



# HUMANS FIRST

A millennial engagement model.

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## INTRODUCTION:

*"Humans first," the millennial responded matter-of-factly to my question. "There's a great sense of engagement here because the company puts humans first!" I paused...a little taken aback. Was she joking? She stared at me, her explanation complete.*

The concept of humans first captures the essence of this White Paper. For centuries the human worker has been treated like a machine. Clocking in and out, receiving pay in exchange for hours worked. However, as our workplace becomes increasingly technologically driven, a new generation of workforce is asking for more humanity to be put back into the workplace. By 2020 millennials will form 50% of the workforce (Rendell and Brown, 2011). Born into the digital age, the expectations of this generation are different to those that came before them. More focused on outcomes than inputs, they prefer to work on meaningful projects in collaborative teams anytime, anywhere, using multiple devices.

Are organisations ready for this shift? Still operating within an industrial age mindset, their ideas of employee engagement are outdated. So how are organisations responding to the millennials' plea to put humans first? How are organisations driving millennial knowledge worker engagement within the context of a new world of work – ensuring their own organisational survival?

Following a qualitative action learning research process, interviewing thirteen executives in eleven organisations and facilitating five focus groups of millennials and HR practitioners, I targeted organisations across multiple industries in Cape Town, South Africa and London, UK. One of these companies – "Organisation J" in the pages that follow – was GetSmarter. This White Paper brings together the primary conclusions from the full account of the study (Ndlovu 2015).

'Work', a once simple four letter word, has now become complex, complicated and by some, misunderstood. The term 'work' was once an easy, universally agreed equation: reward, usually in the form of money, was given by the employer in exchange for effort. That was the sum of it - it was not more complicated than that. For the industrial-age worker this meant clocking in, working your shift on the production line and clocking out. The hours worked were converted into money and life carried on.

Over time, particularly as the manual labourer became the knowledge worker and employee expectations slowly grew, the definition of reward became more sophisticated. Management and particularly human resource management (HRM) began creatively to develop ways to redefine this idea of reward in exchange for effort. In an attempt to keep the workforce happy and ultimately keep the good ones in their positions for as long as possible, HRM started to rethink their offer of reward.

In exchange for 'work', HRM began to concoct a menu of rewards that appealed to the appetite of their

increasingly valuable employees to try to keep them interested, engaged and satisfied. Sophisticated long-term employee development training programmes were paired with varieties of performance management systems. Elaborate incentive packages were served with tantalising promotion possibilities. Share schemes were thoughtfully marinated with long term bonus schemes. Gullible and insatiable employees lapped it up, longing for the ultimate dessert – a ‘job for life!’

Now, things have changed, the tables have turned as there is a new employee in town. This employee, the millennial employee – a generation born in the 1980s and 1990s - has a different set of tastes and expectations. The traditional rewards on offer are not appealing. The ingredients are stale and the combinations unattractive. The whole menu needs a revamp and management teams do not seem to know what to change and how to change. Aware that things need to evolve, and in a vain attempt to make some of these alterations, management teams are simply swapping out some of the ingredients and adding fresh garnish - they seem incapable of creating an entirely new menu.

The world of work is changing. Whilst some organisations, paralysed in the old paradigm, cling on to twentieth century work practices and policies, others are welcoming the opportunity to question, challenge and transform - embracing new methods, tools and practices. Research has shown that those organisations opting for technological advancement and transformation are outperforming their peers in every industry. Those organisations, slow to respond, are warned that this is at their peril (Westerman, Tannou, Bonnet, Ferraris, and McAfee, 2012).

Work, once a place of identity, has become a place of uncertainty (Bindé, 2005). It is not just how we work that is changing but who is working. The millennials are here and are gradually becoming the largest generational demographic in the workplace. Like most generations, they are different from their predecessors - in motivation, aspiration and expectation.

This new breed, coupled with fast-paced technological change, is challenging the world of work as we know it - transforming our relationship with it, our responses to it and our expectations from it. Organisations will need to evolve if they truly want to engage the millennial workforce. Are they aware that they need to change? Are they prepared to make a change and if so, what, if any, changes are being made to engage with these new workers in a new world of work.

Employers are scrambling to find out everything they can about this millennial generation. What motivates them? How do they choose a career and why? How will they change the workplace? How do their managers communicate with them? Are they just an overindulged generation? This generation is so well connected that with just one click of the mouse they could damage an organisation’s reputation if they feel their expectations are not being met by their employer (Raines, 2003).

People are the heart of any organisation and because of this any organisational structures, policies and practices that affect people ought to be appropriate, relevant and practical.

Organisations across the world are beginning to understand that if they are to attract and retain employees, particularly millennial employees in this new world of work, they need to align themselves to the expectations of this growing workforce. Failure to change will result in high costs of staff replacement, loss of institutional knowledge and skill, as well as an increase in the staff attrition rate - all of which can damage an organisation's financial position and reputation.

Talent management should be a key priority for every organisation's senior leadership, governance structures and other key interested parties including shareholders concerned with ensuring the organisation's survival and growth. Organisations need to constantly look for innovative and effective staff attraction, engagement and retention strategies if they want to remain sustainable and competitive. Drucker proposed that the challenge for managers will be to leave behind twentieth century logic, concepts and tools and quickly develop new ones relevant for the work within the digital economy (Drucker, 1989). However, two and a half decades later many organisations are still operating with an industrial age mindset, one that focuses on predictability, stability and compliance (Singh, Bhandarker & Rai, 2012).

My research was focused on understanding the talent management and leadership practices required to ensure organisational sustainability, particularly within the context of a new world of work – reflected in the ease at which we are able to work wherever, whenever, however and with whomever we want.

## **THE MILLENNIAL AS A KNOWLEDGE WORKER IN THE DIGITAL AGE:**

Let me begin by defining what I mean by the term *millennial*. Given the complexities of the South African emerging market context, where a significant part of the research was gathered, I chose to broaden the traditional definition which describes millennials as people born between the years 1980 and 2000 (Rendell & Brown, 2011). Also popularly known as Generation Y and more controversially as “digital natives”, this generation has a unique set of characteristics (Bolton, 2013; Tapscott, 2008).

My definition of the millennials is a generation that is generally, but not necessarily, born in the 1980s and 1990s. In other words they are on average currently aged between 25 to 35 and therefore early to mid-career, making them the most critical part of today's talent pool. They have access to, and are comfortable with, technology. Dwelling in an urban, cosmopolitan setting – in this instance Cape Town and London – from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds they prefer to work collaboratively for short periods of time. They are a generation of workforce that wants meaningful challenging assignments in a relationship-rich world. With a healthy tolerance for risk, they are prepared to move to a new organisation if they are not satisfied.

Often stereotyped as self-absorbed, lazy and quick to shift their loyalties, millennials display high degrees of confidence, intelligence and independence, and crave responsibility and the exciting challenging assignments (Moritz, 2014).

In less than five years 50% of the workforce will consist of the millennial generation who play by a different set of rules (Rendell & Brown, 2011). It is becoming increasingly impossible for organisations to block out the millennial workers' raised voices and their desire to shift the system. They need leadership and guidance from a manager who will help them meet their expectations and challenges and who will treat them with respect.

As we moved from the industrial age to the digital age, the industrial age worker who acquired distinctive skills in relation to their tasks was replaced by the knowledge worker. Drucker's term 'knowledge worker' was used to describe and differentiate individually-held knowledge as a powerful resource from knowledge owned by an organisation. Knowledge workers are intellectual, qualified employees (Horwitz, Heng, & Quazi, 2003).

More explicitly, 'a knowledge worker' is "a person with the motivation and capacity to co-create new insights and the capability to communicate, coach and facilitate the implementation of new ideas" (Horwitz et al., 2003: 23). They thrive on continuous learning and development, enjoy advancement and mobility and resist a command and control style of organisation (Horwitz et al., 2003).

Managers, in particular those responsible for talent management, need to ask themselves how they, as part of traditional companies using traditional practices, make the transition into twenty-first century digital economy companies (Lewis, Wright & Geroy, 2004).

How does the new world of work impact on organisational talent management, sustainability and future growth? The new world of work is here. Gone are the days of working 9 to 5 in an office cubicle on company equipment, hoping to climb the corporate ladder – all eyes set on the corner office.

The increase in global interaction, the rise in the use of digital technology, the presence and utilisation of big data, an ageing workforce, and the increased emphasis on the creation of shared value - all of these concepts, ideas and ideals are directly impacting on the idea of work.

Those responsible for the management of talent will need to ask themselves what the impact this new world will have on their organisational structure, culture and practices and what different skill sets and tools will be needed to retain the best people (Aldrich, 1999; PWC, 2014). For organisations that continue to operate in the old paradigm, millennial talent engagement and retention is becoming increasingly problematic.

This is a relevant and persistent problem not just in South Africa but globally. This paper focuses on one element of this problem - millennial talent engagement (an antecedent to talent retention). More specifically, how will worker engagement practices need to change in order to engage the millennial worker within the context of a new world of work?

## COLLECTING THE EVIDENCE:

In-depth interviews were held, giving an opportunity to gain detailed multiple perspectives on millennial engagement practices. They were an ideal method for obtaining an insight into complex systems because of the depth of focus (Ritchie et al., 2013). The semi-structured interviews allowed space and flexibility to pursue matters as they arose (Lee, 1999). They began with open-ended questions, allowing interviewees to openly describe and explain their situation, experiences, fears and excitements in the area of millennial talent engagement within their changing work environment.

The rich qualitative data gathered from the interviews built a picture of the situation, capturing beliefs, underlying assumptions and different viewpoints of millennial engagement within a new work context. The UK's capital city is regarded as an established and progressive employment market and therefore the data insights received from the London-based organisations provided an additional lens – a window into current global developments against which more comparatives could be drawn.

I hosted a number of focus groups. These were an extremely useful way of discussing the research topic as a group. In many ways, they were more 'natural' than interviews because they gave people an opportunity to think and talk about a specific topic. Because the participants could hear the contribution of others during the session, their ideas expanded and adapted during the focus group process as they reflected on and refined their own thoughts (Ritchie et al., 2013).

Five focus group discussions were held. Two were held in Cape Town with millennials working in the financial services and online education sectors. Three focus group discussions were held in London, one with millennials working in a cross section of sectors, the second and third group with HR practitioners and millennials working in digital advertising.

The focus groups with millennial workers were intentionally held after the first cycle of interviews adding

a different dimension to the picture being painted by the HR practitioners. Open ended, semi-structured questions were posed to each focus group exploring their experience, expectations, preferences and frustrations as millennial workers. As the interviews and focus groups progressed, particularly in cycle three, more specific probing questions were asked providing clarity to the evolving theory. In London, a second cycle of data was collected from interviews and three focus groups that were held.

After each interview, the conversations were transcribed and analysed. Care was taken to capture the propositions from these interviews ensuring meaning was not lost. Grounded theory techniques were used to help systematise the process of data collection.

Following the process of detailed data collection and analysis, a descriptive theory of the behaviour of the system of millennial talent engagement was carefully unpacked and constructed. The theory is essentially a collection of engagement practices that have surfaced from the process of interviewing and holding focus groups and is further substantiated through a detailed literature review. I believe these practices, if adopted, would improve the level of millennial engagement. Whilst this may be somewhat subjective and open to interpretation, it helps propose an explanation of what, from my understanding, might be occurring.

CYCLE	INTERVIEW/FOCUS GROUP	ORGANISATION/FOCUS GROUPS
<b>CYCLE 1</b> - Cape Town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews 1 -5</li> </ul>	Organisations A - E
<b>CYCLE 2</b> - London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews 6 - 8</li> <li>Focus groups</li> </ul>	Organisations F - G Focus groups Blue, Pink and Green
<b>CYCLE 3</b> - Cape Town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews 9 - 13</li> <li>Focus groups</li> </ul>	Organisations H - K Focus groups Purple and Grey

**TABLE 1:** Data collection cycles

Viewpoints were established from each organisation interviewed as well as from the knowledge worker millennials themselves. By developing these perspectives, or holons, a shared and varied understanding of the problem began to form (Williams, 2005). In building each perspective, I wanted to understand and answer the following questions:

- What is the overarching philosophy about millennial engagement?  
This was captured as their 'style' (What);
- What is the 'logic' behind this philosophy? (Why);
- What engagement practices are practiced in the organisation? (How);
- What millennial engagement challenges currently exist?

This data collection phase is summarised in Table 1 and consisted of three iterative cycles: cycles one and three were held in Cape Town and cycle two in London. The full participation and enthusiasm of the managers and millennials during each session helped in developing a deep and rich understanding of millennial engagement practices.

Employer perspectives were derived from a series of interviews which were held with 11 separate organisations, hereafter referred to as organisation A, organisation B, organisation C up to and including organisation K. Interviews were held with people involved in talent management including: HR: Executive Management, HR: Business Partners, HR: Talent Managers, HR: Leadership Development, HR: Benefits and Recruitment. Organisation D interviews were held with the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Operations Officer as they purposefully outsource their HR function.

FOCUS GROUP #	SECTOR	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION
Blue	A cross section of sectors (millennials)	5	London
Pink	Digital agency (millennials)	7	London
Green	Digital agency (HR managers)	8	London
Purple	Online education (millennials)	10	Cape Town
Grey	Financial services (millennials)	7	Cape Town

**TABLE 2:** Focus group participants



A total of five focus groups were held – four with millennials (the focus of the study) and one with HR practitioners. Three focus groups were held in London and two in Cape Town. Table 2 summarises the focus group participants. Each focus group was given a colour representing the connection I felt whilst engaging with them.

Open ended questions were posed to the focus groups under the emerging categories generated by the

<b>PHILOSOPHY:</b> Engagement through surveys – continuously tapping into the mood	
<b>MAIN LOGIC:</b> Data generated through surveys allows for teams to adapt their behaviour	
<b>MECHANISMS AT WORK:</b>	
<p><b>NEW ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regular completion of surveys: culture survey, new employee onboarding surveys, exit surveys</li> <li>2. Increased usage of mobile technology to engage millennials</li> <li>3. 6 months to 1 year sabbaticals – high rate of returning workers</li> <li>4. Creation of ‘solution cafes’ a place to meet and talk</li> <li>5. Positive work environment for the female employees – ready dinner</li> <li>6. (Retention strategy focused on female, aged 25, knowledge workers with critical skills who either want to settle down or who are working mothers)</li> </ol>	<p><b>ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Intergenerational management</li> <li>2. Lack of organisational loyalty</li> <li>3. Work practices are still predominantly industrial age</li> </ol>

**TABLE 3:** Organisation A (retail) – an interview summary

interviews with HR practitioners. New categories were added as the discussions progressed and included current and preferred engagement practices.

## RESULTS: THE VIEW FROM THE ORGANISATION

After each interview with an organisation, a summary of the conversations was documented detailing the engagement philosophy, logic, engagement practices and challenges of each perspective. To give a sense of how the research unfolded, I have detailed in Tables 3 and 4 the perspectives of two organisations – organisation A and organisation D. By doing so the process of synthesis of each interview is brought to life.

Organisation A understands the need for millennials to constantly connect. Millennials are loyal to their family and friends they are not loyal to their organisation. This company therefore feels that as an

organisation they need to find a way to become the millennial workers' friend. Their engagement philosophy is to continuously understand and tap into the workforce mood through regularly conducting culture surveys. Filtering down to team level, the data generated is used as a basis for adapting behaviour and engaging with the workforce. This they believe can only be effective when there is reciprocal respect across the generations; only then can a positive work environment and worker experiences co-exist – “wisdom needs to work alongside youth” (Interviewee, organisation A)

**PHILOSOPHY:** Upgrading the physical infrastructure is key for engagement

**MAIN LOGIC:** Keeping the workforce on site by providing all the necessary amenities will keep them engaged

### MECHANISMS AT WORK:

#### NEW ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES:

1. Use of mobile enabled social media for recruitment
2. Improved website engagement user experience
3. Adoption of e-recruitment to engage with potential employees
4. Gaming tactics to engage Call Centre staff
5. Improving the work environment

#### ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES:

1. Trust and infrastructure are two reasons why working from home has not been considered
2. Organisational wisdom held by the older managers – rigidity of view frustrates the younger generation
3. Managers unsure about how to manage the millennials
4. Engaging actuaries is not easy - they are generally serious, analytical and tend not to move

**TABLE 4:** Organisation D (financial services) - an interview summary

Organisation A views its challenges as including the inability of its managers to manage this new generation of workforce. They also acknowledge that the workforce is still operating with an industrial age mindset and work practices.

*“Are we changing the way we are preparing this generation’s workforce? I don’t think we are – we’re still using old methods of teaching, educating and compensating.” (Interviewee, organisation A)*

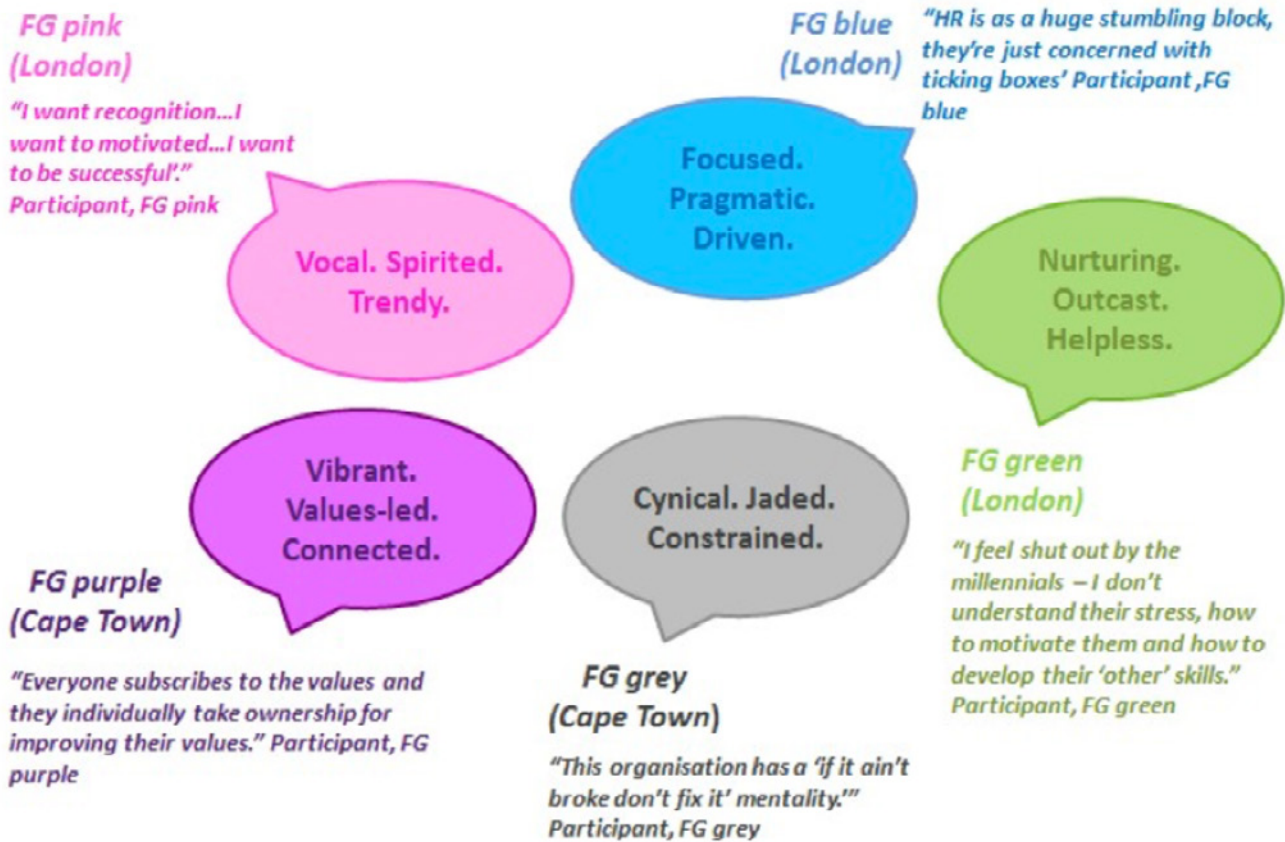
A contrasting summary of the conversation with organisation D, a financial services company, is captured in Table 4.

Organisation D's philosophy for millennial engagement is through providing sufficient physical infrastructure. They believe that providing all the necessary amenities on site will keep the workforce engaged and ultimately productive.

*"We have a subsidised canteen, 3 coffee shops, a pharmacy, a cell phone shop, a travel agent, a physician, a take-away, a hair salon, a wellness centre, a nurse, a masseuse, financial advisors, a car wash and sushi bar. We're also in the process of building another car park that will cater for 100 cars - parking is a real a problem." (Interviewee, organisation D)*

Organisation D views millennials as a brand conscious generation who want and need to be constantly stimulated. They feel they need to provide millennials with time-saving technological tools that will improve their levels of productivity. For organisation D, as with all organisations interviewed, millennial engagement is a topical issue. Whilst organisation D's approach has been mainly focused on changes to the physical environment they have made other changes including reconfiguring their website to ease engagement and adopting mobile enabled social media applications for recruitment practices. They are also currently upgrading the offices to include Wi-Fi, introducing tablets and creating future workspaces in their various branches.

Organisation D recognises that millennials need to be constantly stimulated and entertained and they address this by offering job rotations, short training courses and incentives that are built around gaming tactics. The main challenge for organisation D in millennial engagement is intergenerational worker relations, in particular, providing support to the managers of this workforce who are unsure of how to manage these young employees.



**FIGURE 1:** Focus group colour classifications

## THE VIEW FROM THE MILLENNIALS

The colours allocated to each focus group are captured in Figure 1 with an example of a statement from a group participant that encapsulates the allocated colour. FG blue consisted of 5 participants working in various industries in London. Having weathered the fierce competition of the London labour market and being humbled by the experience, they were extremely focused and pragmatic about their preferred means of engagement. FG pink consisted of 7 millennials working in a digital advertising agency. A spirited, vocal group of trendy people they articulated their engagement needs clearly without apology. In contrast, FG green, a group of 8 HR practitioners working with digital employees, felt helpless in the face of these millennials. Unsure of how to focus their nurturing spirit they felt like outcasts.

FGs purple and grey were both held in Cape Town. FG purple included 10 values-led, connected millennials working within online education. Their passion and vibrancy was palpable. A model for millennial engagement, they were the most engaged. The final group, FG grey were less enthusiastic. Working within a boutique financial services company this constrained "old boys club" seemed to result in a level of jaded cynicism.

**KEY MESSAGE:** “What incentives me is not beer and pizza but being heard and recognised, being involved and being able to have an impact.”

**PREFERRED ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES:**

1. *I would like access to resources, senior people an budget*
2. *I want to be motivated and work in an environment where there is no politics*
3. *I don't necessarily want to be a specialist – I want diversified knowledge.*
4. *I want to work on attractive and interesting projects so that I have a sense of enjoyment (i.e. I love what I do) and a sense of achievement.*
5. *I want recognition*
6. *I want what I do to be purposeful and impactful*
7. *I want to be involved*
8. *I want to be successful both personally and for the company.*

**TABLE 5:** A summary of the discussion with FG pink (millennials in London)

The focus group discussions with millennials centred around their preferred engagement practices and these were captured in a proposition log. A summary of each discussion was documented listing the current and expected practices and each focus group's key message was identified. Table 5 is an example of the summary from discussions held with FG pink – a millennial group in London.

This group identified their own 'key message' as the message that they would like to send their senior management employers:

*“What incentivises me is not beer and pizza, but being heard and recognised, being involved and being able to have an impact.” (Participant, FG pink)*

## COMPARING LONDON AND CAPE TOWN

In South Africa, whilst high levels of unemployment plague the country, highly experienced talent is in extremely short supply. Competition in attracting and retaining this elusive talent requires organisations to adopt innovative engagement practices.

In contrast, the market for talent in London is overflowing. As millions of skilled individuals from all over the world flock to the capital in search of job opportunities and a high wage, the level of competition is stiff as

work is in short supply.

*“Determination and drive are critical (in order) to compete in this market for a job.” (Participant, FG blue)*

Three focus groups (blue, pink and green) were held in London – two with millennials and one with HR practitioners, and one detailed interview was held with a Professor of Organisational Development (organisation G). Whilst the discussions in London around organisational millennial engagement were clearly at a more advanced stage, the challenges and frustrations experienced by the millennials themselves were not dissimilar to those experienced in Cape Town.

With respect to organisations’ adoption of engagement practices, an interviewee from organisation G was of the view that, in the UK, there is a growing understanding of the organisational requirement to embrace the new world of work in order to ensure organisational sustainability. There is also a clear understanding of the millennial engagement shift requirements. This interviewee described millennials as ‘slacktivists’ - lazy activists - who:

*“..have a low level of respect for authority...(millennials) feel they have agency – they are used to a culture of ‘voting people off’. (Interviewee, organisation G)*

Interviewee G described the drivers of the shifting nature of work that was responsible for creating this perfect storm of change. These included the generational changes marked by the erosion of baby boomers born between 1946 and 1961 from the workplace and the rise of the millennials and, secondly, the rise in social media driving more immediate connection and group participation and lastly the rise in technological advancement (Cennamo & Gardner, 2011) .

In response to this, interviewee G believed that organisations were beginning to make the required shift:

- A relaxation of leadership. The traditional charismatic leadership is being replaced by a more engaging, inclusive and democratic style of leadership with the millennials asking to be “engaged not led”, Interviewee, organisation G;

ORGANISATION	PHILOSOPHY	LOGIC
A	Engagement through surveys: continuously tap into the mood of the organisation	Data gathered through surveys allows for the team to continuously adapt their behaviour
B	Create virtual millennial engagement groups	Group engagement virtually builds better loyalty and buy-in
C	Millennial engagement is something we talk about, but haven't yet actioned	A millennial engagement strategy is not yet critical (for the organisation)
D	Upgrading the physical infrastructure is key for engagement	Keeping the workforce on site by providing all the necessary amenities will keep them engaged
E	Embrace technology to improve engagement	Embracing technology to allow flexible working practices will improve engagement
F	Engagement is about culture – apply layers of happiness	Humans matter, create a culture of appreciation and patience
G	Embrace the new world of work	Generational changes, the rise of social media and technology and changes in workforce attitude are all creating a perfect storm for change
H	Create the policy first	Create a strategy first and then change the mindset
I	Focus on the customer, they are what matters.	Focus the business is on customer services (eg point of sales) not employee – customers are the strategic priority
J	Engage, don't transact!	Humans first!
H	Personalise engagement – that's the way to go	Personalise employee engagement in the same way retail is becoming more personalised

**TABLE 6:** The engagement philosophies and logic of the organisations interviewed

FOCUS GROUP	KEY MESSAGE TO MANAGEMENT
FG blue (London)	<i>"Inspire and entertain me and give me the freedom to work for others"</i>
FG pink (London)	<i>"What incentives me is not beer and pizza but being heard and recognised. I want to be involved and able to have an impact"</i>
FG green (London)	<i>"Help (us) to collaborate, network and provide an opportunity to speak (our) passion"</i>
FG purple (Cape Town)	<i>"Management, continue to put humans first!"</i>
FG grey (Cape Town)	<i>"Measure productivity, not presence!"</i>

**TABLE 7:** Key message from millennials to management

- Embracing emerging change. This requires a new level of agility and ability to easily collectively organise, which is achievable through the use of social media;
- Shifting from hierarchical formations to a greater use of networks. Millennials familiarity with social and collective organising makes this easy.

## A SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

Table 6 summarises the different engagement philosophies and logic of all the organisations interviewed. The thirteen interviews held in eleven organisations (organisation A – organisation K) gave a different perspective on millennial engagement practices. Table 7 summarises the key messages from each focus group.

Data from the full set of interviews and focus groups was coded. Twelve initial categories were reduced to eight through subsequent iterations; each of these was labelled as a millennial "engagement practice":

- Engagement practice 1: Gamification of the workplace  
 Engagement practice 2: A culture lived through values



CATEGORIES								
	1: Gamification	2: Culture	3: 'Gig-economy'	4: Leadership	5: Growth	6: Collaborative Tribes	7: Physical environment	8: Social impact
A	Mobile to connect	Culture surveys		Reciprocal respect		Loyal to friends		
B	Constant feedback on performance			Authentic engagement	Growth opportunities	Virtual group engagement	Technological support	
C			Freedom to choose				Cloud support	
D	Gaming tactics (eg Vouchers)		Job rotations				Social media Future workspace	
E	Gamification principles				Growth opportunities		Technology and social media	
F	Gamification principles (sales team)	Vibrant culture		Staff participation and appreciation	Mentally stimulated		Forefront of technology	
G			Zero hour contracting	Inclusive democratic leadership		Connection Crowdsourcing	Social media	
H							Social media platform	
I			Job rotations					
J	Gamification principles	Behaviours attached to values	No benefits – free to do with salary	Weekly performance feedback	Growth. Start-up mentality.		Fun and vibrant workspace	Provision of education
K		Personalised engagement	Outcomes driven Project-based		Start-up vibe Be challenged		Social media	

Key:

Current millennial engagement practices	What they believe millennials want BUT are not practicing
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TABLE 8: Summary of engagement categories plotted against the 11 organisations

	1: Gamification	2: Culture	3: 'Gig-economy'	4: Leadership	5: Growth	6: Collaborative Tribes	7: Physical environment	8: Social impact
Blue	Be entertained		Zero hour contracting	Be respected Be inspired	Be challenged			
Pink			I don't want to specialise	Explain clearly what's in it for them	Opportunities to express passion	Collaboration training		
Green		No company politics	No specialisation. Projects preferred.	Access to senior people. Recognition.	Be motivated			Be purposeful and impactful
Purple	Gaming environment	Humans first! Work and play hard	Outcomes based working	Leadership has a high EQ	Growth. Challenge. Opportunity.		We have the best coffee!	We believe in our products
Grey		Trust. Creative culture.	Gig-economy Productivity not presence	Be taken seriously. Not to be micro-managed	Learning opportunities Start-up vibe		New appropriate technology	Integrity and social impact

Key:

What millennials say they want and are getting	What millennials say they want and are NOT getting
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TABLE 9: Summary of engagement categories plotted against the 5 focus groups

Engagement practice 3:	Project-based working: the 'gig economy'
Engagement practice 4:	Transformational leadership
Engagement practice 5:	'Incentives 2.0': opportunities for growth
Engagement practice 6:	Use of collaborative tribes
Engagement practice 7:	Workspace of the future
Engagement practice 8:	Purposeful business

Tables 8 and 9 are summaries of the themes arising from each of the interviews and focus group discussions plotted against each of the eight millennial engagement practices.

Of the eleven organisations interviewed, one organisation (organisation J) felt that they were currently applying seven of the eight practices and this was confirmed through a focus group with the millennial staff within that organisation (FG purple). In contrast, organisation H is currently applying only one of the engagement practices, the fewest of those organisations interviewed. Despite not adopting more engagement practices, organisation H was very aware of the mindset changes that were needed within the organisation before any discussion around change could be possible.

Of the remaining organisations adopting a smaller number of engagement practices, three of them – organisations A, B and K - were aware of at least one other engagement practice that they felt strongly about adopting, knowing that it would be beneficial to their organisation.

Overall, these research results show that it is the responsibility of the entire organisation, not just the HR function, for the implementation of effective millennial engagement practices. Indeed, some millennials feel that HR should simply be done away with.

*"HR is regarded as a huge stumbling block who are concerned with ticking boxes!" (Participant, FG blue)*

One organisation interviewed has actually done this.

*"We don't have a HR dept. It's outsourced – we just use a labour consultant as and when we need to." (Interviewee, organisation F)*

## THE BROADER PERSPECTIVE: TALENT ENGAGEMENT

These results from the interviews and focus groups point to an incongruity between what is expected and what is being provided. What do we know, then, of wider perspectives on the issues raised?

Talent engagement, particularly millennial talent management, is an increasingly critical HR issue (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008). As generations collide traditional approaches to HRM may soon be a thing of the past (PWC, 2014). It is fully recognised that HRM practitioners need to respond and align their strategies to the new labour force of “digital natives” – the millennial generation (Strohmeier & Stefan, 2014). Their multi-tasking ability, affinity with collaborative efforts, learning by doing and constant feedback requires a new approach.

The challenge for HRM is “to identify actual digitally induced changes in attitudes, qualifications, behaviours and expectation of younger employees, while yet avoiding any stereotyping and considering heterogeneity of actual changes” (Strohmeier & Stefan, 2014:1). For many years HR has been responsible for managing people in a largely segregated operation. Technological advances are changing all of this with talent management becoming more integrated into everyday business. Technology in HR is becoming an increasingly vital component of organisational performance in an increasingly competitive and fast-changing world thereby transforming how HR functions operate and serve their organisations. The increased use of talent data allows for better integration and customisation to an organisation’s changing needs, ensuring greater adaptability and flexibility in response to changing business conditions.

In a recent publication by Accenture, digital technology is seen as being a major disruptor to HR. Social media, gamification, cloud computing, mobile, big data and consumer applications are all transforming the way people are working (Accenture, 2015). A key success factor for organisations operating within this technologically enhanced environment will be the appropriateness of their management of human capital (Lewis et al, 2004) .

As HRM heads towards this digitally enhanced future, the ability for organisations to manage and engage their people will require more flexibility, agility and customisation. These continuous digital advances will continue to have significant implications for employees and managers. Research conducted by Accenture predicted that digital advancement will shift the focus of information and decision making away from centralised groups, including HR, to employees (Good, Farley, Himanshu, & Cantrell, 2015). Digital technology will dissolve boundaries and organisational silos, hierarchies and work practices. In order for HR to keep up with the digital age they have to prepare for this complex change of work context. In the digital economy, human capital needs to be managed differently.

The current revolving door phenomena particular of millennials, who are leaving employment within two years, is a significant problem (Graen and Grace, 2015). The apparent disconnect between the expectations

of this young workforce and the traditional workplace practices is not only threatening the availability of talent but the ultimate survival of organisations.

Recent big data studies in the HR domain show that millennials are rejecting the notions of “professional

MOTIVATION STRATEGY TYPE	RANK
Freedom to plan work	1
Challenging work	2
Access to leading-edge technology/products	3
Top management support	4
Ensure fulfilling work	5

**TABLE 10:** Most effective motivation strategies - adapted from Horwitz et al. (2003)

careers,” “work” and “peer-like collaborative communities” (Graen & Grace, 2015). Instead, they want greater flexibility at work in a more collaborative team-oriented work setting placing more emphasis on “mutual trust, respect, support and positive feedback” (2015:8).

The studies advise that HR practitioners prepare themselves for a more powerful talent- centric strategic approach as one that is a part of the more commonplace emergent business strategy. In order to do so, HR will need to familiarise themselves with the attributes of workplace culture that appeal to the millennials who can strengthen the innovative core of their businesses (Graen & Grace, 2015).

## EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Horwitz et al identified the five most effective motivation strategies from data received from 44 organisations. These are set out in Table 10.

The most effective motivation strategies included: freedom to plan work, the provision of challenging and fulfilling work, regular support from top management as well as access to cutting-edge technology (Horwitz et al., 2003). Horwitz later added to this strategy, advocating the creation of a stimulating work environment, including a participative organisational culture and the promotion of a more effective work culture that promoted teamwork and individual opportunities (Horwitz, 2006).

In contrast, in a survey of 614 accounting firms worldwide, flexible work schedules were seen as the most effective retention tool allowing people a better chance to manage and maintain work/life balance (Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001). In this instance motivation strategies were summarised into four categories: regular communication within the organisation, especially by the top management; a conducive work environment; a compensation plan that is commensurate with successful achievements; and opportunities for further career advancement.

The increasing level of interest in employee engagement reflects the growing relevance of this topic - there has been a high focus in the field since the late 1990s. The UK based Confederation of British Industry stated that “securing high levels of employee engagement was the top workforce priority for UK businesses, ahead even of containing labour costs” (Oswick, 2015:2).

Although a popular topic, Oswick asserts that the concept is poorly defined with limited various definitions being provided by both academics and practitioners. In different instances the term ‘employee engagement’ is defined as a psychological state (cognitive, emotional and behavioural energy an employee gives towards the achievement of organisational goals), a performance construct and/or a trait. However, he believes that it has very real and material consequences for the field of HRM (Oswick, 2015).

Oswick cautions against assuming direct and extrinsic causal relationships, which imply that employee engagement can be directly managed. It would be more appropriate to view employee engagement as a largely intrinsic factor. As opposed to extrinsic factors, the intrinsic factors “answer people’s deep seated need for growth and achievement” (Herzberg, 2003: 3).

Oswick suggests that HRM efforts are perhaps ‘conditions of possibility’ where instead of trying to directly intervene, practitioners should look at ways to influence intervening variables that address employee needs. In other words, it would perhaps be more beneficial to create a conducive and enabling context within which employee engagement can thrive (Oswick, 2015).

## THE CHANGING NATURE OF WORK

Now that we have ushered in the digital economy, managers have to determine how to exist within the new world of work – balancing the old with the new. Managers, particularly those responsible for HRM, will need to ask themselves how they as traditional companies, using traditional practices, make the transition into digital economy companies (Lewis et al., 2004).

PWC conducted a survey of 10 000 members of the general population based in China, Germany, India, the UK and the US in addition to 480 HR professionals from across the world. In this exercise, respondents were asked to give their views on the future of work and what it means for them. Of those surveyed, 53% thought technological breakthroughs would transform the way people work over the next 5 – 10 years (PWC 2014).

As the level of technological advancement continues to increase at an ever more rapid pace, the organisational response both within and outside is critical in order to sustain optimal levels of resilience and viability. Changes to new models of production due to technological advancement, demographical shifts and the global economy are resulting in production being based on community, collaboration and self-organisation instead of the traditional hierarchy and control meaning a shift in our traditional concept of work (Tapscott & Williams, 2007). However, some organisations today are operating with an industrial age mindset, one that focuses on predictability, stability and compliance (Singh et al., 2012).

Technologies are also reshaping the workplace. A 'Future of work: Jobs and skills 2030' study explains how the organisational structure of business is becoming more flexible and networked leading to a new business ecosystem defined as 'network orchestrators' (Störmer, Patscha, Prendergast, Daheim, & Rhisiart, 2014). Here the skills and resources that businesses connect to become more important than the skills and resources they own. The study predicts that collaboration in value creation networks will be enabled by the virtualisation of business processes.

What does this mean for organisations? The study predicts that there will be major implications for the way we do business; in order to compete in tomorrow's market, the business community will have to take a long term view. With increased market volatility businesses will require more flexibility. Using big data, they will allocate required skills to tasks operating from a virtual platform. New HR and contractual mechanisms will have to be developed to manage performance. Issues of trust and transparency will need to be addressed whilst investments in keeping the virtual workforce skilled will need to be made. Organisations will be compelled to prepare for increasing diversity in the workforce both culturally and generationally, by supporting a greater range of flexible working arrangements. They will need to adapt their organisational values to create meaning and value to work (Störmer et al., 2014).

Engagement will have to be widely adopted as a business imperative and applied to the highly-skilled labour force who will want to work with greater autonomy. Work will be mainly project-based with a high turnover of jobs resulting in a reduced workforce and an increase in job sharing (Störmer et al, 2014).

In order to transfer financial risk to employees, zero hour contracts ("ZHCs") will be commonly used. ZHCs are a flexible form of employee contract where an individual is not guaranteed work and is therefore only paid for the actual hours worked (Brinkley, 2013). Employees will be forced to develop their own portfolios of

project-based assignments with a variety of employers. Personal agility and resilience will be required to this changing context as employees face the insecurity of unemployment (Störmer et al., 2014).

## THE MILLENNIALS: THE RISE OF A NEW POWER

In a shifting world where startups are turning traditional businesses on their heads there is a shift in the nature of power. Heimans and Timms term this 'new power'; it is open, participatory and peer driven. Using the agency of the crowd who informally opt-in, different models are being used to exercise this power (Heimans and Timms, 2014). Open source collaboration, increased transparency – particularly through the use of social media – encourage cooperation rather than competition. This 'new power' is changing the way millennials in particular are seeing themselves in relation to institutions, authorities and one another. Businesses need to understand the ways in which to influence and impact in this new era and change their own underlying model (Heimans and Timms, 2014).

The millennials are believed to be “catalysts for seismic change”. Also known as “digital natives”, the “net generation” or Generation Y, these digital employees have had an intimate and enduring interaction with digital technologies. In comparison to the preceding generations, they have distinctively different attitudes, qualifications, behaviours and expectations (Autry & Berge, 2011; Bannon et al., 2011; Strohmeier & Stefan, 2014; Tapscott, 2008)

Research by D’Amato and Herzfeldt found that this generation is less willing to stay within the same organisation as has been the case with preceding generations (D’Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008). They like to network and learn, preferring instant gratification and frequent rewards (Strohmeier & Stefan, 2014). “Creative, innovative, self-confident... and educationally minded” they like to collaborate in small groups sharing ideas. Easily bored with repetition, they have a strong ability to multi-task thriving on the fast-paced nature of change” (Autry & Berge, 2011).

Uncomfortable with rigid, siloed corporate structures, they seek a corporate culture that meets their needs. If their expectations are not being met they are quick to move on. Preferring to work in friendly environments with positive, respectful people, they like to be challenged and learn new knowledge and skills (Ferri-Reed, 2012; Rendell & Brown, 2011).

The requirement for business will be in motivating this generation taking advantage of their technological strengths, social networking capabilities whilst seeking work-family balance. In order to keep millennials engaged in the workplace, organisations will have to play to their own technological strengths, embracing social networking, helping them balance their work and family lives whilst celebrating their diversity. Technically savvy and more ethnically diverse than previous generations, the millennials are poised to become powerful drivers of economies as both employees and consumers (Bannon et al., 2011). They have

the following key millennial characteristics:

**Advanced technological skills.** Connected 24/7 they treat cell phones as an extension of themselves spending hours on social media. They expect frequent, open and honest communications within the organisation – preferably via social networks. They are comfortable sharing information and building relationships online and so organisations will have to capitalise on this ensuring they provide cutting edge technology in the workplace built on a strong technological platform.

**Attitudes towards work / life balance.** Millennials prefer to work regular, ad hoc hours meaning they like to work with flexibility. Adopting family-friendly work patterns they favour opportunities for growth and development over job security and they are less risk averse than their older colleagues. They want global experience, work challenges and learning opportunities preferring a casual working environment with less formal meetings and more informal collaborative spaces. Organisations therefore need to help in balancing workplace success providing an open working environment with opportunities for flexi- time.

**Socially responsible.** Millennials prefer to work with employers whose social responsibility values reflect their own.

**Diversity.** Millennials are the most racially tolerant generation; they appreciate diversity. Employers will need to hold a demonstrable respectful awareness of the diversity of different cultures and languages. It is therefore a requirement for organisational leadership to develop their intercultural communication skills (Bannon et al., 2011).

Successfully meeting the needs of these millennials will not only increase millennial engagement but will improve the overall morale and efficiency of the organisation.



**FIGURE 2:** Millennial engagement canvas



## A CANVAS FOR MILLENNIAL ENGAGEMENT: PRACTICES FOR CORE ENGAGEMENT

Given this general recognition of the changing world of work, what effective millennial engagement practices should organisations adopt to ensure their sustainability, and what practices should HR adopt in the context of a new world of work? This can be addressed by creating a millennial engagement canvas that weaves together the eight core practices identified from this research project, substantiated through the literature review. In order to bring in the voices from the millennials I consulted, each engagement practice begins with a poem that I have created from the actual words and thoughts expressed by them during focus group discussions that I hosted.

The eight millennial engagement practices are captured as a canvas set out in Figure 2. Their adoption is, I believe, key for organisational sustainability in the new world of work.

Each puzzle piece represents a core engagement practice. The more of these practices an organisation can adopt, the higher the level of engagement, resulting in increased levels of organisational sustainability. The power of the sum of the whole (i.e. the eight practices) is greater than its parts - this is where real impact will be felt.

This model can assist organisations in positioning themselves, identifying any missing pieces for which appropriate strategies can be developed to fill the engagement gaps. The eight core engagement practices are described in more detail in the sections that follow.

### CORE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE 1: GAMIFICATION OF THE WORKPLACE

#### ***The voices of the millennials***

*I was brought up playing video games*

*Levels, badges, leaderboards are how I prove my worth. Here, I'm fearless, I take risks*

*Knowing that a second life is just a click away Why not recreate this?*

*Work doesn't have to be dull Why not*

*Give me badges for my efforts Make gaming a part of work With me as your star player.*

Workplace gamification is the application of characteristics of computer games into a non- gaming environment (Perryer, Scott-Ladd, & Leighton, 2012). By adapting and applying game design principles to workplace processes, it is claimed the levels of employee engagement are increased motivating employees to work in a particular way (Oprescu, Jones, & Katsikitis, 2014).

“Gamification” of the workplace, or “enterprise gamification”, as it is known in the tech space, is a fast-growing business (Silverman, 2011). Whilst some organisations have used gaming for years in order to help them market their product and build brand loyalty, gaming is now being used to engage and motivate their employees. Gartner estimated that by 2014 almost 70% of large organisations will use gaming techniques for at least one business process: “the reason why gamification is so hot is that most people’s jobs are really freaking boring,’ says Gabe Zichermann, organizer of the Gamification Summit conference held...in New York” (Silverman, 2011).

Games allow people to take the type of risk that they may not take in real life, without the cost of failure. Distracting people from performing dull and mundane tasks, games give a sense of achievement once the rules have been mastered. As employees progress in the game, feedback is given on their performance. Positive feedback can be rewarded by badges, employee awards and trophies captured on leaderboards. These recognition tools acknowledge the desired behaviours, increasing the individual social capital of the participating employees (Perryer et al., 2012). Millennials have been brought up with computer games and are therefore the ideal generation to be motivated in this way as the integration of play into work is something that they would expect and appreciate. Achieving the goals of an organisation in an entertaining way is ideal (Oprescu et al., 2014).

Games are also an advanced form of interactive modelling thereby helping in the generation of alternative business solutions and scenario planning in this contemporary knowledge economy. In a risk-free, fun environment different options and ideas can be tested.

Whilst gaming may not suit all learning and should still be combined with other learning strategies (Perryer et al, 2012). Although there are clear benefits, engaging in game playing may run the risk of disassociation which can leading to other problems. Research into gamification is still in the early stages. How best it can be used to engage employees to drive positive behavioural change is still being refined but be warned: “adding gamification to the workplace drives performance but it doesn’t make up for bad management. If you are a bad manager, gamification won’t help you’ says Kris Duggan, chief executive of game-maker Badgeville” (Silverman, 2011).

The focus groups that I met with highlighted how this generation, who grew up playing video games, like

to combine work with fun. They believe that the gamification of work practices is a great way to create a sense of fun and friendly competition turning the completion of all sorts of processes into appealing and interesting ones. Frustrated by seemingly illogical processes they long to change things.

*"There's so much red-tape, internal processes are not ideal on top of already complicated external red-tape."  
(Participant, FG grey)*

Some of the employees that I talked to spoke of how their organisation was applying gaming principles as a way of recognising those employees who were demonstrably living the company values. Badges are awarded by their peers in recognition of model behaviour.

*"When I get a badge I wear it! It's a conversation starter – people ask me 'how did you get that?'" (Participant, FG purple)*

Of the organisations interviewed, five out of eleven (or 45%) are applying simple gaming principles in the work environment as a fun, risk-free engagement strategy. Aware of the value of gaming, they cautiously apply these principles in non-knowledge work areas.

*"We use gaming tactics to engage our call centre staff – we have daily prizes and McDonald's gift vouchers valued between R50 – R100." (Interviewee, organisation D).*

Organisation E was in the process of approaching management to consider applying gaming principles within a middle/senior management knowledge worker environment:

*"We're considering applying gaming principles...awarding points for 'sharing info', 'liking info' and 'forwarding info' onto others creating a sense of competition and fun between countries and across sectors." (Interviewee, organisation E)*

Gamification of the workplace is the first preferred millennial engagement practice.

## CORE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE 2: CULTURE

### *The voices of the millennials*

*Less politics, more fun!*

*Let me connect emotionally to your ways of being. Trust me. Teach me.*

*Let's celebrate together and Console each other.*

*Don't flirt with me when you don't mean it Offering gifts I'll be punished for accepting Wolves in sheep's clothing.*

*Pull the wool over my eyes And*

*I. Will. Leave.*

Deloitte's latest annual survey of 3300 executives in 106 countries notes that, for the first time, culture was defined as the most important organisational issue; more so than leadership, workforce capability or performance management (Colvin, 2015). Employers are waking up to the fact that "they have no clue (as to) where to begin in creating the culture they need" (Colvin, 2015: 110).

There are several definitions of culture applicable to business environments. Guiso, Sapienza and Zingales identify culture as being an unspoken means of organisational communication amongst employees; "a set of norms and values that are widely shared and strongly held throughout the organisation" (Guiso et al., 2014: 4). Google is often given as an example of an organisation with a strong culture. A former senior executive says that Google's cultural trademarks are illustrative of its values. It is all about creativity and not standardisation, providing "30 different kinds of cereal in the office and ever-changing cubicle configurations" (Raphael, 2003: 51). The organisational culture at Google is intended to create a sense of "teamwork and togetherness" (Vise, 2007).

Culture becomes particularly relevant when employees face choices that are not governed by regulation. This is when organisational values become important. Values represent an organisation's attitude and assist in establishing organisational norms. They are often interrelated, governing the "thinking-feeling-behaviour pattern" of an individual (Padaki, 2000: 422). Organisational values make it clear to all employees the conduct and behaviour expected.

Culture and values are clearly important to millennials. One focus group told me that 'work culture' is non-negotiable and if they were not in alignment with this then they would leave. The millennials were adamant that they did not want to work in an environment filled with:

*"...political game playing and poisonous mud-slinging" (Participant, FG purple)*

A rich, vibrant work culture where new ideas are welcomed and encouraged was their preference. Some millennials complained of the existence of an underlying 'old boys' culture that silently stifled creativity and trust. They felt that their organisation was paying lip service to the ideals of the 'right' corporate culture by, for example, providing reflective spaces where staff could retreat. The millennials were openly suspicious of this gesture saying that they felt that if they did make use of these facilities they would be frowned upon. As a result, these relaxation zones are not used.

*"Our culture is very destructive...There are unspoken rules with career limiting consequences." (Participant, FG grey)*

Conversely, for organisation D millennial engagement was all about culture – "it's important to apply layers of happiness" the CEO remarked.

Those organisations that I questioned that are working in a 'start-up' environment take their lead from companies like Netflix whose cultural practices are aptly named "Freedom and Responsibility." Values are turned into practical behaviours making them easily recognisable and measurable. Those who do not subscribe to this culture are quick to leave.

*"The organisation is very vocal about the values, they truly live them, they are not just a nice to have." (Participant, FG purple)*

Organisation C is extremely proud of the culture they have cultivated feeling that it has managed to create the ideal millennial environment.

*"Our culture is very 'millennial'...(we have a) flat structure, (allowing) freedom to create one's own role, freedom to identify own projects, we don't have offices... individuals are responsible for their own performance." (Interviewee, organisation C)*

Connection to the organisational culture is the second key engagement practice.

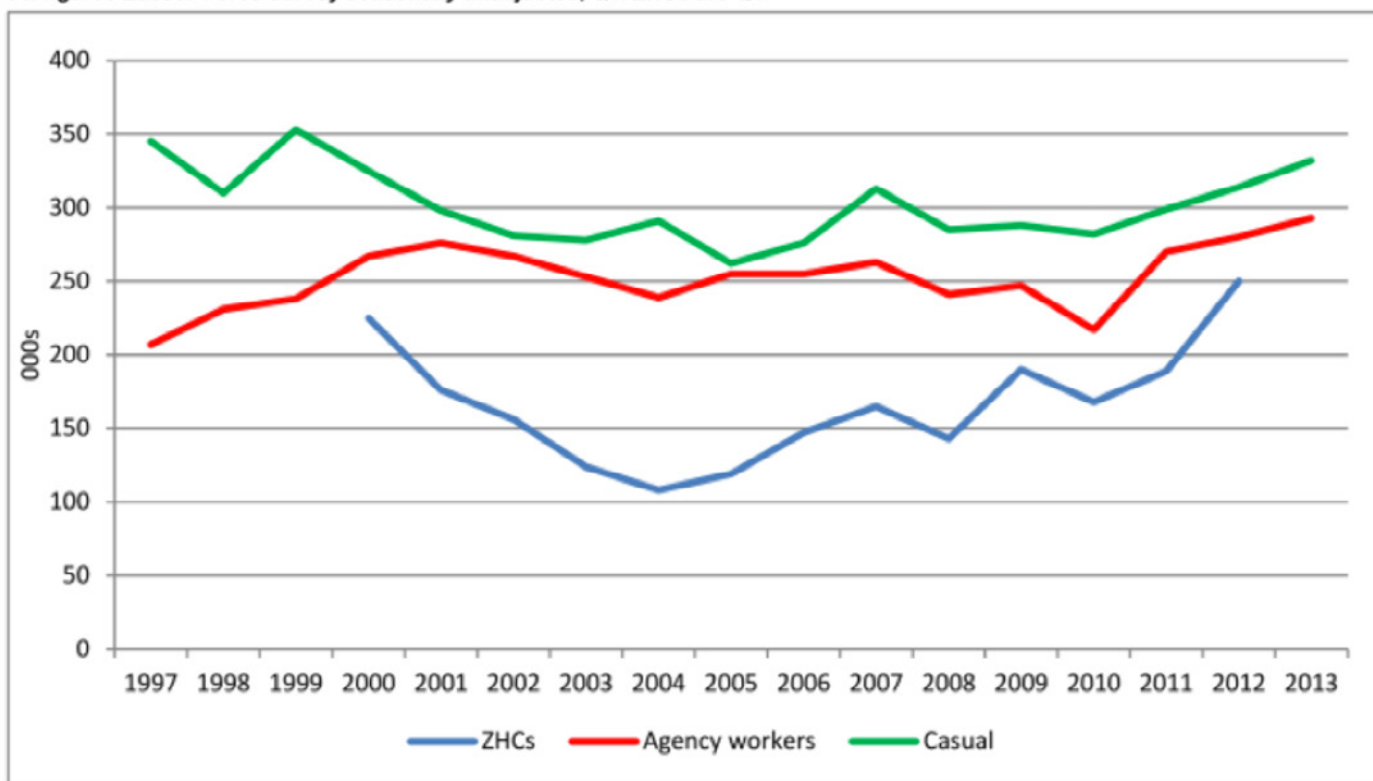
## **CORE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE 3: PROJECT-BASED WORKING IN THE GIG ECONOMY**

### ***The voices of the millennials***

*Why do you like to measure the wrong things? Input, not output?*

*Time, not task?*

All figures Labour Force Survey seasonally unadjusted, Q1. ZHCs are Q4.



**FIGURE 3:** The different forms of flexible working practice. Source: (Brinkley, 2013)

*Presence, not productivity? It just doesn't make sense.*

The convergence of technology and changing workforce has redefined the nature of work and as such organisations have begun to individualise employment practices adding flexibility to the once rigid 'one-size-fits-all' HR strategies. Traditional forms of employment contracts may no longer be effective ways in forming and building knowledge worker loyalty (Horwitz et al., 2003). "One size fits one" (Mitchell et al., 2001: 103).

High levels of competition in the UK job market allows employers to take advantage by structuring different employment conditions to meet their own specific needs as the balance of power shifts (Störmer et al., 2014). As a result, people are under pressure to accept contracts that benefit the employer more than they do the worker. Zero Hours Contracts (ZHCs) are an example of this form of contracting.

The employee has to make him/herself available to the employer as and when they are required. Other forms of flexible working practices include part-time work, flexitime and job-sharing. However, ZHCs have attracted the most press with some Members of the UK Parliament calling for them to be banned.

The graph in Figure 3 shows the rise in the use of ZHCs. Whilst ZHCs (which affected 1% of the workforce in the UK in 2013) account for a large share of the new job market, they are viewed by some as being the reason for low levels of unemployment, but by others as an exploitative form of contract (Brinkley, 2013). When properly used ZHCs are attractive in that they allow for individual work flexibility and freedom of choice of when and where they work. For the employer this form of flexibility allows for greater management of the size of their workforce. Some of the millennials that I spoke with welcomed this form of engagement giving them the freedom to work for whomever they want and when they want.

*“Zero-hour contracting is a great idea. It gives me the flexibility to work for multiple contractors.” (Participant, FG blue)*

As a form of contracting - only being paid for those hours actually worked - others that I consulted resented the fact that the power lay in the hands of the employers:

*“Zero-hour contracting isn’t a good idea when exclusivity is imposed as it doesn’t allow for flexibility – all the power then rests with the organisation.” (Participant, FG blue)*

The challenge for organisations wanting to use ZHCs is one of employee loyalty, commitment and engagement. Evidence suggests that those organisations with high levels of employee engagement perform better than those where there is limited loyalty and commitment (Brinkley, 2013).

*“I want to work in the ‘gig economy’ not the salary economy.” (Participant, FG grey)*

The first time I heard this term was in a focus group discussion. On researching the term I found a New York Times article claiming the rise of a new tribe of predominantly millennials who are cultivating a new way of work and life (Swarns, 2014). Following the slow economic recovery of the 2007 recession a group of 30-somethings were piecing together part-time work due to the scarcity of full-time positions. Whilst an exciting and exhilarating way to live particularly for those who have a ‘fall-back’, the article suggests the stress of uncertainty can be too much for others.

*“I want to work on attractive and interesting projects so that I have a sense of enjoyment and a sense of achievement - I want to love what I do.” (Participant, FG pink)*

Today, more and more people are choosing to make a living working ‘gigs’ rather than entering into fulltime employment. For the optimists it presents an opportunity for entrepreneurship and innovation. For the pessimists, it predicts a future of disenfranchised workers hustling for their next ‘gig’ (Sundararajan, 2015).

*“As long as I get stuff done in my own time but meet the deadline – that what’s important, its outcomes based.” (Participant, FG purple)*

Witnessing an increase in small-scale entrepreneurship, today's digitally enabled 'gig economy' is also allowing for and creating new institutional forms, including for example, the peer-to-peer platforms of Uber and AirBnB (Sundararajan, 2015). Allowing for flexible working, individuals do not have to commit to a full day's work – it can be integrated into their personal lives. There is a sense of empowerment people feel about being their own boss and being able to have a better work-life balance. I registered this first-hand in one of the focus group discussions:

*"You can design your work life – whatever works for you. Only you know when you are most productive."  
(Participant, FG purple)*

Of course the downside to the 'gig economy' is the lack the regular work, income and organisational benefits. The 'gig economy' is an example of the mainstreaming of the entertainment economy, a concept consistent with the idea of gamification. The entertainment industry – music, television and film - has always been piecework operating as the 'gig economy'. A growing trend amongst those preferring not to work the traditional 9-5; the younger workforce like a musician want to work on projects or 'gigs' with clear objectives, timeframes and outcomes. How do organisations feel about this shift?

Those organisations that I interviewed recognised the millennials desire for freedom to choose when and how to work but they exercise caution:

*"...more responsibility without experience would be reckless" (Interviewee, organisation A)*

They were grappling with the concept of the democratisation of time.

*"The biggest challenge for business is to determine what the measurable would need to be to allow this kind of freedom." (Interviewee, organisation K)*

Whilst organisations figure out how to practically apply this idea, millennials are insistent on its practice. 'Gig economy' practice is the third key engagement driver.

## **CORE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE 4: TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

### ***The voices of the millennials***

*Out with charisma, in with authenticity.*

*Transparent, democratic leadership is what we want. Treat us with respect.*

*Trust me, don't micro manage me. Set me up for success and*

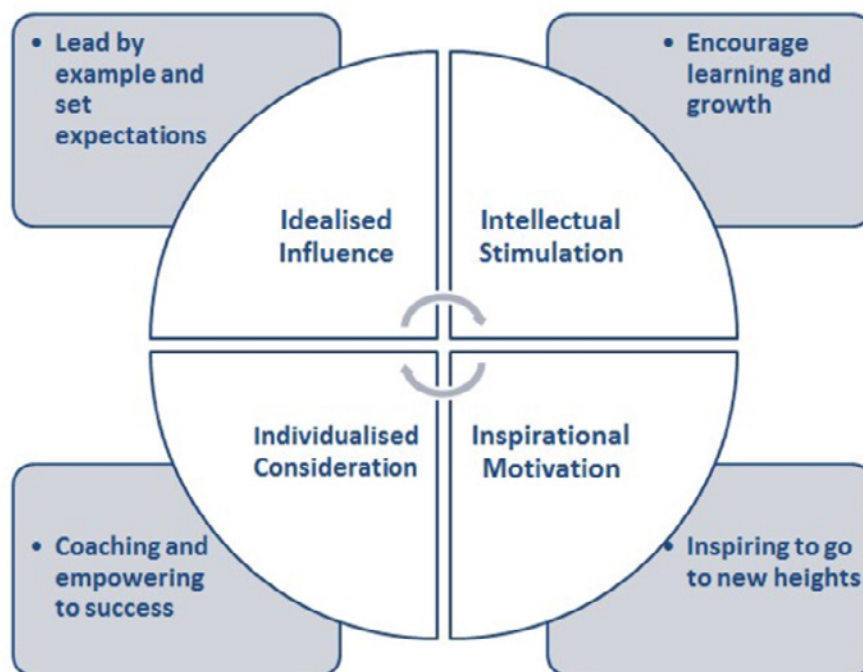
*I will pursue excellence.*



Leadership style of previous generations do not apply to the millennials (Holt, 2012). The tools needed to motivate the millennial worker are different to those used to motivate the baby boomers. Unfortunately employers are not meeting the varying expectations of the new workforce. Feeling threatened by the millennials technical knowhow, employers are discounting the millennials' ideas for lack of experience (Arsenault , 2004). However, as one interviewee pointed out to me:

*"...all generations can learn from each other and should treat each other with respect." (Participant, FG blue)*

Millennials do not necessarily want to be leaders themselves - they prefer great role models who lead with honesty and integrity (Raines, 2003). With their propensity to multi-task and work collaboratively in teams, millennials would respond well to transformational leadership (Holt, 2012). They are likely to have a more positive response to this style of management than one of a domineering, micromanaging boss. Some organisations th



**FIGURE 4:** The four "I's" of transformational leadership (from Holt 2012)

*"... (our) organisational leadership has a high EQ (i.e. emotional intelligence) – we have a very calm and transparent learning environment." (Participant, FG purple)*

Holt refers to the four "I's" of transformational leadership as the ideal form of leadership for this generation (Figure 4). These are:

- Idealised influence. Motivating employees to do more through raising the consciousness of goals and values and going beyond followers' sense of self interest.

- Inspirational motivation. Communicating the high expectations of those they manage reinforcing respect and acknowledging growth and quality work.
- Intellectual stimulation. Encouraging innovation, challenging their followers to creatively engage in problem solving, in addition to providing a stimulating work environment that encourages reflection and constructive feedback adding to the creation of a collaboration work dynamic.
- Individualised attention. Providing one-on-one support, coaching and mentoring - the core of transformational leadership (Holt 2012).

In contrast to transformational leadership, transactional leadership is thought to be less effective (Bass, 1990). Transactional leadership is described as a passive management-by-exception exercise where intervention is made only when certain standards are not being met. It is believed that employees under transactional leadership exert little effort. This is in contrast to their response to transformational leadership. Not only do transformational leaders have better relationships with their employees, they make more of a contribution to the organisation than those who are only transactional.

Creating challenges and learning opportunities further motivates this generation who are not looking to climb the corporate ladder but rather wish to be stimulated and to work collaboratively. Work needs to be clearly defined and deadline driven, interesting and varied with frequent concise feedback being given. These complex, rapidly changing and uncertain times require a great deal of organisational agility. They require a different kind of leader, one who can inspire their employees to enthusiastically participate in a team to achieve the shared organisational goals. A transformational leader, through meeting the emotional needs of their employees, inspiring them and intellectually stimulating them, achieves these results (Bass, 1990). These leaders create an environment of collective loyalty that would appeal to the millennial workforce who wants to know their boss cares, appreciates and respects them.

Over half the organisations that I met in both Cape Town and London acknowledged that their managers were struggling to lead and engage their younger employees. They felt their leadership needed time to adjust to the nuances of millennial engagement. The HR practitioners that I spoke with recognised that there is a direct correlation between the leadership style and the level of staff retention. No longer mesmerised by the charismatic style of leadership of the recent past, millennials want to be motivated, inspired, included and stimulated with transformational leadership driving them towards a clear collective purpose.

The millennial leadership message is clear.

*"I would like access to the... senior people in the organisation." (Participant, FG pink)*

Millennials want to be respected and "...engaged (with) more authentically, no PR spin!" (Interviewee, organisation B). Communication needs to flow freely from the top within an environment of trust. They prefer to be "talked to and not told what to do" (Interviewee, organisation K).

*"Communication from the top doesn't flow down... On the surface things look good, but underneath it's an 'old boys' club.'" (Participant, FG grey)*

Distributive leadership is therefore the fourth preferred engagement practice.

## CORE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE 5: 'INCENTIVES 2.0' AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

### ***The voices of the millennials***

*Challenge me! I long to be motivated. My success means your success.*

*A simple exchange.*

*If I stagnate, don't grow or get bored. I'll find another watering hole.*

Job-related learning and the provision of development opportunities was found to be a key antecedent in millennials' willingness to stay (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008). Globalization and rapid technological advancement have led this generation to be more comfortable with change – they thrive in more challenging and demanding work environments (Singh et al, 2012). They want an empowering workplace that allows them to experiment and innovate; a place where they are able to freely voice their opinions and be heard. A learning organisation is described as one that is able to change people's behaviour and mindset in response to their experience (Mittleton-Kelly, 1999). Promoting self-organisation, employees take advantage of the distributed intelligence within the organisation and fully engage with their internal stakeholders bringing sustainable thinking into the culture of the organisation. Without manager intervention they come together to explore new ideas – an essential part of the process of innovation. These intricate networks are

sustained through continuous communication and feedback.

*"Where I work is not important, as long as I am learning". (Participant, FG grey)*

Confident, hopeful and goal achieving orientated, millennials are optimistic yet practical expecting a workplace that is collaborative, fun, creative and challenging. They want to be assigned to projects from which new things can be learnt. Looking for growth development, they want to learn new knowledge and skills:

*"All I want is a couple of things - a decent wage, not necessarily exorbitant, and to be inspired, challenged and entertained." (Participant, FG blue)*

A psychological contract - a form of unwritten contract – consists of an individual's beliefs about the relationship between themselves and their organisation (Rousseau, 1989). It is an important framework for understanding career expectations and is defined as an individual's employment beliefs including the returns from future employers that they can expect to receive in exchange for individual work effort.

Millennials want a psychological contract where work and personal goals are better balanced (de Hauw & de Vos, 2010). Attaching more importance to freedom related values, they have high expectations in relation to training and mentoring, social connections and career advancement. Challenging jobs yielding learning opportunities allow millennials to continuously develop new skills that make them attractive to the market place. As their expectations for job security are low, they proactively want to enhance their own employability.

Not meeting these expectations will have a seriously detrimental effect on an organisation. As such organisations are encouraged to find creative and inexpensive ways to provide meaningful work with plenty of learning opportunities for career development.

The millennials are challenge oriented. Traditional corporate hierarchy and career ladder- climbing are not inspiring. Preferring to be constantly challenged with opportunities for learning and growth they are willing to leave if they feel they are stagnating.

Whilst some of the HR practitioners that I questioned are struggling to balance personal employee growth with organisational growth, others are trying to reproduce a 'start-up' environment by providing a constant stream of mentally stimulating challenges.

*"In a big company you feel like you're losing your soul.... The small company setup is 'awesome' – get to learn effectively." (Participant, FG grey)*

Capturing their employees' imagination, organisations proactively target the recruitment of millennials that are looking for experience and growth, confident that this will benefit both the organisation and the individual.

*"I want to be successful both personally and for the company." (Participant, FG blue)*

Providing a new form of incentive – one based on offering opportunities for growth rather than promotions and bonuses, is key engagement practice number five.

## **CORE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE 6: USE OF COLLABORATIVE TRIBES**

### ***The voices of the millennials***

*Hierarchies are a military nightmare.*

*We work better in multi-functional, collaborative teams. Where expertise is shared*

*And the silos are broken down.*

*We learn from each other. Respectfully.*

*This way*

*We work hard and play hard.*

Millennials experience organisations as hierarchical, top-down and conformity-driven (Singh, 2012). Suffocating creative potential, such organisations are seen to be insensitive to people development. Given this, the answer to attracting and holding on to the best talent is through fostering strong and rewarding relationships among employees (Colvin, 2015).

For the millennials, working within a collaborative environment is essential. And allowance should be made for a reasonable level of autonomy and self-direction as healthy for this level of workforce (Holt, 2012).

Gratton describes “hot spots” as those extraordinary moments of intense energy when people, both inside and outside of an organisation, work together in ways that are exceptionally creative and collaborative, when ideas become contagious allowing for new possibilities to arise. When this energy arises teams are able to move themselves to achieve goals they never thought possible. Hot spots are extraordinary opportunities for the creation of social capital where friendships and relationships are forged and where people are fully and joyfully engaged (Gratton, 2007).

*A second relevant concept is “holacracy”: “...a new way of running an organization that removes power from a management hierarchy and distributes it across clear roles, which can then be executed autonomously, without a micromanaging boss.” (<http://www.holacracy.org/>).*

Holacracy is a governance framework, replacing the top-down hierarchical approach. It is a natural hierarchy that consists of self-organising teams that emerge over time bringing agility to an organisation. The structure of the organisation is said to emerge naturally by energising operating and governance tensions experienced by the organisation in order to satisfy the organisational purpose (van de Kamp, 2014).

A holacratic organisation consists of multiple self-organizing circles. It recognises that planning does not always deliver the intended results and that decision-making is shared throughout the organisation with information freely flowing through all levels of the business. Here there are no job or management titles - employees are included in the changing environment with clearly distributed authority (van de Kamp, 2014). The jury is still out on how effective holacracy is, particularly at the lower levels of an organisation where people may not yet be proficient in self-organising. Whilst empirical evidence of the successful application of this approach is still scarce the holacracy model is increasingly being adopted by organisations.

The focus group sessions hosted highlighted how millennials (a social generation) are more inclined to work collaboratively than individually. In a networked organisation as opposed to a hierarchical, siloed one they feel they can achieve more.

*“The people here are engaging and keep me here – we work hard and play hard.” (Participant, FG purple)*

Siloed organisations where communication is erratic and infrequent adds to millennials’ levels of frustration. Craving transparency they want freedom to voice their own opinions and hear the views of others.

*"The levels of communication and translation between different units - technical and other - is a real challenge!"  
(Participant, FG green)*

Organisations that I consulted were aware of the new generation need to constantly connect, driving a new form of social activism. Preferring to work collaboratively across functions millennials raise a level of fear of loss of control. The organisations are aware that:

*"..if staff are not stimulated, they will grow restless and leave. (Interviewee, organisation F)*

Organisations are also realising the benefits of group engagement:

*"...it is better to engage with them as a group, not 1-on-1, this builds better loyalty and buy-in." (Interviewee, organisation B)*

With a move to job roles rather than job descriptions and a desire for more project-based working, this form of organising and work is incredibly appealing to the millennials and is preferred engagement practice number six.

## **CORE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE 7: THE WORKSPACE OF THE FUTURE**

### ***The voices of the millennials***

*Google has confused you.*

*We don't want mini-malls within the office walls. Attempting to keep us caged in dimly lit buildings. In the hope that we'd work harder.*

*Trendy baristas and healthy chefs appeal to us. Provide bright, comfy spaces for us to mingle. High tech equipment with fit personal trainers. That's more appealing.*

*But before all of that.*

*Fix the processes. Use technology.*

*If it ain't broke, and it's from 1995, please fix it.*

*We don't need a post office. Just simple processes*

*That work.*

There is a mismatch between what the millennials desire and what is currently being provided. Organisations are responding to low priority expectations including physical ambience and are not focusing on higher expectations including entrepreneurial innovation. Not focusing on these high priority elements will hinder the millennials' commitment to an organisation (Singh et al, 2012).

D'Amato and Herzfeldt suggest generation specific HR strategies should be applied to manage retention – balancing offering an attractive environment for the millennials whilst retaining the valuable experience, skill and knowledge of the older generation (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008).

Millennials prefer workspaces that infuse social networking, casual work environments and technology, and employers who can meet these requirements are the most attractive (Bannon et al., 2011). Social networking allows millennials to use their natural engagement behaviours in the workplace. Whilst some organisations initially viewed social networking in business a waste of company time, there is an increase in appreciation of the business advantages of social networking practices. There is a marked growth in the adoption of enterprise wide social networking – particularly as the millennials' presence in organisations continues to expand (Bannon et al., 2011).

The workspace of the future combines spaces for social networking, casual work environments and appropriate, up-to-date technology, allowing millennials to work from anywhere at any time in multiple locations. Frustrated with industrial age work practices, technologically advanced work processes are a non-negotiable for the millennials interviewed - the absence of which are a simple reason to leave.

*"Honestly, it's so frustrating - we have 1995 work practices!" (Participant, FG grey)*

Some organisations that I talked to seem to miss the point and are heavily invested in providing other physical enhancements. One millennial commenting on physical infrastructure provided by some employers said:

*"...when a business has its own hairdresser, it's too big!" (Participant, FG grey)*

Alarming, one organisation that I met with felt that investing in advanced technology for their staff was too pricey.

*"We are very behind with our technology...Management feel the investment to catch up will simply be too costly so we focus on our customers instead." (Interviewee, organisation I)*

For one organisation interviewed it was an organisational value that demanded that employees "be rude to poor process" (organisation J).

Technology companies are at the forefront of providing millennials with appealing future workspace environments. Google, Facebook and Zappos are well known examples of environments that incorporate open workspaces balanced with appropriate cutting-edge technologies making the workspace of the future the seventh key engagement practice.



## CORE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE 8: PURPOSEFUL BUSINESS

### *Voices of the millennials*

*Be more than the bottom line.*

*Purposeful, social impact is something we look for. For some of us it's more important than salary.*

*I need to believe in you. And your product.*

*When you have real values.*

*When you truly live and breathe them. Then I will follow you.*

Work, particularly amongst the younger generation, seems to be losing its importance as a human activity. Millennials tend to attribute less importance to the security and economic benefits of work than they do to “values such as personal development, self-fulfilment, the family, social relationships, creativity and aesthetics or the spiritual quest” (Bindé, 2005).

As private enterprises are replaced by workerless factories, front and back office functions are being automated, knowledge workers are being replaced by analytics and labour costs are declining - how will people now define their useful life? Organisations across the world are beginning to understand that if they are to attract and retain employees, particularly millennial employees in this new world of work, they need a clear and meaningful purpose (PWC, 2014).

Studies reveal that millennials want to do good and consider their own civil engagement as one of their highest priorities (Holt et al., 2012). Organisational values are therefore increasingly important, particularly to this generation. Less focused on money, millennials value meaningful work and are looking for socially responsible organisations that provide personal fulfilment on the job (de Hauw & de Vos, 2010). Millennials have the desire to work collaboratively in solving societal issues and therefore the key to tapping into their potential lies in engaging them in social entrepreneurship (Holt et al., 2012).

As more people want to realise their personal values in a meaningful way in the workplace individuals are carefully selecting employers based on their value priorities forcing companies to adapt their corporate values and policies (Störmer et al., 2014). As the values of the workforce change, HR policies need to adapt and adhere to different principles in order to engage this new workforce (Jerome, Scales, Whithem, & Quain, 2014).

*“The organisation is very vocal about their values, they truly live them, they are not just a nice to have.” (Participant, FG purple)*

This engagement practice was repeatedly mentioned by the millennials I interviewed. They clearly preferred to and in some instances were very proud of working for an organisation with a social conscious. One where they believed that their organisation was positively impacting on society and where they as a result were contributing to a much larger social cause. True impactful business was a label they were happy to attach to the brand.

*"I want what I do to be purposeful and impactful (Participant, FG pink)*

Interestingly, only one organisation interviewed mentioned the importance of social purpose:  
*"Career is not important to millennials, social engagement is...They have a high sense of fairness and responsibility."(Interviewee, organisation G)*

Other organisations I spoke with were notably silent on the matter. The final and eighth core engagement practice as expressed by the millennials is purposeful business.

## REFLECTIONS: AND A CONVERSATION BETWEEN GENERATIONS

The first time I heard the phrase "humans first" was in one of the millennial focus groups that I held in Cape Town; I was struck by how simply and poignantly this captured the essence of engagement. This final section begins by recapping on the original research goals and reflecting on whether, and how far, they have been achieved. I then go on to reflect on some questions this research has uncovered but which remain unanswered.

The millennial engagement model developed here adds to existing theory and further brings the theory up-to-date, adding practices that take into account technological advancement including principles of gamification, the 'gig economy' and future workspaces. It also incorporates our human evolution as we have become more socially conscious human beings expressed by an increased interest in living organisational culture through values and applying distributive leadership principles. All this whilst maintaining and reinforcing the old ideas that theorists including Herzberg had proposed that stress the importance of providing motivating factors including opportunities for growth.

In less than five years 50% of the workforce will consist of millennials (Rendell & Brown, 2011). Desperate to gain the popularity of this knowledge workforce, organisations know that engagement with this group

of employees is critical. Where employers were once in control of the physical assets of the company, it was these assets that created their organisational value. Now with a workforce that consists of knowledge workers, organisational value lives in the minds of employees. These knowledge workers, as they are known, create value for the company through their mental capabilities and experience. Understanding what drives and motivates them is key for businesses' survival.

As the millennial generation enters the workforce in increasing numbers organisations need to be able to attract, engage and retain these workers. My research has shown that it is simply not as easy as swapping out a few ideas for others. Understanding and implementing new and innovative millennial engagement practices is one of today's critical business imperatives.

The theory developed culminates in a set of eight core practices. However, I am left with one unanswered question...is this theory really only relevant to the millennials?

## TALKING BETWEEN GENERATIONS

Throughout the process of completing this dissertation I have been conscious of my own internal voice that has stood patiently in the wings watching this drama unfold. I am not one of the starring characters of this play. The real leading characters are the subjects of the interviews and the participants of the focus groups – the millennials. Their props are represented by various existing and desired engagement practices and each scene is set against the backdrop of different office spaces across Cape Town and London, each with its own particular feel reflected in the colours that I assigned to the name of each focus group.

As I watched from backstage my own non-millennial internal voice grew increasingly louder. The deeper I got into understanding the subject matter the more questions, ideas and thoughts I had of my own preferred engagement practices. I began to be aware of a growing sense of jealousy of these actors who are centre stage – these millennials.

This new workforce who are so clear about what they want and demand change and are quick to leave when they are not happy. They have a different relationship with authority and with how the world of work should be. I have been humbled by their maturity and their sense of freedom. The millennials' quest for equality speaks to a clarity of purpose, a sense of fairness and mutual respect. I imagine what kind of leaders they themselves will be.

As I listened I was acutely reminded how I lacked many of these qualities of character at their age. My own experience of work stands in such sharp contrast to theirs. At their age in my career I was an articled accountant at an international accounting firm working as a junior auditor whilst studying for my professional exams. For me work was simply a continuation of school. My senior manager who led the audit

group that I had been allocated to was my 'headmaster' and his senior management team my 'teachers'. I strictly followed the rules and worked within the law for fear of either receiving some form of detention by being allocated a difficult client, or worse still by being expelled due to poor performance, exam failure or any other organisational reason.

I would arrive at work promptly at 9am appropriately dressed in the unspoken uniform of dark suits and conservative dresses. Working the required hours and not daring to deviate or question; I only took sick leave if I thought I was genuinely dying.

The annual performance appraisal process was comparable to the dreaded yearly school report. If positive it would translate into a healthy bonus and promotion but if negative then expulsion was a real possibility. The whole appraisal process was either an uplifting or a humiliating experience as you sat with the 'headmaster' who painstakingly went through your marks for effort and attainment. Each manager you had worked with that year having provided written input into your performance.

I have one vivid memory of this awful process where I burst into tears when one of my managers had in my view insensitively reported that despite my work being flawless, the real problem was that I laughed too loudly and this laughter carried across the open-plan office thereby disturbing the rest of team. My mark from him was low. My 'headmaster', suitably embarrassed from having to be the bearer of such bad news rushed through the rest of the review as I sat sniffing and red eyed.

But this group of young people – the millennials - are different. They play by a different set of rules. I feel a sense of envy for their boldness of opinion as well as their questioning attitude towards policies and processes that seemingly do not make any sense. They are simply "rude to poor process" as I was told by an interviewee of organisation J.

Increasingly I felt a close connection and alignment to the ideas presented. These ideas appealed to me as a non-millennial. As time went on I began to question whether the work preferences of millennials would appeal to non-millennials in the way that they were to me. What if I was to test the eight practices with non-millennials – how would the Generation X and baby boomers respond to the preferred millennial engagement practices that millennials so fervently believe in? Would they like me prefer to work with some of the engagement practices or was this simply a millennial thing?

Curiosity got the better of me and so I quickly set the scene for a new set of characters and began to orchestrate a conversation between the generations being the traditional baby boomers and Generation X.

Would they, if presented with the practices, opt for any them? Is engagement within the new way of work really about age or is it about something else?

Given the time constraints the most efficient way of testing this hypothesis was through a survey. I therefore created a short questionnaire for non-millennials asking them 10 questions, two biographical and the remaining eight based on key attributes of the eight core millennial engagement practices.

I circulated this survey to 40 people and received 35 replies, which represents an 87.5% response rate. Of the responses, 13 were from baby boomers born between 1946 and 1961 and 22 were from Generation X's born between 1962 and 1979 (Cennamo & Gardner, 2011).

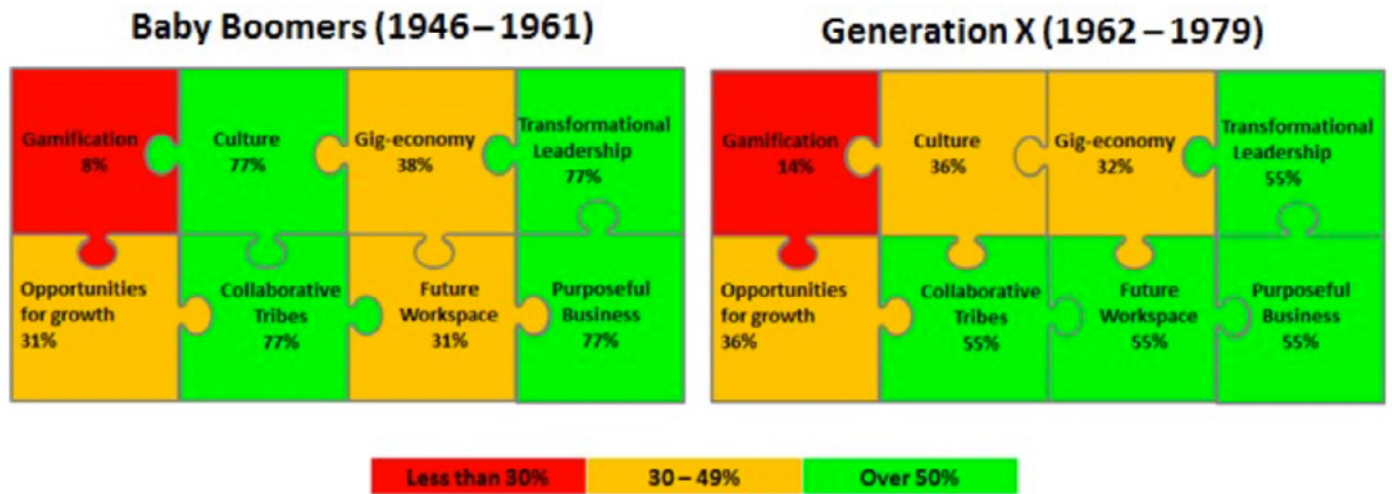
ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE	SURVEY QUESTION	GENERATION X RESPONSE	BABY BOOMER RESPONSE
GAMIFICATION OF THE WORKPLACE	<i>How would you like your performance to be measured?</i>		
	Badges, leaderboards, trophies	14%	8%
	Key performance indicators	86%	92%
A CULTURE LIVED THROUGH VALUES	<i>What is your preferred way of connecting with your organisation?</i>		
	Organisational culture and values	36%	77%
	Clear vision and mission	64%	23%
PROJECT-BASED WORKING - THE 'GIG ECONOMY'	<i>What is your preferred style of working?</i>		
	Short term temporary projects	32%	38%
	Permanent job	68%	62%
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP	<i>What do you think is the most important leadership characteristic?</i>		
	Democratic	55%	77%
	Charismatic	45%	23%

ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE	SURVEY QUESTION	GENERATION X RESPONSE	BABY BOOMER RESPONSE
INCENTIVES 2.0: OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH	<i>What form of incentive most appeals to you?</i>		
	A learning opportunity on a challenging projects	36%	31%
	A monetary bonus	64%	69%
USE OF COLLABORATIVE TRIBES	<i>What is your preferred organisational model?</i>		
	Self-organising environment	55%	77%
	Clear organisational structure	45%	23%
WORKSPACE OF THE FUTURE	<i>What is your preferred way to work?</i>		
	Virtual workspace	55%	31%
	Physical workspace	45%	69%
WORKSPACE OF THE FUTURE	<i>What is your preferred way to work?</i>		
	Virtual workspace	55%	31%
	Physical workspace	45%	69%

**TABLE 11:** Summary of the non-millennial survey

A summary of the questions posed and responses received is detailed in Table 11. The percentages in bold represent the preferred response of each generational category.

The 13 baby boomers who responded to the survey closely identified with four of the eight engagement practices; 77% of the baby boomers preferred to connect to an organisation through culture and values rather than through a clear vision and mission. Preferring a collaborative style of self-organising with a democratic style of leadership they felt it more important for an organisation to achieve a social rather than



**FIGURE 5:** Baby Boomer and Generation X preferred engagement practices

financial impact.

Whilst the majority of this generation preferred having a traditional permanent job operating from a physical location, just over a third of them preferred virtual, project based work and sought learning opportunities on challenging projects over receiving financial bonuses. With an understandably low response to gamification of the workplace, baby boomers preferred key performance indicators as a measure of performance.

Of the 22 Generation X individuals that responded to the survey, 55% preferred working collaboratively and virtually. Purposeful business led by a democratic leader outweighed the traditional charismatic style of leadership, which was so dominant in the 1990s. Whilst just under two-thirds of those interviewed preferred a permanent job and financial bonuses over learning opportunities, this generation's interest in gamifying the work environment whilst still low at 14% was almost double that of the baby boomers. The baby boomer and Generation X puzzles of engagement are summarised in Figure 5.

Apart from the gamification of the work environment, the survey responses show that millennial engagement practices are clearly not confined to one segment of the workforce population. A significant proportion of the other generations long to work in the way the millennials have and continue to articulate.

Preferring this non-regimented style of working so typically found within their own working careers, older generation workers look back in horror at what they had to endure.

This additional data suggests that organisations who do not seriously adopt these preferred work engagement practices face a double risk with both the loss of younger talent and alienation of more senior workforce. This raises a new and interesting set of questions – one of which is whether my research question should simply have been: what engagement practices are relevant for the knowledge worker in this new world of work?

Having had time to think about this question my response is very clear – I do not think this research question would have led me to the same set of conclusions. I believe that it has been by talking directly with and understanding the needs and expectations of the millennial workers that I have been able to craft these engagement practices in such detail. Their raised voices have given a voice to other humans.

## AND A LAST FEW WORDS

Human beings are social beings who naturally want to be engaged authentically as humans, not as machines. Engagement is about human connection - the model developed in this dissertation reflects how an organisation can increase that connection. The more pieces of the eight-piece model an organisation can adopt, the more effective engagement will be of their entire workforce, ultimately increasing organisational survival.

A final word to organisations from the millennials.

*Take me seriously.*

*Let my creativity and longing for challenge and learning be a sign to you.*

*Let my love for fun and trusting nature be a symbol to you.*

*Let my respect for others*

*And need for reciprocal respect be a message to you.*

*Let your appreciation fuel me and recognition drive me*

*For without me*

*You will wither*

*And fade.*

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