

# What GenY Really Want



**Generation Y is compelling organizations to re-look at how they attract, develop, and retain their talent to build a competitive talent edge. They are also holding employers accountable to deliver on their promise.**

**M**ost of India's high potential employees (64%) and middle level managers (55%) are Gen Y-ers. They can be an HR Director's nightmare. While they are mature enough to play crucial roles in organizations, they are also more inclined to leave an organization. While generational stereotypes and characteristics associated with an Age-Cohort will be subjected to generalizations, we must acknowledge that one generation influences the other

They are so well connected that if an employer does not meet their expectations, they can tell thousands of their peers with a click of a 'mouse'!

In a highly competitive business environment, organizations, must have their fingers on the pulse of this generation, since they can make a big difference. Employers must try hard to understand them: How do they choose careers? How will they revolutionize the workplace as we know it today? How must managers communicate with and motivate them? How must we engage them in the challenging multi-generation workforce context?

As organizations brace themselves to understand and prepare for Gen Y, there are myths associated with this generation. Employers can oversimplify the challenge and refuse to innovate, question their own assumptions or refuse to go back to the drawing board at their own peril.

Insightful research on Gen Y with respondents from top 5 Indian Metros helped us pin down and understand some of the expectations of this generation better:

**Role, The Key Motivator:** As organizations prepare to conduct their campus recruitment exercise, it is important to understand how this generation makes choices and what their key motivators are. Unlike popular perception that money is the chief motivator to attract talent, research clearly indicates that the role on offer and brand of the organization are the



through Parenting, Mentoring, as role models etc. These, bridge understanding across generations and strengthen parent-child, boss-employee bonding with a “differently similar” new generation. It is apparent that Gen Y is the hottest commodity on the job market. They are typically well educated, collaborative, sociable, optimistic, talented, and achievement-oriented. They're aware that they are sought after, needed, and arrive at the workplace with high expectations.



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**About the Author...**

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greatest motivating factors even as they exercise their choice.

**Money Minded? Not Really!**

Research confirms that growth opportunities and options for job rotation and cross exposures in organizations are the chief motivators for their staying on. In a recent dialogue with a group of Vice Presidents of a leading ITES company, they thought that this generation was easily swayed by money, until I began asking some pertinent questions like:

**Did** the managers invest in career dialogues with Gen Y-ers regularly?

**Did** employees have options for cross exposures within the company?

**Was** there a strong coaching-mentoring culture prevalent in the organization?

The response to most of these questions was a 'No' and suddenly the penny dropped on what was sorely missing in their strategy for retaining Gen Y.

**Brand or Role?:** What is the real magnet to attract Gen Y to your organization? An attractive package? The research shows that clarity of job profile can prove to be the real magnet-It can even surpass brand and money, especially if the role is described and positioned well.

**Social Media and Company Websites:** Gen Y have a penchant for Web 2.0 products, which is also why this generation is called the Millennial kids, the Nintendo Generation and Gen (I).

What role does the company's website play in attracting the right talent to the organization?

Prospective Gen Y employers need to pay more attention to the career page on their website offer, a true and detailed picture of the roles being offered. Are we using our websites well to enhance our organization's brand and reiterating growth opportunities within the organization to excite Gen Y to apply/join? Having attracted and hired Gen Y, understanding their expectations from the employer are important for a productive journey, and retention.

**What Gen Y Want?**

**Role Clarity:** This is probably the single biggest driver of engagement-"I know what is expected from me at work." The tolerance for ambiguity of roles commonly found in previous generations is absent, as most Gen Y-ers get disenchanted and disengaged if they are not clear on what is expected, and what will make them succeed in their jobs. The same holds true for career paths and other expectations. These need to be clarified and articulated by the employer to enable Gen Y to stay.

**Workplace Communication Is Key To Gen Y Retention:** Most Gen Y-ers prefer regular communication with their bosses and enjoy working in organizations where both the formal and informal channels of communication are strong and in cultures where managers are equipped to share information and listen to their

employees. Access to managers, frequent conversations and feedback are key for retaining Gen Y.

**Gen Y Need Latitude To Perform And Deliver:** Managers need to be ready to delegate and give Gen-Yers the freedom to perform. Encouragement to think independently and to work in an environment where their opinion counts, are great drivers for engagement and retention of Gen-Y. This is in sharp contrast to the previous generations which were more tolerant to compliance, understood it if their independence was curtailed and worked hard to perform-to earn their 'voice' being heard.

**Gen Y Believe Strongly In An Equal World:** Policies, must treat all members equally and speed of decision making is key. Slow, lethargic processes and visible unfairness in the application of policies, drive active disengagement.

**Workplaces Must Enable The Expression Of Individuality:** Gen Y believes in expressing themselves, as is amply visible from the social networking opportunities available to them.

**Having A Say:** Working in a place where their opinion counts, and working for organizations that value their opinion even if they don't have experience is very important to Gen Y. So what must organizations do to manage these expectations? Be the role model- Gen Y is on the lookout for Leaders who are knowledgeable, honest and with high standards of integrity.



It's not that they don't want to be leaders themselves: they would rather have some great role models first.

**Challenge Me:** Gen Ys are seeking new learning opportunities. They want to be assigned to projects they can learn from. Trying new things is what gets them going; they seek growth, development and a defined career path.

**Let Me Work With Friends-** Gen Y wants to work with people they 'click' with. They like being friends with co-workers. Employers who provide the social aspects of work will find their efforts well-rewarded.

**Let's Have Fun:** A fun workplace where individuality thrives and is respected is a huge attraction. A work environment that is not too formal nor too serious is a great attraction. Breaking through power distances and hierarchies to connect and enjoy work is attractive for this generation.

**Respect Me:** Respect begets respect is the philosophy. Respect me, my idea even if I don't have your experience is what this generation is crying out loud. Leaders/Managers will do well by reflecting respect for the ideas expressed by Gen Y.

**Be Flexible:** The busiest generation needs more than a job to define itself. Employers must accommodate this need for expression by building an

environment of innovation and freedom to express, to be different, to collaborate and yet contribute brilliantly to the organizational agenda. Redesign work life balance programs that address individual needs, rather than make generalizations of expectations.

**Avoid Compensation Based Negotiations With Departing Gen Ys:** Instead offer development plans and explicit career paths to retain them.

**Don't Send Mixed Signals About Your Employer Brand based on generational stereotypes.** Instead, consistently communicate a universal brand that emphasizes characteristics across generations.

**Get Gen Y To Lead Team Initiatives:** Team work is a powerful skill development tool and will strengthen Gen Y's ability to build strong internal networks and develop leadership capabilities.

**Gen Y-ers Seek Coaching And Mentoring At Work:** Employers seeking to attract Gen Y talent MUST invest in strong C&M programs and equip their managers with the tools and techniques to become good Coaches. Providing consistent feedback and linking the same to performance expectations and development can do wonders in retaining Gen Y. Employers seeking to leverage this highly talented generation must care enough to understand their needs. Perpetuating stereotypes or myths

will not do. Understanding and caring for who they are and seeking comfort from how differently similar they are to previous generations must be leveraged by organizations seeking to win the war for talent.

Finally, organizations that would like to truly leverage the power of this generation must be aware of their values and drivers. They must have mechanisms to blend the organizational goals with the personal goals of this age group. Gen X-ers who often lead Gen Y may have different perspectives, but must be groomed to handle them well, coach them to perform, and avoid potential conflicts arising out of mismatched values. Generation Y is capable of the maturity required to deliver but is restless if their beliefs are not validated by the employers. They combine the can-do attitude of the veterans, the team work ethics of the Boomers, the technology savvy and ability to manage change of Gen X. They are more evolved, more aware, are generous and socially conscious. Purpose, meaning, and commitment are important to them, but they have saved their best for the employers who deliver on their promise. What we must acknowledge is that Gen Y is not only making employers more accountable but creating better workplaces in the bargain.

**References:**

Corporate Executive Board -  
Managing Gen Y at the workplace

