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**STRATEGIES FOR INCORPORATING SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES
INTO MANUFACTURING ENVIRONMENTS TO INCREASE
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND REDUCE TURNOVER FOR
FRONT-LINE, MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES**

**A Research Project
Presented to the Faculty of
The Graziadio Business School
Pepperdine University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
in
Organization Development**

**by
Karen Fitzgerald**

July 2019

This research project, completed by

KAREN FITZGERALD

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The Graziadio Business School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Date: July 2019

Faculty Committee

Committee Chair, Ann Feyerherm, Ph.D.

Committee Member, Julie Chesley, Ph.D.

Deryck J. van Rensburg, D.B.A., Dean
The Graziadio Business School

Abstract

Generation Y has a reputation of being lazy, entitled, and self-centered. Other generations struggle to find ways to relate and work with them. Companies are spending large sums of money to learn how to engage and lead with them. This study examined the factors that affect front-line millennial employee's engagement and turnover in a manufacturing environment. It also identified systems and practices to engage and reduce turnover with millennial front-line employees in a manufacturing environment. From a study of 50 employees, leadership and purpose were among the highest scored factors that impacted engagement and turnover for the millennial generation. Additionally, communication, nonmonetary compensation, and job and work requirements scored the lowest. Recommendations were provided to increase these scores in efforts to improve employee engagement and reduce turnover.

Keywords: engagement, leadership, purpose, millennials

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Generation Y (or Millennial) has a reputation for being lazy, entitled, and self-centered (Bauer, 2017). Generations outside of this generation struggle to find ways to relate and work with them. Companies are spending large sums of money to learn how to engage and lead with them.

This is the first time in history that the workplace will have four generations working at the same time: The Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. By 2020, a minimum of one-third of the workforce will include the millennial generation (Donston-Miller, 2016). To adapt to the changing workforce, there have been numerous studies conducted on the millennial generation. In fact, Millennials may be the most studied generation in history (Donston-Miller, 2016). Many companies are changing to adapt to this new employee population. For example, “McKinsey, employees are allowed to take 5 to 10 weeks between projects to pursue their personal interests” (Sadahi, 2015, p. 1). It is a priority for millennials to review their total compensation package when choosing their employers. “More than half of Millennials (56%) say that a quality benefits package influences their choice of employers” (Gualtieri & Seppanen, 2012, p. 13). In addition, employers are offering work from home or flex-time options (Sadahi, 2015).

In addition, historically, there are many examples of employees staying with the same company for the majority of their work-life. However, average tenure is on the decline. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), the average tenure in 2016 was 4.2 years, which is down from 4.6 years in 2014. If this trend continues, within ten years the average tenure will average a mere 2.6 years. According to the Society of

Human Resource Management (SHRM), the average time to fill a position is 42 days. It takes an additional three to six months to adjust to your new role (Green, 2013). An organization is facing a minimum of four months of work shortage when an employee leaves the organization. It is to the detriment of the company's investment for employees to leave after a short amount of time. In addition, due to the availability of the internet and technology, employees can learn about what other organizations offer regarding perks and benefits, creating a constant temptation to pursue other opportunities. In fact, more than half of employees (51%) are searching for new jobs or watching for openings (Gallup, 2017). According to Gallup, 33% of US employees are engaged and only one in five say their performance is managed in a way that motivates them. This makes the need to retain their current employee population even more paramount to the success of the organization. This is one reason why companies are becoming so mindful about how they attract and retain the millennial generation. Like McKinsey, many organizations change what they offer and how they work to accommodate the changing values and interests of today's workforce (Sadahi, 2015).

In the study organization, a manufacturing plant, the front-line employee engagement scores for the Generation Y ("millennials") workforce is lower than those in other generations. In addition, employee turnover for this generation is higher. As the HR Manager for this site, I interviewed supervisors of these employees as well as collected exit survey data. These data sets are inconclusive as to why the supervisors state that the millennial generation is lazy and do not want to work. After researching the topic, this statement was not an adequate explanation, but the research could not support alternative theories in this specific environment (manufacturing) and employee position

classification. Thus, the research question of this thesis is to understand the factors that affect employee engagement and employee turnover for front-line Generation Y employees in manufacturing environments. By identifying the factors specific to this plant, organizations will better understand what systems and practices can be put into place in efforts to increase employee engagement and reduce employee turnover in manufacturing environments with front-line, Generation Y employees. For this study, the term “millennial” will be used when referencing Generation Y.

Corporate environments can be flexible with their business operations to engage and retain this generation according to those interests. However, manufacturing environments offer a different set of challenges that may impede the ideals of this generation. These environments utilize machinery and equipment to make products for consumers requiring a certain number of employees on the plant floor or the “line” as known in the industry. This type of environment is highly structured. The front-line” employees are operating the equipment and are assigned to specific shifts based on their knowledge of that equipment. The employees are required to be at their workstation or operating their equipment (e.g., forklifts) at all times with exceptions for rest breaks and meal breaks. There is also little flexibility to their job responsibilities. These employees work on assembly lines by themselves without much technology. This environment offers a different set of challenges that limit their ability to offer perks that traditional office environments have incorporated that appeal to the millennial generation.

Purpose and Objective

It is for the reasons above that this study is important. With more and more millennials in the workforce and tenure decreasing, manufacturing companies are in

positions where they may be facing costly battles with turnover and engagement. Not only is turnover costly to organizations, but employee engagement plays a significant role in organizational success (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015). A recent study concluded there is a significant relationship between engagement and the organizational metrics after interviewing 3,200 employees from 343 companies (Patro, 2013). In addition, organizations that experience higher engagement find there is a 22% increase in employee productivity (Baltoni, 2013). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand how to incorporate systems and practices that speak to the ideals of the front-line millennial generation in manufacturing environments. The question is what factors affect front-line millennial employee engagement and employee turnover in a manufacturing environment. Data was collected and recommended strategies that may increase employee engagement and reduce employee turnover.

Chapter 2 reviews the existing and relevant literature on this topic. Chapter 3 describes the proposed methodology for the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study. Finally, Chapter 5 provides discussion and conclusions from the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore what systems and practices organizations can put in place to engage and reduce turnover with millennial, front-line employees in a manufacturing environment. This chapter provides insight into existing research that will be used to determine where there are gaps in the literature. This chapter reviews several areas of the existing literature and research to support this study. First, this chapter reviews the history that has shaped and formed the millennial generation. Then, this chapter defines the values and characteristics of this generation. The chapter then describes the effects of turnover and engagement for businesses. The chapter concludes with the current state of the manufacturing industry.

Background and History of Generation Y

There is some debate over the date range of the millennial generation. This study uses the more agreed upon dates of those born between 1980 and early 2000s (US Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2012). By 2020, the millennial generation will make up one-third of the workforce (Donston-Miller, 2016); they are the largest generation since the baby boomers. It is important to understand what shaped them to understand their values and characteristics.

As with all generations, there are numerous factors that affect behaviors and values. In 1983, a report was issued about the dire need to revamp our education system highlighting issues around illiteracy, a decline in standardized test scores, and a shortage of qualified teachers. The report advocated for broad academic reform, standardized measures, and increased fiscal support (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). As a result of this study, not only was the educational system brought into national conversation and debate,

but how the government interacted with the citizens of the country was now a point of conversation. There has been a dramatic increase in government spending since the 1950s. Federal spending has increased from \$1,544 per person in 1950 to \$4,760 per person in 1990 (Moore, 1993). The increase in spending is attributed to not only more government programs but also more government oversight for consumer products like cars, homes, schools, and airwaves.

This generation, in particular, grew accustomed to authority and believed that authority does what is right for them (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). The result of this increase in oversight was more trust in authority and systems. Research of more than 800 students from four universities found 60% of millennials agree with the statement “I trust authority figures to act in my best interest,” (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010, p. 209). This is a 20% increase since Generation X was in school. This fact will shape the expectations millennials have in authority, structure, and organization.

There are more people attending institutions of higher education; however, the costs of education have grown considerably - more than in other generations (Maldonado, 2018). “Since 1985 the cost of a college education has soared by over 500 percent!” (Hobart & Sendeck, 2015, p. 79). The increase in college tuition costs means this generation has taken out significant loans to do further education. “In 2012 there were twenty million college students, with more than twelve million borrowing money to pay tuition. There are more than thirty-seven million outstanding student loans, 70 percent owed by Gen Y. The average debt for these loans, across all age groups, is \$24,301.” (Hobart & Sendeck, 2015, p. 79). The result is not only an increase in the total dollar amount but also an increase in the number of loans causing many to delay major life

events like the purchase of a home or even marriage. After finishing school, this generation entered the workforce where they could not find jobs because of the state of the economy. Many people, especially college educated, were not able to find full-time paying jobs; many were forced to work temporary or contract positions until positions opened up.

In addition, parents became hyper-involved in their children's education and extracurricular activities. "Parents expect their children to capitalize on every opportunity presented to them by earning the grades, varsity letters, leadership positions, debate trophies, and AP credits that the best colleges seek" (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010, p.210). This generation has some of the most structured, activity-driven individuals in society. Millennials crave organization and clarity as a result of the high expectations and increased competition evident in their generation. According to Hershatter and Epstein (2010), "Millennial preferences for systems and structures present one of the largest challenges for organizations" (p. 211). This expectation transitions into the workplace where they expect their bosses to provide immediate and specific feedback; by not receiving that feedback, it affects their interest and loyalty to their organization.

The millennial generation is one of the largest generations where both parents worked as they grew up. Many spent time in childcare or after-school programs so working parents could put in enough hours at work. This led to "a strong desire to achieve greater work-life balance" (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010. p. 234). This generation saw the sacrifices both parents made to care for them. They learned that work was a means to afford the type of lifestyle and activities they wanted.

There has also been a significant increase in travel from this generation.

“According to a recent survey by Realty Mogul, 47 percent of young people between the ages of 18 and 34 would rather spend their money on traveling than buying a house” (Martin, 2017, p. 1). Millennials interests have shifted as a result of their upbringing; they want to travel, explore, and have adventures. This is why companies like McKinsey give Millennials additional time off to pursue their interests.

Every generation has historical events that also play a part in their development and formation. This generation saw major attacks such as the events of September 11th, the death of Osama Bin Liden, the War on Terror, Rodney King riots, Columbine, the Lewinsky scandal, Princess Diana’s death, and the Clinton impeachment trial in addition to the economic crises created by the fall of Enron and the housing crisis. These events caused this generation to realize there was fear, danger, and imperfection in the world. “Millennials in general, Howe said, are closer to their parents than other generations were, and the period of intense unity in the aftermath of 9/11 and related anthrax scares reinforced their importance of community "on a subliminal level." (Wagaman, 2016, p. 1). This is a contributing factor into why millennials crave and need to feel connected to a larger mission. For millennials, company values and mission statements play a large factor in determining who they want to work for. Millennials want purpose in their work and in their organization. “Providing Millennials with something to work towards helps them understand how their role plays into the bigger picture. They want to know that their work matters” (Prossack, 2018, para. 6). This is one reason why companies market their philanthropies and community outreach activities, so employees feel connected to the great community and organization. As seen in the 2016 Deloitte survey about

millennials, “Millennials also promote loyalty—particularly when employers demonstrate a strong sense of company purpose beyond financial success” (Deloitte, 2016).

Millennials understand that financial success is required for continued performance in the marketplace, but they do not believe that it is the only metric. In the same Deloitte survey, millennials identify people, purpose, and products in addition to profit as being essential for long-term success (Deloitte, 2016). These themes will impact their overall loyalty to the organization.

Millennials are also the most diverse generation. “Young people are more tolerant of races and groups than older generations (47% vs. 19%), with 45% agreeing with preferential treatment to improve the position of minorities” (Gualtieri & Seppanen, 2012, p. 4). Not only does this play a factor in today’s changing political climate, but it also has a significant place in the workforce. Diversity and inclusion programs are becoming more prominent in organizations. Many organizations have created employee resources groups and expanded their diversity and inclusion programs. These facts are important because the more diverse the group, community, or organization, the more we can learn from each other and expand our knowledge and awareness (Rock & Grant, 2016). According to a McKinsey report, organizations with a more diverse population are “35% more likely to have financial returns above their industry mean” (Rock & Grant, 2016, para. 1). Therefore, not only can we learn from each other, organizations are also more profitable with more diverse teams.

Generation Y Values and Characteristics

Millennial values and characteristics have been shaped as a result of the conditions present through their formation. The millennial generation grew up and moved

into the professional workforce, valuing work-life balance and time to pursue their personal interests. In addition, they are described as:

Well educated, skilled in technology, very self-confident, able to multi-task, and have plenty of energy. They have high expectations for themselves, and prefer to work in teams, rather than as individuals. Millennials seek challenges yet work-life balance is of utmost importance to them. They do, however, realize that their need for social interaction, immediate results in their work, and desire for speedy advancement may be seen as weaknesses by older colleagues.

(Gilbert, 2011, p. 1)

Additionally, Millennials seek employability and flexibility. “Millennials want to continually add to their skills in meaningful ways.” (Brack & Kelly, 2012, p. 5).

However, Millennials are frequently described as the “me” generation. Stereotypes include laziness, entitled, self-obsessed, and easily distracted. In addition, millennials are described as “flighty employees” (Baura, Buckley, & Viechnicki, 2015, p. 12). The perception is that this group of employees will not stick around for long so why train and develop them to join a competitor. The result of this is confusion and resentment from other generations towards the millennial generation.

To some, they are the next “Greatest Generation,” armed with the tools and inclination to drive toward a better future in a world facing economic, geopolitical, and environmental crises. To others, they are “Generation Whine,” young people who have been so over-indulged and protected that they are incapable of handling the most mundane task without guidance or handholding.

(Hershatter & Epstein, 2010, p. 202)

Some of the differences between this generation and others include this generation's relationship with technology. "By birth year, the Internet itself is a member of the Millennial generation" (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010, p. 203). There are only a small percentage of millennials who can remember life before a computer or the internet. This generation is more equipped, knowledgeable, and proficient at using technology. Some complaints about this generation include the short attention span, but Gualtieri and Seppanen (2005) counter that as an increase in their ability to multi-task: "They are retraining the brain to reduce the performance deterioration of multitasking by increasing the speed of information the brain processes" (p. 5). Technology is a contributing factor to the millennial's ability to multi-task. Since this generation grew up with technology, they see it as their aid – an opportunity to do their work from wherever they can. This means they are not spending their time learning a new system and its capabilities; they are trying to figure out how to use technology to their advantage to make their lives easier.

Some of the feedback about this generation is that they are lazy or have no work ethic. However, this generation works more hours than other generations and are the only generation where a majority of spouses also work a full-time job (Schulte, 2015). From Hobart and Sendeck (2015), millennials understand that work-life balance is blurred, but they believe everything should be able to fit within one's life. This is unlike previous generations. The traditionalist generation view work/life balance as "what is that?!", the Baby Boomer generation view it as "live to work; balance when I retire", and Gen X view it as "balance not; not at retirement" (Hobart & Sendeck, 2015, p. 23).

In addition, this generation is motivated by making a difference: “They are optimistic about the future of their companies, they value teamwork and community, they want to engage with customers, and they care about corporate missions and objectives” (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010, p. 213). According to Hobart and Sendeck (2015), the traditionalist generation views work as “an obligation”, the Baby Boomer generations view it as “a lifelong quest”, Gen X views it as “an employment contract”, but millennials view it as “a place to make a difference” (p. 21).

Gen Y wants to know why they are doing a task and how it contributes (Hobart & Sendeck, 2015). The mission of the company and the work they are doing is vitally important to them. This generation will leave an organization if they do not feel like they are contributing to a larger picture or feel alignment with the goals or culture of the organization.

According to Gen Y Now, “What motivates Gen Y is receiving feedback, both positive and developmental, in real time” (Hobart & Sendeck, 2015, p. 31). This generation is accustomed to parents or authority figures aiding them to make them successful in whatever they pursue. Because of this, they need and crave immediate and specific feedback. They need to know how they are performing in their job. They need to know what they need to fix to be better. Not having this information will frustrate them.

Additionally, the millennial generation is demanding a change in how managers lead. Historically, organizations have led through hierarchical measures:

Large scale formal organizations have multiple hierarchical levels and are pyramidal in shape. As one ascends the managerial hierarchy, the number of managers at each level progressively diminishes and the nature of their

responsibilities becomes less concerned with the direction of day-to-day operations and more concerned with diagnosing environment.

(Jago & Vroom, 1977, p. 133)

This type of leadership style is no longer of interest to the millennial generation, “Millennials also want direct connections with leadership teams, from their reporting manager all the way up to the C-Suite... They strive to create inclusive workplaces where everyone has an opportunity to share their voice, regardless of position or title” (Prossack, 2018, para. 3). Millennials place high importance on leaders and the relationship with them: “When this generation is asked to define a “true leader,” descriptives such as passionate, engaging, inspiring, and decisive are among those mostly mentioned” (Goldstein, 2017, para. 9). Additionally, trust within the organization has significant impact on employee’s retention and engagement: “Our new research into the Best Workplaces for Millennials shows one key element impacts Millennial turnover by a factor of 22: a high-trust workplace culture” (Great Places to Work, 2019, p.1). The result of this compilation of leadership information is that the model of “servant leadership stood out for millennials” (Graybill, 2013, p. 11). Servant leadership is best defined as “going beyond one’s self-interest” (Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1230).

It is for all these reasons that millennials have specific priorities; organizations should therefore prioritize in order to attract and retain them. According to a Mercer study,

The top three career priorities for Millennials were compensation (most Millennials graduate from college with an average of \$20,000 in debt), flexible work schedules and the opportunity to make a difference. Not far behind the top

three were having trust in their organization's leadership, receiving benefits and getting professional development opportunities. (Brack & Kelly, 2012, p. 5)

When organizations do not prioritize these items, millennials will start looking for other opportunities.

Turnover

Turnover is defined as "Employees who leave the organization's request as well as those who leave on their own initiative" (Iqbal, 2010, p.275). There are four types of turnover within two categories: involuntary and voluntary. Within involuntary turnover, there is discharge and downsizing turnover. Within voluntary turnover, there is avoidable and unavoidable turnover. Avoidable turnover is defined as "[preventable] by certain organizational actions, such as pay raise or new job assignment" (Iqbal, 2010, p. 276). Unavoidable turnover is defined by unavoidable circumstances. For instance, an employee's death or spouse's relocation (Iqbal, 2010). This study will focus on avoidable turnover. To calculate turnover, the formula is the number of employee separations in one month by the average number of active employees at the worksite during the same period (Payscale, 2010).

Some factors that affect turnover include (but are not limited to) job dissatisfaction, pay, fringe benefits, work environment, management, promotion, and co-workers (Mamun & Hasan, 2017, p. 66). It is important to understand why employees leave organizations. This is often captured in exit survey data. This data will inform organizations where they need to focus their priorities to retain their employee population.

Turnover has a significant effect on employee morale. “High turnover may also have a negative effect on the morale of the remaining employees, especially if the work relies on a positive team dynamic” (Nevbahar, 2015, p. 407). When there is an open position(s) on the team, the rest of the team needs to pick up the slack. Unfortunately, to the team’s dismay, the work that the individual was doing does not go away. Many employees grow tired and weary when there are staffing shortages, affecting their interest in continued employment. In addition, when an employee leaves, the information, skills, and knowledge they have acquired during their tenure leaves with them. Depending on the level of their knowledge, it can take someone a significant amount of time to relearn the information that person had in their head.

The cost of turnover is significant to businesses bottom line. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics:

The cost to replace an employee, at a minimum, is 25 percent of an employee’s annual fully loaded compensation (salary, benefits, and taxes). It can cost thousands to hire and train a new hourly employee. It can cost much more to replace a manager. At the high end, some companies estimate the cost of replacing an employee is over \$200,000. (Hobart & Sendeck, 2015, p. 16)

According to Hobart and Sendeck (2015), the estimated cost of turnover per employee in the manufacturing industry is \$20,000.

There is evidence to support tenure is declining, turnover is costly, and turnover impacts organizational success: “It can lead to a loss of productivity, profitability, corporate knowledge, and skills and competencies.” (Butali, Mamuli, & Wesang’ula,

2012, p. 2). In addition, it is costly to recruit, hire, and train new employees. For organizational sustainability and growth, it is important to minimize employee turnover.

Engagement

Engagement is also an important part of this study because there is a correlation between employee engagement and the organization's success, especially as it relates to productivity. Employee productivity has a direct impact on the organization's bottom-line as "more than 100 studies have affirmed the connection between employee engagement and performance" (Schwartz, 2012, p. 1).

Engagement is defined as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). Employees who are engaged not only identify a part of themselves through their work role but also express themselves through their work performance. Their performance in their jobs has greater significance in their personal identification than when someone is not engaged in their work role. According to a Deloitte survey, there are five factors that impact employee engagement: meaningful work, hands-on management, positive work environment, growth opportunity, and trust in leadership (Bersin, 2015). Kahn (1990) showed that personal engagement was connected to higher levels of psychological meaningfulness than personal disengagement. When an employee is engaged in their work role, they find more meaningfulness in their position and the organization. As mentioned, this engagement has an impact on the bottom-line of an organization as "highly engaged employee will consistently deliver beyond expectations" (Vazirani, 6). It is an investment in time to develop a culture with highly engaged employees. Work is an

excellent source for acceptance and contribution giving “meaningful tasks demanded both routine and new skills, allowing people to experience a sense of both competence (from the routine) and growth and learning (from the new)” (Kahn, 1990, p. 704). This will help the employee’s feel connected and proud of their contributions. Having ownership, pride, and buy-in for the work they are performing will help engage them with their work roles.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing environments include a wide range of different companies, styles, and environments. For the purpose of this study, manufacturing is defined as “any business that transforms raw materials into finished or semi-finished goods using machines, tools and labor” (Kocic, 2017, p. 1). Some examples of these types of companies are apparel, food and beverage, tobacco, and transportation equipment. The type of environment this study will examine has machinery that has automated many of the steps of the process already in an assembly line formation. However, the machines are not infallible; because of this, employees are required to monitor the machine performance to ensure the process is performing as expected or the equipment does break down. This requires the employee to stand at the machine for long stretches of time. This makes it difficult to create flexibility in job responsibilities or schedules.

In addition, the industry is experiencing challenges with recruiting. “Many people – not just Millennials – still perceive manufacturing as “blue collar” work, making it critical for manufacturers to improve their image and update their recruiting methods to attract the next generation of skilled workers” (<http://handytube.com/>, 2015, para. 3). The current employee population in this industry has a relatively low percentage of

millennials, but as the Baby Boomers retire, there will be an increased need for hiring. Based on the information above, there is a decline in interest in finding positions in the manufacturing industry. This means not only will employers need to think of creative solutions to recruit, but they will also need to learn to retain the existing employee population they have. “The U.S. public ranks manufacturing as vital to the domestic economy (ranking #4). Yet only 30% of the same group would encourage their children to pursue manufacturing jobs. The outlook is even bleaker for millennials, who rank the industry as their least preferred career destination” (Bloom, 2018, para. 3). Given the necessity nature of manufacturing to our economy, the challenges of recruiting, and the challenges of retaining millennial employees, it is critical for the manufacturing industry to determine how to recruit this employee population.

Upon reviewing the existing literature, there is significant information about millennials, turnover, and engagement. However, there is little information that exists about the combination of these factors in the manufacturing industry who are considered “front-line” employees. Chapter 3 proposes methods to obtain this research to add to the existing body of literature, which will be used to inform suggestions and recommendations to implement systems to engage and retain millennial employees in front-line positions.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study was to identify systems and practices that may be incorporated into an organization to increase engagement and reduce turnover for front-line millennial employees in a manufacturing environment. The research question was “what factors affect front-line millennial employee engagement and employee turnover in a manufacturing environment?”

Based on the factors that affect engagement and turnover mentioned in Chapter 2, a survey was created to explore engagement and turnover factors. Once the survey was completed, participants were interviewed to take a deeper dive to better understand what strategies may help to increase engagement and reduce turnover. This chapter will review the methods used, survey, interview protocol, participants, and data analysis procedures.

Study Methods

A mixed methods approach was used to obtain statistical and thematic data. The method will “build patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up” (Creswell, 2014, p. 186). This method helps identify trends in engagement and turnover intention scores. This information was used to recommend strategies to increase engagement and reduce turnover.

Participants were surveyed using factors that the literature suggests affect engagement and turnover (Appendix A and B). The data collected from this survey provided a baseline understanding of where millennials stand related to their environment and their tenure to the organization. Then, participants were interviewed to better understand what organizations can provide to increase their level of engagement (Appendix C) and reduce the intention to leave.

This mixed methods approach was carefully considered when thinking about the methods to use. Since there are not many studies focusing on this population in this environment, a qualitative approach was used because it can provide a “broad explanation for behavior and attitudes, and it may be complete with variables, constructs, and hypotheses” (Creswell, 2014, p. 64). The survey was compared to existing research on millennial engagement and turnover intention. The comparison between the research was designed to confirm or refute if trends were true for employees in manufacturing environments. It also provided insight into areas of work where there is a statistical discrepancy. The interviews provided additional context to understand what practices and policies could be implemented in the workplace to support more engagement.

Survey

The survey focused on factors that affect employee engagement and turnover. To derive the engagement levels of the millennial employees in a manufacturing environment, questions related to how an employee feels about work, communication, relationships with coworker and supervisors, growth potential, and culture. In addition, since the eligible participants had not left their organization, the study focused on the intent to leave. It is evidenced that the intent to leave an organization will predict duration and turnover (Pfeffer, 2007). Correlation analysis was provided about factors that may affect the intent to leave, which has been shown to be correlated with the eventual turnover. This correlation helped identify recommendations to increase engagement and reduce turnover.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol had prepared interview questions that supported the purpose of the study (Appendix C). In addition, the results of the surveys were used to probe deeper into the answers to gain more clarity on what organizations can do to retain employees of this generation. The interview answers helped better understand the nuances that the survey may not have been able to isolate. Because of this method, open-ended questions were allowed. The potential challenge was that the “researchers’ presence may bias responses” and participants ability to “articulate” may vary (Creswell, 2014, p. 191). The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The data were then coded into themes. Using an audio-recorded interview was aimed to reduce initial bias by allowing the interviewer to be more fully present during the interview.

Participants and Setting

The participants of this study were those born between 1980 and 2000 working in a beverage manufacturing facility in Sacramento, California. These participants were considered “front-line” employees or have previously held “front-line” positions. For this survey, “front-line” positions consisted of Machine Operators, Forklift Operators, Maintenance Mechanics, Batchers, Quality Technicians, and Sanitation Technicians. There were 50 participants who were eligible to complete the survey. Of the 50 eligible participants, five agreed to participate in the interview. Each participant was asked at the time of the survey if they would like to participate in the interview. Five of the eligible participants agreed to be interviewed. Each interviewee was told the interview would be kept anonymous.

Administration

Email contact was made with the plant manager to secure permission to research the participants. The email stated the purpose of the research and the proposed methods. Once permission was granted, participants were met with to discuss the proposal and gain consent from them. Then, the survey was administered to the participants. At the time of the survey completion, participants were asked about interested in completing the interview and a date was agreed on for completion. Handwritten notes were used during the interview, but an audio recording device was used as a secondary form of documentation (Creswell, 2014). Participants were reminded that the interview notes would be confidential.

Data Analysis Procedures

To analyze the survey data, a Likert scale was used. The survey scale ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree. Five questions were reverse coded. An example, "It's hard working a specific shift schedule." Given the wording, a lower score would indicate that the participants disagree with the statement, which is actually a more positive intent. To analyze the data to indicate a directionally positive response, a reverse coding method was used for those questions (Libguides, 2015).

Upon completion of the survey, the results were tallied using mean, standard deviation, and correlation tables. Trends in the data were reviewed, and the meaning of the factors that affect employee engagement and turnover were derived. The factors in the survey were correlated to each other in an effort to understand if there are any associations or dependence. As an example, participants with bachelor's degrees may disagree with the statement about varied job responsibilities. Additionally, based on the

existing literature, participants with bachelor's degrees may have less motivation to come to work given the information described in Chapter 2 about the millennial generation. Therefore, an ANOVA was performed to see if there were any differences in motivation dependent upon age and level of education.

Then, a coding framework, which assigned themes from existing literature based on factors that affect engagement and turnover and created new themes based on interview transcripts, was used to organize the interview responses into categories, prescribe meaning to them, and find themes (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, emergent themes were noted after the completion of the interviews. Direct quotes were used to support significant themes, but the participants identity was kept anonymous.

Existing literature supports that millennials who do not have purpose, motivation, growth opportunities among other characteristics, generally have lower engagement and a higher probability of leaving the organization. Correlation analysis was used to learn if the participants in this study show consistent patterns with existing literature. Comparison of the likelihood of intention to leave with purpose, motivation, growth potential, and job responsibilities to aid in reviewing consistency with existing research.

Summary

This chapter presented the research methods for this study. The chapter described why the methodology was chosen and discussed how the data would be collected and reported. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter reports the analysis of the survey and interview questions to support the research question: “what factors affect front-line millennial employee engagement and employee turnover in a manufacturing environment?” This chapter will present the qualitative and quantitative analyses from the survey and interview findings.

Demographics of Survey Participants

Participants were asked to provide demographic information to aggregate and compare the data collected. Of the 50 eligible participants, 34 completed the survey (68%). 32/34 participants identified as male, one identified as female, and one preferred not to specify. 28 of the participants were born in the United States, two were born in Fiji, one in Mexico, one in Sierra Leone, and two in Thailand. One participant identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, eight as Asian, five as Black or African American, three as Hispanic or Latino, five as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, six as White, and seven as Two or more races. 17 of the participants had high school diplomas, 14 had some college, but no degree, and three had a bachelor’s degree. Additionally, participants were asked for the age range (Table 1) and tenure (Table 2) within the organization.

Table 1
Age Range of Participants

Age Group	Number of Participants
37 – 40 years of age	5
33 – 36 years of age	12
29 – 32 years of age	12
25 – 28 years of age	2
21- 24 years of age	3

Table 2
Tenure Range of Participants

Tenure with Organization	Number of Participants
16 – 18 years	1
12 – 14 years	3
9 – 11 years	3
6 – 8 years	6
3 – 5 years	9
0 – 2 years	13

Results of Survey

The survey was comprised of questions based on factors that affect employee engagement and intention to leave. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of all survey questions.

Table 3
Statistical Description Table of Survey Questions

Statement	Mean	SD	N
1. I am motivated to come to work	5.28	1.277	33
2. I am proud of my job.	5.45	1.556	33
3. I am excited about my job.	4.98	1.424	32
4. I have a purpose within my organization.	4.95	1.773	32
5. I can grow within my organization.	4.66	1.774	33
6. I am able to develop my skills within my organization.	4.91	1.819	33
7. I have friends at work.	5.14	1.665	32
8. My organization has effective working relationships.	4.46	1.584	33
9. I am paid fairly for my job responsibilities.	4.76	1.531	33
10. I am satisfied with the health benefits I receive.	4.67	1.896	32
11. I am satisfied with the company sponsored events.	4.57	1.714	33
12. I have the time off I need.	3.96	1.955	33
13. I am satisfied with the incentives I receive within my organization.	3.86	1.747	33
14. I am satisfied with the rewards for the work within my organization.	3.70	1.569	33
15. It's hard working a specific shift schedule. *	3.71	2.396	33
16. It's hard being reliant on other people to do my job. *	2.66	1.892	33
17. My responsibilities vary day to day.	3.72	2.195	33
18. I am satisfied with the responsibilities of my job.	5.41	1.321	33
19. Communication is good within my organization.	4.06	1.659	33

20. Expectations are clearly communicated.	4.19	1.811	33
21. I understand what the goals are in my organization.	5.47	1.542	33
22. I receive the resources and tools to do my job effectively.	5.15	1.5	34
23. My organization encourages collaboration to accomplish goals.	5.12	1.393	34
24. It is hard to perform my job due to the conflict within my organization. *	4.37	2.037	34
25. I am satisfied with the company culture within my organization.	4.43	1.808	34
26. My supervisor manages conflict in a positive and constructive manner.	5.27	1.502	34
27. My supervisor leads by example demonstrating the behavior expected of all.	5.62	1.403	34
28. My supervisor holds others accountable for results.	4.40	2.217	34
29. My supervisor praises me for the quality of work.	4.92	1.493	34
30. I am satisfied with the level of appreciation I receive.	4.67	1.595	34
31. I have a good relationship with my supervisor.	5.26	1.562	34
32. I trust my supervisor.	4.99	1.777	34
33. My supervisor treats me fairly.	5.29	1.58	34
34. My supervisor will help me if I need help with my job.	5.75	1.527	34
35. I often think of leaving the organization. *	4.58	1.883	34
36. It is very possible that I will look for a new job next year. *	4.59	1.977	34
37. If I could choose again, I would choose to work for the current organization.	4.98	1.828	34

Note: The reverse coded questions are noted with an asterisk (*).

Once surveys were collected, the results were grouped using concepts found during the literature review that affect employee engagement and intention to leave.

Table 4 visually represents the mean scores and standard deviation based on those concepts.

Table 4
List of Concepts

Question(s)	Concept	Mean	SD
29, 30	Appreciation	4.8	1.544
19, 20	Communication	4.13	1.735
25	Culture	4.43	1.808
5, 6	Growth Potential	4.78	1.797
35*, 36*, 37	Intent to Leave	4.59	1.930
15*, 16*, 17, 18, 22	Job and Work Requirement	4.13	1.861
26, 27, 28	Leadership	5.23	1.652
9, 10, 13	Monetary Compensation	4.43	1.724
11, 12, 14	Nonmonetary Compensation	4.08	1.746
1, 2, 3, 4, 21	Purpose	5.19	1.566
7, 8, 23, 24*, 31, 32, 33, 34	Relationships	4.77	1.670

Note: The reverse coded questions are noted with an asterisk (*).

To breakdown the data further, the chapter will discuss the concepts separately starting with the concept that had the lowest scores (nonmonetary compensation) and moving to the highest scored (leadership). Tables 3 and 4 can be used to supplement each section.

Nonmonetary Compensation

The mean score for the statement “I am satisfied with the rewards for the work within my organization” was the lowest in this grouping. This statement’s purpose is to understand how participants feel about rewards for the work they contribute to the organization. Additionally, the participants slightly disagreed with the statement “I have the time off I need”. As discussed during the literature review, the millennial generation values time off and flexible schedules.

Job and Work Requirement

Job and work requirements are defined by schedule, hours, responsibilities, and overall environment. The result showed a disparity between high scores such as “I have the tools and resources to do my job effectively” and “I am satisfied with the responsibilities of my job” with low scores such as “It’s hard being reliant on other people to do my job”. This shows that not only is this one of the lowest scored concepts but also has a paradox within the concept itself. If the organization were to make improvements to the bottom scores within this concept, then, the whole concept would move upward on the rating scale since many of the questions scored quite highly.

The category for job and work requirement score lowest amongst the concepts. Due to the conditions of manufacturing, a certain number of employees are required to work to produce the product(s) being manufactured. With this score, it may be surmised that millennial employees find it hard to be reliant on others to complete their job responsibilities. Based on the research completed for Chapter 2, millennial employees prefer to work flexible schedules or telecommuting options. Additionally, the participants

in this survey had a mean score of 3.71 for question 15 “It’s hard working a specific shift schedule” meaning that they slightly agree with the statement.

Millennial employees prefer varied responsibilities. While millennials indicated that they were satisfied with the responsibilities of their job ($M = 5.41$, $SD = 1.32$), they also indicated that their responsibilities did not vary from day to day ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 2.20$) This suggests that there are other factors that lead to being satisfied with their job.

Communication

Communication scored third lowest among the concepts that contribute to engagement and turnover. The statement “Expectations are clearly communicated” scored the highest. The statement “Communication is good within my organization” scored the lowest. Participants feel stronger that expectations are communicated clearly, but overall communication within the organization is lower.

Purpose

Purpose scored the second highest among the concepts that contribute to engagement and turnover. The statement “I understand what the goals are in my organization” and “I am proud of my job” scored the highest. Millennials are driven by having a sense of purpose within the organization. Understanding the goals allow employees to feel connected to the organization. Feeling pride also allows employees to connect with the organization.

Leadership

In terms of leadership, participants scored the highest for the statement “my supervisor will help me if I need help with my job” as well as “my supervisor leads by example demonstrating the behavior expected of all”. Beyond reviewing the highest and

lowest scores, other elements of data collected during surveys were reviewed and appeared critical to engage with the millennial generation and prevent turnover.

Appreciation

Appreciation scored third highest amongst the concepts. While both statements fell into the neutral zone on the Likert scale, a higher score was obtained for the statement “my supervisor praises me for the quality of work”. Yet, overall, appreciation was more neutral. Appreciation is essential for the millennial generation to remain engaged.

Relationships

An additional element analyzed is the concept of relationships. The participants slightly agreed with the statements “my organization encourages collaboration to accomplish goals” and “I have friends at work”, which reinforces research found about how millennials feel about having relationships at work. However, the mean scores of the statements “it is hard to perform my job due to the conflict within my organization” and “my organization has effective working relationships” had neutral scores, leading to speculation that what is going on with the organization that may be preventing more effective relationships.

Existing literature comprises of millennials with higher education in office environments. Thus, Two Univariate ANOVAs were conducted to see if there were any differences between levels of education and age with motivation to come to work. There were no significant differences between age and motivation to come to work or between levels of education and motivation to come to work.

Millennials prefer to work for organizations where they feel a sense of purpose. For further analysis, a correlation analysis was run to find the relationship between the survey question “I have a purpose within my organization” and the question “it is very possible that I will look for a new job next year”. The result of the correlation was $-.486$ and there was statistical significance. The negative correlation between the two statements indicates that as one variable increases the other decreases. The literature found millennials crave having a purpose within their organization; without purpose, the research found millennials feel less engaged and interested in sustaining employment within their organization. Based on the correlation test, the higher the purpose, the lower the possibility of looking for a new job. The results of this correlation test are consistent information with what we learned about millennials in the literature review.

Growth potential was important to the millennial generation. A correlation analysis was run to find the relationship between the statement “I can grow within my organization” and “I often think about leaving the organization.” The result of the correlation was $-.583$ and there was statistical significance. Because it is a negative correlation, the variables have an inverse relationship with each other; meaning as one variable increases, the other decreases. This is consistent with the information found during the literature. Millennials actively seek out growth opportunities and advancement. In the absence, millennial employees will be less engaged and more interested in exploring other opportunities. This understanding is consistent with the correlation test above.

Themes of Interviews

Of the eligible participants in the site location, five employees were interviewed. The questions for the interviews can be found in Appendix C. Themes of the answers were coded similarly to the survey questions. The interviews offered additional themes including perceptions of qualifications of management, absenteeism, job security, training, and current employee value as seen in Table 5. This table also shows the frequency of the themed findings.

Table 15

Table of Interview Themes

Themes	Definition	Frequency
Job and Work Requirement	Elements of job and organization required for employees such as shift hours and mandatory overtime	5
Pay	Hourly rate participants earn for work performed	4
Growth Potential	Ability for participants to be promoted in organization	4
Hiring	Organizations ability to hire internal and external candidates	3
Perceptions of qualifications of Management	Participants perceptions of qualifications managers hold regarding work experience and education.	3
Absenteeism	Employees who do not report to scheduled shift	3
Current Employees Value	Participants subject matter expertise due to knowledge	3
Training	Training available to participants	2
Job Security	Probability of participants keeping their job	1
Retention	Retaining internal employees	1
Nonmonetary Compensation	Compensation that does not involve money such as vacation time	1
Job Responsibilities	Specific tasks or duties	1

Job and work requirements, pay, hiring practices, and overall feelings towards the organization will be discussed in this section.

Job and Work Requirements

The employee's job and work requirements including schedule and number of hours. During one of the interviews, a participant said:

Graveyard is taking a toll on me... it's challenging especially being a single father. It's a little challenging having to tend to the home life then having to stay up all night and going home and still taking the home life. So, the sleeping schedule is definitely a big factor in it. It's trying to find time in the day to sleep while having two kids.

Upon further clarification, the graveyard shift's normal works hours were from 10:00 PM to 6:30 AM, Monday through Friday. Additionally, the participants stated the number of hours they work to be overwhelming. One participant said "No, overtime, it's crazy here. When I got hired, they said there would be some overtime but not every Saturday overtime." Upon learning more, weekends were required as well as normal shifts. This impacted their life outside of work. Absenteeism came up multiple times during the conversation. When asking for clarification, the participants would cite the Federal Medical Leave Act (FMLA) as the primary reason for absences. Follow-up questions were asked to understand how FMLA was responsible for absences. The participants shared that there is a lot of overtime and number of hours worked so employees would open claims to get time off work; these forces other employees to have to work that shift and those hours. The participants detailed a cycle where employees eventually become burdened by the number of hours worked and so they create an opportunity to have protected time away from work.

Pay

Another theme that was frequent was pay. The participants answered they wanted more pay when asked: "what would make them happier to work here?" However, when comparing the interviews to the survey, the participants answered the statement "I am

paid fairly” with a mean of 5.03. This score indicates that the participants agree they are paid fairly. After asking for clarification during the interview process, the first answer was about pay, but the next answer would provide different context such as training or better work hours. In addition, a new theme of absenteeism was identified when discussing the number of hours: the participants work. The participants attribute the perceived high level of absences as the reason for the number of hours they are scheduled to work. They find it frustrating that some employees are not at work and, therefore, they have to work more.

Hiring Practices

In addition, multiple employees expressed dissatisfaction with the organization’s hiring of managers without food and beverage backgrounds vs. those who started on the plant floor and worked their way up. One employee said, “And you're going to hire some Joe Schmo off the street granted he has a masters.” There is a perception that employees believe one should start from the plant floor to grow within the organization. Research has shown that millennials crave growth opportunities and in the absence of opportunities, they will move from job to job-based on their wants and needs. However, this group of millennial participants seem committed to working in front-line roles until an opportunity opens for them to be considered. Based on the interviews, the participants seem loyal to their work responsibilities and learning the process regardless of growth opportunities. Similarly, multiple employees described themselves as the biggest strength within the organization. They described that they were the ones who are making the products produced in this location; they knew the process and equipment allowing the organization to be successful. There seems to be a belief that the organization would not

continue without them completing the work; there seems to be an ownership mentality, which corresponds to the high level of purpose evidenced in the survey data. Literature has not been found on whether the collective millennial population has this ownership mindset.

Growth Potential

The participants cited that they are happy in their current organization. They are comfortable with the job responsibilities and leadership. They, however, do not see growth potential in the organization and do not see training available to work in other parts of the plant or on different pieces of equipment. One participant said, “But then you got all these people, but you're not training them at all, so they just stuck on one machine.” In this plant when there are job openings, becoming a line lead or overtime availability qualifications play a crucial role in the movement. By not training the employees on other parts of the machine, they are not qualified to work on other pieces of equipment and, therefore, are limited to their knowledge and growth. Additionally, the participants explained that in addition to limited growth potential, when the organization hired someone who had potential and credentials to move up, the organization was not sure how to retain them. One participant said, “That the dude had his degree. They kind of just let him rot there. It's like a big surprise. I mean, he'd been here for two years!” The participant referred to a previous employee who had a bachelor's degree and explained the organization let him sit in his position without additional training or a career path. Finally, one participant mentioned that even if there were promotional positions available, they would not be eligible for it due to their brother working for the organization. The organization has a policy that supervisors cannot directly or indirectly

manage family members. The family member would need to resign to be eligible for a promotion. There are numerous family members who work within this organization as floor employees, limiting promotability.

Summary

After analyzing the survey and interview data, purpose and leadership were the highest concepts that affected engagement and turnover. Nonmonetary compensation, job and work requirements, and communication were the concepts that scored the lowest and have the most opportunity. Additionally, the data found that a majority of the participants are not thinking about leaving the organization within the next year and would reapply for their current role if given the chance. Furthermore, as a result of the analysis conducted in this chapter, the employees of this organization are engaged in this workplace. However, increasing areas of opportunities may improve engagement and further reduce turnover.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The question of this study was what factors affect employee engagement and employee turnover for front-line, millennial employees in manufacturing for the purpose of identifying systems and practices that may be put in place to increase engagement and reduce turnover. Understanding these factors will allow organizations to better address critical issues, such as retention, productivity, work environment, health benefits, rewards, and other areas of interest for employees. This chapter concludes the study by discussing and summarizing the findings and interpreting the results. Study limitations, recommendations for future research, and implications are explored. Based on the study findings, there are five areas of recommendations. The areas of focus in this chapter are job and work requirements, nonmonetary compensation, growth potential, pride, and communication.

Implications

This research contributed to the field of organization development by providing deeper understanding of the factors that affect employee engagement and turnover in for millennial, front-line employees in manufacturing environments. During the literature review, there was no research that directly assessed this population of millennial employees. Through reviewing existing research and collecting data for this study, the study was able to bridge the gap and provide additional context to the factors that affect engagement and turnover. The leaders of this organization will be able to use the data collected to develop a plan to address the effectiveness of each concept identified in Chapter 4. In addition, best practices for improving employee engagement are now being collected and organized around each of these specific concepts. These findings allow

manufacturing organizations to prioritize its development and evolution of the company's resources and capabilities to better enhance employee engagement, especially among this demographic.

Interpretation and Conclusions

The following research question was proposed in Chapter 1: "what factors affect front-line millennial engagement and employee turnover in a manufacturing environment?" Using a mixed-methods approach for data collection, concepts emerged through the surveys and interviews that defined concepts to answer the research study question about employee engagement and turnover factors. Through the literature and analysis, there were 11 concepts from the survey and 12 themes from the interviews identified. Through the analysis outlined in Chapter 4, the study concludes that the participants within the organization surveyed and interviewed are happy and engaged within the organization. The participants stated numerous times in the interviews that they are happy and do not want to leave the organization; they scored neutral to slightly agree in most of the concepts in the survey. This study found that the participants intention to leave the organization was quite low and a majority of the employee engagement concepts scored high. The identified factors, if improved, may increase millennial engagement and reduce employee turnover. Also, there were high scoring factors that contribute to employee engagement and turnover identified. The study found two central areas that scored high: leadership and purpose. Additionally, three central areas that scored lower were in the areas of nonmonetary compensation, job and work requirements, and communication.

Based on existing research, millennials want leaders who will provide guidance and support. “Millennials made it clear that what they want most from their managers isn’t more managerial direction, per se, but more help with their own personal development” (Willyerd, 2015, para. 4). According to Willyerd (2015), millennials want and crave a coach, someone who will meet with them regularly to provide feedback to help them achieve their professional goals. In this analysis, Willyerd (2015) found “the four biggest traits of inspiring leaders are providing a vision, enhancing relationships, driving results, and serving as a principled role model” (para. 7). Millennials look to their leader and will emulate the behavior of their leader. The participants agree that their leaders demonstrate the behavior they expect of their direct reports; this aligns with millennial expectations. The role of a leader is vital for engagement within the millennial population. They see leaders not as managers, but as coaches; these individuals share responsibility in their success and achievement of their goals. The survey and interview data support that this population of millennials agree with leadership and this organization displays a high level of leadership.

Additionally, trust within an organization is a critical element for engagement and retention for the millennial generation. The participants of the survey scored a 4.99 with the statement “I trust my supervisor”. This is an excellent start for building a highly engaged workforce; the organization would benefit for further crafting a highly trusted environment. The organization can do this by creating a transparent culture where employees have access to all-levels of structures for optimal growth.

Millennials crave purpose in the organization based on environmental, political, and historical factors that occurred during their development; the participants of this

study scored high in the purpose concept. The organization can continue to foster an environment that reinforces the mission and values of the organization to build more engagement and reduce turnover. In fact, millennials loyalty to organizations will change if there is a lack of purpose. The participants in this research identified purpose as one of the highest concepts. The participants feel they have purpose within the organization. The fact that the organization already has evidence of an environment of purpose bodes well for the organization and its ability to engage and retain millennials employees especially given the challenge in recruiting millennials in manufacturing. The research described in this study did not go into detail on what the definition of purpose the participants indicate they have. For example, we do not know if it is purpose within their job or purpose within their organization. This would be good information to further gather to develop robust engagement and retention strategies.

There are a number of areas such as job and work requirements, nonmonetary compensation, and communication that may benefit from further exploration from the organization. The organization cannot shift its job and work requirements without technological advances like robotics, but it can review the number of hours employees are working and the conditions for completing that work. The participants scored a 3.71 for varied job responsibilities indicating they disagree with the statement “my responsibilities vary day by day”; however, the survey confirmed they slightly agree with the satisfaction of their responsibilities and the participants in the interviews expressed that they enjoyed the work they did. This varies from the research depicted in Chapter 2. Millennials want varied and progressive responsibilities. Yet, the millennials in this organization are comfortable with the work they complete.

There were areas of paradox such as growth potential. Based on survey data, growth potential's mean score was 4.77, yet during the interviews participant's expressed dissatisfaction with their ability to grow within the organization. Upon further clarification during the interview, the primary reasons were either due to policies directly or indirectly supervising family or locality. The participant in that interview has a brother who works for the organization; based on the organization's policy, the brother would need to resign in order for this participant to be eligible and considered for a promotional opportunity. Another interview participant expressed a lack of interest in relocating for growth potential. Additional interview participants discussed educational requirements as an obstacle for growth potential. Based on the interviews, it is hypothesized there are few opportunities for promotion in the Sacramento plant; there also seem to be organizational challenges when there are promotional opportunities available. Perhaps the organization can benefit by creating a visual ladder for growth as well as training and development programs that will aid in getting the employees to their desired position. The organization may also benefit from a robust tuition reimbursement strategy to help internal employees receive certifications or degrees to help qualify them for various growth opportunities.

Recommendations

It would be beneficial for manufacturing organizations to conduct a full study of their front-line millennial employees to derive deeper understanding of the factors that affect employee engagement and turnover. The deeper dive would confirm or refute the findings from this study. Continuing to engage in data collection will contribute more to research of different generations in the manufacturing industry among front-line

positions. With that said, the organization of this study can use the data collected to experiment with different recommendations or solutions.

The participants in the survey indicated a high level of pride and purpose. Millennials perception of manufacturing industry is diminishing. Yet, this does not seem evident with this population of millennial employees. It's recommended that the organization review more deeply what the driving force of pride and purpose are to capitalize on these characteristics. This information would be beneficial to tailoring a recruitment and retention strategy around these key characteristics for millennials and the upcoming generation.

Existing research shows how important leadership is to the millennial generation. The data from this study supports its importance. To continue to earn high scores in this concept, it is recommended to implement leadership strategies to continue to engage with this generation. As mentioned in Chapter 2, servant leadership is a popular style especially with the millennial generation. Incorporating the model into the organization's leadership philosophy may be beneficial to continue to engage with this generation. Additionally, "incorporating leadership development programs focused on next-generation leadership skills: collaboration, cross-cultural dialogue, team leadership and service leadership should be the basis of creating new training models" (Graybill, 2013, p. 14). Additional strategies include: "tell them the truth...learn their "language" and communicate in terms that they understand...provide structure and strong leadership...be clear about expectations and long-term goals and take time to orient with respect to the organization's culture" (Al-Asfour, 2014, p. 64). These suggestions may help continue to lead this generation effectively.

Based on the findings outlined in Chapter 4, it is recommended that the organization focus on the three concepts that had the lowest scores while devoting time to maintain and increase engagement in the two highest scores.

Participants rated nonmonetary compensation lower amongst the other concepts, specifically around rewards systems and time off within the organization. The organization can review adding a reward system to offset the metrics associated with the concept; “The most effective incentive programs for millennials will focus on improving work-life balance, enabling flexible schedules, offering timely promotions and giving back to the community, as well as small gestures” (Landrum, 2017, para. 4). Given the job and work requirement restrictions the organization faces, it would be worthwhile to think out of the box on systems they could put in place to increase engagement in this concept. For example, the participants scored training lower in the survey and interview data. The organization can invest in more robust training and mentoring programs. There are also catalog programs where employees earn points that can be redeemed for things like gift cards. Finally, a recognition program for anything from the best to the worst idea, safety, performance can also be implemented to engage with employees. Based on a Deloitte principal, “Many millennials will leave when they see their counterparts at other organizations having cooler and easier tools for work” (Wall Street Journal, 2015, para. 4). As mentioned earlier, technology allows information to spread faster and easier. People have access to a lot of data on what other organizations offer in terms of all aspects of corporate life. For manufacturing to be competitive with other organizations, they need to understand what their workforce wants and needs.

Additionally, the participants identified they do not receive the time off they need. Millennials yearn for time off to feel like there is a balance in their life, explore areas of interest, travel, or more. Lack of time off will continue to disengage and alienate this employee population. The organization should consider what is restricting the participants ability to take the time off and work to correct this. During the interviews, participants noted the manufacturing plant asks for a lot of overtime and weekends. It is hypothesized that overtime and weekend work could be why the participants feel like they cannot take the time off they need. The plant should consider the financial impact to hiring more workers, even on a part-time basis, to provide coverage for employees who are absent from work. Another alternative would be to review different work schedules, such as a four-day ten-hour work schedule. “In the United States, more than 40 percent of workers are now employed in “alternative work arrangements,” such as contingent, part-time, or gig work” (Deloitte, 2018). This may reduce the overtime the employees are required to work in the current state while also giving them additional time off.

As described in Chapter 4, job and work requirements are one of the lowest scores. Because of the environment, it will be difficult for the organization to change its work environment in regard to the shifts and being reliant on others to perform their job. Reviewing alternative accommodations for working specific shifts is proposed. For example, the organization can have a rotating shift schedule based on a defined increment such as weekly, monthly, or biannually. Additionally, the employees need to be reliant on others to perform the essential function of their positions, but the organization can dive deeper into what the issue is with being reliant on others. It may correspond to the interview themes of absenteeism. If that was validated, the organization can review the

ability to hire additional people who can work to offset any absences. Absenteeism can cost “\$3,600 per year for hourly employee” (Randstad & Future Workplace, 2016).

Additionally, it is recommended to emphasize the technological advancements highlighted in manufacturing environments. “Emerging technologies are precisely why millennials believe in technological solutions” (Rector, 2018). The millennial generation grew up during the rise of technology and some have never known a life without it. Manufacturing companies can use their technology as a way to attract and retain millennial employees. This could cause an increased interest in working in manufacturing in general.

Finally, the participants scored lower in the concept of communication in the organization. Communication is a key driver to millennials on the job and is a factor in their abilities to do their best work (Randstad & Future Workplace, 2016). It would be beneficial to the organization to understand the communication concept better. For example, research shows that millennials have preferred forms of communication “This generation grew up with the gradual introduction of instant messaging, texting, email, and other forms of written communication. Because they are just as instantaneous, but provide you the ability to think over your words, they are more comfortable and precise communication forms” (Alton, 2017, para. 4). Additionally, communication may mean how leaders are communicating versus the platform they are using. For example, “checking in for 15 minutes each week is more important than a top benefits package” according to a recent survey of 1,000 millennials (Hassell, 2015, Retrieved from <https://www.15five.com/blog/employee-communication-millennials/>) Because the data does not communicate what the participants feel neutral about in terms of communication

besides expectations and overall communication, it is suggested that the organization conduct another study to determine what the specifics about communication are. From there, the organization develops better communication plans and strategies to ensure all employees are aware of changes and updates within the organization. In addition, the leadership may benefit from additional training in setting expectations with their employees. This will not only help with employee engagement, but it should affect productivity and the bottom-line within the organization.

As mentioned, growth potential was a contradiction between the survey and the interviews. The survey results indicated this as neutral, but the interviews showed growth as a source of dissatisfaction. Between this and the state of manufacturing in general, there may be challenges with workforce planning for the organization. The literature shows that as the older generations retire, there will be a large gap between the needs and those interested in manufacturing jobs. This can be seen in Deloitte's Manufacturing Insights (2018), "The 2018 Global Human Capital Trends study found that manufacturing companies in the United States are unprepared to leverage the aging workforce, with only 9.2 percent of manufacturing companies creating targeted roles for older workers" (p. 14). Creating a mentorship program between the more tenured employees and the less tenured employees to do a knowledge transfer may increase engagement. The millennial generation can help other generations learn skills that utilize technology. For example, whereas the other generations can share the wisdom and knowledge they have acquired through their career, "Inverting the hierarchy, and allowing millennials to act as mentors, results in equally beneficial outcomes" (Wingard, 2018, para. 8). Millennials crave continuous learning and purpose. Creating a mentorship program will allow them to share

knowledge and learn from others as well as continue to build purpose for themselves within the organization.

Limitations of the Study

Given the scope and methods of analysis, the findings have limitations regarding generalization across organizations and industries. First, the study surveyed and interviewed eligible participants in one beverage manufacturing organization. The responses are limited to the participant's experiences at that organization. As a result, there was a limited quantity and sample size which limited statistical analysis. 34 people were surveyed, and five people were interviewed. This is a small sample size in comparison to the number of millennials who work in this type of environment. As such, this may not be representative of millennial employees who work in manufacturing. In addition, based on the demographic information, the majority of the participants were male and from the United States. Female millennials and those from other countries may offer other insights about factors that affect engagement and turnover. Thus, there are statistical limitations based on the demographic information.

Conclusion

There are limitations in existing research pertaining to front-line employees in that much of the existing research focuses on professional level positions in corporate, office environments. This research adds further to the existing research and broadens the existing scope. More research is required to fully understand what factors affect employee engagement and employee turnover for front-line workers. Based on the research, we understand that organizations must invest in understanding these factors. In times of consistent change, increased technological improvements, and more competition,

many companies have begun to pay attention to differences amongst generations. However, organizations have not adapted to the differences as quickly as the changes in today's environment. The ability to adapt to the changing environment will be necessary for organizations to thrive in today's market and retain and engage their employees especially when thinking about how quickly and available information is today given technological advancements. Organizations need to do a deep dive within their organization to understand what affects their employee's engagement and turnover. Based on the results of this study, the concepts of purpose, leadership, appreciation, and growth potential are a few concepts that affect engagement and intention to leave. Once an organization has identified factors that affect engagement and turnover, it would be suggested to implement various programs and policies to support the information obtained, as it is costly and timely to lose employees especially those considered top talent.

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Appendix A

On a scale from 1-7, rate your level of agreement with each statement.

1 = Strongly Disagree - 7 = Strongly Agree

1. I am motivated to come to work.
2. I am proud of my job.
3. I am excited about my job.
4. I have a purpose within my organization.
5. I can grow within my organization.
6. I am able to develop my skills within my organization.
7. I have friends at work.
8. my organization has effective working relationships.
9. I am paid fairly for my job responsibilities.
10. I am satisfied with the health benefits I receive.
11. I am satisfied with the company sponsored events.
12. I have the time off I need.
13. I am satisfied with the incentives I receive within my organization.
14. I am satisfied with the rewards for the work within my organization.
15. It's hard working a specific shift schedule.
16. It's hard being reliant on other people to do my job.
17. my responsibilities vary day to day.
18. I am satisfied with the responsibilities of my job.
19. Communication is good within my organization.
20. expectations are clearly communicated.
21. I understand what the goals are in my organization.

22. I receive the resources and tools to do my job effectively.
23. my organization encourages collaboration to accomplish goals.
24. It is hard to perform my job due to the conflict within my organization.
25. I am satisfied with the company culture within my organization.
26. my supervisor manages conflict in a positive and constructive manner.
27. my supervisor leads by example demonstrating the behavior expected of all.
28. my supervisor holds others accountable for results.
29. My supervisor praises me for the quality of work.
30. I am satisfied with the level of appreciation I receive.
31. I have a good relationship with my supervisor.
32. I trust my supervisor.
33. my supervisor treats me fairly.
34. my supervisor will help me if I need help with my job.

Turnover Intention (Khan & Du, 2014)

35. I often think of leaving the organization.
36. It is very possible that I will look for a new job next year.
37. If I could choose again, I would choose to work for the current organization.

Appendix B

1. What would make you happier to work here?
2. What is the organization's biggest strength that they should be focusing on?
3. What drives you crazy here?
4. Hypothetically if you were to quit tomorrow, what would be your reason?
5. If given the chance, would you reapply for your current position? Why or why not?
6. What else would you like to share?

Appendix C

1. What would make you happier to work here?
2. What is the organization's biggest strength that they should be focusing on?
3. What drives you crazy here?
4. Hypothetically if you were to quit tomorrow, what would be your reason?
5. If given the chance, would you reapply for your current position? Why or why not?
6. What else would you like to share?