors and executing them. Most of the workforce worked directly or indirectly for the government, which followed the rules & procedures set by the British. The job and financial security that came with government jobs was paramount.

Today this generation is the senior most home born professionals, they have vast knowledge and experience and they have seen the country move through various economic cycles, they know what adaptation is and they can work in the least resources. Many of these generations have retired with a handsome pension from government offices and thus money is not a huge issue for them. HR today needs to relook at their policies to leverage this talent which is very rich in experience. Indian Human resources can accommodate this resource of professionals for nurturing & mentoring of younger talent by adding their wisdom to the youthful risk takers. The HR today must propose various policies that can be drafted on the lines of:

- Hiring of Baby boomers as consultants on board to build the knowledge & experience bas of the company
- Offer compensation that has more comprehensive healthcare and wellness schemes
- Offer flexible work timings and choice of locations as per their preferences.

### **1.3 Generation X (Born between 1963-1980)**

Gen X spelled “CHANGE” in India. This was the generation which had better educational opportunities as compared to Baby Boomers. This generation had the liberty to explore various professions and personal aspirations. They were born to the baby boomers and had witnessed the un-qualitative work life. This generation had parents that had higher aspirations for their children and gen X wanted to do better than their parents and were willing to work for their aspiration which was beyond the regular 9-5 job. They are focused, career oriented and understood the importance of hard work in order to grow in their chosen professions. Gen X followed their passion at work & understands the importance of work in order to live a good quality life.

Generation X is the neo middle class of India, who had aspiration not only for themselves but as well for their children. They strived to give their children the best of education in India as well as abroad so as to give them all round exposure. This leads to their financial growth and social status building in terms of exposure to technology, knowledge and global experience. This generation is often referred to as more open to diversity, and embracing religious, class, ethnicity and race differences.

The HR department was in its nascent stage at this time and being more use to dealing with people who followed orders they were at a loss with these educated technocrats they began treating them like demi-gods. This generation got used to and also demanded a lot of respect form their juniors, subordinates, peers and the organization. The two generations baby boomers and gen X were part of the workforce, this created several issues in work styles, growth patterns, risk ability and decision making.

### **1.4 Generation Y/Millennial (Born between 1981-1995)**

This generation has been shaped by the technological revolution that occurred during their growing years. Born in new India the Millennial had several advantages which their predecessors did not have, to mention a few:

- Their parents had more disposable income thus they got more exposure to global scenario,
- Indian economy was opening up so they were getting the benefits of liberalization
- Education was more advanced and close to global standards
- The IT boom bought in more global players
- The internet of things

Based on changing trends of workforce Human resource was witnessing major demographic change where older generation was not ready to retire. Baby boomers and gen X were valuable resources but not required full time due to the fast change in technology. Majority of the workforce was gen Y but the baby boomers and gen X were learning soon & could not be discarded from the workforce.

The biggest challenge for Human Resources department was that gen Y demanded not just money but a lot more in order to be part of the workforce which the earlier generations had never dared to do. The millennial have enjoyed faster promotions into senior level managerial positions. The fact that they were “digital natives” and better educated has contributed towards them overtaking their senior counter parts where understanding and using of technology helps. The HR challenge that comes with gen Y is that they are often thought to be arrogant and having a sense of entitlement due to their IT background. The gen Y is very restless and seeks quick gratification. Things beyond money were important to this generation, stock options, offshore postings, place on boards of organization, flexi hours were all introduced to keep them motivated at work.

### **1.5 Generation Z (Born in 1995-2010)**

Before the world could settle with the Millennial and get used to their digital ways, one realizes that Gen Z was ready to make their professional debut in the main stream work force. Generation Y and Generation Z do not have much of a generation gap in terms of years, but in terms of technology usage, and their attitude towards making the technology work for them (Gen Z) rather than them (Gen Y) working for the technology clearly distinguishes these generations from one another. Gen Z believes that work should not cause stress; they enjoy what they do and do not bother to do what they do not like. “Living up” is their motto and they cannot be bothered with procedures, they are more committed and focused to what they do professionally, which in turn makes them high. Having advanced skills in Information technology and born to parents who have double income as well as disposable income, and being a generation that has had strong knowledge base along with great exposure makes them a unique blend of risk takers and an open learner, adaptable and ready for feedback. Gen Z is actively engaged in self development and is looking out for opportunities to advance their growth and development. Growth for them essentially includes the larger purpose along with the intellectual and monetary growth.

## **2. Literature Review**

All Generations are influenced by their parenting styles and the environment in which they are brought up. In India there is an evident change in professional growth of youngsters born between 1995-2010. It is important to understand these young people and their behavior traits because soon enough they will be part of the existing workforce. In some cases they already are part of the professional network and have started on their professional journey.

Today as per (2011, Nov), the parenting of generation Z is far more driven in terms of professional input and grooming as compared to earlier generations. The Gen X is raising gen Z with high involvement parenting style. Gen Z is growing up with technologies that their parents are also comfortable with, such as mobile phones, laptops, video games and various online networks etc to name a few. The understanding between the parent and the gen Z has lead to a tight bond and the parents are nurturing Gen Z to be an independent thinker. Gen Z is encouraged by their parents to experiment and explore before deciding on their choice if profession or career. This freedom to be able to decided what will be there long term future career path has given the risk taking confidence and on the go attitude to this generation.

*Challenges and Issues of Generation Z further emphasizes that Gen Z* (Singh A., 2014), is very active, motivated, goal oriented, extraordinarily competent etc. The paper highlights that Gen Z is fully awakened by the social responsibilities towards society, and they are technologically savvy, smart minded, active decision makers. Having all these traits it becomes a challenge to employ them and more so to keep them motivated at work. The paper further explores the key behavioral characteristics of gen Z and what are the new trends that will be seen once the gen Z is part of the current workforce. *Move over Millennials, Here come Generation Z talks about how Generation Z* (Dupont, 2015), is perceived to be fighting rulers of dystopian societies & Generation Z is expected to be next to take on worlds injustices. Compared to Millennial they were not raised on traditional media and are using technology earlier and faster to communicate whatever, whenever they want. **Are you ready for Gen Z?** (Nagler M., 2015), Explores how different can a new not much younger Generation be? So what's going to change with generation Z? What's same, what's different and what's really possible to anticipate. What are the identifying traits for generation Z?? To name a few they are: Early starters in their career, the use of technology for a deeper purpose and they are full of surprises spelt unpredictable and will most likely be an entrepreneurial workforce. Generation Z believes in engaging their mind and soul at work. For this generation the work life balances as mentioned in 11th Aug., 2015, is very critical. Gen Z believes that work is a medium through which they will achieve their life goals and when they feel that the job is not contributing towards their personal growth & development they tend to move on. It is important for the HR to know and understand that it is the career growth opportunities that will retain & engage this generation at workplace. Author also mentions that as opposed to the popular belief that gen Z employees are “technology freaks” it is observed that gen Z in India actually prefers face to face communication over email or instant messaging.

In order to attract the gen Z organization need to work on their online presence as most of the gen Z are following online portals and professional networking sites like LinkedIn and TechGig for jobs. In 3:50 p.m., 13th Aug., 2015, the author discusses that employers should realize and understand that the challenging and meaningful work is the highest motivator for gen Z to continue working for them. The article further elaborates the expected environment at work place. This generation makes their hobbies their jobs Gen Z expects to be online and can be motivated for long term through engagement at work. Organizations have to come to terms with the change that work life balance demands for gen Z.

### **2.1 Generation Z**

Generation Z has different expectation because they have evolved differently and have different needs from their jobs which involves a lot more than the monetary benefits. Today the confidence in Gen Z is coming from the support they get from their parents.

Generation Z is having a much tighter and closer connection with their parents and therefore their parents can relate with their aspiration and also support and encourage them in finding a career that makes them happy rather than which provides them with job security. To retain and motivate generation Z organizations needs to have an open culture... open attitude towards:

- Technology-organizations will be forced to accept technology as the way of doing things when generation Z is going to come to work. The connected gen desires to be connected to all things personal even when they are at work. They are looking for instant gratification and have no sense of privacy.
- Plan for Global out reaching: Generation Z wants more in terms of learning and exposure. They already have global exposure and therefore it becomes them to perform on global platforms, being given international assignments, managing global diversity are some of the challenges they aspire to tackle at work.

- **Build longevity through short term loyalty:** Gen Z are multitasking, they work to serve their personal growth. Their loyalty is not guaranteed. The only way to retain this versatile, opportunistic workforce is to engage them in assignments that delivers fast result and helps them grow personally and professionally.
- **Flexibility & career growth are the key to hire and retain gen Z.** This generation cannot be contained in traditional norms, rules and regulation. They demand flexibility at work, flexibility in their working styles, flexibility to engage in more than one job, flexibility to incorporate their personal aspiration with their professional aspiration. Career for generation Z is not about job but about learning, growing and developing on personal as well as professional front.
- **Encourage entrepreneurial growth:** Organizations need to encourage their entrepreneurial streak and leverage this unique trait of this generation that makes them so special in terms of innovation, creativity and risk taking ability
- **Hierarchical structuring:** Although generation Z understands the relevance of Hierarchy but they are output driven. In most cases the lines become blurry when they are accomplishing a given task and might end up ruffling the senior management unintentionally. This often leads to misgivings and lack of trust between the Management and the employee.
- **Leadership Styles:** Generation Z is more of the transformational leadership oriented rather than the transactional. They need to be lead by example. Instant recognition is important to them but at the same time it is equally essential for them to feel that they are contributing towards the better society on the whole.

## **2.2 Expectations of Generation Z from Their Future Employers**

**(1) Freedom:** One the most evident is freedom at work place. This generation believes in personal freedom even at the workplace. Organizations need to understand this generation is fiercely independent... clocking and seeking permissions don't go down smoothly with them. They wish to be trusted as responsible young adults who know what is expected from them and will deliver the same rest for them is forced formality.

**(2) Unconventional:** With freedom they want to tread on roads less travelled. They all want to do something different. Professionalism and career for them is beyond the realms of organization. They bring different approaches to traditional jobs like teaching, research or being a manager. Their exposure and sharp technical skills makes them different from their counter parts. Most of them desire to be entrepreneurs to pursue a day time job and develop their passion and explore the same as a profession in the later years.

**(3) Materialism:** Job for this generation is an opportunity to develop their growth plan. They believe in acquiring creature comforts and indulge in life that they have seen on television, in advertisements. International holiday, buying branded everyday goods sets them apart from their predecessors, who believed having a good life was over indulgence.

**(4) Experimental:** This generation wants to experiment at their work. They are most likely to hold two jobs at the same time. They aspire to work with NGO, write a book, develop an application and do much more. They wish to hold on to jobs because it gives them a purpose and makes them happy rather than thinking of it as earning a living.

**(5) Beyond IT:** Most of the generation Z do not wish to work as an IT professional on the contrary they wish to explore photography, Work as a UN aid, do freelance journalism through technology. The global exposure and witnessing the IT boom has inspired them to explore other aspects when it comes to professional choices.

**(6) Professional Commitment:** Professional commitment according to Gen Z is very subjective term. They believe in being committed to their work when it is of their liking and serves their purpose. Their personal growth

and development is the driving force to their professional commitment. When one stops serving the other they tend to move on to a job which will serve this need better.

### **2.3 Challenges that HR Will Face due to Their Role of Supporting Several Generation in the Work Force**

The vibrant multi generational workforce brings with it, its own set of challenges that need to be addressed by the HR leaders of our nation. The diversity in age, experience, skills and working styles creates an environment which is dynamic and also volatile at times.

To create a synergistic organizational climate HR needs to integrate the multiple perspectives, expectations and working culture, which is easier, said than done in real-time.

Some of the challenges that need to be addressed for this purpose are discussed below.

**Communication:** Organization needs to develop a communication channel that all generations can access. The technology as well as face to face communication needs to be incorporated in the organizational hierarchy and structure to ensure the baby boomers as well as the Gen Z can relate to it and feel confident when it comes to organizational interaction.

**Stereotypes:** In a multigenerational work force there is always an opportunity for negative stereotyping. A baby boomer might perceive the millennial to be a selfish, self-absorbed techie while a millennial might think of previous generations as a self righteous obsolete taskforce. The HR has to take conscious efforts to deal with the subconscious personal prejudices and biases of the managers.

**Technology Integration:** Businesses are driven by technology, all functions and departments are adding value to their performance and productivity through integrating technology across their work group. Multigenerational approach towards technology integration takes care of the limited capabilities of baby boomers to the technology dependant attitude of millennial. Technology integration platform should enable all generations to perform their tasks in a more efficient and effective manner.

**Flexible Benefit Plans:** HR policy makers have to keep in mind the multigenerational expectations when designing benefits for their employees. There is an evident need to design a diverse benefit plan having paid time off work, educational loan reimbursement, or sponsored training, flexi timing that will appeal to everyone across multigenerations.

The communication of these benefits also needs to be developed and involvement of employee preferences should be incorporated when designing these multi generational benefit plans for employees.

**Company Culture:** Nurturing an organizational culture that works across all generation employees is a challenge that most of the HR leaders/managers are facing today. Various aspects with relation to workforce like work life balance, employee engagement, technology integration and job enrichment to name a few need to be evaluated and if needs arises reworked to accommodate the diversity at workplace. It is vital for the organizational culture to deliver on the expectations of multigenerational workforce pertaining to each generational characteristic.

## **3. Conclusion**

Generation Z is intrinsically motivated. It is important for Human resources to accept this and build policies that more empowering, and self-driven rather than hierarchy driven.

The importance of speed, efficient and validation of data is something that is part of their DNA. Corporate

HR must build trusting relationship with these on the go employees and try to understand that their restless outward behavior is what makes them efficient and good at multitasking. Proper training, friendlier approach and social networking are the best way to approach the core of this generation. To develop and retain this generation, organization/corporate HR have to evaluate their performance appraisal and compensation adjustment procedures. Employee engagement and providing a fun place to work will ensure their loyalty and performance for the organization. They are Gen Next, multi-talented, well networked, and high on promoting themselves. Tap generation don't live for work...they work to live.

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