MILLENNIALS – A NEED FOR ADAPTATIVE CHANGE

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Abstract
The new rising “ME” generation in the labor force became one of the most challenging need of change for the actual leaders. A self-branding man child is arising in the work market area and occupies the new entry positions in any organization. The actual leaders faces with self-centered people who are rejecting the system opting for parental continuous help. Ready or not, the nowadays leader must face and adopt his leadership style to a new free generation who would rather climb the highest mountains then the organizational or corporative leader, but asking for their parents money.

In less than five years 50% of the work force will be represented by Millennials, a self-focused generation with different views than we are used to have and the question is how to deal with them to achieve the corporate goals and at the same time to grow them, in order to create a new generation of leaders, by using their positive attitude and their new, different vision of life.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the nowadays leaders need for adaptive change in order to develop other leaders and to deliver the requested expectations, by using the new Facebook generation vision of life and work. At the same time It will highlight how this model can be translated into the daily activity so that Millennials be perceived as precious source for the future leadership way.

Keywords: Millennials, Leadership, Adaptive change
JEL Classification: M19, M 50, M53, M 590

Introduction
At present time one of the biggest challenge of the organizational change is to change the work force’s generational proportion. The old generation that dominated, the work market 25 years ago (Builders) is almost entirely retired, the Baby boomers generation diminishes while Generation Y (Millennials) is almost equal with Generation X. The different proportions between the four generations that are active on the work market makes the recruiting, retention and reward process more challenging than ever.

Amid this challenge, a bipolar transformation takes place, affecting the people and the organization as well, at the personal interaction level between the old and the new generations. If during the past 10 years two generations worked very well together, now is the time to identify the way how another new generation can jinn this workflow, provided that the Millennials becomes more and more dominant.

In the frame of the organizational change and adaptations process it is absolutely necessary a fresh way of thinking, based on new principles. Therefore the relationship between Millennials and their managers becomes a challenging aspect, for both personnel categories. This paper aims to identify to whom should the need for change and the respective adaptation be assigned.

For the purpose of the paper, we have started from the assumption that change and adaptation shall take place at the present day leader’s level, but also at the new generation (of young people) level - Millennials, present on the work market. This paper’s main objectives are to:
♦ identify the existence of the need for change for the current managers;
♦ identify the obstacles that the new generation encounters when trying to adapt efficiently.

Building on this observations we proposed to identify the main courses of action for the current managers so they shall achieve a maximum efficiency from the new generation that follows them in the work, and the ways through which in the following years the future dominant generation shall develop professionally, gain experience and value, by
using the old generation acquis, so that in less than 10 years they can be the new generation of leaders that shall be able to efficiently adapt to a new generation, the already born Easy Generation.

The paper proceeds as follows: 1) Literature review. 2) Bipolar adaptation. 2.1 Generational discrepancies from the psychological perspective. 2.2 A new leadership challenge: Managing Millennials. 2.3 What Millennials should do to pass the barriers? 3) Conclusions related to the bipolar adaptive change. 4. Bibliography.

1. Literature review

During the last decade the organizational analysis expanded by disseminating the (of the generation born between the years 1977 -1990). From the etymologic point of view, the Millennials concept’s initial forms were: “Generation Y”, “Generation Why”, “Echo Boomers”, “I-generation”, “Generation next”, “Boomlets” or “Don’t -Nets”. Even if initially the concept’s launching was perceived as a “trend inflation” – (Jack Welch 2007), the exaggerations of the consultants, in their wish to create a new market, the concept expanded and became one of the analysis engines aiming both the organizational efficiency and the personal development.

From the study of generations’ point of view, the founding theories are:
- The Generational Theory launched in the paper “The problem of a Generation” – (Mannheim 1952) that consisted in an analysis of three perspectives: temporal location, historical location and socio-cultural location. In the subsequent analysis it was noted the fact that the initial research studies referred to a 20 years’ time frame (McCridle 2006) and defined the problem of the Mannheim’s generation as “age of cohort”. Glenn (2005) thinks that the used term of “cohort” is intended for describing people within a delineated population that live the same events in the same time frame.

The theory was later completed with features concerning the “Life course” – a cohort composed of people linked by the same birth year, together with aspects connected to the “Collective memory” and its effects - the collective memory generates cultural forms for those in the present (Griffin 2004).
- “The Age Norm Theory”; whereas the age norms are perceived as ages integrated into a typical standard by a reference group from a social system.
- Ageism: (Butler 1969), a discrimination oriented against an individual or a group, due to age. Example: the young ones that cannot teach the old ones.
- The Contingency Theory (Fiedler 1967) according to which a leader turns his responsibilities to a leader member interaction. The emphasis here is on the leader’s personal relationships with his/her subordinates, the level of delegated tasks to the group’s members, the formal power entrusted by the position held.
- “Path Goal Theory” (House 1971) / “Situational Leadership Theory” (Hersey & Blanchard 1988) are two theories having present-day practical applicability de actualities, and were built on the contingency foundation. While the Path Goal Theory emphasizes the importance the leader must give to the training, support, participation and achievement orientation, the Situational Leadership Theory shows the importance of explaining, the power of example, of participation and of task delegation. Combining the aspects described in the two theories conducted mainly to the creation of the following: a) the concept of “Participative Management”, perceived as a course of action that combines several styles of management, for different situations, that are still based on the same behavior, respectively the subordinates take in the decision making process (Vroom 2000); b) “Empowering leadership” – the interdependence between the leader and his/her team, a process in which “an individual’s belief in his/her self-efficacy is enhanced” (Conger & Kanungo, 1980).

2. Bipolar adaptation

The generational diversity appears as a direct effect to the changes within the needs people have, of the need to be informed and to understand, as well as of the way in which information flows.

At present time there are four different personal categories acting on the market place, respectively Builders, Baby boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Millennials. The majority proportion is given by the parallel existence of the latest two generations, the X respectively the Y.

When the X Generation entered the labor place, it was immediately perceived as being different from the other two generations that represented the majority at that moment and was characterized by a higher need for financial stability. The X Generation (born during the 1964-1979 period) is much more preoccupied than the other two generations to spend time with the family and to focus on what is important in life. X Generation (born during the 1964-1979 period) is much more preoccupied than the other two generations to spend time with the family and to focus on what is important in life.

A first differentiation between the two generations is connected to education. Unlike Generation X, Generation Y was raised by lenient parents, so that they have gained a greater sense of security than the X Generation, the latter being more optimistic, finding opportunities in situations where the others see only problems. As a result of this close way of growing, emerges also this different perception about life. Within the X Generation growing process, the Y Generation, and
particularly the Baby boomer Generation, involved itself very actively, acting in its children’s name, aiming to get a better treatment for them: a better class for their children, the negotiation with the teachers, visits to the university and to the campus, also including taking part into the military recruitment process.

The parent’s sustained involvement into their children’s lives conducted to the coming out of one of the Y Generation most definite characteristics, respectively to insure a balance between work and daily life. Thus, from the managerial process’ point of view, one of the newest and biggest challenge arisen is connected to the ways to persuade them to avoid changing their work place, from their desire to optimize this balance. Nowadays one does not think to go extra working hours anymore but to shorten the working hours, to efficient size the work into a shorter time frame that would later allow as much leisure time as possible. This aspect is defined by the way in which they aim to eliminate the parents’ stigmata, whom they have seen working during their entire childhood, constantly preoccupied by their working place.

Another differentiation between the two generations is emphasized by the Millennials’ desire to impose itself from day one at the working place, even if they don’t have the experience and counting only on what they have studied at university, whether they have also got involved or not. The differentiation originates too in education, because during their growing process they have constantly asked their parents, and once arrived in the working field they start to ask their superiors. During their evolution their parents have constantly encouraged them by telling them how wonderful they are. And now, once in the work field it is normal that, starting from this way of education, it should continue, even if the environment changed, while the parent was replaced by colleagues and superiors.

Therefore the work force field consists mainly of people that had differently evolved due to socio-cultural changes. The obvious question that arises here is connected to: who to whom shall adapt, the manager to the new generation or the new Generation to the manager.

2.1 Generational discrepancies from the psychological perspective.

The generational differentiation is closely connected to the period of time in which a generation that had activated or still activates, as well as with the need that it characterizes and that is closely connected to the historical-existential context.

The Generation that was active over 25 years ago, the Builders, lived into a tumultuous context characterized by conflicts, and by consequence it had a series of primal, psychological needs, connected to assuring the availability of food, water, resting. An immediate consequence on this way of living was the transmission and the cultivation of a superior need that belongs to the same psychological level, namely the need for security. Thus the Generation Builders related itself to the need for safety and security, need that generated an organizational behavior that is quick - adaptive, characterized by steadiness at the work place.

As time went on with assuring the things necessary to daily living, as well as of the security, developed a new need developed and was felt by the next generation, a need corresponding to a superior hierarchical level. Baby boomers, the next active generation in the work field, but still simultaneously with the Builders, manifested a psychological need connected to the sense of belonging, characterized by the desire to make friends at the working place and to prefer informal instead of formal relationships.

As a consequence of the generational evolution in connection to the historic time frame in that it acts was provided by the development of expectations, by the attainment of some appreciation needs.

The Generation X commenced do differentiate from its predecessors through the needs connected to the professional assertion. Prestige seems to be the most coveted trait by the current new population that entered the work force.

Once the basic needs connected to water, food, rest and security have been achieved, those psychologically connected to the sense of belonging being well inferred, as well as the professional assertion as a guiding line in life generated a series of educative behaviors, so the new generation’s needs shall beat a maximum level, because this generations does not need to fight for ensuring the primary or psychological ones.

Nowadays when in the work field a new “cohort” imposes itself, the Generation Y or Millennials, that was born after the year 1990, having all the other needs easily achieved, a new challenge connected to the need for self-awareness arises, needs that incumbe simultaneously on both the professional and the personal fields. This is the moment in which, by not being aware of the primary and psychological needs, Generation Y evolves towards accomplishing all needs concomitantly.

By taking into consideration the historical-psychological context, there will be interesting to see how the next, the EG - Easy Generation will act, generation born after the year 1991 and that in 2016 shall make its first steps into the work field.
2.2 A new leadership challenge: Managing Millennials

The perception change on life caused the new generation to have other expectations from those that lead it. A first one is connected to the need for feedback both from the superiors and from the other members. In this context, the boss and the subordinate became dialog partners, a dialog in which different perspectives are discussed. Within the frame of this dialogue, the expectation changes in the moment when they have encountered difficulties, the communication turning into counselling. Another expectation is that connected to appreciation, the basis on which rewards shall be permanently awarded for accomplished tasks. Due to these new challenges, the present day managers would need to adapt by starting from their perception towards the new generation, to its behavior and expectations. If at the Y Generation emergence the managers thought and are still thinking about the way in which the new generation should adapt, the future leader needs to take into consideration his need to change and adaptation that are necessary in order to lead the new generation. The mainstream managerial perception concerning the new generation is still connected to the fact that, at the career start, it can accomplish few things due to its lack of experience.

Starting from this desiderate, as well as considering the fact that in less than 5 years the labor force will consist mainly of Generation Y representatives, the manager’s challenge is to believe that they can be extremely useful and competent right from the beginning. And this thing is possible through mutual confidence, a confidence in which the way through will not be by punishing the subordinates that challenges you but by letting yourself be challenged, so that you will see which are their ideas. Therefore the formal power must be replaced with the interacting power, based on free and direct communication between boss and subordinate. The present day manager’s new challenges, while interacting with the new generation, are:

- The experience, respectively the way of perception change regarding the lack of practice and its replacement with opportunities, a basic expectation of the new generation. By motivating the new employee with the opportunity to make something new from which he can develop both professionally and intellectually shall be a beneficial strategy clearly superior to that in which the new employee is perceived from the start as lacking experience.

- The labor process. Within the organizational frame, in most cases a series of working rules and aspects that are very clearly defined does exist. The new generation perceives them as being rigid, even in the case the today’s managers observe them entirely. The challenge is given by the capability to adapt to what have to say, propose or improve those that are now subjected for the first time to these rules. Obviously there are rules from which you cannot deviate, but there are also many rules that must be changed in conformity to the new generation’s perception.

- The expectation, comes as a direct consequence of the changing process described above. A transition from the acceptance of understanding things, to the concrete and detailed explanation to the expectations from the new employees is imperiously necessary.

  Expectation is closely connected to communication. At present time, most of the time the manager’s perception is given by the fact that they are not seriously considered by the other subordinates. This perception seems to be erroneous if we are to consider the Millennials’ need to be accepted, to express their point of view and their need of feedback.

A first conclusion is given by the fact that the application of the four challenges shall make the current manager to not be able to perceive the lack of implication and dedication of the new generation anymore, but to turn it in his favor, in the sense of its manipulation, starting with its perception, so it will become productive. Furthermore, the manager’s most important challenge is connected to the capacity to create a direct relationship, a less formal one with them. And this challenge shall be doubled by the Generation Easy entrance on the work market starting with the year 2016.

2.3 What Millennials should do to pass the barriers?

Half of the work force of these days, represented by Generation Y or Millennials has a common behavior at the working place based on a synergic, emotionally–professional perception, linked to the experience of which are subjected. This premise has a simple basis of discussion with them, discussion during which the defining aspects for them can be identified: individual aspects, general aspects and aspects regarding the team.

Starting from their education characterized by their parents’ support and total involvement, the new generation have a series of expectations in the work field that are different from those of their educators. From this point of view, the organizational management translates from the phase in which orders are made to the phase in which they are explained. The new generation does react to imperative orders like observing budget targets, only if the expectations linked to them in order to apply this measure are explained to them and understood by them. Now the employee’s expectation is closely connected to the comparison between his skills and aptitudes with those of the superior or with those of the other homologues from the hierarchically professional point of view.
This understanding of the task, characterized by as many as possible details is closely connected to the nature of the relationship with the superior. As long as things are at the beginning and they have something to learn from it, they are expecting an interpersonal relationship. The aspects are changing only then they are put into difficulty and this interpersonal relationship transforms into a consultative one, based on which solutions to the aspects that are generating discomfort shall be found.

While considering the tasks, there is a transition from the "must be done" to a dialog in which the Millennials wish to express their point of view, the way they think about things. Even if at a first view this aspect comes in contradiction with the manager’s way of expressing his competences, things receive an added value, because by expressing that need, the Millennials are indirectly attracted into the decisional process frame, so that whatever will be decided, has as basis their perception and involvement.

Once things are settled, the action plan applied and the coming out of the first favorable results, a new need arises, and namely that of these results’ acknowledgement. Still this acknowledgement is based upon an extrinsic motivation characterized by the need for promotion, a need arisen after a very brief period.

All these behaviors, expectations and needs are closely linked to the way in which the Millennials were grown, a way that in the early stages of the career generate certain barriers they must overcome in a way similar to the education they have received.

The first and the most important barrier regarding the work process is given by the lack of experience. Starting with what they were accustomed to receive during their education, the most important challenge for Millennials is to reunite, to identify as many as possible persons to whom to address as many questions as possible and from whose experience they can learn more and more quickly.

The lack of experience generates a second challenge and namely the unsurely of expectations. For a member of the new work generation to go into action with devotion and involvement, he must have as much information as possible. By consequence, the strategy he must apply is that of identifying several persons to whom he would explain in the most direct possible way which are his expectations towards them and that, at the same time, to allow them express their opinion or point of view.

The application of both above mentioned strategies leads to a new challenge, the challenge launched by the communication with the direct manager. In order that this communication take place in the most efficient way for the new generation members, he must build a rather interpersonal relationship with the superior, one in which to see opportunities and not tasks to be carried out.

In applying the agreed strategy, the new generation shall deal with technical and methodological processes from the organization. Considering their theoretical training to overcome the barriers linked to processes, Generation Y must carry on activities in the requested manner, but during this process to express their point of view for improving them, aiming to progress.

The confrontation with the processes generates a new barrier concerning patience. Considering the personal dynamics of this new generation, in order to be able to face the objectives and the available means to achieve them, there must take place a mobilization in view of understanding the approaching the superior, while simultaneously with the persistence in the effort to change things according to the expectations.

From the professional point of view, the Generation Millennials is subject to some barriers whose overcoming depends only on choosing the appropriate strategy, strategy connected to identifying mentors, the understanding and the acknowledgement of expectations, the building of an interpersonal relationship with the direct superior on which the expectations are understood and the expression of own point of view is made possible.

3.Conclusions

1. The analysis and the observation of actual tendencies manifested into the work field leads to a new sociologic aspect of study generated by the existing discordance between the generations that activate simultaneously and concomitantly in the labor force.

2. The discrepancies between generations are generated by the technological evolution, by the existing norms at a given moment, as well as by the communication means that is specific to every generation.

3. In general, among the present-day manager’s perception represented mainly by the Generation Baby boomers, persists the image according to which the new generation – the Millennials, do not take things seriously and that it lacks involvement.

4. An adaptation of current managers to the ways of being and of perceiving things of the new generations, the Millennials, must take place for the organizational evolution.
5. The new generation has a perception towards work that is different from that of the old generation, perception that generates psychological barriers.

6. The overcoming of psychological barriers of the new generations is closely linked to its capacity to understand, adapt to the old generation simultaneously with expressing and imposing its own mentality.

7. In the coming 10 years, the organizational efficiency shall be closely linked to the capacity of bipolar generational adaptation.

4. Bibliography


Acknowledgement:

♦ This Paper should not be reported as representing the formal opinion of any institution. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author.

♦ This work was supported from the European Social Fund through Sectorial Operational Programm Human Resources Development 2007 – 2013, project number POSDRU/159/1.5/S/142115, project title “Performance and Excellence in Postdoctoral Research in Romanian Economics Science Domain”.