

# Nitty Gritty of Next Gens' Life and Work

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**Abstract :** The paper aims at studying the work and life aspirations of Next Gen. It covers study of Millennials, Gen Z and Gen Alpha. The study tries to understand various aspects of work and life of Next Gen and its effect on their performance. It tries to highlight grey areas to be focused by the companies as per the current generations' needs. It also throws light on various aspects which has scope of improvement and should be embraced by futuristic companies, as work has been redefined from 9 to 5 duty. These constructional scopes are being compared under cause and effect relationship to be tagged not merely as wants but also as next generation needs.

**Keywords:** Next Gen, Life and work, Millennials, Gen Z, Gen Alpha

**Introduction:** Trends and Times are on a supersonic changing mode. Employers have brought consistent changes in the workplaces based on the changing times. But the question in hand is would these changes be enough to manage across Next Gens? By Next Gen the researcher means to Millennials, Gen Z and Gen Alpha. Millennials are defined as the ones born between 1981 to 1996. <sup>(5, 6)</sup> They are right now the largest segment in the workplace. Gen Z is defined as the ones born between 1996 – 2010. <sup>(1, 2)</sup> And Gen Alpha is defined as the ones born after 2010. Some of them may be just born but may prove to be the torch bearers of transformation. The

Next Gen are considered young, mobile and entrepreneurial and they are destined to change the workplace as we know it. <sup>3</sup>

Millennials are becoming the dominant generation and are bringing with them new ways to work, live and play. <sup>1</sup> Technology has made a huge difference in the way Next Gen will manage their work and life. Millennials showed their older generations the path of technology. Gen Z may be tagged as addicted to technology, less social and fighters for social justice. Technological advances and changing demographics will bring significant changes in the way we define an employee and how we represent a workweek. <sup>1</sup>

Its important to answer questions like whether the next generation is going to be seen through the negative lens of being lazy, or through the positive lens of being able to see the role of work in life in a better way. There has been focus in the past years on the 'Talent' of the company and many steps have been taken for their motivation and retention. If companies want to ensure excellent performance, the approach of 'one size fit all' needs to be forgotten. The questions of 'where' and 'when' we work have become prominent. Technology is playing a major role in the creation of these questions.

### Objectives of the study

- To study Next Gens' work-related aspirations.

- To study Next Gens' life-related aspirations.
- To highlight areas to be focused on by companies to cater to the aspirations of next Gen.

## Review of Literature

### Work related aspirations of Next Gen:

#### Flexibility is the need of the hour

Generations are global 'game changers' change that is happening at the speed of not a comet but at the speed of light.<sup>12</sup> Millennials are changing the very will of the world and hence we too must change.<sup>6</sup> Next Gen has eyes on the horizon. Their top priorities are flexible working, great people, vacations and money.<sup>5</sup> Younger managers are accommodating flexibility request of juniors and want flexibility themselves.<sup>7</sup> When the life is not separated from work, employees tend to work much more efficiently. Answering work phones and emails on vacations then doesn't become a burden. Flexibility is more looked out by men than women. **The most urgently affecting development is the need of flexibility by the employees.** They are reachable anytime anywhere and hence don't understand the need to be in one place at specified time. Another reason for asking for flexibility is late marriages and caring for aging parents. **Flexibility is assumed to surpass pay and security.**<sup>14</sup> Millennials are not the only one looking for flexibility. Non-Millennials also want it. A survey by Work Enterprises Inc., which helps companies add flexibility strategies says 'Older generations need flexibility as much as younger ones, but they are afraid to ask for it.' The 'flexibility stigma', as called by social scientists, which is faced by women could reduce

if fathers and mainly people who aren't parents would ask for flexibility.<sup>11</sup>

#### Professional development opportunities

Next Gens don't mind quitting their job for pursuing something else, mainly an opportunity to work in different roles.<sup>13</sup> Gen Z looks for multiple roles in one place of employment and look for professional development opportunities. Next Gen are creative, and they expect to get a chance to act on their ideas.<sup>2</sup> They look forward to feedback for their work. The feedback however should be properly framed and delivered in a proper way.<sup>12</sup>

#### Manager's involvement for better engagement

Millennials are the least engaged generation. They change jobs often. They are more engaged if regular meetings are held by managers. If Next Gens are given jobs with purpose and meaning, they will give their best at work.<sup>5</sup> The companies, whose managers show sincere interest in Next Gen as people, are seeing 8 times improvement in agility and 7 times increase in innovation. While the biggest driver for engagement is managing performance, the biggest threat for engagement is employer reputation.<sup>12</sup>

#### Flexibility in Working hours

Next Gen believes in doing the work, and not about the time when it is done. This makes them feel that employees are considered humans.<sup>14</sup> They are not fond of 9 to 5 work hours.<sup>7</sup> Millennials have proved that it is not necessary to follow '9 to 5' timing to be effective. **For them work is a thing not a place.** The Next Gens value their time more

than money. Millennials are unconvinced that personal life should be sacrificed over work demands.<sup>11</sup>

### **Importance of good work environment**

Next Gen doesn't believe in advancing only in titles but are searching for good work environment. 'Interviews' were considered tests earlier but now it's more of a 'conversation'.<sup>(14, 2)</sup> Next Gen would not work at a place where they have value clashes, will embrace diversity and would need advanced technology at work.<sup>3</sup>

### **Tech Savvy 'WE'**

Next Gen realizes that the current jobs will not exist in the next 20 years due to the changes brought up by technology. They want to work with cutting edge technology and they believe that technology would influence their job choices.<sup>1</sup> They believe that technology and automation will create equitable work environment. Next Gen works more in teams with more technology.<sup>12</sup> Use of advanced technology while hiring Next Gen can give competitive advantage to the companies.<sup>2</sup>

### **Mindset of Next Gen**

Social scientists found that all young people are not asking for benefits because they have a fear that they would be tagged as lazy or disloyal. Gen Z, however, is less scared to ask for things. They have seen their parents struggle. They don't expect loyalty from employer and hence won't give their life for work.<sup>14</sup> Next Gen believes that the main ambition of business is making money.<sup>5</sup>

### **Life related aspirations of Next Gen:**

#### **Education and Economic status**

Next Gen will pursue education for a longer time than their previous

generation.<sup>4</sup> They have high education loan debts and are in the era of low wage growth. Their financial wellbeing is slightly complicated as the individual earnings has been flat for over 50 years.<sup>13</sup> Next Gen will face more economic inequality.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Personal and social life focus**

They have become more detached from major institutions such as marriage, political parties, religion and military.<sup>8</sup> Millennials are getting married later than the previous generations. Also, they are beginning their families later than the previous generation.<sup>13</sup> Millennials are more than 3 times likely to be not married than their previous generation.<sup>8</sup> The focus on social and personal life is important for them. Employees would not mind switching jobs with pay cut if they can be closer to family.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Lifestyle of Next Gen**

People are facing burnout issues and hence they have committed themselves to take time off.<sup>14</sup> Next Gen work more hours but also sleep more. They spend half as much time on thinking and relaxing than the previous generation. They participate more in sports, exercise and recreational activities. They are twice as likely as older generations to play board games and computer games.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Next Gen are tech savvy**

Gen Alpha would be very tech savvy, diverse, educated and conscious generation but may suffer mental health issues due to the internal and external pressures. They would choose technology over human connections.<sup>3</sup> Gen Alpha will stay in education longer and is more into technology which also leads to shorter attention spans and impaired social formation.<sup>9</sup>

## **Next Gen embrace diversity and social issues**

Next Gen believes in giving back to society and are civically engaged. Their neighborhood and friends don't only include people in proximity but also people across the world.<sup>12</sup> Next Gen will accept people of different backgrounds and the racial divisions would not exist.<sup>9</sup>

## **Findings**

### **Wake up call for companies**

The companies are still rarely bringing changes in their policies. The older generation may have the thought process of letting the generations have the sufferings the way they had it. Big companies like Wal-Mart and Apple have put taking care of their employees on priority list. Millennials have become bosses and the new generation wants a sane way to work. So, companies will have to change. Benefits like sabbaticals, paid vacations, necessary breaks, paid time off etc. are provided by companies.<sup>14</sup> Deloitte research found that employers are prioritizing bottom line of workers, society and environment. Diverse leadership teams ensure motivating work environments. Managers need to consider new strategies to engage, motivate and retain Next Gens. The strategies designed to retain boomers need to be put in corporate archives. Older employees realize the need to be flexible and work as a team.<sup>12</sup> One of the major retention drivers for Millennials is feeling supported and appreciated.<sup>11</sup> The Gallop survey 2016 mentioned that Millennials look forward to the changes as mentioned below:

- Be with companies who have mission and purpose
- Pursue development instead of job satisfaction

- Want bosses to become coaches
- Look forward to ongoing conversations instead of annual reviews
- Focus on developing strengths instead of fixing weaknesses
- Look at job as an important aspect like life and hence look for companies who value their strength and contribution and give a change to do their best<sup>6</sup>

To attract, retain and develop Millennials, companies need to offer career security, appreciate them, focus on career variety and mobility, be flexible, have regular career conversations and be open to alternative work models. The companies need to reimaging their people practices. **What will work for Millennials will work for the rest of the workforce.**<sup>10</sup>

### **Major steps needed by companies for managing Next Gen workforce**

‘Change is the only constant thing in life’ is the statement to be remembered by companies. As the ancient proverb goes, ‘Societies become great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they will never sit under’, same stands true for companies. They need to understand the changes and take major steps for the benefit of generations to come. Some of the steps can be as follows:

- Flexibility needs to be provided to employees in every aspect of their work. Flexibility will play a major role in the process of development.
- Next Gen need to be provided with opportunities to expand their horizons and bring out their best.
- Managers need to understand that they play a major role in ensuring employee engagement.

- The focus needs to shift from ‘9 to 5’ style to ‘job deadlines being met’ and ‘quality of job’
- Provide them a work environment which creates a positive mindset towards the companies
- Give them opportunities to work with advanced technologies.
- ‘Embracing Diversity’ should become a prominent part of company culture.

### Limitation and Scope for further research

The researcher has realized during the process of literature review realized that very limited research has been done on the future generations in various parts of the world. The various aspects of future generations’ life need to be studied in detail to get a deeper and better understanding on the effect of their lifestyle characteristics on their health, personal life and work and in turn its effect on companies, societies and nations at large.

### Conclusion

Nations become great not by the resources they have but by the way the resources are nurtured and utilized for the benefit of all. Its not how good we are now, but how good we can become great if we realize the ‘Nitty Gritty of the Next Gens’ Work and Life.’ This paper has tried to exclusively focus on the same and has suggested the required steps in that direction.

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