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Generation Z: Utilizing Adaptive and Authentic Leadership to Promote Intergenerational Collaboration at Work

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Utilizing Adaptive and Authentic Leadership

To Promote Intergenerational Collaboration at Work

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Abstract

This paper explores intergenerational collaboration between Generation Z and the older generations. Through the use of both Adaptive Leadership and Authentic Leadership, organizations can promote positive work environments and foster collective intelligence. This paper will start by reviewing existing literature surrounding Millennials in the workplace as well as what we know so far about Generation Z in order to fill in the gaps around what corporate leadership can expect from their Generation Z followership. By overcoming fixed mental models, leadership can change the way younger generations are viewed and can start to embrace the rapidly changing world of the future.

Introduction

The next generation of adults is beginning to enter the workplace and things are about to get very interesting. Many organizations may have four generations of employees all working under one roof! Some organizations may even have members from the Silent Generation as well resulting in five different generations all working together. The newest generation has been named Gen Z, also referred to as Post-Millennials and iGen. Gen Z is the cohort that was born sometime between 1994 and the year 2012 although researchers have yet to agree on where exactly the starting point lies.

Jean Twenge describes generational cut-offs in her book *iGen* by saying "just like city boundaries, the demarcation of 18 as legal adulthood and personality types allow us to define and describe people despite the obvious limitations of using a bright line when a fuzzy one is closer to the truth" (Twenge, 2017). Some researchers, like those at the Center for Generational Kinetics define generations as a group of people born around the same time and raised around the same place (CGK, 2016). The Center for Generational Kinetics also helps us to understand the generational demarcations by explaining that generations are shaped by cultural events, trends, and tragedies such as 9/11. The reason that many researchers end the Millennial generation and begin Generation Z around the mid 90's is because by that point most Millennials would have been old enough to remember and be affected by September 11, 2001, but the Gen Z population would have been too young to remember or have any real attachment to that day (CGK, 2016).

Gen Z grew up watching their Millennial counterparts struggle through the Great Recession and it has impacted how they see money, employment, and politics. They are diverse,

technologically savvy, and collaborative. This is the first generation that is the most racially diverse in the history of the US and they celebrate that diversity. According to Business Insider, "The Census Bureau found that 48% of Gen Z is non-Caucasian" (Kane, 2017). They are also the first generation that has grown up with internet at their fingertips from the beginning of their lives (Kane, 2017). They do not remember a time when they did not have instant access to information. As a result, this generation uses technology in different ways than the older generations.

According to the Center for Generational Kinetics, Gen Z is better at multitasking because they are used to having multiple tabs open while Snapchatting their friends, streaming a video, and texting their parents while at the same time they are working on homework (CGK, 2016). In a 2015 article, Matt Nagler says "the combination of these things has given rise to a hardworking, focused, entrepreneurial generation. They're focusing early on opportunities that will make them more attractive candidates later on. Unlike earlier generations who often used their careers to find their life purpose" (Nagler, 2015). He also says that many high school aged Gen Z students are starting to volunteer and have internships in potential prospective career fields (Nagler, 2015). However, not all researchers agree on this point and this is something that Jean Twenge directly refutes in her 2017 book *iGen.* She says that "iGen [Gen Z] teens are spending *less* time on homework, paid work, volunteering, and extracurriculars combined, not more" (Twenge, 2017). Gen Z is also seen as having a shorter attention span, being more insecure, obsessed with safety, and fearful of their economic futures. "They are at the forefront of the worst mental health crisis in decades" and they are growing up more slowly than previous generations did (Twenge, 2017).

Gen Z also has a different world view than other generations. If you compare them to Millennials you may see similarities, but you will also realize that this generation is very different than the Millennial generation. As illustrated by the recent events stemming from the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, they have come to *be* the change they wish to see in the world. They are cause based and want to feel like they are a part of something rather than feeling like they are being marketed to. They want to feel like they are part of the solution, know their leadership, and are involved in the decision-making process. Robert L. Zorn, PhD, also points out that Gen Z is collaborative, they want to work together (and work with their leadership) to solve the issues of today (Zorn, 2017).

Purpose

As a student of leadership, I find that it is increasingly important to teach conflict resolution, collaboration, and other interpersonal relationship skills in our increasingly technologically driven world. I believe that there will come a time when most functions will be performed by computers, therefore, it is important to focus on adaptive challenges and the so called 'soft-skills' that humans have that machines don't.

My interest in this subject is propelled by the backlash that Millennials have faced and my curiosity to see how Gen Z prepares to enter the workforce. What I am curious to explore is how we, as leaders, foster intergenerational collaboration in the corporate workplace in order to create positive working environments and maximize collective intelligence between generations. As baby boomers are working longer and Gen Z is coming into the workplace there will be many organizations that have four (to five) generational cohorts all working together. In order to promote a positive organization, improve follower happiness, and increase productivity it is

important to foster intergenerational collaboration and tap into the collective intelligence of the entire organization.

Through this paper I will explore how adaptive leadership can be used to bridge the generational gap between Gen Z and the older generations. I will analyze the existing literature around Gen Z and the different technical solutions that researchers have suggested. I will then highlight the adaptive challenges that cannot be solved through technical solutions and work to name the so-called, "elephants in the "room" of intergenerational organizations. I was drawn to this research by seeing how my generation, Millennials, were dehumanized, blamed and dismissed as a generation by previous generations who held tightly to outdated mental models in a rapidly changing society. I felt that it was important for myself as a student of leadership to highlight the challenges that Gen Z face so that we can work together to grow and change. I hope to foster a future of compassion, acceptance and inclusion through my work in leadership and to extend the conversation of adaptive challenges beyond the classroom.

Leadership Theory

Adaptive Leadership

Ronald Heifitz defines adaptive challenges as challenges that can only be addressed through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits and loyalties in his book *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). These types of challenges are unique because they cannot be solved by implementing a technical solution and, therefore, must be dealt with through human influence. By naming the adaptive challenges inherent in intergenerational collaboration, leadership can help address and shape a dialog around the so-called "elephants in the room". An example of an elephant in the room that causes issues could be something like age based bias that affects the way that older members of the organization interact with the younger

generation. Issues in leadership arise when people treat adaptive challenges as though they were technical problems. One of the ways to distinguish between the two challenges is by looking at what loss the change would represent. These losses may impact the cultural DNA, habits, jobs and values (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). In evaluating age based bias, it is important to examine the mental models in place that are affecting the older generation. For example, they may have a firmly held belief that younger generations cannot add value because they are constantly looking at their cell phones during meetings and, therefore, are not listening to what is going on in the room. This may actually be the opposite of what is happening with the younger generation actually using the internet to fact check, scan for ideas, or check out what the competition is doing. Through the use of mobile technology, the younger generation may be able to contribute valuable information that the older generation is not as easily able to do. Older generations may have to let go of the belief that looking at a computer or cell phone screen equals being checked out of the conversation. Adaptive Leadership can be applied to help individuals move through this bias by addressing what may need to be let go of in order to allow for growth and change. A technical solution to this issue would be banning cell phones in meetings. While this may be a workable solution in some instances, it could also lead the organization to miss out on key pieces of information that they would have otherwise had access to.

Authentic Leadership

I don't believe that you can have adaptive leadership without authentic leadership. In order to ask others to let go of their tightly held priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties, leaders must be true to their own values and beliefs and act accordingly. Afsaneh Nahavandi defines authentic leaders as people who know themselves well and remain true to their values and

beliefs. They have strong values and a sense of purpose that guide their decisions and actions (Nahavandi, 2015). It is vitally important that leaders who participate in adaptive leadership techniques have a strong understanding of their own values and that their actions align with those values. In their 2017 article on authentic leadership Otaghsara and Hamzehzadeh write, "authentic leadership is built on authenticity indicating a situation where individuals conduct in accordance with their values, beliefs, and human supreme nature; and, under various difficult pressures, persist with behaviors in line with self-values and beliefs. In fact, authentic leadership theories try to educate leaders expressing their real selves to their followers and conducting their behavior in line with their internal reality far from any hypocrisy and insincerity" (Otaghsara and Hamzehzadeh, 2017).

In addition to exploring how adaptive leadership can be used to bridge the gap between generations, I will also be exploring the ways in which authentic leadership can mold and shape the direction intergenerational organizations are going and how authentic leadership can help to facilitate the conversation around values and transparency which is vitally important to Gen Z. This is also an opportunity for leaders to examine their own mental models and actions in comparison to their core values. By holding true to their values and exhibiting behaviors that align with those values and beliefs, authentic leaders are able to help guide their followership through a conversation around adaptive challenges and open the door to vulnerability and transparency.

Literature Review

Generational researchers are just now beginning to turn their attention from Millennials and Generation X to the newest generational cohort Generation Z. There is starting to be a wide array of discussion around who falls into this generation and what characteristics these members

hold. However, the research is limited concerning how leaders and organizations will be affected by this group of people and there still seems to be some disagreement around what to expect and how to prepare. There is a gap in the research concerning effective leadership strategies and intergenerational collaboration in regards to the newest cohort of followership. At this point there is not much being said about Gen Z in the workplace as many people are still focused on the Millennial generation.

In reviewing the literature, I think that applying what we know about Millennials at work and how managers are shifting their leadership strategies is a helpful start, but we must keep in mind that Gen Z will bring different challenges and different values than Millennials because they are a different group of people. We can take the strategies created to manage Millennials and apply them to Generation Z, but we will have to be open to adjusting them along the way.

iGen and Coaching

Jean M. Twenge, a psychology professor at San Diego State University, has studied generational differences for nearly twenty-five years. In her most recent book *iGen* she compares Gen Z (or what she calls iGen) to previous generations when their members were young, and analyzes them in extensive, long-time surveys. She finds that observing how young people view themselves over the course of time is more reflective of actual differences than, for example, interviewing older people and relying on their memories of when they were young. Through this research she looks at everything from teen driving habits and after-school jobs to religion, politics, and sexual activity in young people from different generations (Twenge, 2017).

Twenge states "some generational changes are positive, some are negative, and many are both. There's a natural human tendency to classify things as all good or all bad, but with cultural changes, it's better to see the gray areas and trade-offs" (Twenge, 2017). She also says that

cultural change has many root causes that "work together to create an entire culture that is radically different from the one our parents and grandparents experienced" (Twenge, 2017). It is important to note that "just because there is an average difference doesn't mean that everyone in the generation is exactly the same" (Twenge, 2017).

In her research on Gen Z, she noticed that this generation is tending to grow up more slowly. The trends, she reported, are that Gen Z teens are less likely to leave the house without their parents, even to hang out with friends, than previous generations. They are less likely to date and have sex, get their driver's licenses, and to drink or do drugs. One important thing for corporate leadership to note is that Gen Z is also less likely to work during the school year and summer as well as spending less time on homework and extracurricular activities than Gen X teens did in the early 1990's. One student she interviewed at San Diego State University said that her parents would not allow her to work in high school and she had a rude shock when trying to find a job when she entered college (Twenge, 2017). She also said "No one would hire me due to my lack of experience and even when I finally did get a job, I wasn't acting in a professional manner [...] and ended up getting fired a few months later" (Twenge, 2017). This student felt that she would have been better prepared and would have learned valuable skills if she had been given the opportunity to work in high school (Twenge, 2017).

Many researchers have shown that Gen Z craves coaching and feedback. Because this generation is growing up more slowly through extended parental nurturing, it is more important than ever to incorporate regular coaching at work. As we'll explore further on, employment trends are moving away from the old model of staying in the same job for one's entire career and are making a rapid transition towards a model whereby employees work at one company for a few years and then move on to something else. By engaging Generation Z in

coaching opportunities at work, leaders are showing them that they care about their long-term success and want to help them develop their personal and professional goals. By giving Generation Z an opportunity to grow they may be more engaged and motivated to stay in their current organizations for longer periods of time because they will be fulfilling that need to develop. This will save organizations money and time in the long run through improving both recruiting and retention of new members.

The Gen Z Effect

Thomas Koulopoulos and Dan Keldsen explore the "six forces shaping the future of business" in their 2014 book on the new generation. In this book they claim that technology is driving a series of micro-generations and that Gen Z will be the last real generation that we have. They write that Gen Z is a choice, that it is a mindset one can adopt. They call this the Gen Z Effect. They believe that by rethinking the way age shapes our behaviors, we can avoid falling into the trap of rigid generational categories that separate generations by their behaviors instead of focusing on the benefits of age-based diversity and inclusion. They discuss the generation gap as a "magnification of the difference in values between two generations" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014). One of the benefits of having a generational gap is the sense of community it gives the younger generation, but that sense of community can be flawed if it doesn't leave room for individualism (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014).

The issue with thinking that Generation Z is a mindset we can all adopt is that it doesn't factor in the perceptions and bias that come down from members of older generations. We can't just ignore these generational differences by simply saying 'we're all Gen Z'. I do agree that we can use techniques like connectivity and reverse mentoring to build a bridge between the generations, but we have to do so in such a way that acknowledges the generational differences.

These researchers say that by avoiding the trap of rigid generational categories we can focus on the benefits of age-based diversity and inclusion, but I don't agree that we will tap into the diversity that comes with having multi-generational organizations by breaking generational boundaries. I think that the way we can really tap into the diversity that comes with multi-generational organizations is by recognizing and celebrating those differences, not by becoming one homogenous group. We should remember that generational boundaries allow us to define and describe people who were born around the same time and raised around the same place.

Technology and Connection

The two authors also tackle connectivity in their book. They write that "for Gen Z, connectivity creates a level of transparency in relationships that makes trust an earned status rather than one bestowed upon by an individual or an organization" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014). Have you ever been in a situation where you're having a conversation with someone, you come to a disagreement on a topic and they quickly pull out their smartphone in order to look up the answer? Koulopoulos and Keldson call this a Gen Z reliance on an outboard brain and claim it "fundamentally alters power structures and implicit assumptions about how we form relationships of trust" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014). What they also say is that by utilizing these behaviors of hyper connectivity those in leadership positions can increase engagement and trust by allowing for transparency and critical conversations (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014).

Koulopoulos and Keldson believe that "one of the most critical, and perhaps most controversial, Gen Z issue is the shift from affluence to influence" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014). They believe that "the power to influence the masses has always been a critical part of how society and commerce operate" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014). They use Dr. Robert Cialdini's six principles of persuasion in order to build a sense of trust between marketers and

Generation Z. They believe that this leads to persuasion that is considered ethical and valuable to both the buyer and the seller. They claim that Gen Z is starting to expect retailers to have an intimate understanding of their needs, values and behaviors in order to lead them to the products they want most. They also show how earned marketing is outpacing paid marketing and owned media by forming communities and influencing society through Gen Z (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014).

Through their argument for earned media they make a valid point that the members of Gen Z care about the DNA of your organization. As we mentioned above, they want to feel like they are a part of the organization and that they have a meaningful relationship with the person behind the scenes. They also say "Gen Z doesn't need to win over the media gatekeepers; they have the ability to wreak havoc on companies and even governments through the influence they wield as a hyperconnected community" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014). "Community to [Gen Z] is probably the single most important piece of their identity... [and]...[they] will support the communities they've decided to belong to" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014).

Koulopoulos and Keldson separate connectivity, advancing technology, and influence into three different sections. I would argue that all of these sections fall into the same category. Technology leads to connectivity which in turn leads to influence. Where Koulopoulos and Keldson miss the point, in my view, on connectivity and influence is when they use Dr. Cialdini's six principles of persuasion to encourage marketers and retailers to build a false sense of connection and trust between themselves and Gen Z. By trying to manipulate members of Gen Z, they miss out on an opportunity to use authentic leadership to create a genuine sense of connection and transparency and be better leaders.

As Gen Z is seeking more transparency and wanting to be a solution-based part of the cause, leaders really have the unique opportunity to tap into authentic connection and ensure that their actions are in alignment with their espoused values. Koulopoulos and Keldson say that Gen Z care about the DNA of your organization, and this is true, they want to know their leadership in ways that past generations haven't. Remember, this is a generation that has a close relationship with their parents, and they want to feel close with their leaders. They also have more economic power than past generations because of their globalized connections. I am of course not negating the power of marketing strategy to grow a business and increase sales, but I think it's a shallow motivation that this intelligent cohort will quickly see through. Leaders are much better off finding true connection through community and shared values with their Gen Z following and using that transparency to keep themselves honest and committed to the mission of their organization.

Reverse Mentoring and Feedback

Koulopoulos and Keldson also claim that "the future is feedback" and that "the increase in the rate of change has made the importance of feedback central to success" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014). They say "these kids are used to consistent and constant feedback almost in real time. If they don't get the feedback, they think there's something fundamentally broken in the model" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014). In a fast-paced world people need to know when they're off course (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014).

One of the solutions that Koulopoulos and Keldson bring to intergenerational collaboration is reverse mentoring. They found that of the organizations they studied, less than 15 had a reverse mentoring program in place, and those that did were among the more progressive companies (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014). "For Gen Z, experience and influence

don't flow only from the top of the pyramid; it's just as likely that knowledge and ideas will percolate up from the bottom" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014). "Unlike traditional mentoring, in which the mentor is always a senior individual who can pass on experience without much risk of pushback from the protégé, reverse mentoring provides no safe haven for the mentor, who can easily be trumped by the protégé's position in the organizational hierarchy" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014).

In an interview with our authors, Carlos Dominguez, senior vice president in the office of the chairman and CEO at Cisco said "we were spending an exorbitant amount of money on training and educating [college grads], and many of them might leave after a relatively short period of time if we don't give them good reasons to stay [...] we needed to give them a voice, to let them participate, and get them engaged and contributing [...] we also needed to learn something from them about how they see the world and their values" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014). Through reverse mentoring at Cisco new hires were given access to senior persons that they could also get coaching, mentoring and learning from, "it was clearly beneficial to both parties" (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014).

Wendy Marcinkus Murphy also writes about reverse mentoring in relation to Millennials at work. She found that "reverse mentoring has become a 'best practice' among several large corporations" (Murphy, 2012). In her article she says that reverse mentoring helps build the leadership pipeline which fosters intergenerational relationships and enhances diversity initiatives. She claims that "reverse mentoring is an excellent tool for senior organizational members to acquire technical knowledge, learn about current trends, gain a cross-cultural global perspective, and understand younger generations" (Murphy, 2012). For Murphy reverse

mentoring should also help to reduce assumptions and negative stereotypes across generations (Murphy, 2012).

Reverse mentoring is a technical solution that very well may hold many answers for intergenerational collaboration. However, for reverse mentoring to work, leaders must face the adaptive challenges and mental models that come from both generations. By asking members of Gen Z to mentor an older counterpart in the office they may feel nervous or ill-equipped to handle such an interaction. They may also have feelings of resentment or frustration come up as it seems to be the trend to ask younger members of society to teach the elders how to use technology. Older generations may face feelings of arrogance or self-importance. They may feel that their time is better suited to other pursuits. They may also feel inadequate and afraid to show what they don't know about technology. These are adaptive challenges that must first be addressed before introducing reverse mentoring into the organization. Followers should understand the value and importance that reverse mentoring brings and leadership will need to address the potential loss of beliefs and tightly held mental models that could come from engaging in reverse mentoring.

Core Competencies for Leading Today's Workforce

Chip Espinoza, Mick Ukleja and Craig Rusch wrote about nine core competencies that are necessary for leading today's workforce centered on the nine perceived orientations of Millennials that they noticed as common trends during their interviews of managers and Millennials (Espinoza, Ukleja and Rusch, 2011). The authors make note that perceptions are not always reality and that it is important to remember that this is how Millennials are perceived (Espinoza, Ukleja and Rusch, 2011). They looked at managers because "they have the greatest amount of responsibility and influence with respect to daily duties and interactions" (Espinoza,

Ukleja and Rusch, 2011). Through their research they found that managers could be categorized into two sections: effective managers and challenged managers. What they found was that effective managers talked about how they could change to be better managers in "today's world" and "used the power of relationship verses the power of their position" (Espinoza, Ukleja and Rusch, 2011). This is different from challenged managers who put the need for change on others, punished their subordinates for challenging them, and "saw Millennials as an impediment to their own success" (Espinoza, Ukleja and Rusch, 2011). See Figure 1. for an example of the nine perceived orientations of Millennials and the way they compare to Millennial intrinsic values which lead to the core competencies that are required of effective managers (Espinoza, Ukleja and Rusch, 2011).

Figure 1.

Perceived Millennial Orientations	Millennial Intrinsic Value	Required Managerial Competency
Autonomous	Work-Life Balance	Flexing
Entitled	Reward	Incenting
Imaginative	Self-Expression	Cultivating
Self-Absorbed	Attention	Engaging
Defensive	Achievement	Disarming
Abrasive	Informality	Self-Differentiating
Myopic	Simplicity	Broadening
Unfocused	Multitasking	Directing
Indifferent	Meaning	Motivating

Figure 1. Sample perceived orientations of millennials with their corresponding values and managerial competencies (Espinoza, Ukleja and Rusch, 2011).

This article is really interesting because it is a step in the right direction towards changing leadership perspective and working through the adaptive challenges inherent in bringing two different groups of people together. If you replaced the perceived orientations of Millennials with the perceived orientations of Generation Z you may be able to plug in new competencies required of managers of the next generation. By finding the underlying values that each

generation hold, leadership can make connections between the values and the perceived

orientations that come with intergenerational organizations. This adaptive challenge takes real

work on the part of the organization because it requires followers to first name the perceived

orientation and then find the root value in order to identify the managerial competency. This

practice also helps followers identify how values are showing up in the organization and ensure

that their espoused values are in fact in line with their behaviors.

Maximizing Millennials in the Workplace

In 2012 Jessica Brack and Kip Kelly explored how to maximize Millennials in the

workplace (Brack and Kelly, 2012). They found that the increasing retirement of Baby Boomers

will cause leadership gaps for organizations and claim that by 2020 there will be 46%

Millennials in the workplace and the other 54% will be comprised of older generations. Brack

and Kelly have named the older generations cowboys claiming that they are a "rugged,

individualistic lot" and say they like clear boundaries and value working individually. They call

Millennials the collaborators, believed to be more interested in employability and flexibility as

well as personal enrichment and fulfillment. They claim that Millennials are more optimistic,

tech-savvy multi-taskers, and view managers as coaches and mentors rather than content experts

in the way their predecessors might have (Brack and Kelly, 2012).

They claim that Millennials want four things from their employers: Coaching,

Collaboration, Measures and Motivation. As many of the Gen Z researchers will say, Brack and

Kelly also claim that Millennials expect constant coaching and feedback at work as a result of

how they were raised. They also say Millennials are natural collaborators and recommend that

employers be clear about deadlines and boundaries. Because Millennials are accustomed to

understanding how they will be judged and assessed there should be metrics and tools to

continue those assessments (Brack and Kelly, 2012). Finally, motivation is shown through "a work environment that is comfortable and which inspires them to contribute without fear of being criticized" (Brack and Kelly, 2012). They reference Diane Spiegel, CEO of The End Result who suggests simple rewards like a pizza lunch or special time off for doing a good job (Brack and Kelly, 2012).

Above all they feel that Millennials want to "follow leaders who are honest, have integrity and who treat them with respect...they want flexibility in their jobs and opportunities to learn and meaningfully contribute" (Brack and Kelly, 2012). They show that Millennials are quick to leave jobs because they originally took jobs they didn't want in order to pay the bills and now are leaving for better opportunities. This leaves organizations with a leadership gap and an opportunity to change the way they attract, develop and retain Millennials (Brack and Kelly, 2012).

They recommend attracting Millennials to organizations by offering competitive packages, using technology to let them know about the organization's culture and offering flexible work schedules. They also recommend taking the time to develop Millennials at the organization by offering skills trainings and encouraging innovative thinking across generations (Brack and Kelly, 2012). Finally, they believe retention can be achieved by creating an "organizational culture that is flexible and relaxed, has open communication and encourages sharing and innovation" (Brack and Kelly, 2012).

It appears that in their calculations, Brack and Kelly lump Millennials and future generations into the same category. Koulopoulos and Keldson show that around 25% of the workforce in 2020 will be Generation Z, although this can be disputed by other researchers as well (Koulopoulos and Keldson, 2014). Many of their claims about Millennials seem very

similar to claims about Generation Z, such as collaboration, and multi-tasking. Much like Millennials, the Gen Z cohort also want to follow leaders who are honest, have integrity and treat them with respect. This is the reason why authentic leadership fits so well with this generation. Shifting this mentality towards Generation Z it is important to remember that we don't know a lot about what members of Gen Z want from their employers at this point, and it's likely that we won't know until more of this cohort enter the workplace. However, we can take what we currently know about Gen Z as a cohort and foreshadow what the next generation will need in order to be successful at work.

<div align="center">**Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**</div>

Due to time constraints and the fact that most of Generation Z is under the age of 18 at the time of this paper I was unable to do research in this field. Coming from what we have seen recently through assumptions and generalizations made surrounding the Millennial generation, I think it is more important than ever to continue engaging in a dialogue with Generation Z. This generation has barely gotten in the door of the working world, and as they are projected to be one of the largest cohorts it is important to develop an understanding of what they want from their leadership. I have developed a prototype survey that I would like to use as future research to gain a better understanding about Generation Z and what they are expecting to bring to the table, as well as what they are expecting to gain from their leadership and working experience in regards to flexibility, work-life balance and feedback. I think that this survey would be useful in understanding more clearly the ways in which this generation aligns with what other researchers have said. I believe that a survey of this type would be useful for leadership to gain a better understanding of how to prepare for Gen Z followers as well as how to ensure they are providing

a fulfilling working experience to their employees. I have attached this prototype as Appendix A to this paper.

I also recommend that future research be done in the field of positive psychology at work, as well as developing training and employee engagement around happiness and wellbeing activities. If it is true that Generation Z is on the cusp of one of the worst mental health crises, as Jean Twenge claims, then it is important that leadership starts to implement a plan to counteract this unhappiness. Through work that I have completed in a group effort with Zara Marselian, Desiree Acosta, Taylor Megginson and one other student at The University of San Diego we created a proposal to engage employees in positive psychology in the workplace. I have attached that proposal as Appendix B.

Conclusion

There is still much to learn about Generation Z and how they will impact the future of business, but we have a start in the right direction. As a future leader it is important that we work with the next generation to create a work-life that is fulfilling and that we maximize the potential this group of people brings with them. By working with the next generation through authentic and adaptive leadership theories, we can solve the issues that come up through multiple generations working under one roof, and bridge the generation gap. It is important that leaders remain authentic to their values and lead their followers with transparency and critical conversations, as this next generation has a keen eye for deception.

We're entering an exciting time in leadership and gaining opportunity to test the tools we currently have while still developing better ways to interact with each other and lead our followership. Interpersonal skills are going to be top priority as we face new and better technology. I believe that as long as we lead with compassion on the forefront, work to keep our

mental models in check, and embrace diversity we will find a way to unite young and old in

order to maximize collective intelligence and collaboration throughout organizations.

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Appendix A

Age
14-15
16-17
18-19
20-21

Gender (Please choose one)
Gender Non-Binary
Female
Male
Prefer not to say

I identify my ethnicity as: (Please Choose all that apply)
Asian
Black/African
Caucasian
Hispanic/Latinx
Native American
Pacific Islander
Prefer not to answer
Fill in Box

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?
K-8th Grade
High School
Some College
Graduated College
Graduate School

What is your CURRENT employment status? (please check any which apply)
Paid Employment
Self-employed
Volunteer
Intern (paid or unpaid)
Student
Military
Unable to work

Have you thought about what working for a corporate organization is like?

Yes   No

Some people support a traditional 8am-5pm, Monday through Friday work schedule while others don't. What would your ideal work schedule be?

_____

How much time off would you like to have a year for vacation, not including sick or personal days?
2 weeks or fewer
3-5 weeks
6 weeks or more

Would you be interested in job shadowing the position you applied to before being hired?
Yes
No
Unsure

What do you want from your future (or current) employer?

_____

Please rate the following questions according to which best fits you on a scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree

I believe that I am prepared to be a valued member of an organization.
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

The organization I work with should be active in my happiness.
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

I believe I should be able to have flexibility around when and where I work, as long as I am completing tasks assigned by their deadline.
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

I do NOT agree that my employer and I should have shared values.
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

My employer should be transparent about all issues relating to the organization.
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

I would enjoy working for an organization that offered personal development opportunities.
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

I believe the organization I work with should NOT be involved in my health and wellness
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

Is there anything else you would like us to know about how you envision your ideal working environment?

_____

Appendix B

Methods

Procedure: We will hold eight meetings, consisting of an hour each, in which we will work with the management team in order to work through the positive psychology activities listed below. The first exercise will be a pre-assessment consisting of the Subjective Happiness Scale & the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey at the beginning of the workshop. This will be repeated at the end of the training to measure impact of the intervention proposed. The facilitator will be able to tabulate and compare the results but not be able to identify the individual member identities. The goal is to run the interventions with the management team so they can learn the techniques and see the benefits first hand before passing them down to their employees.

Session 1

As a way of introducing positive psychology to the management team our group proposes to have them each complete the VIA signature strengths survey. After the VIA is completed, the directors will be asked to share their top five values. We will talk about how to "Build and Broaden" their strengths in new ways. We will then take a look at each director's five lowest scoring values and discuss how these are under-developed strengths, we will work with the directors to brainstorm ways to strengthen these values within themselves and utilize their under-developed values. Each director will be asked to identify two personal goals which they will rate on a scale of one to five depending on how far along they assess themselves towards achieving those two goals. At the end of the workshop and subsequent eight sessions, the directors will rate themselves again on personal goal scale to measure the impact of this intervention. Also, at the beginning and end of the workshop/training, the directors will have a conversation around how

they are doing as a group, as a whole to assess their progress towards how they are functioning as the management team, with the goals and mission that they have already established.

Session 2

The second session will be centered on nurturing social relationships and recognizing the value in the team as a whole. Everyone will be asked to write his or her name on the top of a piece of paper. Each paper will then get passed to every other member of the team. Each director will write a compliment, notion of gratitude, positive attribute, etc., of the person listed on that piece of paper. By the time everyone receives their initial name sheet back, it will have at least twelve notes of affection from the entire management team. The kind words are meant to help team members feel their full value and contribution to the organization. It may even highlight or reinforce their character strengths. Often times, people who work together do not realize how strongly they affect one another. The smallest gesture can sometimes have the biggest impact.

In addition to increasing feelings of value and self-worth, this activity will also provoke feelings of gratitude for the people that comprise the management team. When dealing with the menial day-to-day tasks, it is not unlikely that frustration or irritation with co-workers can sneak up. The name game will help directors see the importance and significance that each member of the management team brings to the table. Gratitude for the fellow directors, coupled with reciprocal positive feedback will build stronger bonds between directors, encourage involvement, and increase satisfaction within their organization. Additionally, it may even help with problem solving and communication when the management team is faced with various issues.

Session 3

At one point or another, people will experience some type of work related stress. Whether it be with the work itself or an issue with a co-worker, stressors are bound to creep up even with

the happiest of employees. However, research has shown that a sense of community in the workplace is a contributing factor to happiness and satisfaction in the job (Mahan, Garrard, Lewis, & Newbrough, 2002). Happy hour is a great time for workers to come together, bond, and create their own sense of community. However, social culture has deemed after work happy hours as a time to release negative work tension. Stereotypically, co-workers get together and vent about the boss or let off steam after a long, challenging work week. For their third session, we propose that the management team still engage in a team-building happy hour, but with a positive twist.

The changing power of happy hour can take place at any location of the management team's choosing. However, it must be outside of the office and in a casual setting. Instead of talking about various frustrations or difficulties that have come up over the past week, the directors will be asked to discuss the organization's achievements and accolades. This changes the conversation from focusing on the negative to the positive. In an effort to help this discussion along, we will ask the management team to keep a "gratitude box" in the office for the week leading up to happy hour. Throughout the week, team members can drop anonymous notes of thanks to any co-worker that has helped them during the week or has done something to make their day a little easier. Notes of appreciation, hard work acknowledgements, or simple compliments are all welcomed in the gratitude box. During the happy hour, the notes will be read aloud to the group in order to build rapport between team members and boost feelings of value. Happy hour will help the directors bond in an appreciative and respectful way, while additionally setting a tone of fellowship that fosters feelings of positivity and closeness between members.

Session 4

Practicing Acts of Kindness (AOK) will be our next session. This session will include psychoeducation about what it means to practice acts of kindness, how you go about doing these acts and why it is effective in increasing mood, leading to increased satisfaction at work. Practicing acts of kindness means that you provide some sort of assistance or comfort to others by donating means or something as simple as your time, as stated by Dr. Lyubomirsky (Lyubomirsky, 2007). Some ideas that might be helpful in the workplace to practice these acts would be to offering to help with a project, making coffee for everyone, greeting someone you don't know in your office or work environment or giving a coworker/client/customer direct eye contact and time to hear their concerns. Getting creative is key to this exercise. Every Monday, everyone in the workplace will participate in the AOK. It is important to keep in mind every AOK should be different than the last. This exercise can be fulfilled by completing one big AOK or three to five AOK's before the end of the work day. By doing the activity once a week, it is likely that the AOK's will create a ripple effect. A large number of empirical studies confirm that positive social connections at work produce highly desirable results. For example, people get sick less often, recover twice as fast from surgery, experience less depression, learn faster and remember longer, tolerate pain and discomfort better, display more mental acuity, and perform better on the job (Seppala and Cameron, 2015). Having a weekly AOK will start to impact your coworkers as well as your self-perception. We aim to promote and restore a sense of meaningfulness and value in the workplace.

Session 5

The next session will also tie into creating social connection in the workplace. Our personal life can affect how we perform at work and influence our interactions with coworkers.

On top of those negative life events you must find a way to manage stress from deadlines, hardship and traumas at work. Psychoeducation about problem focused coping and emotion focused coping will be taught briefly. For those who choose to cope with problem focused coping skills this would look like talking to a supervisor or boss about the deadline extensions or if you may have a partner in a certain project, create a new feasible work schedule, or even think about looking for another job. Problem focused coping will help you re-evaluate your adversity and to take action. On page 152 it states, people who use problem focused coping experience less depression during and after less stressful situations (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Emotion focused coping skills are good for overwhelming and uncontrollable emotions. Those who are experiencing depressive like symptoms should focus on behavioral activation techniques. This may look like walking during your ten minute breaks, walking before or after work, seeking emotional support from those you feel most comfortable at work, and practicing these techniques outside of work as well. Making sure to incorporate self-care, like going to the movies, to distract negative or intrusive thoughts, outside of work. Another emotion focused coping skills would be to cognitively challenge yourself to interpret the situation in a positive tone and accept the situation. Whether you decide to practice problem focused coping skills or emotional focused coping skills everyone will participate in the, ABCDE journaling. The ABCDE journaling stands for A) Adversity B) Belief about adversity C) Consequences D) Dispute E) Energy. By journaling and writing thoughts about an adverse event at work, coworkers will be able to organize their thoughts and share it. The idea is that this exercise will spread awareness about the adverse event but also help them dispute their thoughts and come up or collaborate with others to come to a rationalized solution. We aim to uniting the workplace by increasing actively listening and collaboration to solve a work issues.

Session 6

      Increasing Flow Through Music. "Music is proposed to reduce stress, and can evoke positive feelings such as joy, relaxation, and empowerment" (Weinberg and Joseph, 2016). Flow is best defined as a "state of 'full-capacity' living that is believed to be directly linked to optimal development and functioning. Csikszentmihalyi studied people who became so absorbed in their work that they lost all sense of time and space, these people would forget to eat, change their clothes, or even use the restroom. While we don't want employees neglecting self-care, there is a level of happiness that can be derived from experiencing flow at work (Lopez, Pedrotti and Snyder, 2015). Through our research we learned that flow in social forms has been rated as being more enjoyable than solitary forms of flow. This means that people who experience social flow, ranging from 'mere presence' with others to as complex as interactive coordinated situations in groups, find that these experiences are more fulfilling than experiencing individualized flow where there are no others around (Walker, 2010). The other thing that we learned was that many large companies are adding entire music rooms to their offices to allow their employees to play music either on their own, or through group jam sessions. Of course this expense is easily added for a high profit company like Google or Facebook, but how do we incorporate music into everyday environments that may have a lower budget.

      This happiness building activity focuses on incorporating music into the workplace in a way that everyone can enjoy even with a low budget. Until funds can be allocated to musical instruments like maracas, small drums and tambourines focus on playing live upbeat music during office breaks or before meetings. Everyone should be encouraged to sing, dance and play like nobody's watching! The goal here is to get everyone laughing and playing with each other and to allow for employees to shake away the daily stressors and forget about work and

deadlines for a little while. Another way to incorporate music into the workplace is to play light background music when appropriate. Remember that not all people can work with music and for some it may inhibit flow so be mindful of when music is played and for how long it is played to avoid ear fatigue.

Session 7

Nourishing Your Body: Through Friendly Competition. Moving your body throughout the day can be a challenge when you work behind a desk. It is important to get up and move as frequently as possible and hosting an interoffice challenge is a great way to motivate employees to move their bodies in a fun way! One fun way to motivate employees to move is by incorporating fitness at every level. The following activity is a fun, interactive, challenge that will motivate each employee to do what they can when they can in an effort to win a "prize" and get moving!

Make it fun! Employees will be encouraged to move their bodies in whatever way they enjoy throughout the day at work. Employees will be grouped into teams to hold each other accountable and make the challenge more fun. Each employee will be given a daily movement tracker that they can use to fill in the amount of movement they've done each day. At the end of the week teams will submit their total movement minutes and the team with the highest total will win for that week. Prizes can range from bragging rights to a trophy that gets passed around to the winning group for that week.

Session 8

Goal Commitment. Commitment to goals provides one with meaning, structure, and good self-esteem. Communicating goals and motivations allows individuals to connect with others and bond over values. It goes without saying that goals -both personal and professional- are vital to

drive and productivity in the workplace. In this session we will focus on two goal-oriented activities.

Our first activity for this session is an icebreaker exercise. Attendees will be invited to introduce themselves and share their own "motivation statement." Facilitators will ask that these motivation statements are personal and concise. The main intention of this exercise is to make space for employees to share their values with each other. Sharing and understanding others' motivations contributes to staff cohesiveness and teamwork.

The main portion of this session will consist of a goal workshop inspired by positive psychology practices. Employees will first choose a goal in their professional or personal life that they would like to work with in the session. Group facilitators will then present information pertaining to goal commitment and effectiveness. Attendees will learn how to analyze their goals based on 6 parameters outlined in *The How of Happiness*: intrinsic vs. extrinsic goals, goal authenticity, approach- vs. avoidance-oriented goals, harmony in goal setting, activity vs. circumstance based goals and goal flexibility and appropriateness (Lyubomirsky, 2007). Employees will then use this information to analyze the goal they chose at the beginning of the activity with the aid of a goal commitment worksheet and help from the facilitators. Forming better, more intentional goals will increase the likelihood of goal commitment and completion in the long run (Elliot, 1994).

Expected results: It is expected that the management team will:

- Develop an awareness about positive psychology and the happiness benefits;
- Identify their signature strengths and identify new techniques to employ them daily in all aspects of their lives to "build and broaden" their strengths;

- Become acquainted with the strengths of their team members and how their individual strengths complement each other and the value to the whole;

- Re-affirm the alignment between their individual values and the organizational values, mission;

- Identify the upward spiral from the goals that they set one year ago as a whole match up with their individual strengths and individual goals;

- Be able to verbalize their gratitude for each other and the support they gain from team members;

- Being able to engage in "reflection in action", a process to build a shared vision through reflecting on the director's assumptions, generalizations, and mental models to determine which interactions are not working. If assumptions are identified then they will be able to find the root causes of the problems and restructure their assumptions with a new co-created vision to address the issue at hand. This process can help to remove the barriers to growth. This process is referred to as a "Balancing Inquiry and Advocacy Escalation" (Senge 2006).

Data Collection and Effectiveness

Three measures were chosen to assess the effectiveness of our initiative. The first of these is the Subjective Happiness Scale outlined in Sonja Lyubomirsky's *The How of Happiness* (Lyubomirsky, 2007). This assessment uses questions pertaining to happiness with Likert scales to quantify the subject's perception of their own experience of happiness. Scores from this assessment will be taken before and after the program to examine the effects of our program on employees' happiness levels.

     Our second data collection tool is intended to measure the opposite of happiness in the

workplace-burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey tests for signs of burnout in

3 areas: exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy. A comparison of pre- and post- tests will

provide a means to view what effect our program has on burnout rates in our participants.

     Finally, we created our own assessment with the help of the Workplace Survey created

by the American Psychological Association (Harris Interactive, 2012). It is designed to measure

job satisfaction as it pertains to various aspects of the workplace. The assessment will also be

administered to the management team before the program sessions begin, and then again once all

the sessions are completed. For this survey, we decided to use a Likert scale consisting of ten

questions with five answer options, listed below:

Work Satisfaction Scale

Overall, I am happy in my workplace
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

My organization makes me feel valued
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

I have a positive relationship with my co-workers
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

I am motivated to do my best for my employer
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

I typically feel tense or stressed during the workday
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

I am satisfied with the work-life balance practices offered by my employer
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

My employer helps employees develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

I feel supported by my organization/superior/co-workers when creating and accomplishing career
goals
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

I feel comfortable communicating with my fellow co-workers and team members
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

I share values with both my employer and co-workers
Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

Results from each test will be anonymized and aggregated to both protect the identities of study participant and provide a more accurate picture of the cumulative effects of our program.

Conclusion

This eight session program is designed to boost quality of life in and out of the office, reduce stress in the workplace, and increase work-life balance, all while increasing workplace productivity. We strongly believe that happy employees are more effective employees. Understandably, employers want to see the value of wellness programs on their revenue and production, and we feel that by increasing the happiness of employees it will increase their desire to be at work, lessen their distractibility and work-related stress, and increase the quality of work produced. Input from leadership and administration have played a large role in curriculum development. We intend to continue working closely with the management team to assess and fine tune the program as we progress. Our hope is that the directors continue engaging in these activities after experiencing increased workplace happiness and productivity and continue to provide a workplace that fosters employee wellbeing.

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