

Using New Ways of Working to Attract Millennials

Millennials are attracted to the new ways of working. However, care needs to be taken as the new ways of working must be clearly aligned with opportunities to learn and grow.



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Digitization is changing our work environment. Work has become more flexible and potentially more social with the use of new technologies, and organizations are introducing flexible work arrangements in terms of office design (e.g., open offices and flexible seating) and telework (e.g., flexible work locations and scheduling) as they adjust to the impacts of digitization.

However, responses to digitization and these work arrangements are complicated. On the one hand, individuals tend to find themselves less attached to the office, or the office becomes less personal and less social. On the other hand, they also see that these work arrangements make collaborating easier and less formal. Therefore, it is important for companies to consider how they implement digitalization if they are to attract and retain talent. This is particularly true for millennials.

WHAT MILLENNIALS WANT FROM A NEW JOB

The labour market offers a variety of opportunities such as internships, traineeships, and ju-

nior roles that allow new and almost graduates to gather work experience.

However, organizations do not necessarily make it easier for new entries to the work force to choose the organization that is right for them. This is especially problematic for freshly graduated millennials. Howe and Strauss (1991) defined millennials as consisting of individuals born between 1982 and 2004. Millennials are viewed as the generation that has been most exposed to online and socially-networked world and are considered natural users.

According to a recent Gallup report, millennials are not different than other generations when it comes to their wanting to feel deeply committed to their work and to work with a good manager. However, more than other generations, millennials rate as much more important the opportunity to learn and to grow; they want to provide input into the organization, understand its inner workings, and be part of the decision making process.

But because newly graduating millennials typically have little exposure to the inside of organizations, they rely on limited information to evaluate a number of personal fit-related aspects such as whether they like the potential role/job, the company culture, managers and colleagues, or the organization's work system. This may include recruiting and selection, remuneration schemes, and control and supervision systems, among others.

Two experimental studies point to the fact that millennials are attracted to the new ways of working (open offices and telework) and to those organizations that practice them. They see organizations with new ways of working as more innovative or with greater abilities to learn and to adapt to the new work environment. However, care needs to be taken as the new ways of working must be clearly aligned with opportunities to learn and grow.

ALIGNMENT IN NEW WAYS OF WORKING IS KEY

Studies show that the positive effect of new



ways of working diminishes when there are clear misalignments between the office design (e.g. open office/flexible seating) and telework (i.e., flexible work locations/scheduling). For example, telework has only positive effects on job attractiveness under high alignment. With low alignment, telework did not have any positive impact on the organizational attractiveness for the job applicant. For example, if telework arrangements are not supported by how office space and work schedule are coordinated, and this makes promotion difficult, a prospective employee from the millennial cohort will perceive the firm as less equipped for the ongoing digitalization trend.

It is likely that alignment of both work systems (office design and telework) leads to a stronger relationship between either work system and organizational attractiveness as compared to their misalignment. That is, these job candidates evaluate the organizations more poorly when the organizations seem unable to present their work practices in a cohesive way. This has important implications on how

organizations should present themselves to attract talents. This result reflects on a recent report from MIT Sloan Review based on a large survey that revealed that while 90% of individuals considered their industries will be largely disrupted by the digital trends, only 44% considered their organizations prepared for it. The misalignment presented may cause negative attitude towards the organizations.

Overall, new ways of working can increase the perceived support for innovation and, thus, organizational attractiveness due to the alignment with millennials' implicit theories of what organization they want to work for. They assume that innovative and adaptable organizations will provide them with greater opportunities to learn and to grow. However, if there is a clear misalignment of these work conditions, the new ways of working lose their advantage.

REFERENCE:

Neil Howe and William Strauss 1991 Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069

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