FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS IN THE WORKPLACE: HOW ARE LEADERS

ADAPTING TO THEIR SHORT ATTENTION SPANS AND HOW WILL THEY

KEEP THEM FROM LEAVING A QUALITATIVE STUDY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

by

Maribel R. Diz

2021

To: Interim Dean William Hardin
      College of Business

This dissertation, written by Maribel R. Diz, and entitled Gen Z and Millennials in the Workplace: How are Leaders Adapting to their Short Attention Span and How Will they Keep them from Leaving a Qualitative Study, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

_____
Karlene Cousins

_____
Mido Chang

_____
Miguel Aguirre-Urreta

_____
Manjul Gupta

_____
George Marakas, Major Professor

Date of Defense: May 17, 2021

The dissertation of Maribel R. Diz is approved.

_____
Interim Dean William Hardin
College of Business

_____
Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2021

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Jorge and my children, Gabriella and Sebastian. By demonstrating that anything is possible if you set your heart and soul into it. Education and knowledge is something that no one can take from you, Stay Curious and Intrigued. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to the Cohort 1 Wolf Pack. Without their support and comradery, this journey would not have been as enlightening and fun. We are true pioneers!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Maribel R. Diz

Florida International University, 2021

Miami, Florida

Professor George Marakas, Major Professor

There is a new type of employee entering the workforce that is a true digital native with allegedly the shortest attention span known as Generation Z. Coupled with millennials, they will dominate the workforce. The problem investigated is the effects of short attention spans in the workplace and how this is being magnified by the incoming Generation Z cohort and existing millennials. Companies will need to adapt to short attention spans, along with what will engage and retain these two cohorts. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore both generations as there are no current studies with this cohort combination. The theoretical framework for this study was Generational Cohort, Selective Attention, Psychological Presence and Social Exchange Theory coupled with Organizational Culture. The target populations were Generation Z and millennials employees in good standing and Leaders with a minimum of one-year experience currently managing them in their function. The data collection process was conducting interviews with structured and semi-structured questions. The key findings of this study were that leaders and employees alike admit that there is an issue with attention spans. Leaders have taken steps to adapt and assist in prioritizing, providing deadlines

and engaging them with enjoyable projects. Gen Z and millennials have identified what their distractors are. During the study, there was a clear differentiation between attention span and focus. These are mutually exclusive. These cohorts have an uncanny ability to focus. They get distracted audibly versus visually, they plug in to tune out noise by using ear buds, listening to music or using noise canceling headsets. They are most engaged when working on projects that are rewarding and impactful, meaningful work and being challenged. They seek a protector of sorts an prefer a leader that provides guidance, has their back, coaches and provides feedback. They need psychological safety along with an importance placed on development. The cohorts favors an inspirational leadership style. Assuming that Gen Z and millennials are fairly paid with good benefit, they will stay if they have continued learning experiences and participate in rewarding and impactful work, which is intrinsic in nature.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

With the changes rapidly taking place in the workplace due to technology, leaders need to now more than ever how to engage their employee's attention to continue to motivate and keep the deliverables on target. Today, technology has impacted how quickly we turn things around, how we interface via video conferences and share documents between one another. The new generations are accustomed to getting things quickly, and thanks to mobile devices everything is at our fingertips. Google is used to answer any question in seconds. On our downtime, if we want to watch a television show commercial free, chances are we can do that by accessing Netflix and binge-watch an entire season. If we get a craving for a favorite meal and do not want to cook or have the ingredients at hand, an order can be placed through Uber Eats, Postmates or any other delivery food service available. In less than one hour our food delivery arrives. We have become a society of instant gratifiers and there is no exception in the workplace.

When it comes to managing different generations in the workplace, leaders can become confused about how they course-correct when trying to cater to differing needs. According to Roodin and Mendelson (2013), older workers expect a more hands-on, people-centered approach from their leaders or managers and are not comfortable multitasking, preferring to emphasize quality in the work that was accomplished. However, this is not the case for newer generations.

We are beginning to see a new type of employee entering the workforce known as Generation Z. Gen Z's were born between 1996 and 2010 and are the true digital natives (McNeil, 2018). They are the offspring of Generation Xers (born between 1960 and 1979) (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Gen Zers learned to navigate an iPad before they said

their first word. They are used to being exposed to ever-changing screens and data saturation on multiple platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Snap Chat, TikTok to name a few. Little is known of their work habits as this generation is currently transitioning into the workforce today.

Generation Z has a focus on quickness and accuracy (Grail, 2011). A study found that conflict in the workplace occurs from Gen Z's due to their overconfidence, communication styles and intolerance for criticism (Bencsik, Horvath-Csikos & Juhasz, 2016). Most of the studies related to Generation Z revolves around their study habits, preference towards technology, and entrepreneurial tendencies. Bloomberg published an article stating that almost one-third of the world's population was Generation Z, nudging ahead of millennials (Miller & Lu, 2018). This is a reality that corporations will be facing in the short term. The researcher believes that the ramifications of having such a large cohort enter the workforce can affect organizations from a cultural perspective, as well as a financial standpoint with strategic implications. It is unclear whether Generation Z will need to adapt to the traditional work setting or whether the work setting will need to adapt to this up-and-coming generation.

Millennials have been plagued by many comments related to their attitudes at work. Based on the literature reviewed, while some analysis contend that millennials are self-centered, others argue that millennials value community, civic duty, and volunteerism (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). One can say that there have been contradicting views related to millennials and how they have shaped the workplace during the last ten years.   Empirical research demonstrates that these efforts have

produced a generational cohort that is high on self-efficacy and is unusually self-assured (Twenge 2009; Twenge and Campbell 2001).

Generation Z has learned from the missteps of the Millennial generation in their utilization of social media and how it also affects organizations and society (Merriman, 2020). Evaluating whether there will be an impact to the productivity due to social media usage will be an instrumental measure in the study (Prakash Yadav & Rai, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed by this study is the effect of short attention spans it the workplace and how this is being magnified by the incoming Generations Z cohort and the existing millennials. Further, the large number of members in these two generations combined in the United States alone represent 166 million people according to Bookings' analysis of population estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau (Schneider, 2020). These generations have already had an effect on the remaining generations. They dominate the digital space and marketers are catering to them by the speed commercials are aired and the amount of information that is covered according to the Digital Marketing Institute (2018). This is becoming the norm and has unknowingly affected the other generations where their attentions span have also been compromised.

Meanwhile, these two generations have a tendency to hop around and not stay long with their employer, coupled with the upcoming Gen Zs having an entrepreneurial spirit (Gibbons, 2018). Employers would benefit from understanding how to retain these employees as they will soon make up the majority of the workforce.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine both Generation Z and millennials in the workspace in order to determine how leaders are adapting to them as far as their focus, motivation and retention. There have been studies in the past that focus on multi-generation in the workplace, but when it relates to Generation Z, research of the literature shows that the number of papers dedicated to this topic is low and disparate. Other studies focus on millennials' tendencies towards work; however, there are no studies that focus on both millennials and Gen Z's low attention span and how it may impact their attitude towards work. Further, an article in Time Magazine stated that the average attention span dropped from 12 seconds to eight seconds (McSpadden, 2015). Low attention span will be a burning topic that will affect the future of work and how leaders will need to adapt to engaging and retaining these two generations.

There is literature on Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), which state that leaders engage with their followers utilizing different types of social exchanges, the leaders differentiate in the way they treat their followers leading to different quality relationships among the leader and each follower (Danserau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975). However, leaders will have an issue in reconciling motivating and engaging both generations plus delivering results coupled with short attention spans.

In addition, retention is an important factor when it comes to a company's return on investment, as personnel is the most expensive line in a company's profit and loss statement. Hiring and training a new hire accounts for 90% to 200% of an employee's annual salary (Simmn, de Sivatte, Olmos, & Shaw, 2013). This is a significant amount

that employers will grapple with if by the time employees close the learning curve gap, they decide to leave.

Theoretical Framework

The focus of the study was how leaders are adapting to Gen Z and millennials short attention spans and how to retain and engage them. The epistemological assumption was that Generation Z was raised in the digital world. They have grown up with smartphones, tablets, 3-D, 4-D, and 360-degree photography, just to name a few of their norms. Gen Zers, quickly lose interest in television shows, quickly browse their Instagram feed only pausing for a split second when something distracts them and how they are connected with different sensory stimulating tools when doing a task (e.g., listening to a playlist, while scrolling on social media and cleaning their room). It is unknown how this will transform the workplace.

The ontological assumption is that there may be different answers to the research question(s). The interpretive framework that was used was Pragmatism. Meaning that the focus will be on the outcomes of the research—the actions, situations, and consequences of inquiry—rather than antecedent conditions (Creswell & Poth 2018). Very little is known about Generation Z, as they have just started to enter the workforce. In the next couple of years we will have large numbers of this cohort joining organizations in entry-level jobs (Chillakuri & Mahanandia 2018). The process used was an inductive one as there are little known facts as to the effects of their attention span in the workplace and what will entice these two generations to stay with their employers for an extended period of time. The research philosophy that was used as the foundation for this study was interpretivist philosophy, whereas the study will integrate human interests. Interpretivist

researchers assume that access to reality (given or socially contrasted) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments (Myers, 2008).

The format used for this study was qualitative research instead of quantitative. Quantitative research examines the relationship among variable and require the use of specific approaches to sample, collect and analyze data numerically (Groeneveld, Tummers, Bronkhorst, Ashikali, & van Thiel, 2015; Nyberg, Militerno, Hale, & Lepak, 2014). Even though scholars assert that this method is subjective in nature, McLean, Jensen and Hurd (2007) explore that there is a strong methodology and rigor. As stated by Jennifer Mason (2018), a qualitative researcher engages with important matters of epistemology and ontology from the bottom up and through their own practice and critical thought, and not simply through digesting abstract treatises on these participants. Critical thinking is at the core of qualitative studies, especially when it is a phenomena that is emerging due to environmental or societal situations. When studying generations at the workplace, this is an evolving subject matter as external forces may adjust or reshape characteristics of any given generation, namely the up and coming Generation Z. The purpose of the qualitative researcher is to understand situations in their own particular context and interactions (Patton, 2015).

The theoretical basis that will ground the research is the generational cohort theory, which suggests that 'several generations were distinguished based on the specific time periods into which people were born and the time periods they grew up in (Hemlin, Allwood, Martin & Mumford, 2014). Another theory that was utilized for the study is theory of selective attention. Broadbent's and Treisman's models of attention are all

bottleneck models because they predict we cannot consciously attend to all of our sensory input at the same time. Which led us to the current situation of digital overload on the senses and the ability and capacity to process. While stimulus selection in theory can be random, individuals have the capacity to perform specific selections (Cohen, 2006). The mechanism responsible for the ability to select stimuli is called 'selective attention.' Additionally, organizations need employees that bring ideas, feel connected and are motivated to produce good work. Psychological presence (Kahn, 1992) subsumes work motivation and has other manifestations and implications. The more fully present workers are at work the more meaning they may experience in performing task behaviors, particularly those that demand more of them personally. Also the effects of trust and influence in managers/leaders was a variable that was explored in order to determine if there was a correlation with motivation and satisfaction of the two generations.

Research Question

This topic is important to human resources practitioners as well as top leaders of organizations. Human resources practitioners are faced with a shortage of talent, and adaptation is the option that will ensure differentiation among other companies competing for said talent.

RQ1. How are leaders adapting to Millennial and Gen Zs short attention spans?

RQ2. How will leaders engage millennials and Gen Zs?

RQ3. Which factors contribute to Millennial and Gen Zs staying with a company?

Significance of the Study

There is a concern related to the scarcity of talent. Companies are reinventing themselves and adapting their workplaces, including benefit offerings to appeal to the different generations as an employer of choice (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001). There is a bona fide concern in retaining talent as the cost of hiring and onboarding continues to rise. This issue becomes even more complicated when there are five generations at the same time in the workforce (Salzman, 2017). With the entering Generation Z, which allegedly possesses the shortest attention span, how they will affect the traditional workplace. Companies are faced with the daunting task of figuring out the impacts of the entering generation, (e.g., how they will impact the workforce, how will their attention span affect how they interface with other generations, what impact will their output have in the workforce and how do we retain them).

Definitions

Employee engagement descries an employee's commitment to the objectives of the organization and how recognized and valued they feel for their efforts (Georgiades, 2015). Employee engagement, which was defined as a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001).

Generation Z: This generation cohort are the offspring of Generation Xers that were born between 1996 and 2010 and are the true digital natives (McNeil, 2018).

Intrinsic Motivation: State where individuals are willing to complete an activity because they consider the activity exciting and pleasurable (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Meaningful Work: Is a deeper level of intrinsic motivation and the instrument of work satisfaction and work commitment. Deriving a deeper level of satisfaction from the accomplishment of the task and intrinsic, deeper level of motivator to performing a task (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009).

millennials: This generation was born between 1980 and 1994 (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Motivation: Employees should respond positively to four basic aspects of work: variety, task identity, autonomy and feedback (Oldham and Hackman, 1981). Considerations conducted by researchers led to the creation of the Job Characteristics Model (JCM), which assumes that internal motivation is determined by three psychological states, which can occur if the work has certain characteristics. These characteristics include: the variety of skills used to perform the task, the identity of the task, i.e. the degree of task performance from beginning to the end, the autonomy of the work, the importance and impact of the task performed on others, and feedback regarding the task performed. JCM assumes that an employee's motivational potential (MPS) should be highest when the job performed is characterized by high levels of autonomy, significance and feedback (Koszela, 2020).

Organizational culture: organization culture encompasses the set of values, visions, norms, working language, systems, symbols, beliefs, behaviors, and habits found withing an organization (Lukas, Whitwell & Heide, 2013).

Psychological Safety: being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status or career (Kahn, 1990)

This chapter was the introduction of the study. The purpose of the study is to understand how the two largest generational cohorts—Gen Z and millennials will impact the workforce with their alleged short attention spans, expectation of leadership and what will have them stay longer with organizations. Companies are facing a situation with retention of talent that is impacting their bottom line. Understanding what will retain employees will be helpful in addressing this issue long-term.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how Gen Z and millennials will impact the workforce, namely how leaders will adapt to these two cohorts that will dominate the workforce, how they will be engaged and what will retain them. This study took an in-depth view on whether leaders' suppositions are correct or if there is disparity among the actions the leaders take and the expectations that the Gen Z and millennials have. Chapter 2 begins with a concise review of the literature and theoretical context of the study. An electronic method was used to search journals and relevant articles in the subjects of Human resources, Generation Z tendencies, Millennial tendencies, Retention, Psychological and Social Sciences. The criteria focused on peer-reviewed journals and search engines as in Google Scholar and the Florida International University Library.

Generational Cohort

In today's workforce there are multiple generations—five to be exact. Although there are varying dates depending on the source, the following are the five generations: Traditionalists (born before 1945) (Ozcelik, 2015), Baby Boomers (born between 1940 and 1959) Generation X (born between 1960 and 1979), Millennials (born between 1980 and 1994) and finally Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2010) (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). This theoretical basis suggests that several generations were distinguished based on the specific time periods into which people were born and the time periods they grew up in (Hemlin, et al, 2014). McHenry and Ash (2010) conducted a study that examined differences among the generational cohorts with respect to knowledge management. They found that within the technology domain, the findings correspond with the stereotypes, that is that older generations use the intranet in a passive way and the younger cohorts use

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instant messaging, Share Point and social media. However, the study found minimal differences with respect to other areas such as connectedness, management support, and sharing. It appears that technology is a phenomenon in its own right. This implies that technology may provide a unique perspective compared to other societal factors with respect to studying different generations (Padayachee, 2017).

Theory of Selective Attention

As stated earlier, Broadbent's and Treisman's Models of Attention are all bottleneck models because they predict we cannot consciously attend to all of our sensory input at the same time. Selective attention is the mental ability to select a fraction of all the stimuli present in our surroundings. Cohen (2006) suggests that the act of information selection assumes that in our surroundings information exists to be selected. Therefore, prior to the actual operation of selective attention, 'pre-attentive' processes must be performed. Attention studies led to research in selective attention, resulting in a group of 'bottleneck theories.' The most influential theories were those proposed by Broadbent (1958), Treisman (1960) and Deutsch & Deutsch (1963) (Cohen 2006; Rossini and Galera 2006). As Cohen (2006) notes, when performing a task, information processing begins with input (usually via our senses) and ends with output (normally a behavioral action). In their theories, Broadbent, Treisman and Deutsch & Deutsch discuss the stage in which selective attention information processing takes place. Broadbent proposed an 'early selection' model, which proposes that physical properties in a scene are processed in parallel and without limitations. Treisman's model states that incoming stimuli are analyzed pre-attentively through an attenuation filter based on physical characteristics, with resulting information becoming available to the individual's consciousness.

Contrary to Broadbent and Treisman, Deutsch & Deutsch propose a late selection model. Their model indicates that all stimuli reach perceptual mechanisms, independently if attention is or not paid to them. All stimuli input activate a semantic representation and all incoming information is recognized. Because the capacity to respond to input is limited, only a part of incoming information is recognized and responded to. The selection of which information is recognized is based on its level of importance and pertinence (Almeida, Veloso, Roque & Mealha, 2011). These theories seem to answer the question about the nature of short attention spans, but how are leaders reacting or leveraging them with the younger generations. This study has determined what the main struggles Generation Z and millennials are facing when it comes to their attention span and their productivity.

Psychological Presence

Trust in superiors is shown to be associated with job satisfaction, affect, innovative behavior, organizational citizenship and hope (Simmons, Nelson, and Neal 2001). Influences by leaders have been reported to increase employee satisfaction, commitment, learning, and performance (Kohli, Shervani, and Challagalla, 1998; Trempe, Rigny, and Haccoun, 1985; Johnson, Luthans and Hennessey, 1984; O'Reilly & Roberts, 1978). The study explored Generation Z and millennials' expectations of their respective leaders in building a safe environment where they feel connected and are able to produce good work. Trust and influence are paramount and were explored in order to determine the correlation of engagement with the two cohorts.

Social Exchange Theory Coupled with Organizational Culture

Research shows that social exchange theory is used to explain social dynamics of relationships and workplace behavior (Janssen, van Vuuren & de Jong, 2016). Generally, social exchange theory posits that social interactions between two parties will generate a degree of obligation (Homans, 1958). Employees will repeat actions that were rewarded and will continue to repeat said action for the reward effect. The process of social exchange has the potential of creating strong relationships. Said parties adhering to certain rules will evolve their relationship into a mutual commitment that is trusting and loyal over time (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This theory is of particular interest since these two generations are looking for lasting relationships in the workforce and in some cases an extension of their parents who provide guidance and protection.

The theory of exchange between leader and employee—known as Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) state that there are several elements that may influence employee's actions, behaviors and motivation including leadership styles that result in the type of relationship among the employee and leader (de Oliveira & da Costa Rocha, 2017). Gen Z and millennials' relationships with their leaders will be analyzed based on (LMX) which will focus on the expected relationship and whether it has any bearing on engagement and retention. These expectations will not only manifest itself in the employees' output, but in defining whether the employee's expectations aligned to the leader behavior towards them.

For Gen Z and millennials, organizational culture is an important means to gauge whether organizations will support and protect them. Perceived organizational support is a notion that is developed based on social exchange theory (Rara, 2019). Values,

attitudes, beliefs, and experience of an organization is explained by the organizational culture. Organizational Culture is the shared norms and values of individuals and groups withing an organization (Schein & Schein, 2017). Also known as Corporate Culture, is the way organizations conduct business, treat their employees, allow employees to freely express themselves and how committed employees are to the organization in return. Experts consider organizational culture as the most important determinant of behavior in organizations (Ruzgar, 2019). According to Schein & Schein (2017), Corporate culture is also an important factor that can improve performance and efficiency. The merger of social exchange theory and company culture would define an organization that has a blend of supportive leaders along with identifiable company norms that will appeal to Gen Z and millennials.

Gen Z and Millennial Behaviors

Gen Z's represent the youngest generation in the workplace and their numbers are growing at a staggering rate. What is known of the Gen Z generation is that they do not prefer the use of e-mail to communicate in the workplace. They are more interested in texting (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). This is along the lines of their rapid and abbreviated communication style. Both generations are digital natives—meaning that technology has always been part of their lives. They find technology essential to their daily lives (Lebowitz, 2018). Gen Z's technology usage and interest in flexibility is almost identical to millennials (Ryback, 2016). Gen Z understand the importance and value of being financially stable and performing well at work is important to them, however, sacrificing their personal lives in order to succeed at work is not acceptable to them (Flippin, 2017). Millennials are considered confident, connected and adaptable (Taylor & Keeter, 2010).

Millennials appreciate stable companies that are dynamic and flexible, that provides a friendly environment that will allow for positive interactions among colleagues and leaders with a less authoritarian management (Falaster, Ferreira and Reis, 2015). In the evaluated literature there is no mention of attention spans and how they manage multitasking, which will be covered in this study.

Engaging Gen Z and Millennials

The relationship between Gen Z and millennials needed to be assessed. There is a high expectation of feedback, centered on personal and professional success, empowerment, the need for freedom and personal attention, the need for flexibility and meaning (Hannus, 2016; Allen, 2005). Employees that have a meaningful work-life increase productivity, high performance and commitment to the job (Barsh, Cranson & Craske, 2008; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Herman & Gioia, 1998). Besides money and rewards, work life should provide inner purpose and a sense of meaning consistent with employees' value system (Bremner and Carriere, 2011). Gen Z and millennials need intrinsic rewards and motivators to be engaged, productive and successful (Adams, 2012). This study will highlight this as an outcome. They value rewarding, impactful and meaningful work, along with new challenges where they can improve work processes and conditions. Gen Z and millennials are in search of meaning and purpose in their work, more than ever before (Holbeche & Springett, 2004; Martela, 2010).

Meaningful work is also described as the realization of one's potential and purpose where the passions, core values and strengths interact with work (Lieff, 2009). They work long hours without additional compensation, exhibit positive relationships with peers and leaders, and provide high quality work (Stegar, Dik & Duffy, 2012).

Studies indicate that employees engaged in meaningful work-life put less importance on compensation than in comparison to the impact of meaningful work (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

The leader involvement is equally as important as Gen Z and millennials have certain expectation of them. Given the they grew up in structured environments, they are used to these environments at work. Honesty, integrity and respect are their preference in leaders (Brack, 2012). They are looking to be offered projects that include a learning component and challenge them to work harder and develop (Newman, 2010).

Retaining Gen Z and Millennials

Employers find that the younger generational cohorts don't stay long due to lack of motivation and becoming disengaged with their job, which results in turnover (Pontefract, 2018). Millennials have a reputations of switching jobs frequently and quickly earning them the label of job hoppers (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Li & Devos, 2008). Millennials leave their jobs to find another in less than two years after their start date (Mayangdarastri & Khusna, 2020). They work to live rather than live to work. They are in pursuit of work-life balance and do not easily commit to organizations (Li & Devos, 2008). Creating a strong organizational culture that encourages sharing, innovation, open communication, flexible and relaxed meaning less formal will help retain millennials (Brack, 2012). When employees perceive meaningful work, they show commitment to work and organizations (Chalofsky, 2010). Further, if there is perceived organizational support linked to social exchange theory, there is a trade of effort and loyalty (Eisenberger, Armeli, Barbara, Patrick & Linda, 2001). When someone received kind treatment from others, reciprocity obligate them to repay the kindness (Eisenberger,

et al., 2001). Employees will show their loyalty to the organization if they are appreciated and well-being is nurtured (Rara, 2019). Hence employees will demonstrate their loyalty to the organization.

Little is known of the tendencies and preference of Gen Z, and the effects that they will have in the workplace. The business community is intrigued. There have been plenty of studies on millennials, but none with both generations. The empirical research on this subject is lacking. This chapter provided literature review and theoretical context of the study. The research findings of the study were subtlety discussed throughout this chapter. It is expected that this dissertation research will expand our understanding of the impact and expectation that Gen Z and millennials will have in the workplace. Grounding the research to the theories, provide not only validity, but and expanded view based on the recent findings from this qualitative study. The data gathered from this study will postulate a deeper understanding of what will engage and retain Gen Z and millennials. It will broaden scholarly analysis for the consumption of Human resources practitioners and Leaders alike.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This international qualitative study explored how leaders are adapting to Gen Z and millennials' and attention spans, how to engage millennials and Gen Z's and finally what factors will help retain these two generations. This chapter will provide a description of the study as in the design, target population and sample, procedures used for the study, including the protection of participants, data collection and analysis, study instruments and ethical considerations.

Methodology

The large internal system consists of the different generations at work, which includes different functions, levels of employees and locations. Generation Z is a smallest group in the workforce; however they will end up dominating due to the retirement of the Traditionalists and Baby Boomers, leaving the Gen X and millennials, which are smaller in numbers. By coupling Gen Z and millennials that provided a solid sample for the study.

The study received FIU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before data was collected ensuring that all ethical and welfare parameters were adhered to. The participants for the study were employees of a Multinational Technology Company that is ranked among Fortune 500's most admired companies with 20,500 employees around the world. The company has received numerous recognitions on its brand, corporate responsibility and reputation, culture and diversity and product development and innovation. The company is known for its inclusiveness winning the following awards: Great Places to Work, Best Places to Work for LGBT and Equality, Top Companies for Women Technologists, Bloomberg's Gender-Equality Index (GEI), McKinsey's Woman

in the Workplace study, Diversity Best Practices Inclusion Index, 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers, Best Company for Multicultural Woman, NAFE Top 70 Companies for Executive Women. This is evidence of the openness of the company's acceptance and importance it places on hiring employees of diverse background, which encompasses generations. The focus, nonetheless, was to interview employees and leaders that were based in Miami, Florida in the United States and several countries in Latin America where there was critical mass. Upon scoping the region for demographic data on generation distribution, there were only several Generation Z employees based in Bogota, Colombia, and Miami, Florida, in the United States working entry-level roles. Consequently expanding the sample size to include millennials that were employed at the Company.

The study used the ethnographic research method. This method is used to study social or cultural problems; or document the customs, beliefs, perspectives and practices of people, organization, teams, and communities in their habitat (Reeves, Peller, Goldman, & Kitto, 2013). In order to identify factors, the selected method was structured interviews with a willing pre-selected group of managers and employees. Interviews are useful data collection tools for qualitative researchers since data can be recorded, archived, challenged and reinforced (Jamshed, 2014). The interviews consisted of open-ended questions, which were useful for capturing the facts and perceptions of the interviewees' own experiences. The questions were structured or semi-structured, which allowed them to be easily altered during the interview depending on particular experiences of the interviewee (Jamshed, 2014).

The qualitative method further allowed the researcher to understand and explore characteristics of Gen Z and millennials employees. The pre-selected group consisted of managers of Gen Z and Millennial employees and Gen Z and Millennial employees. The managers and employees were based across the following locations: Buenos Aires, Argentina, Sao Paulo, Brazil, Bogota, Colombia, Mexico City, Mexico, Lima, Peru and in Miami, Florida in the United States. During the interview the question was asked of their country of origin, which varied and included a broader coverage of the Latin American and Caribbean Region. Sample interview questionnaire for managers and employees along with the interview protocols are located in the Appendix section of the dissertation. The interviews took a maximum of 45-minutes. A total of 72 participants were part of the study. The importance of background knowledge for observations is evident in a variety of area as there has long been an emphasis on the training and competence of the analyst for making observations and interpretations (Kvale, 1996).

Pilots

An informed pilot was conducted, which yielded that engagement and motivation needed to be defined for the participants. Definitions found in the section labeled Definitions. Another recommendation was that the questions needed to be clustered by themes to increase ease when coding the interview data. A pilot was done with two individuals: one representing the employee group and another representing the supervisor group. The pilot study yielded that the questions were concise, clear and easy to answer. The feedback received was to be ready to explain the entrepreneurial question located at the end of the interview session since it seemed to deviate from the engagement and

motivation. Both participants enjoyed the experience and are curious to learn the results. Both interviews were concluded before the 45-minute mark.

Data Collection and Analysis

The participants were sent an email (Appendix 1) where they were provided the context of the study, the interview format and time allotment, confidentiality statement along with the consent form and contact information in case they wanted to reach out with questions. After which, they were sent an invitation for the interviews during a time that was convenient to the participants. The executed consent forms (Appendix 2) were collected before the interviews took place. The researcher followed a script (Appendix 3) explaining the length of the interview, the purpose of the interview the importance of their participation, reaffirming that the interviews were being recorded and ensuring that they were in agreement to proceed. The interviews started on time and were spaced out so that if one interview ran over, it would not keep the other participants waiting. All of the interviews were concluded at the scheduled end time. The interviews were recorded using Otter Voice Meeting Notes, which is an automated tool on the iPhone that transcribes texts. The researcher had to validate the transcriptions as the tool substituted words based on sounds and did not have the capability to transcribe in different languages (e.g., Spanish and Portuguese). Once the transcripts were validated, the recording was deleted as it was of no use to the researcher. The data analysis involved interpretations of the data captured through the interview transcripts. The transcripts should not be the subject matter of the interview study, but rather as tools, the means for interpreting what was said during an interview (Kvale, 1996). Member checking was conducted by forwarding the validated transcription to the interviewees. The vast majority of the interviewees did not

appreciate the way that they came across in the transcriptions and asked to their pauses and filler words to be deleted. As such, the denaturalism approach to the transcriptions was used. Denaturalized transcription grows out of an interest in the informational content (MacLean, Meyer & Estable, 2004) of speech and dissatisfaction with the empiricism of naturalized work (Billig 1999a; 1999b). Yet while still working for a full and faithful transcriptions (Cameron, 2001), denaturalism has less to do with depicting accents or involuntary vocalization. Rather accuracy, accuracy concerns the substance of the interview, that is, the meanings and perceptions created and shared during conversations (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005). Each transcript was meticulously reviewed several times by the researcher in order to become familiar with data to identify common threads and emerging themes.

The system used to capture and code the information was NVivo. The analysis consisted of coding, creating specific categories for data presentation and formulating descriptions of the research through those categories to uncover themes (Schaefer, 2016). The data analysis was done by using the Strauss and Corbin coding methods for transcribed interviews and field notes: Open Coding, Axial Coding, and Selective Coding. Thematic analysis was done to determine common themes, topics, ideas, and patterns that come up repeatedly. The data was coded to guarantee anonymity of the interviewees for research reporting (Shaefer, 2016). The coding portion of the study was done by the researcher. The coding was cross validated by two third party individuals. A binder with printed copies of the nameless transcripts along with coding schema was provided. The two validators were not trained, but merely instructed to classify the content of the transcripts using the code book options. There were a series of codes that

were consolidated as a result of the validation process further grouping themes for concise evaluation. This was done to ensure objectivity of the researcher and avoiding any possible biases.

A comparison of the responses of leaders and employees were made in order to determine possible correlations, similarities and/or disparities. The analysis yielded whether the tactics used by the leaders are resonating with the Gen Z and Millennial generations as it relates to their attention spans and what will motivate them to stay.

Assumptions

The researcher had a couple of assumptions for the study. Firstly, all participants would answer all questions in an honest, open and direct manner related to attention span, motivation and retention. Secondly, that once interviewees agreed to participate, they would attend the interview, answer all the questions and not withdraw before completion.

Limitations of the Data

The data will be limited to the Multinational Technology Company; hence the information gathered may or may not be transferable to other companies. Another limitation is the unpredictability of the data gathered while interviewing employees. They may have censored themselves for fear of the information leaking, and when interviewing managers, they may have omitted information that may place their leadership skills into question.

Delimitations

The study was limited to employees from this one Multinational Technology Company with more than one year of employment and in good standing which means receiving a performance rating of Meeting or above. The sampling had a geographical

constraint that while being an international study, only employees from Miami, Florida

and Buenos Aires, Argentina, Sao Paulo, Brazil, Bogota, Colombia, Mexico City,

Mexico, Lima, Peru were interviewed. This selection sample was based on participants

belonging to either the Generation Z or the Millennial generational cohort. The leaders

that were selected were either part of the company's leadership team or supervisors of

Generation Z or Millennial employees with more than one year of supervisory

experience. The focus of the research was limited to a specific population to gain and

understand what factors would encourage employee retention and how leaders are

adapting to short attention spans and engaging their employees.

Ethical Assurances

The study abided by all FIU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethical standards.

All participants executed a written acceptance regarding their participation in the research

through a signed Consent Letter, which is attached in the appendix of this document. The

Consent Letter assured participants that their involvement in the study was voluntary and

they were free to withdraw from the study at any point for any reason whatsoever. Video

Conference Interviews were scheduled given the limitations due to the COVID-19

pandemic. The employees took the video conference calls from a quiet place that was

familiar to them. Ethical assurances provided protectionism for the research. Ethical

safeguards maintained the anonymity of the interviewees. Participants were provided

with an outline of their rights to withdraw before, during and after completion of the data

collection process without consequences, loss of benefits or risks. Participants were

informed that they could email the researcher to be withdrawn from the study if they

chose to. For these cases, a follow up email was sent to the participants informing them

of the extraction of the study and deleted from the participant database. The deletion would have been documented within the data if anyone elected to not participate.

This paper will extend existing theories related to generational cohorts and Social Exchange namely LMX as it relates to engagement and retention. It will highlight different aspects mainly related to the workforce and the contributions that a generation, in particular, will have. Interested parties in the analysis are human resources practitioners and leaders that are responsible for business units. Corporate functions or market/geographies as organizations will also have a vested interest in the findings. This study will contribute to the existing literature on the different generations. It will be relevant for a myriad of academics, industries, and Human Resources Leaders that are responsible for establishing people's strategies and workforce plans for organizations.

Having the research questions top of mind allowed the researcher to focus and gather data in a structured unbiased way. This chapter described the design elements of the study, steps taken to select participants, interview protocols, transcribing procedures and coding transcripts methodology. The selection process yielded 72 participants from countries located in Latin America and the United States. The same questions were used for employees and a slightly different set of questions were used for the leaders. This was done in order to compare responses to determine correlations or gaps in what Gen Z and millennials were expecting versus what the leaders believed the employees anticipated. Consistent measures were taken to protect participant's confidentiality and identities. Strict measures were taken to gather data and ensure anonymity. The data was collected and transcribed using a combination of electronic and manual process. The coding was done manually with extreme care using the NVivo software to assist with the analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of the study is to determine how leaders are adapting to Gen Z and millennials short attention spans, how leaders will continue to engage these two generations and what factors will contribute to these two generations staying with the company. The researcher currently holds a senior executive level role for a Multinational Fortune 500 company and has over 30 years of work experience mainly in the human resources field. Having been exposed to different industries, cultures and nationalities, the researcher brings a plethora of experience when it comes to different generations in the workplace and intimate knowledge of how successful companies are run. Understanding the different generations currently in the workforce will help leaders learn how the generations interact, are motivated, learn and develop (Gugercin, 2017). This knowledge will minimize tension and possibly increase retention as stated by Hechl in 2017, generational conflict leads to disengagement, challenges with succession planning and turnover.

The researcher has extensive experience in employee relations, setting human resources strategies, including a keen focus on hiring and retention. The researcher started her career in Talent Acquisition, which is responsible for interviewing future talent and current talent for continued growth and development opportunities. The researcher is accustomed to interviewing via telephone, video conference and in person. This is evidence that the researcher is skilled in interviewing and putting the participants at ease in order for them to open up during the interview. She also has deep experience in working with multigeneration and different cultures. The research was aware of the potential for bias due to her role in the organization and in the industry (Marshall &

Rossman, 2016).   The researcher practiced bracketing, which typically refers to the identification of vested interests, personal experiences, cultural factors, assumptions and hunches that could influence how s/he views the study data (Fischer. 2009). This was managed in a two-part process, first the researcher continuously recorded her assumptions and second when evaluating the transcripts, she included reflective bracketing to deepen her understanding of the meaning of the subject matter. She also practiced journaling and consulted with colleagues throughout the process.

The research observed that the topic of Generation Z's in the workplace was scarce as this generation is entering the workforce. The evidence beyond some articles that focused on their study habits, did not addressed what their struggles would be related to attention spans, how to engage them and retain them. The researcher decided to couple this generational cohort with millennials due to the low sample size of 11. In some cases there was a supposition from the leaders that was fundamentally different than what Gen Z and Millennial employees were expecting or would be motivated by. This broaden the researcher's views. Through this dissertation, the researcher plans to add empirical data to the exiting knowledge base to aid organization in the management of Generation Z and millennials.

Description of Sample

The criteria for participating in the study were that the employees had to be employed by the Latin America and Caribbean division of a Multinational Technology Company that is ranked among Fortune 500's most admired companies with 20,500 employees around the world. Employees had to be employed for a minimum of one year and be in good standing which means receiving a past performance rating of Meeting or

above. The employees needed to belong to the Generation Z or Millennial generational cohort. Based on the filtering by tenure, performance rating/standing and generational cohort that yielded a list of employees that were based in the following locations: Miami, Florida; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Bogota, Colombia; Mexico City, Mexico; and Lima, Peru. The leaders that were selected to participate in the study were to have a minimum of one year of supervisory experience. The leadership team members were also invited to attend, the prerequisite was to have a Gen Z employee in their function or currently supervise Millennial employees. The total number of participants was 72 employees and supervisors alike. There were a total of three participants that opted out of the study. All interviews were conducted virtually due to the COVID 19 Virus pandemic not allowing for face-to-face contact. Each participant was assigned a number to ensure confidentiality.

Table 1 and 2 illustrate the participants' demographic make-up. Table 1 captures employees' characteristics as (a) Gender described as Female or Male, (b) Generation (GenZ or Millennial), (c) Location (current work location described as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Miami, Peru), and (d) Country of Origin (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Puerto Rico, United States, Venezuela). All efforts were made to ensure an adequate gender split. The end result yielded 59% female and 41% male participants. Location representation was also considered ensuring that there was adequate representation in the different Latin American countries: Argentina 12%, Brazil 12%, Colombia 15%, Mexico 12% and Peru 9%. The majority of the employee population are based in the Hub, which is located in Miami, Florida where the sample composition totaled 41%. The country of origin representation also varied due to

migration tendencies in the sample group: Argentina 11.8%, Brazil 23.5%, Colombia 14.7%, Cuba 11.8%, Mexico 11.8%, Nicaragua 2.9%, Peru 8.8%, Puerto Rico 2.9%, Venezuela 8.8% and finally United States 2.9%. All of the Gen Z population in the Company were interviewed, which yielded 11 (32%) of the participants. The rest were millennials making up 68% of the interviewees.

Table 1

Demographic Data: Employees Who Participated in the Study

Participant	Gender	Generation	Location	Country of Origin
P1	Female	GenZ	Miami	Cuba
P2	Male	GenZ	Miami	Brazil
P3	Male	GenZ	Miami	Nicaragua
P4	Female	GenZ	Miami	Cuba
P5	Male	GenZ	Miami	Brazil
P6	Female	GenZ	Miami	United States
P7	Female	GenZ	Miami	Venezuela
P8	Female	GenZ	Colombia	Colombia
P9	Female	GenZ	Miami	Colombia
P10	Male	GenZ	Miami	Brazil
P11	Female	GenZ	Peru	Peru
P50	Female	Millennial	Miami	Cuba
P51	Male	Millennial	Brazil	Brazil
P52	Male	Millennial	Mexico	Mexico
P53	Male	Millennial	Argentina	Venezuela
P54	Female	Millennial	Miami	Cuba
P55	Male	Millennial	Brazil	Brazil
P56	Female	Millennial	Colombia	Colombia
P57	Male	Millennial	Peru	Peru
P58	Female	Millennial	Miami	Puerto Rico
P59	Male	Millennial	Argentina	Argentina
P60	Female	Millennial	Argentina	Argentina
P61	Male	Millennial	Mexico	Mexico
P62	Female	Millennial	Colombia	Brazil
P63	Female	Millennial	Colombia	Colombia
P64	Female	Millennial	Argentina	Argentina
P65	Male	Millennial	Miami	Argentina
P66	Female	Millennial	Brazil	Brazil

P67	Male	Millennial	Brazil	Brazil
P68	Female	Millennial	Mexico	Mexico
P69	Female	Millennial	Mexico	Mexico
P70	Female	Millennial	Colombia	Colombia
P71	Female	Millennial	Peru	Peru
P72	Male	Millennial	Miami	Venezuela

Table 2 captures leaders' characteristics as (a) Gender described as Female or Male, (b) Location (current work location described as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Miami, Peru), (c) Country of Origin (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Salvador, United States, Venezuela) and Years of Experience (1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35). Using the same methodology as in the employee group, all efforts were made to ensure an adequate gender split, however, the end result yielded 37% female and 63% male participants. Location representation was also considered ensuring that there was adequate representation in the different Latin American countries, however the leadership concentration was predominantly in two countries—Brazil and Miami, Florida. The composition make-up was as follows: Argentina 3%, Brazil 13%, Colombia 5%, Mexico 8% and Peru 3%. Similar to Table 1, the majority of the employee population is based in the Hub, in Miami, Florida where the sample composition for leaders totaled 68%. The country of origin representation is especially varied at the leadership team level: Argentina 5%, Brazil 18%, Colombia 3%, Cuba 5%, Mexico 16%, Nicaragua 11%, Panama 3%, Peru 3%, Portugal 3%, Puerto Rico 5%, Salvador 3%, Venezuela 11% and finally United States 16%. Different from the employees, the leaders were asked for their years of experience leading people: 1 – 5 years, 3%; 6 – 10 years, 11%; 11 – 15 years, 26%, 16 – 20 years, 24%; 21 – 25 years, 16%; 26 – 30 years, 13%; and 31 – 35 years,

8%. There is a high concentration of leadership experience in the 11 – 20-year range

equal to 50%.

Table 2
Demographic Data: Leaders Who Participated in the Study

Participant	Gender	Location	Country of Origin	Years of Experience
P12	Male	Miami	Panama	26-30
P13	Female	Miami	Nicaragua	21-25
P14	Female	Miami	USA	6-10
P15	Male	Brazil	Brazil	21-25
P16	Male	Colombia	Portugal	11-15
P17	Female	Argentina	Argentina	16-20
P18	Female	Miami	Colombia	26-30
P19	Male	Miami	Peru	16-20
P20	Male	Miami	Argentina	16-20
P21	Female	Miami	USA	26-30
P22	Male	Miami	USA	21-25
P23	Male	Miami	Mexico	26-30
P24	Male	Miami	Salvador	31-35
P25	Female	Mexico	Mexico	31-35
P26	Female	Miami	Brazil	16-20
P27	Male	Brazil	Brazil	31-35
P28	Male	Miami	Venezuela	11-15
P29	Male	Miami	Mexico	6-10
P30	Female	Miami	USA	26-30
P31	Male	Miami	USA	11-15
P32	Female	Brazil	Brazil	16-20
P33	Male	Mexico	Mexico	21-25
P34	Male	Miami	Puerto Rico	6-10
P35	Male	Miami	Puerto Rico	16-20
P36	Female	Miami	Venezuela	11-15
P37	Male	Mexico	Mexico	11-15
P38	Male	Miami	Nicaragua	11-15
P39	Male	Miami	USA	6-10
P40	Male	Miami	Venezuela	16-20
P41	Female	Miami	Cuba	16-20
P42	Male	Colombia	Venezuela	11-15
P43	Male	Miami	Nicaragua	21-25

P44	Male	Peru	Mexico	11-15
P45	Female	Brazil	Brazil	11-15
P46	Female	Miami	Cuba	1-5
P47	Male	Miami	Brazil	11-15
P48	Female	Brazil	Brazil	16-20
P49	Male	Miami	Nicaragua	21-25

The researcher adhered to the protocols explained in Chapter 3 in the collection and analysis of the data. The questions were reviewed by scholars, colleagues and the dissertation committee. The questions for employees and managers are included in Appendix 3 of the dissertation. For the Leader interviews, the first couple of questions were background questions establishing a rapport with the participant and putting them at ease. The questions were related to their country of origin and the length of time they had been a leader. The following two questions were related to leadership style and adaptation to different generations with a follow up question asking them to provide examples. The following two questions were related to motivation and employee engagement. Development, empowerment and entrepreneurial tendencies were the following set of questions that focused on what development opportunities they offered their employees, whether they felt that they empowered their employees and if entrepreneurial tendencies were expressed by their employees were expressed how they would manage. This questions was specifically asked for the Gen Z populations, since studies of Generation Z reveal a strong entrepreneurial spirit (Gibbons, 2018). The last two sections of the questionnaire focused on attention span and retention.

For the Gen Z and Millennial participants, the interview questionnaire varied a bit. The first question as about their country of origin, which opened the door for them to talk about where they are from. The researcher found that there was a sense of pride in

discussing heritage and culture. This helped put the participants at ease. The following

question was their description of the best leader they ever had. This question help gather

leadership attributes that were important to these two generations. Engagement followed

by asking whether they were engaged in their roles and asked for examples. Development

and empowerment were the next sections gauging whether they had taken advantage of

development opportunities and if they felt empowered in their roles. In the Aspiration

section, the question was if they felt that they considered themselves as entrepreneurial.

A total of 91% of the Gen Z participants considered themselves as entrepreneurial.

Whereas only 57% of the millennials did. In the Attention Span section, there were

several questions delving in on losing track, what they found themselves doing instead, if

they became distracted with surrounding events and what those were. There were follow

up questions if employees did not lose track of what they were doing, what techniques

did they use to stay focused or what they would do to prevent them from being distracted.

Overall 53% of the employees responded that they did not lose track. Of those that

belonged to the Gen Z generational cohort, 73% asserted that they did not lose track of

what they were doing. Further this same cohort stated that 100% of them became

distracted audibly instead of visually. The last section corresponded to Retention (e.g.,

whether they were currently looking for a job internally or externally and what the

company can do to prevent them from looking or leaving).

The interviewed were audio recorded using the Otter App on the iPhone. These

recordings would automatically be transcribed, which the researcher had to validate for

accuracy. Once the transcriptions were completed, they were sent to the participant for

review and accurate depiction of what they mentioned during the interview. This action

added trustworthiness and credibility to the study (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell & Walter, 2016; Iivari, 2018). The transcripts were reviewed numerous times by the researcher to familiarize herself with the data and identify any emerging themes. The researcher coded the data manually and subthemes surfaced throughout the process. These were inputted in NVivo qualitative software. The process was repeated by two independent third party reviewers that were provided the hardcopies of the nameless transcripts and code using the coding schema. Based on the coding observations of the reviewers, there was further consolidation of the themes. A thematic analysis was conducted which proved to be critical to understanding meanings behind the collected data and make sense of it (Choy, 2014; Percy, Kostere & Kostere, 2015).

Presentation of Data and Results of the Analysis

The purpose of the research was to explore three research questions related to the Gen Z and Millennial generational cohorts. The first research question in support of this study was how leaders are adapting to Millennial and Gen Zs short attention spans? The second question explored was, how will leaders engage millennials and Gen Zs? The final research question was, which factors contribute to Millennial and Gen Zs staying with a company?

The data gathered from the interviews were aligned to obtain intelligence surrounding the research topics. The main themes that emerged were preferences of Gen Z and millennials when it comes to engaging and empowering these two cohorts, retention and attention distractors.

RQ1. How are leaders adapting to Millennial and Gen Zs short attention spans?

Based on the interview finings, leaders understand that there is an issue with attention spans. They have taken steps in order to assist by helping Gen Z and millennials prioritize their deliverables, providing deadlines to keep them on track and offering projects that they find enjoyable and they like.

Help in prioritization

- (P12) "I break things into small tasks that are deliverable. I cannot give a Millennial a 5-year project."
- (P17) "As a leader it is important to set the priorities and measure how the team is meeting the goals and objectives."

Provide a deadline

- (P14) "I have them on a tracker or let them know that this is what we are going to do at the end of the week"
- (P32) "Tasks need to have a sense of urgency, a deadline and there needs to be commitment or passion."

Work on things that are enjoyable/like

- (P18) "In terms of their interests, and so you tend to be more interested in what makes you happy. So you pay more attention to that."
- (P23) "They lose their attention if they are not connected to the topic. When there is no connection or their own interest with what they're doing, then they lose interest."
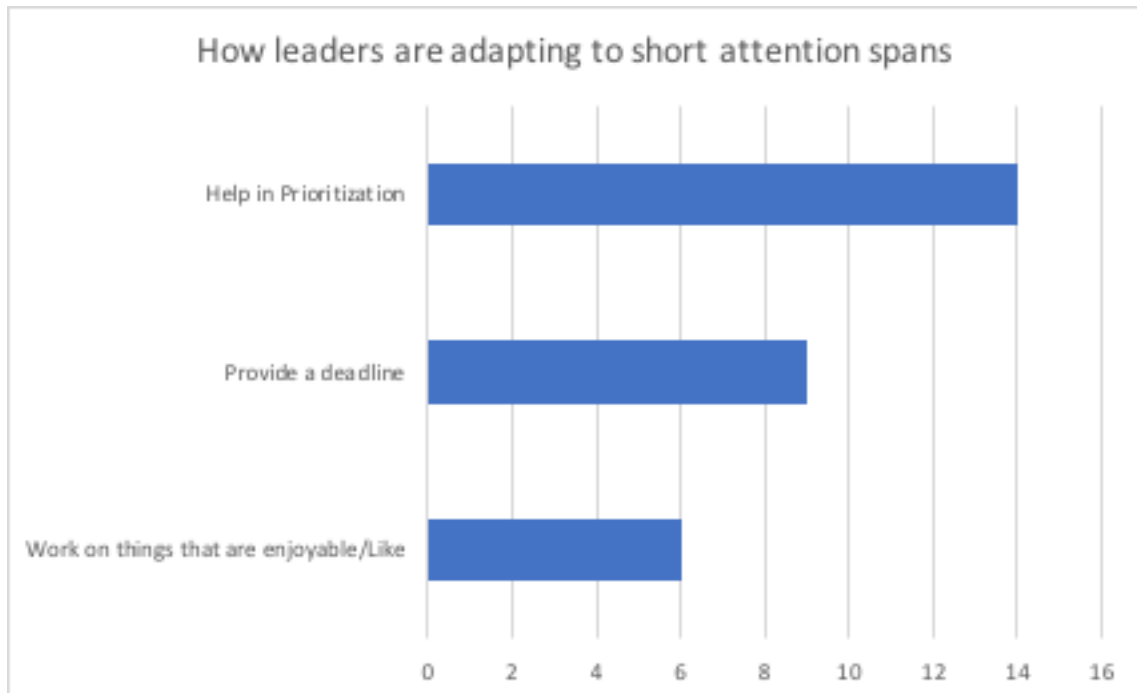
Figure 1: How leaders are adapting to short attention spans

Three themes emerged when Gen Z and millennials were asked what distracted them. Gen Z and millennials do struggle with constant interruptions from their colleagues, multitasking as they are working on many things and having competing deliverables.

Colleague Interruptions

- (P68) "When people see you they come up to you and start to ask questions. There is it harder to tell them, No, I can't".
- (P66) "I don't know what happens in Brazil. People think they are in a restaurant or in a park. I don't know. This really annoys me. 'Hey, I'm trying to work here.' I don't say that, but it's what I think."
- (P58) "If I'm working on a PowerPoint presentation, and somebody interrupts to ask a question and we'll have a 10-minute conversation."

Multitasking (working on many things)

- (P5) "A lot of time there are also distractions where you're focused on something and then you have an email come in and then you click on it and you go off. Or you have a call coming in or someone calls you on IM or wherever and you get these distractions. I do think that it is a higher tendency among younger people. Maybe multitasking too much."
- (P59) "So you have to be like an octopus, you have to have like eight or 16 hands at the same time to deal with the different things. And this is translated into working 14 hours a day and being awake until 4am in the morning replying to emails and dealing with things."

Competing Deliverables

- (P54) "What happens sometimes is that you have different projects at the same time."
- (P56) "I have to be very intentional about it because you have so many things at work and you have to be by yourself and divide your attention because there are so many business lines."
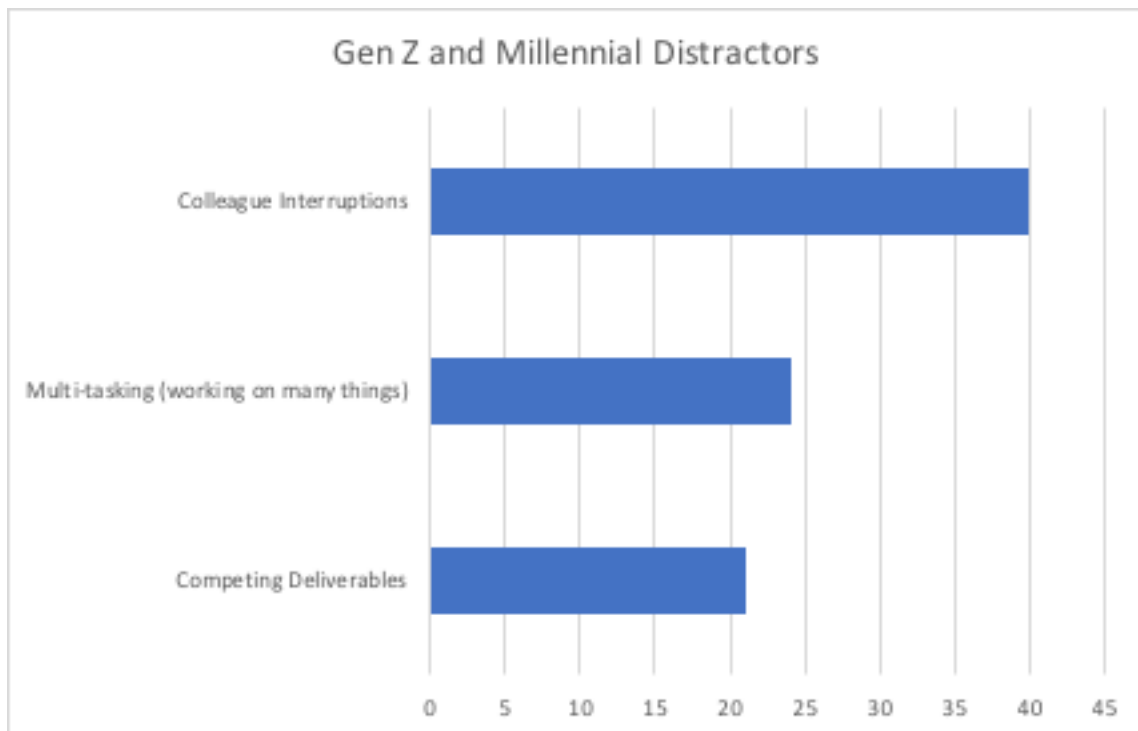

Figure 2: Gen Z and Millennial Distractors

Gen Z and millennials have taken safeguards to ensure that they control their attention span distractors. It was discovered during the study that there is a clear differentiator between attention span and focus. The results of the interviews were that based on the participant responses these are mutually exclusive. Attention span does not equal focus. These generations do not have a focus issue. In the contrary, they have an uncanny ability to focus and are able to tune out and hone in on the task at hand. They apply techniques to assist them in this.

Write things down

- (P9) "I take a lot of notes, writing down a lot of information."
- (P11) " I write down everything I have to do like a checklist."

Prioritize/work on important things

- (P10) "So I think that if you prioritize the tasks that you have, I don't think you'll lose track."
- (P59) "When you have like a big stack of things and priorities are changing almost every hour, it's kind of difficult you know to keep track of everything. So you have to implement some different ways of keeping track of everything."

Block time to maximize attention span

- (P61) "If it's something that is very important for me, I go to a meeting room and start working to not have distractions."
- (P62) "I like closed rooms, rather than open spaces. Actually, because I can concentrate better and I'm more productive as well."
- (P69) "Yes, I isolate myself. I go to the Innovation Center because I know that no one is going to be there."
- (P8) "I change my status to Do Not Disturb."
- (P1) "I do set my calendar, in order to avoid meeting invitations like if I know I have something that's important to do."
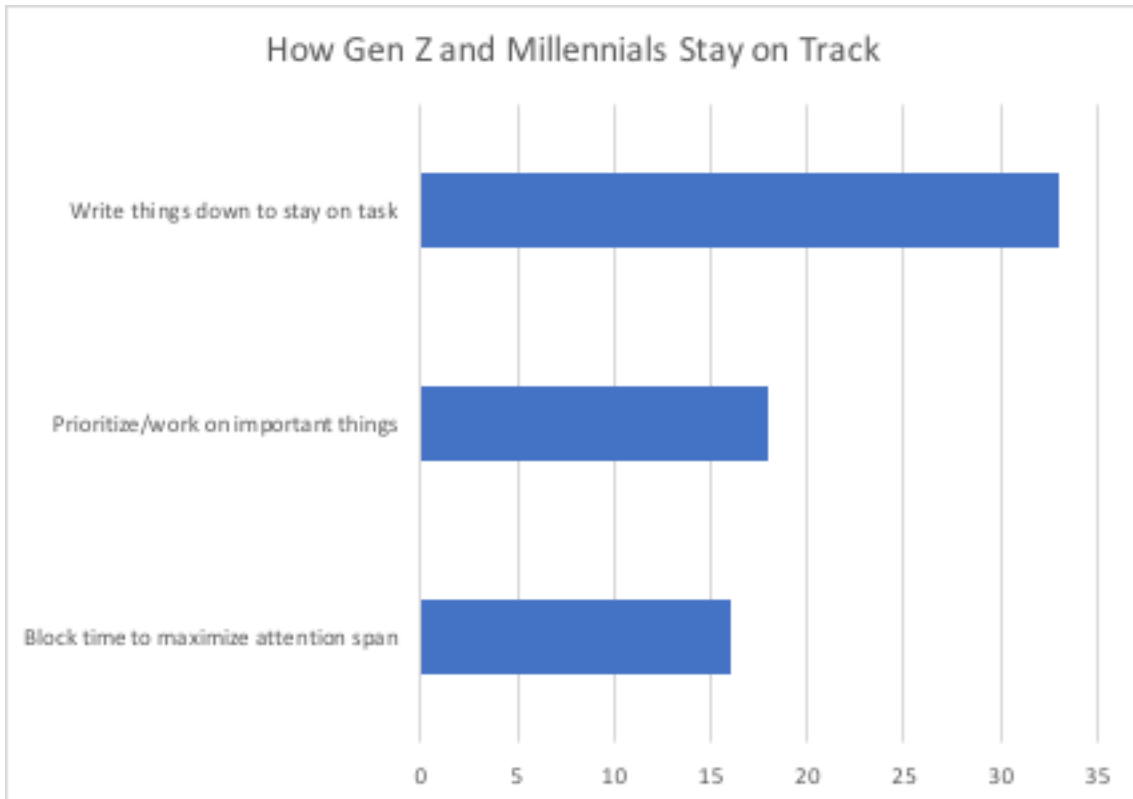
Figure 3: How Gen Z and Millennials Stay on Track

It was discovered during the study that as a result of open space and numerous distractors, the majority of these generations are distracted audibly versus visually. As stated earlier, these generations have a high degree of focus once they tune out noise. Meaning they are distracted when they hear things instead of visually stimulated or when people are around. They have opted to plug in and tune out their auditory distractors, by using ear buds to listen to music or noise canceling headsets.

Earbuds

- (P61) "When I'm doing something that I need full concentration, I put my headphones"
- (P65) "I always have my headphones on. I know I had to resort to other ways to, to set myself up for success because I do get easily distracted."

- (P9) "The headphone situation really helps me in particular the air pods that have been noise cancelling, that helps a lot."
- (P9) "Noise cancelling headphones"
- (P8) "When I really need to get concentrated at the office, I put on my earphones."

Listen to music

- (P4) "Sometimes if I'm trying to focus and I can't tune out the noise, I just cover it up with music. If my environment is too loud or there's a lot going on, I do have a little bit of trouble focusing, but I usually put music. No lyrics, just focused music and I just try to hyper focus, and that seems to work."
- (P70) "I use my air pods to play music and concentrate in what I need to do."
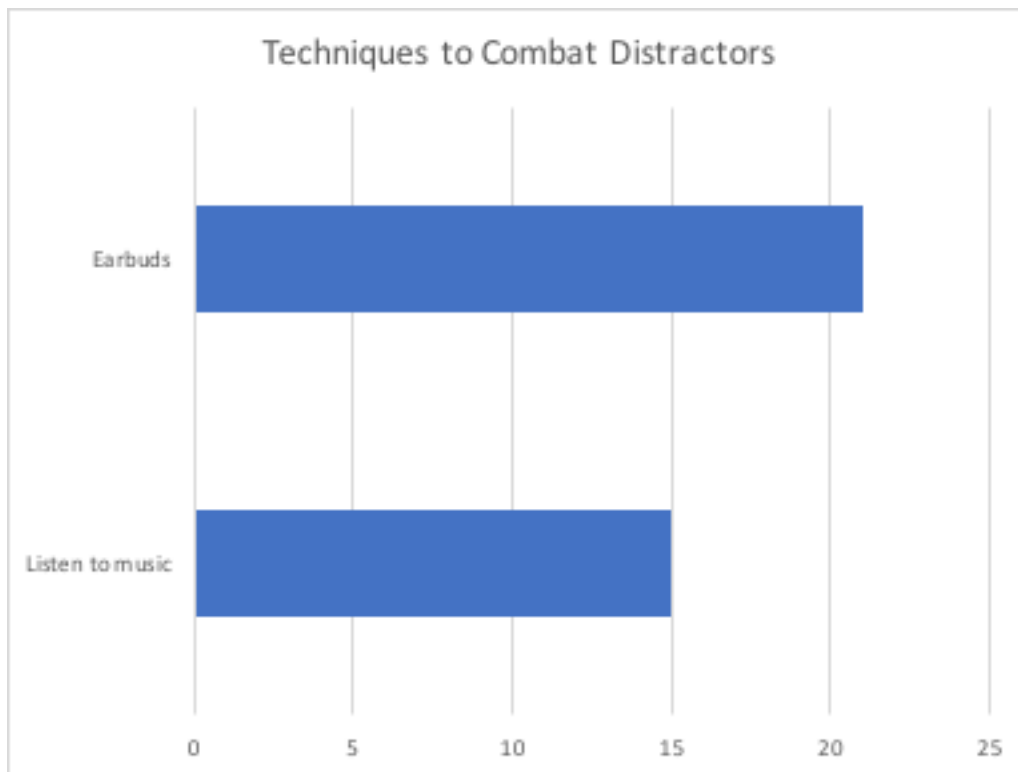- (P51) "I put music to focus."

Figure 4: Techniques to Combat Distractors

RQ2. How will leaders engage Gen Zs and Millennials?

The top three emergent themes during the interviews with Gen Z and millennials related to engagement is when working on projects that are rewarding and impactful to not only them, but to society. They are highly engaged when the work that they do is meaningful, and they constantly seek new challenges. The importance of meaningful work, as an intrinsic motivator has a direct and positive relationship with engagement and retention. millennials value authenticity and organization values (company culture). Especially if it aligns to their personal and societal goals.

Work needs to be rewarding and impactful

- (P2) "I have been lucky in the sense that the partners that I get to work with are partners that I am familiar with through my everyday life. Some of those partners are video game companies. I am 22 and I still play video games, so I get to go to these meetings, and they are like, oh I don't know if you guys like video games because we don't talk to people who play. I tell them, no I still play video games."
- (P7) "I can see the impact that I have."

Work needs to be meaningful

- (P10) "Having a purpose, having the work that you do creates happiness, contribution and feeling that it is meaningful."
- (P66) "I am helping both the organization and I'm helping the citizens of the economy. The thing that keeps me motivated is the challenge of both, helping people and helping the organization."
- (P52) "The things that we do in our company everyday are some very transformational things for the community."

Looking for new challenges

- (P2) "Trial by fire is like getting tossed into situations where it's like new and uncertain but also kind of hard."
- (P3) "The different projects that we participate in is for engagement and the other is for being challenged. We try to challenge ourselves."
- (P51) "I always try to see something new, something different and challenge myself."
- (P66) "I always learn something new. I am faced with a different new challenge every day."
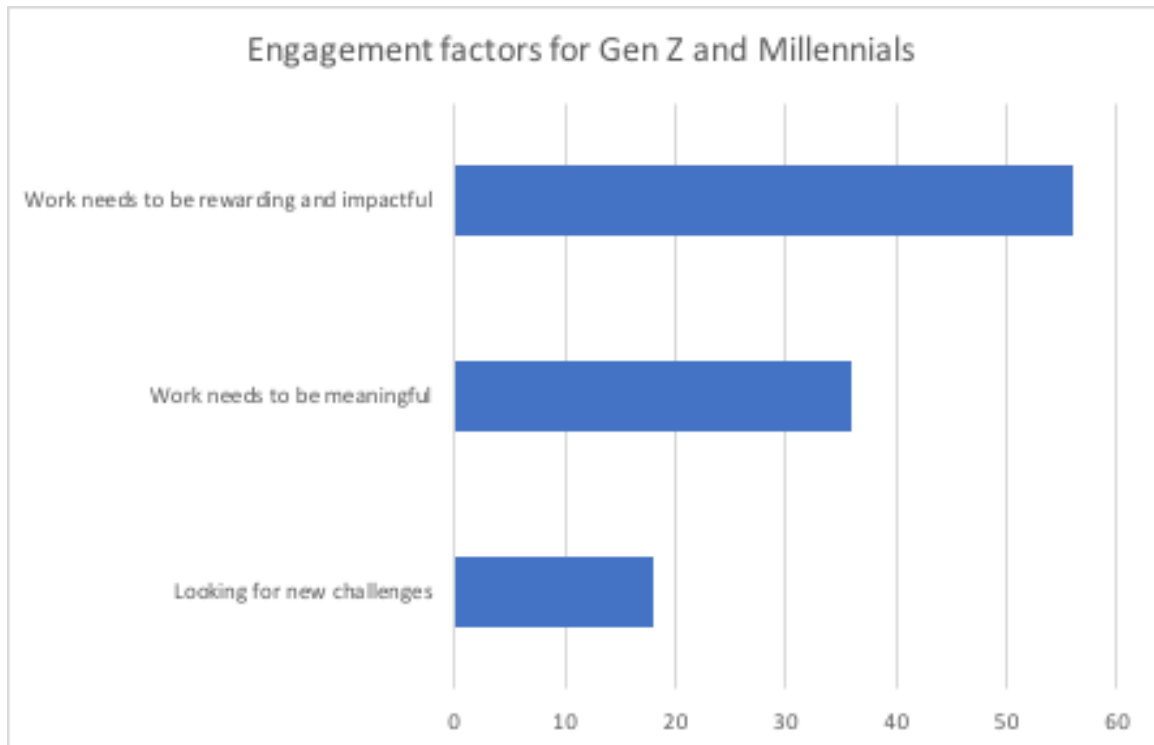
Figure 5: Engagement factors for Gen Z and Millennials

The responses to the interview show the top three emergent themes when it comes to Gen Z and millennials defining empowerment. They feel empowered when given more responsibility, are able to decide what to work on (self-directed work) and are able to voice their opinions in a safe space. There is a high degree of autonomy in these two generations which is an enigma given that they have been exposed to highly structured environments while growing up.

Give more responsibility

- (P11) "As I learn new things, they give me new responsibilities. Also they consider me to new projects and let me do new things myself."
- (P4) "I do feel like when I am owning certain projects or doing more than supporting on a project, I do feel more empowered."
- (P50) "I feel empowered because I'm given the trust to work on things that are important to the clients."

- (P53) "I think that sense of responsibility that you're giving this company at a young part of your career and for those who like that war feeling in your stomach when you're making decisions is really great."

Self-directed work

- (P10) "There is no one really watching me like what I am doing."
- (P52) "Every single day, I perceive more and more control."
- (P64) "I feel that I am the owner of my area. I love working on multiple things and working on different things. I don't feel that I have to ask for permission or ask for approvals."
- (P66) "I have the space and the opportunity to build, so I am empowered to build the space and the results that show the contribution to the company."
- (P71) "No one needs to tell me what to do. I stay up at night if I have something to resolve."

Provide a "safe" space to voice opinions

- (P1) "There is actually a safe zone to feel like it's okay to voice your opinion in a respectful way."
- (P3) I feel empowered to share my thoughts to put my concerns on the table."
- (P51) I always have the opportunity to present my ideas."
- (P53) You are being asked to provide an opinion that gets taken into consideration for decisions."
- (P72) "My boss and my bosses boss listen to me and my idea and I always have their support."
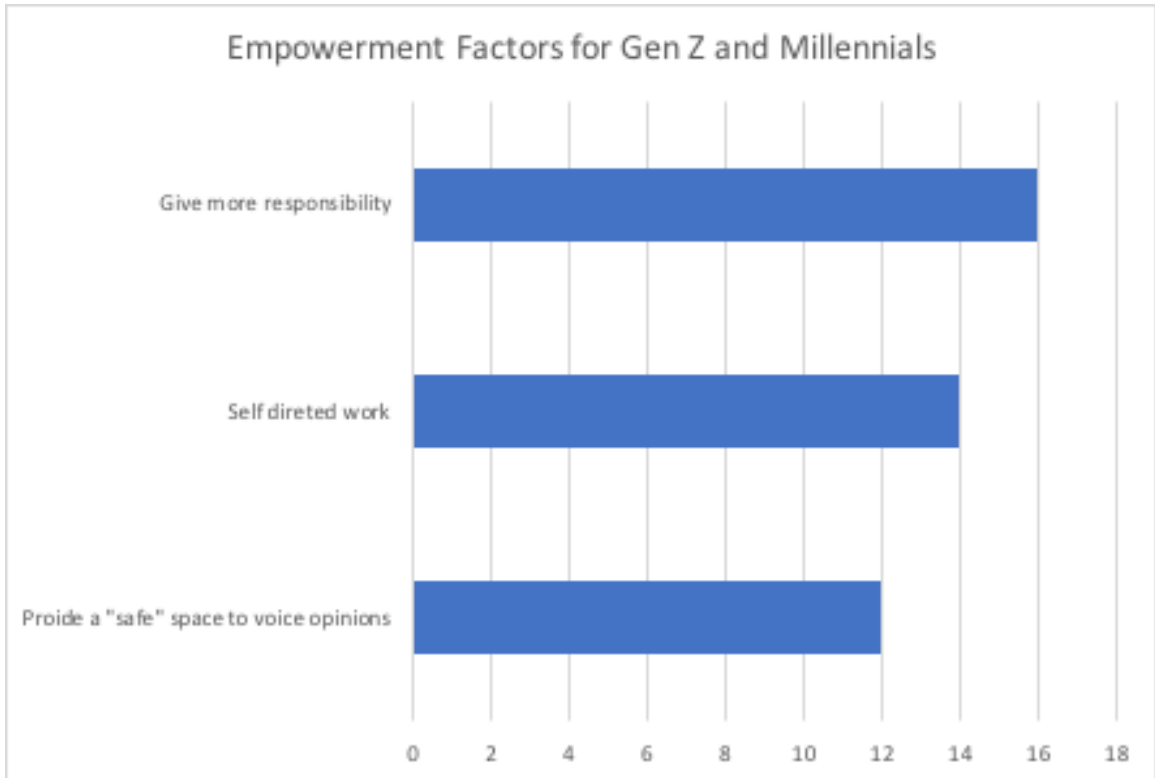
Figure 6: Empowerment Factors for Gen Z and Millennials

Upon interviewing the participants there were some overlap between engagement and empowerment. The following statements appeared when asking about engagement and empowerment: Self-directed work/works during own time; safe space to voice opinions; high amount of responsibility; share ideas/not holding back. Participants including leaders see the above-mentioned statements interchangeably when asked about engagement and empowerment.

Gen Z, Millennial and Leaders Input on Engagement and Empowerment

Engagement   **_Empowerment_**

New Challenges

Open Communication

Team members

Having fun

Works on own time/
Self-directed work

Safe space to voice opinions

Amount of responsibility given

Share ideas/does not hold back

Decision making

Exposure

Challenge way things are done

Ability to lead
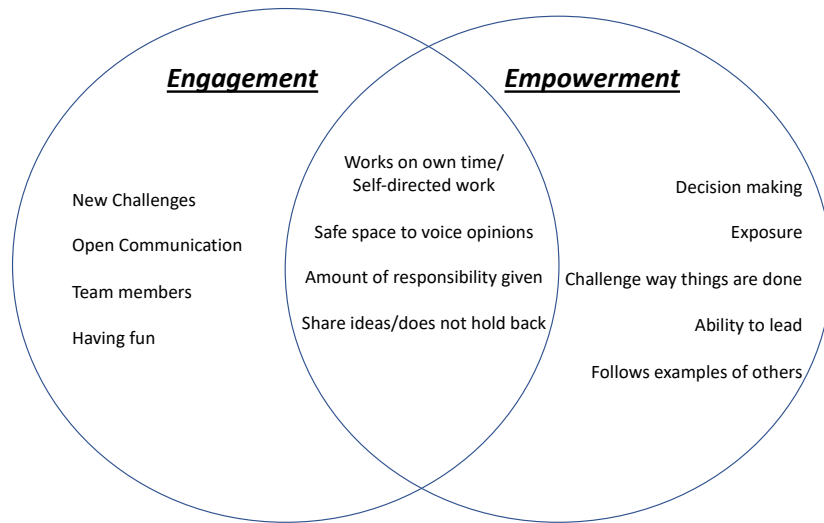
Follows examples of others

Figure 7: Gen Z, Millennial and Leaders input on Engagement and Empowerment

There was an emergent themes that clearly reflected disparity among the leader and employee populations. The disconnect came with what the leader perceived that the Gen Z and millennials want when it comes to engagement and empowerment whereas Gen Z and millennials are not interested in. Leaders imagine that Gen Z and millennials want exposure and decision-making authority. Combined these two themes were mentioned 47 times by leaders, however only 15 times from Gen Z and millennials.
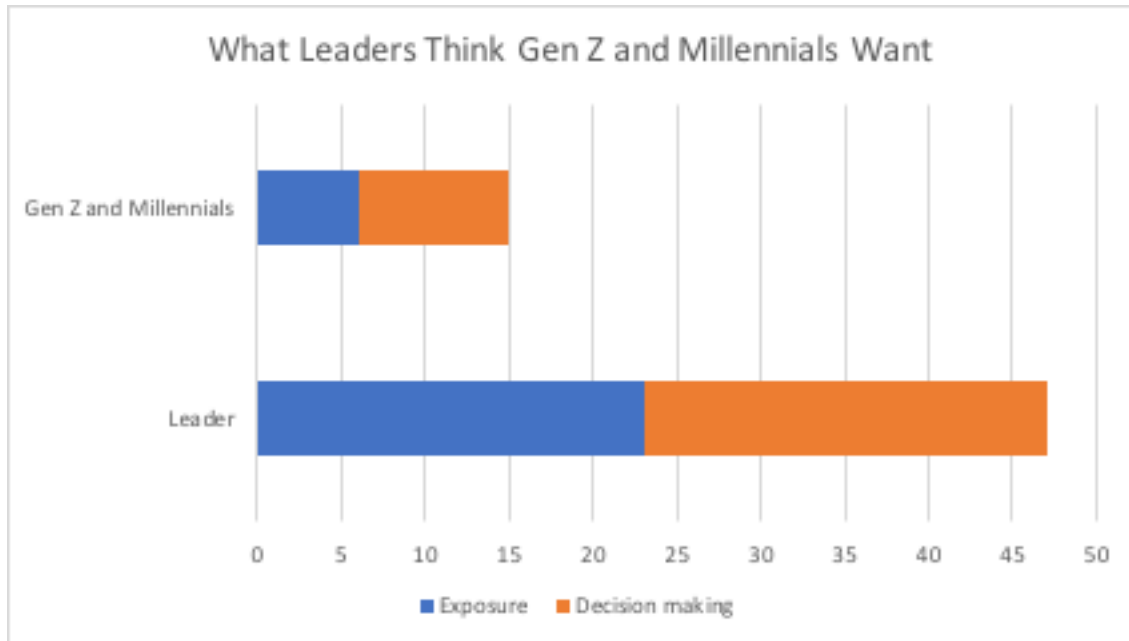
Figure 8:What Leaders Think Gen Z and Millennials Want

Gen Z and millennials were specific in describing what behaviors they look for in

a leader. In the observed themes all participants including leaders concur that being a

caring leader that values work-life balance is important. A leader that is authentic and

relatable are essential. As well as, a leader that is honest and trusting.

Caring and balanced

- (P65) "Someone who is not only good on the work side, but also on the empathy or just the understanding that there is also personal matters where we have our good and our bad days. This one leader was very understanding of our personal space."
- (P72) "He would set me aside and ask how I was doing. I was going through a very rough patch in my life—in my relationship. He would see me, and say come to my office and let's talk, the company is not going to stop."
- (P1) "Someone who prioritizes family. Understanding of everyone's different life situations."
- (P4) "Gives you freedom to manage your life and any unexpected events that you need to attend to."

- (P55) "She was also very cautious to transmit the message in a way that would not make me feel ashamed or my mistakes or somehow uncomfortable."
- (P61) "Combination of a very human leadership."
- (P62) "Thinks about the others. Is always putting others first."

Relatable and authentic

- (P2) "Someone who was relatable."
- (P54) "He's approachable."
- (P6) "The best leader was the one that did not make me feel intimidated because of the big age gap. Sometimes when you're coming into the corporate world, you have that thought of, how can I relate to my manager. He made himself very relatable to me."
- (P53) "Leads with emotion and charisma and someone who is authentic. He is the real thing."
- (P54) "He is very humble. He will sit with random people at lunch just to let them know that there is not actual hierarchy."
- (P56) "We could be real to each other."
- (P58) "She is authentic and that is something that I've always appreciated and especially from female leaders growing, starting up in consulting, a very male dominated career."

Honest and trusting

- (P62) "My leader is humane and can be trusted."
- (P4) "The best leaders I've had is someone that trusts you to do your work. Someone you feel that you can trust."
- (P55) "I could trust in her."
- (P5) In the beginning, my boss would step in more and be there more. Now it's kind of like, you already know this, I trust you to go alone to this meeting."
- (P64) "She is a person who is human and can be trusted."
- (P65) "It's a leader that gives me confidence, that builds a relationship of trust and honesty."
- (P72) "Once you show him that he could trust you, he would just let you fly. I think that's so important because it opens the door to creativity, to people coming up with ideas. I really appreciate that."
- (P1) "Someone who is honest, just blatantly honest and tells you everything like it is and won't sugar coat anything."
- (P66) "It's a leader that gives me confidence, that builds a relationship of trust and honesty."

Figure 9: Leadership Behaviors
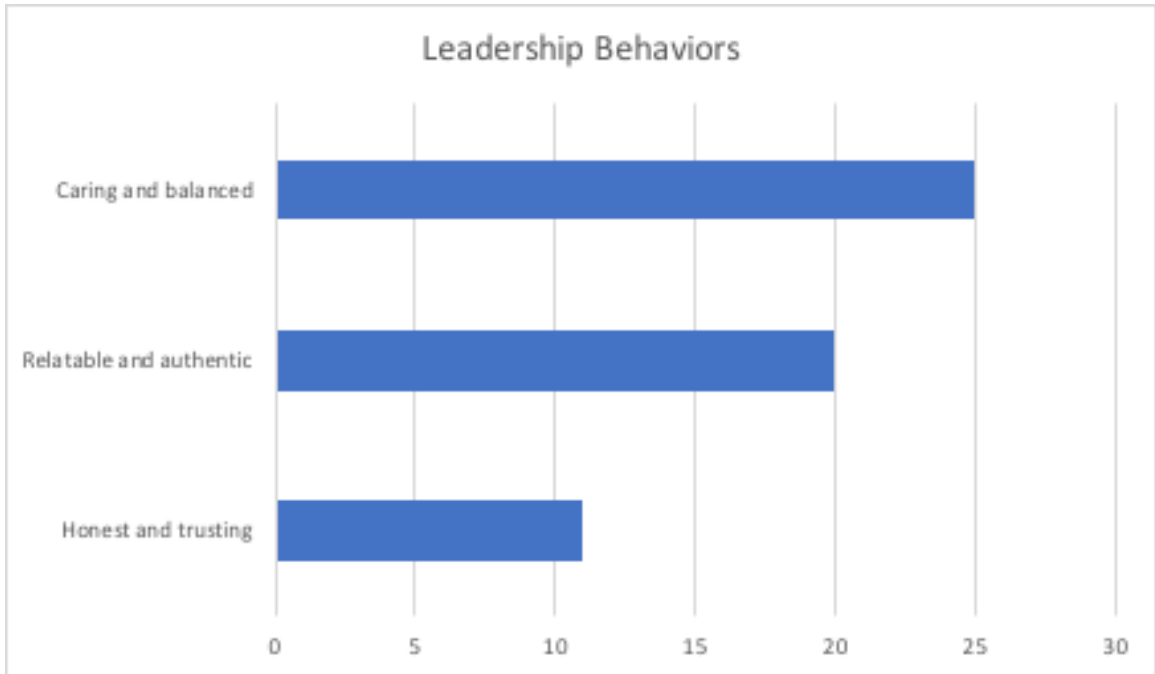
It was noted that Leaders are at odds with Gen Z and millennials when it comes to having fun at the workplace. Leaders place a higher value on this than Gen Z and millennials. Gen Z and millennials place a higher degree on importance to Leaders being serious, respectful and confident. Gen Z and millennials are also looking for a leader that leads by example—18 mentions during interviews.
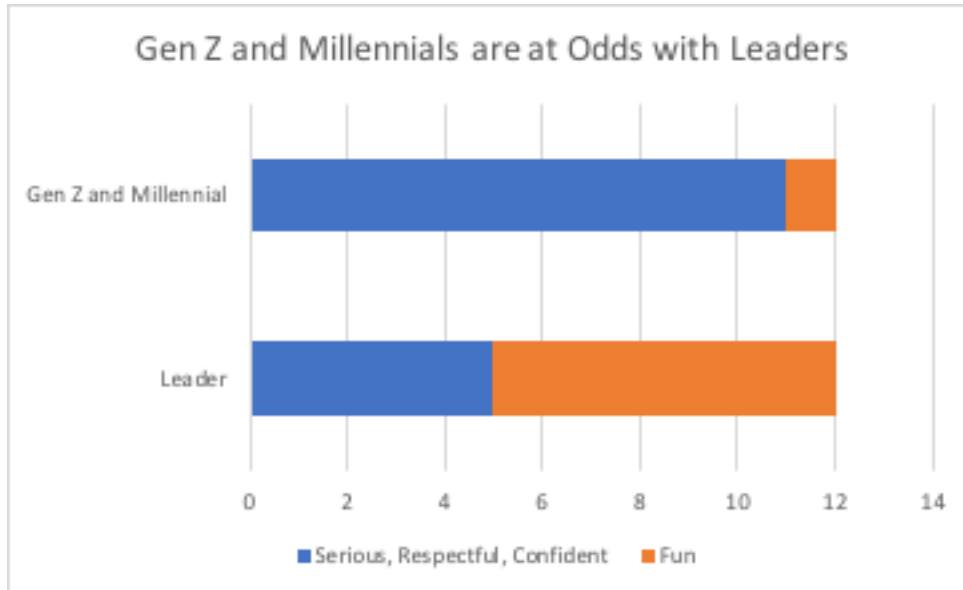
Figure 10: Gen Z and Millennials are at Odds with Leaders

As previously mentioned, Gen Z and millennials are looking for a protective

leader that provides guidance, has their back, coaches and provides feedback. This was

evident throughout their interviews. Validating that they are looking for an extension of

their parental units and how the workplace is a continuation of their home life. An

emphasis on psychological safety was evident along with a development component.

Provides guidance

- (P6) "The best leader was the one that was able to help guide me through all the different tools available that the company has to offer. In order for me to perform my tasks better and more efficiently."
- (P7) "They take every opportunity to teach you, but not teach as a lecture, more like a living experience."
- (P8) "Someone who helped me during my process of learning how to do things."
- (P62) "I like a leader that is a giver, that is sharing his knowledge to the team and to others."
- (P53) "A person that leads with knowledge."
- (P54) "He was a hands-on leader."
- (P55) "She was a person that has deep knowledge on what she was doing."

- (P56) "He would be transparent, if I did something wrong or something needed to be corrected."

Has your back

- (P68) "She always backed her employees up."
- (P66) "I know that since the beginning we established a very respectful relationship. He would say, I have your back, you have my back and we will learn together."
- (P8) "She was always there when I needed."
- (P1) "Someone will have your back."
- (P55) "I knew that I would follow her path and she would be guiding me to a good place withing the company."
- (P5) "A good leader needs to have a right balance in stepping in when he or she is needed."

Coaches

- (P8) "I didn't feel she was my boss, I felt like she was my coach."
- (P58) "She's authentic, she's a connector of people, she's a great coach. She knows how to ask probing questions. She always listens and asks probing questions and allowed me to find my path."
- (P64) "Being a coach is important."
- (P68) "She gave me instant feedback and provided coaching. She would say, I saw this, and you need to change by doing that. She would give helpful tips."

Provides feedback

- (P8) "Sometimes when I did wrong things that person didn't get angry. She would say, maybe we should improve that or let me give you some advice."
- (P71) "He was direct with both the positive and negative. I like the way he is."
- (P50) "Has the ability to touch base and ask where we are at and if we need feedback."
- (P55) "I felt the trust on her in whenever she had to give me any type of feedback."
- (P56) "Even if he told me like things were wrong and he had to tell me, I know that he was doing it from love."
- (P58) "They would open up in saying, 'Hey can I share some comments with you?' and always very respectful."
- (P5) "He was very sincere and frank in terms of providing feedback, not positive and negative. When you do a good job and when you did a bad job."
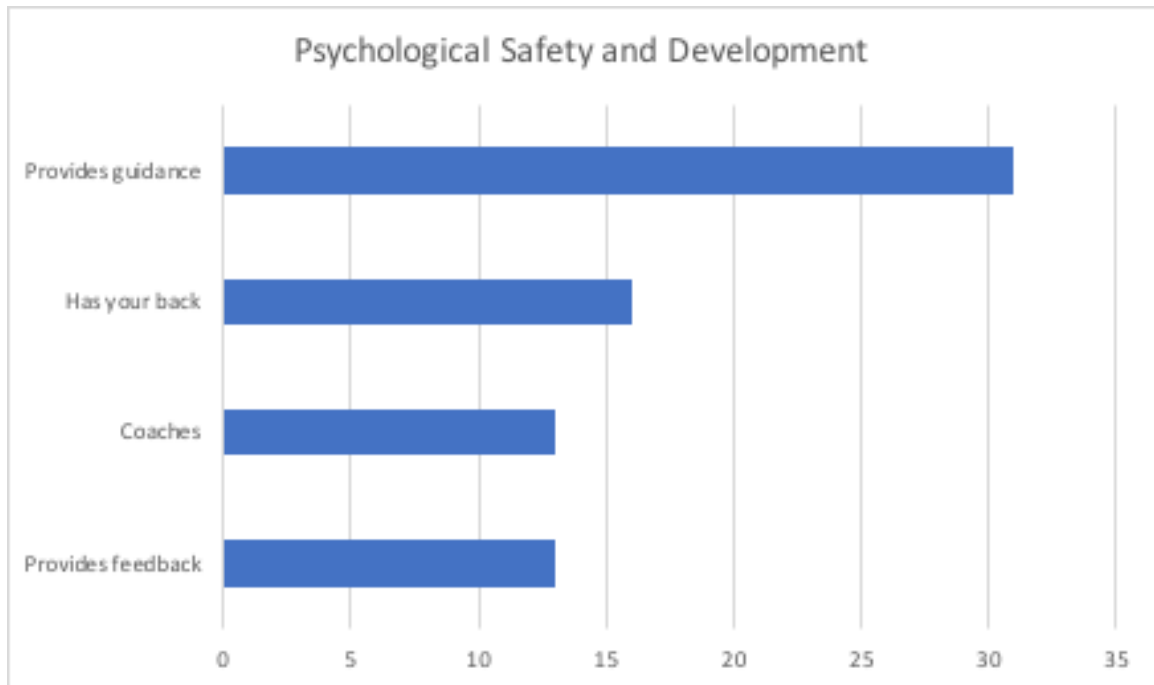
Figure 11: Psychological Safety and Development

When it comes to leadership style, Leaders feel that Gen Z and millennials are looking for a motivational leader, however Gen Z and millennials are looking for an inspirational leader. Inspirational leadership is a method of leadership that focuses on inspiration or inspiring followers (Avramenko, 2014; Goffee and Jones, 2006). By admitting vulnerability by disclosing their imperfections, humanized them and made the leaders more inspirational (Ludeman & Erlandson, 2004). This makes the leaders more endearing to Gen Z and millennials. Motivation externally driven and compels one to take action—pulling towards something. Whereas inspiration is something that comes from within where one pushes forward. This will create a conflict between the leaders and the generational cohorts provided that the leaders do not adapt to the needs of the

employee. The leaders will be offering something that the employees do not value or will find productive.
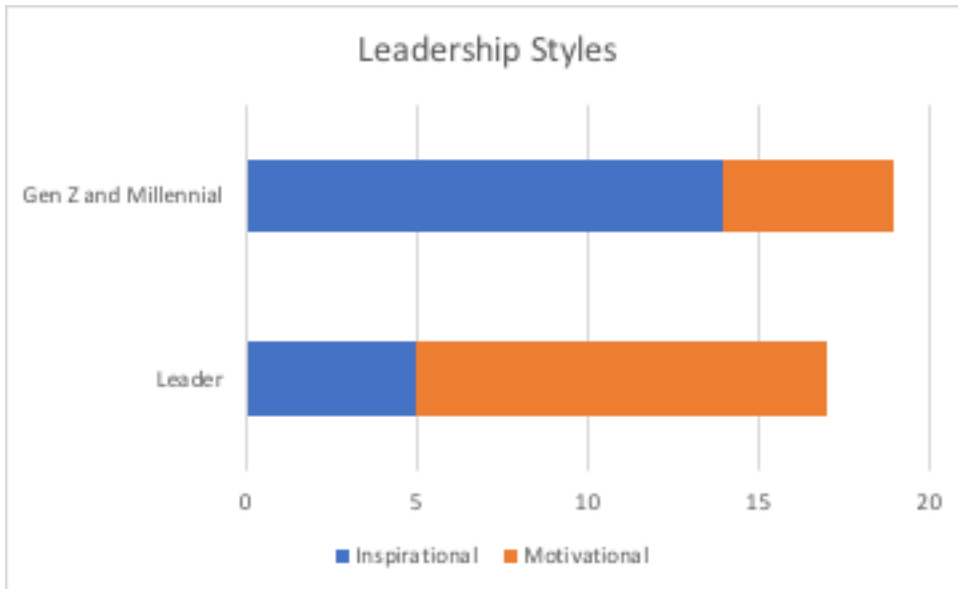
Figure 12: Leadership Styles

RQ3. Which factors contribute to Gen Z and Millennials staying with a company?

Global talent sourcing has proven to be competitive and retention is becoming a significant challenge human resources and corporate leadership. This research question will address what factors will contribute to Gen Z and millennials staying with a company longer and their expectations came out strong during the interviews. Parting from the assumptions that employees are paid fairly and have good medical health plans, what will retain Gen Z and millennials is intrinsic (e.g., continued learning and impactful work). Motivation activates through a set of regulatory styles two of which are external introjected and intrinsic regulation. They vary from the greatest self-determined and autonomous form of motivation (intrinsic) to the least self-

determined and controlled for of motivation (external) (Mahmoud, Fuxman, Mohr & Reisel, 2020). Intrinsic motivation occurs when employees are motivated by self-satisfaction and are driven to perform, hence these intrinsically motivated employees are do not need additional compensation, recognition or other types of praise as stated by Mahmoud, Fuxman, Mohr and Reisel (2020). Intrinsic motivation nurtures meaning relationship, making contributions and personal growth and gain. When a person is intrinsically motivated, they perform for their own pleasure and enjoyment, instead of demands, external pressures or rewards (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation refers to societal values and expectation that include money and popularity (Mahmound, et al, 2020). Continued learning as defined by these cohorts is guided learning, which entails having a coach, mentor or meaningful development conversations with their leader; participating in projects, exchange programs or exposure to leaders; and finally training sessions be it instructor led sessions or web-based training. The meaning of loyalty to millennials is when organization assures employees development, training, coaching and mentoring and opportunities for growth (Hershatter & Epstein 2010). Leaders did not rank continued learning and rewarding impactful work as high as Gen Z and millennials. Leaders applied a higher degree of importance in career opportunities (38) than Gen Z and millennials (17). Similarly, Leaders applied a higher degree of importance in being valued (46) than Gen Z and millennials (16). Again at odds, Leaders need to focus on what will motivate Gen Z and millennials.

Continued learning

- (P10) "Constantly learning opportunities for development such as the company's university portal, I think that's essential."

- (P11) "Education reimbursement is important. It support to keep improving yourself to learning and to develop yourself."
- (P50) "Having resources available to continue developing myself as a professional."
- (P60) "I think that the benefits of learning and feeling that I am developing myself and the work that I do is highly valued."
- (P62) "If I'm not leaning and I'm doing the same thing all the time, I will probably move and fast."
- (P68) "The company's commitment is there for continued development and growth."
- (P8) My generation does not want to stay in a place that doesn't offer improvements, knowledge, becoming a better professional or person."

Good Benefits and Fair Pay

- (P1) "I think the company actively looks at benefits, kind of like on a rolling basis."
- (P4) "We do have competitive pay and benefits."
- (P2) "I think that obviously the benefits are really good."
- (P50) "I think that the benefits are very good in terms of medical benefits and compensation. The 401K and stock program are very good."
- (P54) "Well I mean, compensation is always a strong aspect to think of."
- (P55) "Compensation and remuneration is also a strong topic."
- (P5) " I think that the bonus package and the compensation is excellent, but I also think it makes people comfortable."
- (P67) "Benefits and salary are above the medium."
- (P8) "Tuition reimbursement for me is a really good benefit."

Rewarding impactful work

- (P10) "Having challenging work that has an impact."
- (P2) "I think that the work has been extremely rewarding and it has also been hard."
- (P56) "As long as I am able to find fulfilment in the task, find value my ideas are taken into account, find that I'm working toward things that are being implemented in the market."
- (P66) "What the Company delivers, not only to the client, but to society. As long as I keep admiring it, I am going to be here working together and trying to contribute to this."
- (P7) "What I do is very social, and it can impact the society. I find that to be super important."
- (P9) "I see myself as that pioneer of this process for the company and for FinTechs and so for that reason, I don't see myself pursuing anything anytime soon."
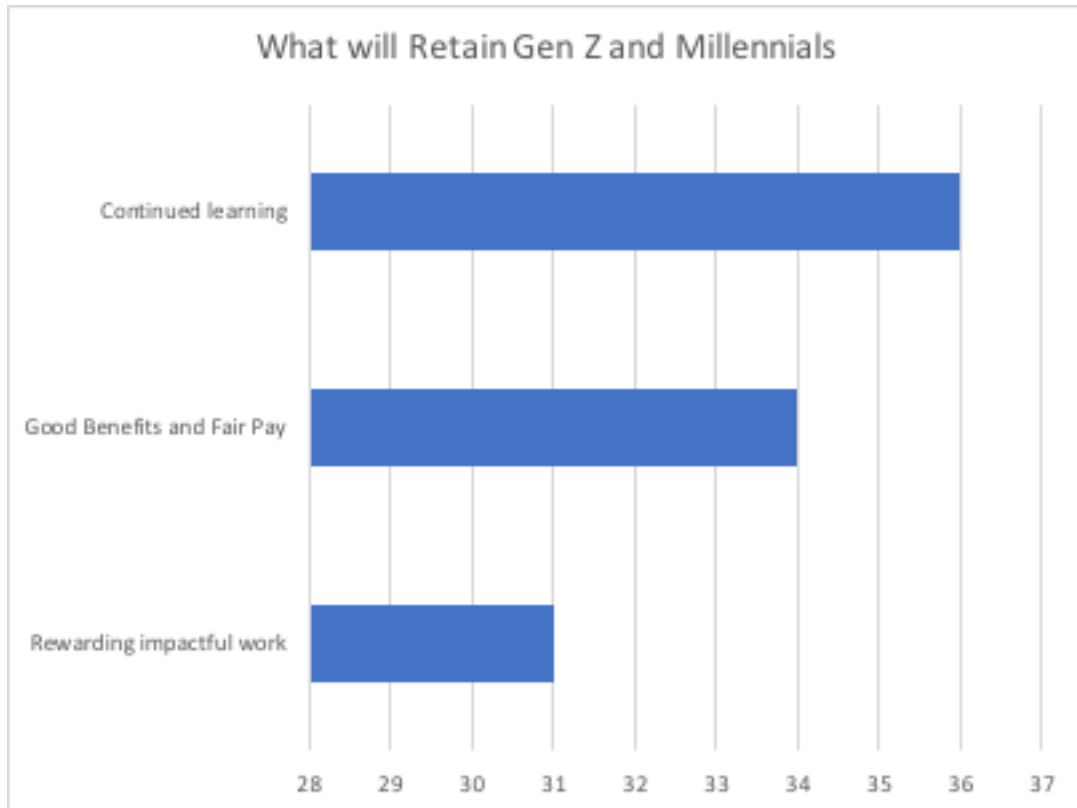
Figure 13: What will Retain Gen Z and Millennials

Training sessions

- (P10) "Whenever I have time on the weekends or sometimes after work, I just go on the Company learning portal. I always try to take as many courses as I can."
- (P11) "I have found a lot of tools, a lot of data, a lot of trainings that have helped me to develop these capabilities. I had the opportunity to be part of a lot of courses during the Company's Learning Fest."
- (P1) "I've been reading books on how to manage, a lot of HBR books, so all that's really interesting. Anything that I can see and understand like where I am now in my career and how I can be of use."
- (P4) "The company does offer a lot of training."
- (P50) "I had the opportunity to go to the Strategic Workshop at the University of Miami."
- (P54) "I have been working on committing to developing public speaking skills, presentation skills, other skills that are complimentary to my work outside of the technical courses.
- (P58) "I just completed the Company's Leadership training and it was wonderful to understand the difference of feedback and coaching."

Projects, exposure, exchange programs

- (P51) "I take advantage of working in the team and reach out to others to work in projects and get exposure."
- (P52) "My way to learn more, and in that matter, transcend in my role is to have the experience. I'm not so engaged in a specific training. It is more about the experience for me."
- (P63) "I have been able to work on some LAC projects and I think that shows me more of my role, not only the Andean region, but teaches me about the organization on a different scale. Not only local, but how the HUB works how the LAC team works. That gives me more networking."
- (P66) "The opportunity that the Company gave me to work on different teams. So I started with Risk then Operations and then I moved to Products, now I am in Processing."
- (P68) "I took advantage of the opportunity and my boss has been giving me more projects. I have earned his trust and one of the projects that help me a lot was a bid deal that was done."
- (P70) "Working on multifunctional projects."

Guided learning (coach, mentor, leader)

- (P1) "Okay, so I have a mentor. I got like a mentor last year officially who helped propel me in a lot of just different things to grow out of the first two years of my transition like from school going into the corporate world. Those first two years I think were like training wheels."
- (P3) "I try to be in close conversations with my manager about career development."
- (P57) "I've discussed with my manager, who is very open minded about career conversations, he always mentions that you are the one that is creating your career."
- (P58) "I've had a mentor since I graduated from college."
- (P64) "Yes, a few months ago I stated having monthly meetings with a leader. She is my coach. I picked her because of her regional scope."
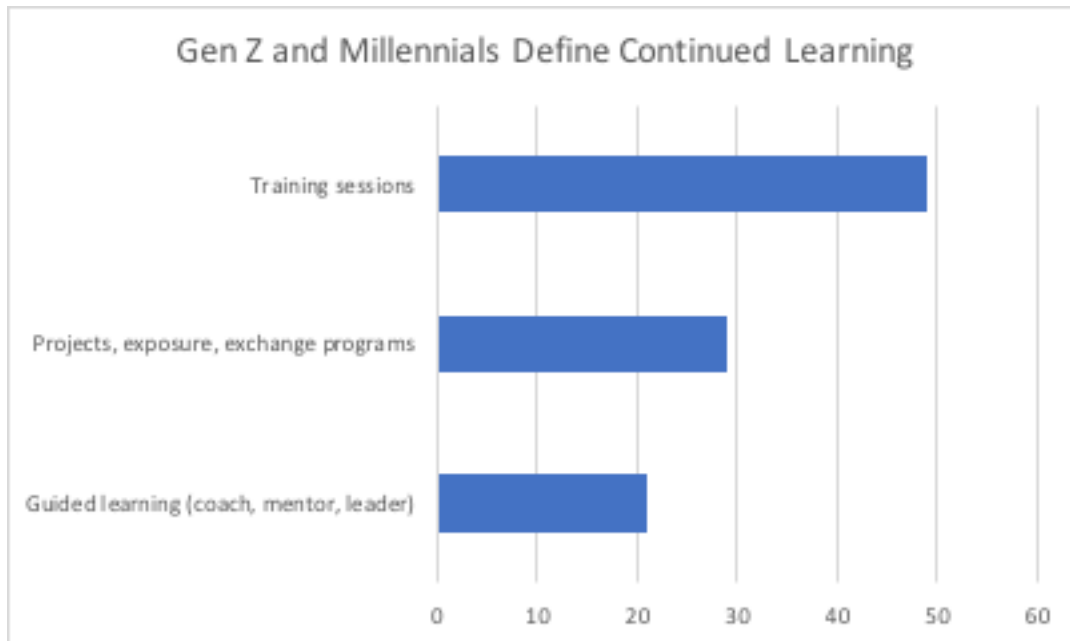
Figure 14: Gen Z and Millennials Define Continued Learning

This chapter presented the results and findings of the data collected, highlighting

verbatims of the participants as it related to each of the research questions. The thematic

analysis of the data included manual coding and using the NVivo qualitative data system.

The analysis consisted of coding, creating specific categories for data presentation and

formulating descriptions of the research through those categories to uncover themes

(Schaefer, 2016). Graphs were utilized to visually demonstrated the emergent themes

along with the researcher's analysis answering each research question. Further, the

researcher found that there was no difference in the generational responses due to

location, country of origin or culture. The responses were consistent throughout the

generational cohort as it is reflected by the emerging themes throughout this chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was in part to expand the existing knowledge of the two youngest cohorts (Gen Z and millennials) in the workplace.

The first chapter introduced the study, included the problem statement, purpose, theoretical framework used, research questions, significance of the study and definitions. The second chapter provided the literature review laying out the theoretical framework and context of the study further positioning overarching theoretical grounding Gen Z and Millennial behaviors, engaging Gen Z and millennials and retaining Gen Z and millennials. The third chapter explained the research method as in the methodology, performed pilots, data collection methods and analysis rigor, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, process used to comply with confidentiality protocols to safeguard participants identities. The fourth chapter focused on the findings of the study. This chapter offered the researcher's background, details on the sample, demographic data and the emerging themes tied to the research questions as a result of the data analysis process. The last chapter—Chapter 5, which focuses on a summary of the study, implications discussion, recommendations for future researcher and conclusion bringing the study to a close.

Results

Since little is known of the Gen Z cohort as they are just entering the workforce and are currently holding entry level positions, the researcher wanted to learn more about this cohort. The study took place with employees and leaders of a Fortune 500 Multinational Technology Company. There were 11 Gen Z participants in the sample, due to the small number, the researcher decided to combine the of Gen Z cohort with

millennials in the company to expand the sample size to a total of 34 employees

interviewed. In order for the study not to be one sided, Supervisors of Gen Z and

millennials along with Executive Leaders of the company were also interviewed totaling

38. The total number of participants were 72. The international study included

participants with 13 different nationalities based in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico,

Peru and the United States of America. The gender representation between employees

and the leadership group were fairly balanced: 34 Female participants; and 38 Male

participants. This sample yielded ample data to analyze and advance in adequately

responding to the posed research questions.

Theoretical Implications

The findings aligned and expanded on previous studies. The main motivation for

conducting this study was due to the lack of research on the Gen Z cohort and the lasting

effects that the digital environment is having on attention spans. Further, motivation and

expectation that both Gen Z and millennials have on their leaders was also explored.

I believe that this study has made significant contribution to the Leader-Member

Exchange (LMX) theory especially in the area of social exchange theory. The social

exchange theory emphasized that interactions among people are established on

maintaining the balance between giving and receiving (Blau, 1964). Extrinsic rewards

refer to the quantifiable monetary value provided to the employees as in salary, bonus,

welfare and anything related in monetary form (Yin, 2017). While Intrinsic rewards

include rewards that cannot be quantifiable in monetary form as in power, prestige,

promotion, and any improvement in work resource (Tymon, Stumpf & Doh, 2010).   The

reality of having the future workforce dominated by Gen Z and millennials, it is clear that they are intrinsically motivated, which adds an additional level of complexity for leaders.

The first major implication of this research is to propose in including leadership behaviors that revolve around being a caring leader that values work-life balance and a leader that is authentic and relatable, as well as a leader that is honest and trusting in the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory especially in the area of social exchange theory. These attributes are linked to how a leader is expected to show up demonstrating a high degree of care and authenticity that to the best of my knowledge was not present in any other studies evaluated for this research.

When an organization and by design leaders promises to give employees rewards, respect, justice among other elements, employees' trust will increase and by default they would want to work harder and will repay the organization by better performance (Masterson and Taylor, 2000). The second implication of the research is to include retention as an outcome along with engagement. Hence, caring including the above-mentioned behaviors as part of the social exchange theory, I posit that it will also not only increase measures of engagement but also retention for these two cohorts. The blend of supportive leaders along with identifiable company norms will appeal to Gen Z and millennials.

No longer will compensation solve for lack of engagement and discontent. It may solve for the short term, but if they are not impacting their communities or societies with meaningful important work they will leave. They have a leadership image that they pursue, which is inspirational leadership. They seek a human, trusting, caring and honest leader. One who is authentic, admits vulnerability and discloses imperfections

(Avramenko, 2014; Goffee & Jones, 2006). In exchange for these behaviors from their

leader, they will repay this treatment with engagement and loyalty. If their needs are met

and have an inspirational leader, they will think twice before leaving. This study will

provide leaders with a blueprint of how to effectively manage and gain the trust of Gen Z

and millennials. Traditional leadership tendencies that create a barrier with professional

and personal lives do not resonate with these two generational cohorts. Leaders that

demonstrate caring and authentic behaviors will gain their trust and influence them.

The degree in which a subordinate feels psychologically safe is closely related to

being able to show one's self without fear of negative consequence of status, career or

self-image (Kahn, 1990). The third implication of the study is that psychological safety

goes both ways not just for the subordinate. Leaders need to also feel safe in showing

their true self without negative consequence. Not doing so will hinder their ability to gain

the trust of their subordinates (e.g., Gen Z and millennials). These two cohorts have this

expectation of their leaders.

Practical Implications

The study has implications for perceptions on short attention spans and

development practices. The two cohorts are independent, self-directed and will address

their perceived low attention spans. After further research it was discovered that the

often-quoted statistic of the average attention span being down from 12 seconds in 2000

to eight seconds now is not based on any real research (Subramanian, 2018). This

research found that the digital environment has oversaturated employees with information

overload and competing deliverables, increasing stress levels and needing assistance

when prioritizing work. The main distractors were constant interruptions from their

colleagues and multitasking. The real issue it the illusion of the ability to multitask. Contrary to popular belief, they don't have an issue with attention span, they can focus for hours on a single project as long as it is meaningful, relevant and they have the time and space to accomplish it. (Subramanian, 2018). It was discovered as a result of the study that as long as they are provided assistance in prioritizing their deliverables and are provided deadlines to keep them on track, this will maximize their focus. Additionally, as long as they are offered projects that are enjoyable and they like, this will maximize engagement and focus. They are also leveraging the digital environment and tools to help them simplify work and maximize efficiency.

The two cohorts are on a quest for knowledge. This knowledge can be obtained in many different ways—web-based training, traditional training sessions, project work, exchange programs, mentorship, coaches, etc. There is a growing movement towards replacing marathon training with brief learning experiences referred to micro-training, short-form training, as-needed training or Burst training (Subramanian, 2018). Companies would benefit from implementing learning experiences that will satisfy the needs of Gen Z and millennials. The study reflected the intrinsic motivation that drives these two generations. Development is one of them. Their pursuit for continued growth and development will provide this need and ultimately continue to engage them and motivate them to stay with the company.

Business Leaders and Human Resources Practitioners will benefit from this data as it will provide insights for managing these cohorts and offering them the necessary development and opportunities to engage and retain them.

Limitations

The data will be limited to the Multinational Technology Company; hence the information gathered may or may not be transferable to other companies. Another limitation is the unpredictability of the data gathered while interviewing employees. They may have censored themselves for fear of the information leaking, and when interviewing managers, they may have omitted information that may place their leadership skills into question.

The study was limited to employees from this one Multinational Technology Company with more than one year of employment and in good standing which means receiving a performance rating of Meeting or above. The sampling had a geographical constraint that while being an international study, only employees from Miami, Florida and Buenos Aires, Argentina, Sao Paulo, Brazil, Bogota, Colombia, Mexico City, Mexico, Lima, Peru were interviewed. This selection sample was based on participants belonging to either the Millennial or Generation Z generational cohort. The leaders that were selected were either part of the company's leadership team or supervisors of Millennial or Generation Z employees with more than one year of supervisory experience. The focus of the research was limited to a specific populations to gain and understand what factors would encourage employee retention and how leaders are adapting to short attention spans and engaging their employees.

Avenues for Future Research

Future research will be needed as the generations evolve with time. We studied millennials that are coming into age and are no longer the younger generation and Generation Z the incoming cohort. As Generation Z matures, their outlook may change. As more Gen Zs enter the workforce, the sample size will undoubtedly grow.

It is recommended to conduct the study with a larger sample size encompassing different industries as this study was limited to one company in the technology sector. Expanding the study to include other regions as in Asia Pacific, Europe and Central Europe, Middle East and Africa would be useful to compare findings.

There is an assumption that Gen Z are entrepreneurial. A suggestion for a future study would be to validate whether this generation is actually entrepreneurial and how will that affect existing corporations with a shortage of talent.

Conclusions

The 72 participants involved in this study, no matter the location, national origin or age group provided great insights into answering the research questions related to Generation Z and millennials. By organizations creating a robust and favorable employer brand is imperative in promoting positive attitudes in employees (Schlager, et al, 2011). If employees are proud to be affiliated with a company, it will indubitably lead to success in attracting Generation Z and Millennial talent. That coupled with being active participants in communities and societies will feed into the need of these cohorts in making and impact when aligning to their intrinsic needs. Company culture will certainly need to be tied to these aspects in order to attract and retain these two cohorts.

In response for the first research question of how leaders were adapting to Gen Z and Millennial short attention spans, it was found that leaders and employees alike admit that there is an issue with attention spans. However, it is a reality of the digital fast-moving times of today. Leaders have taken steps to adapt and assist the two cohorts in prioritizing their deliverables, providing deadlines to ensure derailment is minimal and ensure that they are kept engaged by providing projects that they like and/or find

enjoyable. Furthermore, Gen Z and millennials identified what are their main distractors in the workplace. There are factors that aggravate short attentions spans and those are constantly being interrupted by colleagues, multitasking or working on many things at the same time, and having competing deliverables. However, these clever cohorts are taking precautions, in order to combat said distractions. They write things down to stay on task, prioritize and work on important things and block time to maximize attention spans. During the study, it was discovered that there is a clear differentiation between attention span and focus. Having short attention spans does not mean that one has the inability to focus. These are mutually exclusive. These cohorts have an uncanny ability to focus. They apply techniques to assist them with this. As they get distracted audibly versus visually, they plug in to tune out noise by using ear buds, listening to music or using noise canceling headsets.

When it comes to engaging Gen Z and millennials, there were three top emergent themes: 1) Working on projects that are rewarding and impactful them and something greater than them (e.g., society, community); 2) The work that they do is meaningful; and 3) Looking for new challenges in their work. There was an overlap in some cases when discussing engagement and empowerment. The following themes came up in both engagement and empowerment answers and are used interchangeably: self-directed work/works during own time; safe space to voice opinions; amount of responsibility given; sharing ideas and not holding back. When discussing empowerment, Gen Z and millennials feel empowered when they are given more responsibility, are able to decide what to work on and have a safe space to voice their opinions. There is a disconnect in what leaders believe Gen Z and millennials want when it comes to engagement and

empowerment. Leaders feel that they want exposure and decision-making authority. Gen Z and millennials had a low mention of these, signifying that they did not apply the same level of importance.

Gen Z and millennials have a definitive view of what they are looking for in a leader. The soft skills that they require are caring, importance in work-life balance, authentic, relatable, trusting and honest. Leaders find themselves at odds with Gen Z and millennials when stating that these two cohorts are looking for fun at the workplace. This was mentioned considerably less times by Gen Z and millennials during the interviews. Nonetheless, they placed a higher degree of importance in having a leader that is serious, respectful and confident. They are looking for a protector of sorts, when they state that they prefer a leader that provides guidance, has their back, coaches and provides feedback. There is an emphasis in psychological safety along with an importance placed on development. When evaluating the emergent themes, it was noted that Leaders feel that Gen Z and millennials are looking for a motivational leadership style, contrary to what was stated by the cohorts as favoring an inspirational leadership style.

The final research questions related to the factors contributing to Generation Z and Millennial retention. Assuming that Gen Z and millennials are fairly paid and have a good benefit program, the emerging themes were continued learning and rewarding and impactful work. The degree of being developed and educated with making a difference by having impactful work is intrinsic in nature and referenced in the previous chapter. Specifically when defining continued learning, the three emerging themes were: providing training sessions; projects, exposure and exchange programs; and guided learning by having a coach, mentor or leader discussion on growth and development.

Whilst leadership attributes came out strong in the study, there is a high degree of importance in how the leader "shows up". The interaction and level of connection is primal in Gen Z and Millennial's decision to stay or go. These generations are notorious for moving between jobs, however if the leader cares for them and their careers, while providing an environment where they feel safe, they will most likely stay longer. The traditional style of leadership (e.g., Inspirational and motivational, transformation, and servant) came up in the study, but were overshadowed by safety and the importance of providing a platform for development and guidance.

While engagement and empowerment are two different concepts, there seems to be overlap between the two, especially when it comes to sharing ideas and not holding back, self-directed work, opportunity to voice opinions and creating a safe space to do so, along with giving higher amounts of responsibility.

This international qualitative study provided data in a topic that will impact all workplaces no matter the location or industry. It will also arm leaders that are responsible for business units and human resources practitioners in how to navigate what will be the two largest generational cohorts in the workforce.

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Appendix 1

Sample text for interview invite:

Dear (Name),

,"""
I am currently a doctoral candidate at Florida International University. As part of my doctoral program, I am to complete a project conducting a performance analysis. For my scholarly project, I am conducting an interview in an effort to gain a better understand how leaders manage different generations in the workplace. We expect that the information obtained will help provide analysis data to whether employees are engaged and motivated.

I will be sending and invitation for an interview to ask some questions. The interview should take no more than 45 minutes. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Florida International University and Eduardo Coello.

Your responses will be confidential. Data will be reported in an aggregate format so that no individual participant will be identified.

I have also attached a copy of the consent form for you to read and familiarize yourself with. This form will need to be signed/acknowledged by you and emailed back to me before our meeting. This is a voluntary process, and it is important that you feel comfortable. If you wish not to participate, kindly decline the invite.

I greatly appreciate your time and willingness to assist me in gathering information relevant to this research study.

If you have questions or concerns about the research study, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone (305) 328-1421, or by email at maribeldiz@bellsouth.net. Thank you for your time and consideration of participation.

Maribel Diz

Appendix 2

Sample Consent Form:

ADULT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

This study is being done in conjunction with Florida International University.

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Things you should know about this study:

- Purpose: The purpose of the study is to evaluate leadership styles in today's digital age. I am conducting interviews in an effort to obtain data on different leadership styles and/or techniques. We expect that the information obtained will help provide analysis data on leading and motivating different generations in the workplace.
- Procedures: If you choose to participate, you will be asked to a few experienced based questions. The questions will ask about your experiences in leading different generations in the workplace. There are no right or wrong answers – We are interested in your experiences and opinions. The interview will be recorded for notetaking purposes. After the interview questions have been transcribed, the recording will be deleted.
- Duration: This will take a maximum of 45 minutes.
- Risks: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants other than devoting 45 minutes of time to taking the survey and no more than one would experience in regular daily activities. There is a low risk that the questions may bring upon memories of work experiences that create joy, sadness or anxiety. There are no foreseeable **physical risks, social or economic risks.**
- Benefits: The main benefit to you from this research is that you may gain some insights about yourself as an employee and/or leader.
- Alternatives: There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study.
- Participation: Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please carefully read the entire document before agreeing to participate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to evaluate leadership styles in today's digital age. I am conducting interviews in an effort to obtain data on different leadership styles and/or techniques. We expect that the information obtained will help provide analysis data on leading and motivating different generations in the workplace.

NUMBER OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 75 people in this research study.

DURATION OF THE STUDY

Your participation will involve a maximum of 45 minutes of your time.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, we will ask you to answer the questions during the interview. The interview will be recorded for notetaking purposes. After the interview has been transcribed, the recording will be deleted.

RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS

The study has the following possible risks to you: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants other than devoting a maximum of 45 minutes of time to taking the survey and no more than one would experience in regular daily activities. There is a low risk that the questions may bring upon memories of work experiences that create joy, sadness or anxiety. There are no foreseeable **physical risks, social or economic risks.**

BENEFITS

The study has the following possible benefits to you: None, however, through the process you may gain some insights about yourself as an employee and/or leader.

ALTERNATIVES

There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private and will be protected to the fullest extent provided by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher team will have access to the records. However, your records may be inspected by authorized University or other agents who will also keep the information confidential.

COMPENSATION & COSTS

There are no costs to you for participating in this study.

RIGHT TO DECLINE OR WITHDRAW

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to participate in the study or withdraw your consent at any time during the study. You will not lose any benefits if you decide not to participate or if you quit the study early. The investigator reserves the right to remove you without your consent at such time that he/she feels it is in the best interest.

RESEARCHER CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the purpose, procedures, or any other issues relating to this research study you may contact Maribel Diz at, 305-328-1421.

IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you would like to talk with someone about your rights of being a subject in this research study or about ethical issues with this research study, you may contact the FIU Office of Research Integrity by phone at 305-348-2494 or by email at ori@fiu.edu.

PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

I have read the information in this consent form and agree to participate in this study. I have had a chance to ask any questions I have about this study, and they have been answered for me. By clicking on the "consent to participate" button below I am providing my informed consent.

_____   _____
Signature or electronic acknowledgement   Date

Appendix 3

Interview protocol:

As all in-person interactions are currently on hold until further notice, all interviews will be done virtually. For virtual interviews, block a maximum of 45-minutes per interview. Send out an email communication informing of project and highlighting confidentiality of process including the consent form. Also enclosed a Skype video conference number with passcode. Ensure that the signed/acknowledged consent form is received via email before the interview commences. Have interview questionnaire up on the screen for easy access.

Script for Interviews:

Thank you so much for taking the time away from your busy schedule to meet with me. I promise that our meeting will not take more than 45-minutes of your time. I am currently attending Florida International University in the process of obtaining my Doctoral in Business Administration Degree. I am on the last leg of the program, and as a graduation requirement, I need to submit and defend a dissertation. The topic that I have selected is evaluating leadership styles in today's digital age. I am conducting interviews in an effort to obtain data on different leadership styles and/or techniques. Your responses are confidential and will be reported in aggregate. What you will be helping me with today is providing honest insights as to your experiences when leading people or being led by your manager, your level of engagement and motivation. How does it sound so far? If you agree to proceed, I will need you to sign this consent form if you haven't already emailed a signed copy to me. Also this meeting will be recorded for note taking purposes. Once I have transcribed this interview, I will delete the recording. At the end of the interview, we will leave some time for any questions that you may have. In case I need to ask some follow-up questions after our meeting, I would be reaching out to you for an additional meeting. Would that be okay with you? After I complete my meetings, I will analyze my notes and come up with a theory and supporting hypotheses. May we proceed?

Interview Questionnaire

Questions for Managers	Answers	Reflective notes:
Leader Background		
What is your country of origin?		
How long have you been a leader?		
Leadership Style		
How would you describe your leadership style?		
Do you adapt your leadership style to different generations?		
Follow up question – Can you provide examples?		
Motivation – the job performed is characterized by high levels of autonomy, significance and feedback		
How do you motivate your team members?		
Can you provide examples of successes?		
Can you provide an example of techniques that did not work or fell flat?		
Employee engagement – a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfilment that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption		
Are your employees engaged?		
Follow up question – How do you know?/Provide examples		
What do you do as a manager to keep them engaged?		
What do you struggle with most when it comes to engaging your employees?		
Development		
What development opportunities do you offer your employees?		
Empowerment		
Do you feel that you empower your employees?		
Entrepreneurial		
If your employees expressed entrepreneurial tendencies, how would you manage?		
Follow up question –		

How would you leverage this behavior in your team?		
Attention Span		
Do your employees lose track of what they are supposed to do?		
Follow up question – Can you provide examples? Why do you suppose that happens?		
Do your employees become distracted when things are going on around them?		
Follow up question – Can you provide examples? Why do you suppose that happens?		
Retention		
What steps do you take in order to retain employees?		
In your observations, have you been successful in retaining employees?		
Follow up question – If Yes, how?		
Follow up questions – No, why?		

Questions for Employees	Answers	Reflective notes:
Employee Background		
What is your country of origin?		
Leader		
Can you describe the best leader you ever had?		
Engagement – a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfilment that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption		
Do you feel engaged in your role?		
Follow up question – Can you provide examples?		

Development		
Have you taken advantage of any development opportunities?		
Follow up question – If so, which ones?		
Empowerment		
Do you feel empowered in your role?		
Follow up question – If not, why?		
Aspirations		
Would you consider yourself to be entrepreneurial?		
Follow up question – If so, how do you apply that in your current role?		
Attention Span		
Do you lose track of what you are supposed to do?		
Follow up question – If so, why?		
Follow up question – What do you find yourself doing instead?		
Follow up question – If No, what techniques do you use to prevent that from happening?		
Do you become distracted when things are going on around you?		
Follow up question – If so, why?		
Follow up question – What usually distracts you?		
Follow up question –		

If No, what do you do to prevent that from happening?		
Retention		
Are you currently looking for another opportunity?		
Follow up question – In Visa or externally?		
Follow up question – What can Visa do to prevent you from looking?		

VITA

MARIBEL R. DIZ

Born, Miami, Florida

B.S., Management
Nova Southeastern University
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

M.S., Human Resources Management
Florida International University
Miami, Florida

1994 – 1996	Human Resources Manager Doubletree Grand Hotel Miami, Florida
2009 -	Adjunct Professor Florida International University
1996 -	Visa, Inc.
1996 – 2007	Human Resources (various)
2007 – 2008	Assistant Vice President, Human Resources
2008 – 2010	Regional Head of Human Resources and Talent Acquisition
2010 – 2013	Senior Business Leader, Human Resources
2013 – 2019	Vice President, Human Resources, Latin America and Caribbean Region
2019 – Present	Senior Vice President, Human Resources, Latin America and Caribbean Region and Global Head of HR for HR

INVITED TO PRESENT

Diaz, W., Diz, M., Litano, L., Phillips, S., (August 2020), *Global Effects of Blockchain Utilization on National and Household Welfare.* Invited to present at the Academy of International Business – LAC