

Book Review

MILLENNIALS & THE WORKPLACE: CHALLENGES FOR ARCHITECTING ORGANIZATIONS OF TOMORROW by *Pritam Singh, Asha Bhandarker & Sumita Rai*, New Delhi: Sage Response, 2012, Rs. 425, Paperback, ISBN: 978-81-321-089-6, 233 pp.

“*Change is the only constant*” – Heraclitus. A constant state of flux is probably the sole invariable of the human condition down the ages. Incremental changes have been a part of human existence for millennia, where our journey from the Stone Age to the Information Age has not merely been technological, but also societal, cultural, philosophical and political. But society, as we know it now, is not merely changing, but doing so at an accelerated pace. People today, are becoming increasingly empowered; privileges are being treated as rights; institutions, which were previously beyond reproach, are facing scathing criticism, and in some cases violent protests. Large-scale public protests and uprisings have targeted financial institutions in the Euro-American world, military dictatorships in the Arab world and the government in India, the world’s largest functional democracy, amongst others. The people at the forefront of these protests are part of a generation termed as Millennials, also variously known as “Generation Y” or “Gen Net”. Organizations, an integral part of modern societies, therefore cannot remain impervious to these changes when these

protestants are part of, or soon will be, their workforce. But, the enormity of most modern organizations, coupled with the need for constant boundary spanning activities, makes tailoring an organization to the needs of the workforce an arduous task, yet it is essential if the organization is to survive and thrive. Therefore, books like “*Millennials and the Workplace*”, serve a very important purpose where organization leaders are given a blueprint for taking their organizations forward by able academicians.

The book’s approach is an empirical one, where based on a large scale survey of 2,158 respondents across India on certain demographic, social and psychological variables, the authors try to understand the meaning of and the expectations from the workplace for the Millennials. All the respondents were born within 1977 – 1984, the standard age criteria for Millennials. On the basis of that understanding the authors put forth a detailed plan for organizations to attract and retain talent.

The book is organized into five chapters. The introductory chapter

provides an extensive literature review on the meaning of work for humans and how it has changed down the ages throughout the world, before going on to what work and workplace have come to mean for the Millennials. The chapter then provides a brief introduction of the research variables, instrument design and finally the research instrument itself. The second chapter provides an extensive profiling of the respondents on the basis of demographic (age, gender, education, work experience and place of upbringing), psychosocial (family type, parental occupation, parents' employment status, father's style, family decision-making and risk-taking style), personality and value variables. The personality variables used are achievement orientation and workplace locus-of-control, while the values studied are personal growth, self-fulfillment, progressive orientation and community development. While the variables included for the study are undoubtedly important, the authors do not expound on the reasons for specifically choosing these variables for their study.

The third chapter deals with the Millennials' expectations from the workplace and identifying the antecedents influencing these expectations. The dominant themes which emerged in terms of expectations were: entrepreneurial innovation; performance-based recognition; transparency and fairness; opportunities for learning and development; and work-life balance. Among these, entrepreneurial innovation was the most important factor. The chapter concludes by examining the effects of the demographic, psychosocial,

personality and value variables on these expectations.

The fourth chapter brings out the large gaps in between employees' expectations from the workplace and actual organizational realities. These gaps, along with the gaps in expectations from and experiences of supervisory behaviors, are chief influencers in an employee's intent to leave an organization. The chapter concludes with a view from another perspective, as the authors present their finding from their interviews with HR professionals.

The concluding chapter provides the blueprint for tomorrow's organizations by pointing out what are the essential shifts in organizational mindscapes which are required if organizations are to excel. The authors state that an organization which encourages entrepreneurial innovation provides a just, fair and equitable work environment, along with opportunities for employees' self-development and enough room for the exercise of free-will is the organization which will succeed with its Millennial workforce. The authors conclude the book by providing two important checklists for organizations and leaders, which would help them to reduce the differences between employee expectations, supervisory behaviors and organizational realities.

The reviewers find this book a very valuable piece of work especially considering that there has been no previous work on Millennials as a workforce in India. The scale of the data, along with the various sources from which data is drawn

(employees, students, HR professionals, etc.) makes it a particularly commendable work. As it is the Millennials who will be leading Indian organizations in the near future, the book is important for current practitioners who will hand over the baton, to know what to expect from and what to provide to tomorrow's leaders. From the researchers' point of view, the book provides a starting point on which a body of work on Millennials of India can be built. Since the authors have concentrated only on a limited number of psychological variables, it gives ample scope for an expansion of this research agenda. Similar research on the same cohort can also be

conducted at a later date (or on a longitudinal sample), to see what differences have emerged in the interim period and how have they come about. Since the data is cross-sectional, it is only through such studies (or by comparison to previous studies) it can be conclusively said whether this generation is actually very different from the others preceding it, or is it just a case of "*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*".

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