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### Does Employee Training and Development Programs Mitigate Attrition in the Millennial Workforce?

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# Paper Christian

*by* Christian Marcelo

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**Does Leadership Training Mitigate attrition in the Millennial Workforce?**

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Granite State College

MGMT 850: Capstone

Dr. Kathy DeRoches

March 7, 2021

## DOES LEADERSHIP TRAINING MITIGATE ATTRITION IN THE MILLENNIAL WORKFORCE?

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### **Abstract**

This paper looks to examine if there is a correlation between employee training and development programs and how that might mitigate attrition in companies. The main target group in this research are individuals in the millennial cohort born between 1982 and 1999. The reason why I chose this topic was because it is the generation with the most employees entering the workplace. The paper will also cover the many factors that may influence a millennial's decision to stay with their current employer, and the many values they are looking for to advance in their companies. The paper will utilize scholarly articles and a survey distributed to the millennial cohort. The data in this research points that millennials are looking for lucrative salaries, career advancement and overall leadership support from their employers.

*Keywords:* Millennials, Leadership, Training, Development

Does Leadership Training Mitigate Attrition in the Millennial Workforce?

**Introduction**

This topic was of high interest to me because I am part of the millennial cohort and have been employed with my company for a little over ten years. Many of my peers that are millennials have held many different positions since graduating high school. One of the main reasons why I chose to stay with Marshalls was because of the continued leadership and training development that the company has provided through my tenure. This paper will examine the different types of leadership and training programs that companies have to offer their employees and whether that is a reason for them to continue to advance with them or move on to a different employer. Throughout different journals and research, the common denominator is that incorporating and investing in employee training and development programs can increase employee morale and ultimately reduce employee attrition. Many companies across many industries are struggling to retain employees. The millennial cohort which spans from 1982 to 1996 have been raised differently than past generations, the values in this cohort are different because of the high student loan debt and cost of living increase. Most of the individuals in this cohort are seeking jobs based on their current stage in life. There have been large percentages of attrition rates that have skyrocketed in many companies. According to the US Bureau of Labor (2020) “The average attrition rate of employees leaving their employer in 2020 in all industries is up 45%” (US Bureau of Labor, 2021). This research paper intends to make a compelling case for companies to take the time and invest in their employee’s growth within the company. Many people seek to grow within their companies in leadership roles and beyond. In order for companies to promote the next leader they need to take the time to properly train and support their development. Within the case there will be a definition of attrition, the importance of

relationships between leaders and managers and evidence that demonstrates the benefits of employee and leader development programs.

At first glance, it is hard to pinpoint why people leave companies, however training and development play a key role. When employees feel supported and have the resources to advance within the organizational structure it creates a sense of motivation to exceed expectations. I want to know what companies can do to reinforce their training programs or even maybe incorporate them into their daily work routines. Training is far more than just the learning the responsibilities of a role. Companies can create a vast array of training programs to increase leadership, responsibilities or teamwork.

This research paper utilizes a mixture of case studies, past research and data collected from surveys to determine the correlation between employee attrition and training and development.

## **Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

For my research study I have chosen to do a detailed analysis on the impact leadership training and development may have on the decision for employees to stay with the company. I will specifically be focusing on the millennial cohort born between 1982 and 1996. In my research a survey was distributed to a group of millenniald to determine the root cause of why they left their employer, what values they seek and if they are looking to advance based on support from leadership and training programs. I will take a closer look into companies that support development programs for employees to grow within the company, and the importance of developing appropriate leadership development programs. I will address some of the

important factors that may lead employees to seek other employment such as cost of living, where they are in their life, monetary incentives and what values they seek from an employer. It is important for companies to ensure that there are proper training and development programs set in place to increase the leadership capabilities of those in managerial positions.

### **The Workforce**

#### ***Shortage of Workers***

There are many factors that have influenced a fast-growing amount of shortage of workers in the workforce. Many industries are seeing a decline in applications due to the shortage of skilled workers in specific trades. In the research conducted by Krajesak & Kozak, the results of economic recessions have largely contributed to a high demand in certain job labors, which in turn create a gap in applicants and finding talent. The economy after the 2008 financial crisis saw a slow economic recovery and an increase in manpower in industries with high demand such as agriculture, retailers, and healthcare, (Krajesak, 2018). Now more than ever many people are going to college and seeking high education so that they can seek out professional jobs. Now that the new generation of millennial workers is entering the workforce with college degrees, making the employment selection very competitive. (Krajesak, 2018). Many employees in low paying jobs are quitting due to low wages, benefits and schedules. (Krajesak, 2018). Employers want quality workers with at least some kind of education behind their belt, but the pay does not match the job qualifications. Studies have shown that the number of open jobs has been way higher than the amount of people looking for work. (Fernandez, 2019). According to the US Department of Labor there were 8.1 million job openings in 2019, with only 5.5 million people looking for work that year. (US Department of Labor, 2021). More people are being picky to what jobs they want and what their expectations are for future career

growth opportunities. As the cost of living increases people can't afford to get a job that pays the bare minimum. "With such a tight labor market and rising productivity, workers should expect much bigger pay raises than they're getting" (Fernandez, 2019).

### ***21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills***

Current research demonstrates that employers seek workers with skills that mirror current trends in today's world. Technical skills are no longer enough for employees to compete in a competitive job market (Dean, A. & East J. 2019). Electronic communication has recently replaced the typical face to face interaction and have been utilized by many companies to connect customers and employees. (Dean, A. & East J. 2019). Not only is communication important to consider in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, technology has continued to evolve in the past decade and many employees require basic understanding of certain online platforms and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The article conducted by Dean, A. & East J. (2019) discusses the importance of communicating effectively with customers and co-workers. Dean, A. & East J. (2019) states "that workers should possess interpersonal skills, which are a factor for effective customer communications" (Dean, A. & East J., 2019). Communication is one of the most important skills to have in any job setting. Nowadays, we have different platforms to communicate with people, such as social media, virtual conference systems and in person meetings. As there are more advancements in technology in the workforce, employees need to have some basic understanding on how to use them to their advantage to build relationships and increase performance.

### **Attrition**

Reynolds (2019) defines Attrition as a reduction in numbers in the workforce usually of resignation, retirement, or death. In order to measure attrition, it is important to understand the root cause of the separation between the employee and the employer. One of the top causes for a

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high turnover rate in companies is pay. According to the US Department of Labor statistics the average minimum wage in 2020 was \$7.25 with twelve states having that as their state required minimum wage. (US Department of Labor, 2021).

Another factor in the attrition scale is skills development. Many workers seek opportunities for training and development support to increase their job understanding. Employees that feel supported and empowered to learn and be a part of development opportunities are most likely to stay with their organizations, because they feel that the company is investing in their future with them, (Sharby, 2019). People want to learn more than just the basic training for their jobs they want to develop skills that can benefit them for promotions and Ultimately career opportunities. When companies implement special development programs, they include more than just the basic training competencies which keep employees engaged to continue to learn.

Currently, many companies across different industries are trying to combat an increasingly high employee attrition rate. Reynolds (2019) discusses the details on how organizations can better recruit, engage, and retain their employees. The article notes that in some industries it is very competitive to retain talent within. “the transitory nature of careers is forcing organizations to pay special attention to how they discretely manage employees” (Reynolds, 2019 p.4). Many employees across different industries have redefined their expectations and relationships with employers. Times have changed and now many of the expectations that employees want to see are problematic for traditional leaders to adapt. Reynolds article confirms that companies that focus on individuals needs and wants are making themselves far more attractive than any other company. Employees consider what they want from work and how that will benefit them in the long run when applying for a new position or

deciding to stay with a company. (Reynolds, 2019). In his article Kopp (2020) discusses the importance for employers to keep a balance to attract employees to their companies and to survey what competitors are doing to pull people into their companies. “A number of influencing factors like pay, working conditions, co-workers and managers, career opportunities, intrinsic and extrinsic aspects may influence the level of employee's satisfaction in the organization” (Kopp, 2020). It is important to know your team and what influences their decision to stay. Many people have different outlooks on why they want to grow with the company.

### **Millennials**

#### ***Who they Are?***

The millennial workforce consists of individuals born between the years of 1982 and 1996. Adkins (2016) discusses that the millennial generation “have a strong desire for development is perhaps the greatest differentiator between them and all other generations in the workplace” (Adkins, 2016). Many workers in this generation are looking for career opportunities to increase their position, salary, and learning. A lot of millennials have many financial factors to consider when determining if they want to make a career out of their current company, (Adkins, 2016). Many people have high student loan debts and they can't afford to stay with jobs that pay the bare minimum and that don't have many advancement opportunities. Studies have shown that career development and training is a significant factor for millennials to stay committed to their employer. “An impressive 87% of millennials rate professional or career growth and development opportunities as important to them in a job” (Adkins). Millennials may have a higher emphasis on career development than any other generation because of their current stage in life. Many are at the age in life where they may be looking for real estate, starting a family or even starting their career journeys.

### ***Values***

As we enter a new decade in the workforce, companies are seeing a new batch of workers from a generation that have increasingly been raised with technology and a different lifestyle. In the article by Yanto (2020) He discusses the impact that the millennial workforce has on companies' values and career development opportunities. Organizations need to consider that this current millennial generation will eventually take on managerial positions in the future to fill in for other generations that are soon able to retire. It is important for companies to have a strategic plan for talent development and find the next emerging leaders, (Yanto, 2020). In the article by Adkins he notes that millennials feel empowered to learn and develop their job skills. "Millennials want managers to find ways to invest in their futures, hone their skills and coach them to become the best workers they can be" (Adkins, 2020).

### **Leaders and Employees Relationship**

In order to maintain a positive work environment there needs to be a solid and formed relationship between the leadership team and employees. The article by Jo & Ellingson (2019) examines the benefits of establishing a positive relationship within an organization to decrease any issues that might develop. The authors define social relationship broadly and take a deeper dive into the different turnover theories across different industries. "Research shows that employees leave organizations when they are dissatisfied and have job alternatives" (Jo & Ellingson, p.248). The article goes into detail on how one's social connections with others in the company may influence their decision to stay or leave. Within this article it was important to note the definition of social relationships as "the way in which people are intermittently but continuously allied either formally or informally for an extended period of time" (Jo & Ellingson ,p.251).

There is research that suggests that there is an impact on employee morale when employees feel supported and engaged by their managers. Not only does supporting employees help boost their performance it also helps build a healthier relationship that can form trust and communication between both parties. “Supervisors can enhance employee positive behavior by signaling that employees will get support to carry out their tasks and deal with stressful situations” (Sguera et al., 2016 p. 616). Employees that feel they can count on their supervisor for any type of support will feel empowered to reach out for help. “Such caring may involve enhanced task performance, as well as important altruistic behaviors that go beyond formal job requirements” (Sguera et al., 2016 p. 616) It is important for Managers to articulate the company’s mission to foster a positive work culture within the organization. Managers need to address their commitment to help employee’s development, recognize behaviors and take ensure employees are happy within their position.

Throughout the research conducted that suggest that employees are also trying to find support from their leadership teams that help promote a health work-life balance relationship with their positions. In Kopp (2020) research study on “Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction” found that “Most people divide their daily life between work and family, and both are difficult to separate. And if an organization wants better productivity and more commitment of the employees, then they must be in fact happy and satisfied” (Kopp, 2020 p. 28). Allowing employees to have lucrative benefits such as time off, flexible work schedules, and an opportunity to relax at home can bring positive outcomes for both the employee and company. Kopp (2020) notes that “the balance is achieved if an individual’s right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as a room, to the mutual benefit of the individual business and society” (p.28). There are numerous studies that show the importance of

ensuring employees have a positive work-life balance because it increases employee loyalty, attrition and increase job productivity. “work-life balance measures should be enforced in all businesses in order to motivate the employees and to avoid fluctuation. It needs a clear concept and a strategic approach to target work-life balance measures” (Kopp, 2020).

There is research that proves that employees want to increase their relationships with managers and co-workers to make work fun and enjoyable. Many people that feel comfortable and have strong relationships with co-workers will always want to go to work with a positive and can-do attitude. “Individuals want to come to work and enjoy the experience with coworkers, mentors, teammates, or supervisors. These relationships are incredibly influential on enjoyment, productivity, and desire to stay with an organization” (Reynolds, 2019). Building a strong, trusting and supportive relationships are extremely important in the workplace and have shown many positive outcomes of future growth and development.

### **Companies Supporting Employee Development Programs**

Companies that support employee development programs seem to have higher employee morale and motivation. Many employees seek to grow with companies that invest in their development. Jaspreet’s (2016) study found a variety of benefits in training programs.

“Training and development programs have a positive impact on knowledge enhancement, skill development and job enrichment of bank employees, which in turn reduces the attrition rate, increase the job retention and prove to be beneficial for the value addition of employees” (p.198).

Studies have shown that employee development can help organizations grow because of the committed employee talents that are grown within. “Managers are responsible for accomplishing

results through others. The time spent developing them will pay off in the form of a motivated, skilled, and productive workforce” (Hosmer, 2015 p. 3).

Generally, current research finds that a company that invests in their development programs sees an increase in employee retention. Not only does development help build leadership team, it also helps showcase employee talent and build the company’s talent pipeline. “demonstrating your investment in your employees will go a long way toward motivating and retaining them, regardless of their unique circumstances. Employees want good supervision, coaching, and professional development” (Hosmer, 2015 p. 16).

### **Companies Response to Leadership Training Programs**

Leadership programs have been proven to be very successful across many companies. “Training is a vehicle for learning as well as change, it opens minds, people become more capable through training” (Palan, 2007 p.6). Research has shown that well executed programs have lucrative benefits for both the trainer and trainee. “When the trainer and training are effective, those trained feel more confident due to their new knowledge and skills. The training adds value to the individual and boosts the individual's self-esteem” (Palan, 2007 p.6). Leadership values has an impact on the culture of the company and that might affect the employee’s day to day functions. De Meuse (2013) notes “The fundamental premise is that the nature of managerial jobs differs across organizational levels. Consequently, managers need to have different skill sets to perform their jobs effectively as they ascend the organizational hierarchy” (150).

Brig General George M. Reynolds (2019) demonstrates how leadership across many organizations has drastically changed. Nowadays, when leading a team, it’s more about the total staff and putting a big emphasis on focusing on the individuals within the team. “Today’s

employees view work differently and are progressively reevaluating and prioritizing work attributes such as flexibility, development, and enjoyment. These changes can be problematic for traditional human resource departments and organizational leaders” (Reynolds, 2019).

Leadership training programs are essential for managers to learn how to manage a diverse group of people with different needs and wants. What might motivate one individual may not motivate the other, so it is important to learn everyone’s style. For hierarchical organizations leadership positions are crucial in keeping employees engaged and up to date with policies and procedures. Research conducted by Guyton-Ringbloom the author expressed that “From learning about leadership roles to developing leadership skills, pursuing growth as leaders can help accelerate opportunities for professional advancement as well as raise the profile of the profession in healthcare” (Guyton-Ringbloom, 2020).

Overall, individuals in the millennial cohort are seeking more than just training and development. Values, 21st century skills and where they are in life have a big factor in determining whether they should stay with their employer or seek employment elsewhere. There are different steps that companies can take to formulate and execute a leadership training program. It really depends on what the organization wants their employees to take away from the training and how much support they are willing to invest in their talent. “People are not necessarily born as perfect employees. Rather, the right employee is made by what they do everyday learning, gaining experience, and developing skills” (Guyton-Ringbloom, 2020).

### **Framework for Analysis**

In order to gather data to pinpoint whether leadership training and development programs mitigate attrition in companies, I generated a ten-question survey to dissect data from a select

group of seventy-five respondents. The millennial cohort ranges from individuals born between 1982 and 1996. Out of the seventy-five participants fifteen were omitted because they did not fall in between the millennial cohort. Sixty participants did however qualify for the research study. The data in the survey demonstrated and proved that well over half of the participants are seeking training and development programs from their employers. 72% of employees are looking to advance with their current employer and noted different values that play a large role in their decision to stay. Many participants had similar values they seek in their current job such as culture of the company, advancement opportunities, monetary incentives, work life balance and development support. These elements are just a few of the many reasons why millennials are seeking employment elsewhere. There was a common theme of tenure in the survey where the average amount of jobs participants had in the study was four since graduating high school. For employees to have held that many jobs in such short time in their career was fascinating to understand as a millennial myself and it goes to show if companies are really taking the time to invest in their employees training and development.

### **Conclusion**

As a current millennial in the workforce who has been with the same company for the past ten years due to the continued leadership and development support they have provided me, it was fascinating to note how other millennials in my cohort felt in regards to their companies and past employers. Some of the participants noted the values they seek from their employer as “companies giving you the tools needed to succeed and advance within the company” (Participant Survey, 2021).

Pay also was important for many respondents as the cost of living has increased and many have high student loan debts. Not only are millennials looking to grow with their company

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they are also looking for lucrative salaries to support their needs. A participant noted in the survey “I will stay If they provide a reasonable salary that can support me as a I look to start a family” (Participant Survey, 2021).

Some limitations in the research were the timeframe of the survey. With such a small window to allow participants to respond to the survey I could have missed a bigger crowd of respondents. I also had to omit fifteen respondents that did not fall in the millennial cohort criteria. One participant declined the consent, so their response was removed. If there was a longer timeframe for survey, I believe that the results could have provide more information on what other people seeking in career opportunities and training from their employers. Overall, the data in the research study notes that millennials are seeking leadership training and development training. “Seeking leadership development and career opportunities within my current employer are what will keep me with my company” (Participant Survey, 2021). In order to retain employees companies, need to support them in their development and provide them with training that will attract millennials to stay.

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