

Generation Y's Leadership Preferences and Their Influence on Work Performance

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to analyze the generation Y's leadership types preferences. We build upon the presumption that identifying preferences and the effort of satisfying them for a given group of workers, will lead to the enhancement of their work performance. We presume that, apart from higher performance, there will also be a lessening of its fluctuation as well as enhancement of the quality of life perception. The theory section of the article deals with the characteristics of individual generations and with major leadership theories. Research section examines the preferences of the generation Y members in the area of leadership and the subjective rating of the current state of affair in that area. The modified Full Range Leadership Model was chosen as a suitable tool for the analysis. The results of the analysis show that the preferred leadership style is the interviewed sample of respondents from generation Y is transformational leadership. 30% of respondents are dissatisfied with the current leadership style in the company, and the share of satisfaction with their direct superior is higher. The results showed that the way Generation Y is conducted at work is crucial to it; 96% of respondents said that management has a direct influence on their successful retention.

Keywords: Leadership styles, work performance, generation Y, MLQ

Introduction

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The goal of this work is to analyze generation Y's leadership preferences and to bring forth suggestions, which could lead to increased generation Y's work team loyalty, increased work performance and enhanced life contentment. To understand this issue, there is the further goal to identify the characteristic traits of individual generations with the focus on generation Y. It is also necessary to identify individual leadership theories and the application of their principles. The aim of this work is also to analyze the millennials' various leadership type preferences in order to find out which one is the preferred one.

In relation to the given goals, this research provides answers to the following questions:

- What is the generation Y's preferred leadership type?
- Are the employees satisfied with the current status of leadership in their workplaces?
- Does the leadership play a role in their loyalty to the company?

The research will increase the professionalism of leaders in the performance of their work. Professional leadership is not considered as a position, but as the quality of an individual's natural potentials, relating to an inner style that has the potential to follow and gravity and manifests itself in interpersonal contact. Professional leadership is an essential quality for leading people and human systems in today's environment (Ambrozova, 2019).

Generational Management

The goal of this chapter is to understand the generation Y's influence on work sphere in the contemporary world and how effective is their communication ability in the work environment. We will reach this understanding by specifying their characteristic traits. From a sociological point of view, the definition of a generation is as follows: "The term generation, in a sociological sense, describes a group of people growing up in the same time period, who share the lifestyle, thinking, problems and attitudes dictated by that time period. Members of each generation are influenced by the same historical, cultural, socio-economic and political events of the time period and therefore exhibit the same traits. These traits, however cannot be presumed automatically so as not to suppress the individuality of each member." (Kotler, 2007 cited from Heřmanová, 2015) The time frame of one generation is given as the period in which a member of the generation reaches the productivity age and begins to create a new generation. This time frame is usually accepted to be 20-30 years. Related to this, there is the nowadays frequently used term diversity. Currently there are number of scientific and popular articles dealing with the topic of diversity in the gender and ethnographic sense. With the massive entry of generation Y into the work environment, we now also encounter the term generational diversity. This is due to the difference of the generation Y from others in many areas.

It is important to understand the diversity and specifications of individual generations in order to understand their needs, preferences, behavior and decision making. When this is understood, it will be possible to correctly adjust the work environment and to apply effective types of leadership.

Generation Y

The needs and expectations of millennials in the work environment were described in the studies (e.g. Deloitte, 2016) and books (Spiegel, Crampton a Hodge et al.). Generation Y has a strong tendencies to autonomy and independence and prefers freedom and flexibility. These people like to fulfill their tasks in their own time and style (Martin, 2005). They expect an immediate and open feedback and positive evaluation for their effort (Spiegel, 2013). This generation also prefers to be given smaller tasks with tighter deadlines and to work on smaller parts of individual projects. This way their work is the most effective. They welcome the responsibility and the opportunity to show their skills and abilities. They also require enough growth and self-development opportunities, both inside and outside the company (Martin, 2005).

Generation Y grew up in the age of technological boom and information sharing. It is a generation with bigger grasp of technology than any other before it (Spiegel, 2013). Computer and internet use is

their second nature and they regularly use modern technologies in their jobs. Greater technology understanding, we observe with millennials, has a positive impact in the form of ability to gather information faster and to utilize the information in their work. However, according to Simon Sinek (2017), a substantial negative impact is the fact that a big part of the generation Y is dependent on the modern technologies, which leads to a lack of concentration, absence of personal social interaction and therefore also to the inability to create and maintain stable and meaningful personal relationships.

Generation Y was actively supported by their parents and led to openly express their opinions and feelings. Thanks to the modern technologies and the internet, the millennials are used to communicate instantly and to make themselves to be heard at all times. They are willing to openly share their thoughts and opinions and they expect the same from the others. At work they are asking not only for the decision to be communicated to them but also the reasons behind these decisions (Spiegel, 2013).

As is shown in the Deloitte research (2016), open and unrestrained communication at work has a direct impact upon the satisfaction of the generation Y with their occupation, as well as on their loyalty to the company and so also on their willingness to stay; 47% of the people interviewed by Deloitte stated they would stay for longer than 5 years in a company allowing and supporting open communication.

A need for feedback, stronger than that of previous generations is another characteristic trait of the generation Y. Tulgan (2009) states that the reason for this is growing up in an environment where they have received a lot of attention and space to openly express themselves. Mentoring and feedback are therefore the tools to communicate with the generation Y effectively and to help them to self-develop. They are quick to apply constructive feedback, which significantly enhances their productivity and performance (Spiegel, 2013).

A feedback provided only once or twice per year at formal meetings is insufficient for generation Y. For more effective work of the millennials, the management needs to be trained in feedback provision and in the skill of these meetings in general (Crampton and Hodge, 2009).

Generation Y grew up in the environment of constant support, care and praise of their parents. This created a safe bubble which shielded them from any negative feelings towards themselves. They often heard that they are unique and that they can reach anything they wish for in this world. Positive style of upbringing like this, leads to a big confidence of this generation and largely influences their faith in their own abilities and knowledge (Spiegel, 2013). Simon Sinek (2017) thinks this to be a major failure of the parenting strategy. As a result of this strategy, millennials, when faced with the real world in their adulthood, suddenly lose the illusion of their uniqueness and exceptionality of their abilities. Sinek (2017) sees this fact as the reason why is generation Y, much more so than other generations, dealing with mental issues such as depression, anxiety and suicidal tendencies.

Flexibility and longing for change are other key attributes of the generation Y. Martin (2005) states that millennials are not only adaptable to change but are actually demanding it. They prefer a work environment, where they can skip from task to task, gain new knowledge, skills, experiences and contacts. If they are not offered enough flexibility, option to work on diverse tasks and in different environments, the millennials tend to get bored fast and they might start looking for new challenges. Thanks to that, they are viewed as unstable and disloyal. Generation Y is the fastest growing segment on the work market, being more than twice as numerous as generation X (Steelcase, 2011). Thanks to this, their work market influence is of a great importance. Because of their specific character traits, described in the previous part of this article, it is important to pay attention to the millennials' preferences regarding their work environment. In the research ran by Deloitte (2016), there were described the following preferences of the millennials, which form criteria for their job search and for their final decision which employer to chose (please note, the wages conditions were not included). The research showed the most important for millennials is the balance between professional and personal life, followed by the opportunity of a career growth. This is followed by flexibility,

meaningfulness of the work and availability of professional development programs. Important finding is the fact, that millennials demand for their work to be meaningful, with a positive impact on society. Generation Y feels very low levels of loyalty to the company (Deloitte, 2016). 44% of respondents expect to leave their current job within 2 years.

Generation Y requires work environment with sense of humor and constant challenges (Susan Eisner, 2005). Eisner also states that the main principle of leadership of this generation is an immediate, concrete and constructive feedback. Due to fact that the generation Y prefers an environment which values relationships, they put more importance on the personality traits of their leaders, or managers.

Leadership styles

The basic leadership styles were chosen for the purposes of this research: Transactional, transformational and passive.

Transactional leadership is defined as a relationship based on exchange trade between the leader and the follower, with the goal to trade the valued objective without the intention to reach any higher goal (Burns, 1978). Transactional leader therefore works with the expectation of a reward for fulfilled task and/or a punishment for failure (Awamleh, Evans and Mahate, 2005) and is not motivated to perform above the expectation.

Awamleh, Evans and Mahate define transactional leadership as a style based on an exchange process, within which the leader deals out both rewards and punishments. According to Bass (1985) the transactional leadership is based upon supportive building of relationship between leader and follower, in the sense of establishing expectations, clearly stated responsibility, negotiating rules and giving out rewards for achieving given task. Transactional leadership is based on monitoring and controlling of followers and rewarding desirable behavior (Bass, 1985). Transactional leader gives followers what they want in exchange for what he/she requires. Judge and Piccolo (2004) differentiate between two basic tools for rewarding followers by the transactional leaders – contingency reward. This means the leader states beforehand the expectations (and the reward for success) and the rules for deviations from the goal, which are not in sync with the expectations. Tool for this is a negative stimulation (e.g. a punishment). Transactional leader leads the followers towards reaching his/her expectations and achieving set goals, but not towards exceeding the expectations and extra work effort. According to Bass (1985), the attributes of transactional leadership are:

- Contingency reward
- Management by exception: active and passive

Transformational leadership is a process concentrating on a change of behavior and perception of individual as well as social group. It focuses on satisfying higher needs of the followers. It deals with topics such as emotions, values, ethics, inspiration, long-term goals and strategy. Transformational theory of leadership is currently the most researched theory (Prochazka, 2015) and it is unique in its approach and focus on the highest human needs and on the transformation of the current situation. The first person to introduce the concept of transformational approach to leadership was James MacGregor Burns, in his 1978 book *Leadership* (Northouse, 2016, p.161). Burns defines the transformational leadership as a process, in which both leaders and followers help each other to achieve a higher level of morale and motivation. The theory of transformational leadership is considered a behavioral theory and it is assumed that transformational behavior can be a learned skill for a leader (Bass, 1990).

Northouse (2006, p.161-p.162) states that the transformational leadership can be used to describe a wide range of leadership styles: From the very specific intention to influence an individual follower, to influencing whole organizations, or even whole cultures. In his other publication “Leadership and Performance beyond Expectations”, Burns further develops his concept of transformational leadership and describes this type of a leader as follows:

- Fair and impartial
- Sets up clear goals
- Has high demands
- Encourages others
- Inspires
- Provides support and appreciation

Factors of transformational leadership (4 I’s)

Charisma, Idealized Influence (“II”)

Charisma is generally perceived as a very important factor in relation to leadership and was researched by many authors (e.g. Weber, Yukl and others). Transformational leader is a role model and sets an example for the followers. His/her moral and ethical standards are high. The followers perceive such leader as a person with extraordinary abilities, perseverance and determination. The followers admire, respect and trust their leader, which leads to them identifying with his/her goals and values and to the desire to do the right thing (Bass, 1985). As also stated by Yukl (1989, p.260-p.261), charismatic leaders show faith in the abilities of their followers by having high demands, which strengthens the followers’ self-awareness and faith in their own abilities. Bass sees charisma as a key component of transformational leadership.

Inspirational Motivation (“IM”)

Factor of inspirational motivation describes a leader who has the ability to express his/her vision in such a way, as to motivate and inspire the followers to the vision’s achievement (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Bass (1985) describes the basis of the dimension of the inspirational motivation as leader’s ability to apply vision in individual steps and component goals, leading to its fulfillment. He also describes it as the ability to present the application of the vision in such a way, so the followers see the meaning in every performed task and that they understand the way they participate on the vision or the required goal. Many other authors work with the concept of vision and its influence and importance in the business structure. For example Simon Sinek (2017) claims that a vision is the key to the feeling of personal fulfillment and to loyalty and belonging with the company.

Intellectual Stimulation (“IS”)

Intellectual stimulation factor specifies the influence of a leader upon the intellectual aspect of the followers. It is a behavior where leader challenges established customs, stimulates followers to see the problem from other perspectives and calls for innovation of thinking and acting.

Individual Consideration (“IC”)

Factor of Individual consideration indicates a leader who cares for individual needs of every follower. Leader is often a mentor and coach and one of his/her main expressed behaviors is empathy towards followers and broader surroundings.

Full Range Leadership Model “FRLM”

FRLM has developed from the work of James MacGregor Burns. In 1978 Burns claimed that leadership is either transactional or transformational. Transactional leaders lead by social exchanges,

whereas transformational leaders help develop their followers and motivate or inspire them to achieving extraordinary level of success.

FRLM is a tool frequently used to measure transformational, transactional and passive leadership. Below is shown a model which differs from the original one in grouping of the individual components and in the identification of passive approach to leadership. The original model contained the above described 4 attributes of transformational leadership "4 I's". In this new model, the component of Idealized Influence (charisma) was divided by Burns into two new components: Idealized Influence (attributes) and Idealized Influence (behavior). The attributes component focuses on description of leader's traits and the behavior component focuses on his/her actual behavior and acting. This brings it up to "5 I's". The original model includes the laissez-faire concept, but in the new model this system is changed to passive leadership category which became a synthesis of the laissez-faire concept and passive ruling of deviations (originally part of the transactional leadership). This change was made to more accurately diversify individual leadership styles (Bass, 2000).

Research Methodology and Results Interpretation

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) is the tool used to collect the data. It consists of 36 research questions, whereas 4 questions were assigned to each of the attributes of leadership styles (e.g. CR, IIA, MBEP, etc.). A unipolar Likert scale was used to measure and analyze the data (from 0=Never to 4=Very often, if not always).

Participants of the research were individuals from Europe, working for global companies in the industrial area. The research was performed using a questionnaire sent to the individual groups. The total amount of respondents included in the research was N=44.

Research questions were developed based on the available version of MLQ5X-Short questionnaire, which is widely used tool for measurement in the area of Full Range Leadership Model. In its original state, this tool serves as means to a leader's self-assessment. To use this tool for the research project with the goal to find the respondents' preferences and to find the required ideal state, the individual statements were modified; instead of statement "I ..." the statement "My ideal leader ..." was used (for example, instead of statement "I prefer the good of the group over my own interests", a new statement was used: "My ideal leader prefers the good of the group over his/her own interest"). To each dimension of transformational, transactional and passive leadership is assigned one statement. The respondents rate the statement using the unipolar Likert scale.

As a measuring tool, the original model Likert scale was used (0=Never, 1=Rarely, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often, if not always). For research of the questions in rating of the current state, the Likert scale of agreement was used (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree).

Demographics of the researched group

More than half of respondents are men (61.4%) and the biggest part of respondents are in the age group 32-38 years old (54%). Most of the respondents have master's degree (61.4%). Almost half (45.5%) of employees are with a company for 2-5 years. In the second place there are two same size groups of respondents, being with a company 6-10 years and 16-20 years (18.2% both). Most of the respondents (43.2%) work in a Sales Management department as Account managers, or Sales engineers. Second biggest group consists of Project management department employees (25%).

Leadership style preferences

After collection and export of data corresponding to the age range of generation Y (as already stated, data of respondents above 39 years of age were removed from the analysis), average values were calculated for every individual component of leadership (Idealized Influence (Attributes), Idealized Influence (Behavior), Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Individual Consideration, Contingency Reward, Management by exception: Active, Management by exception: Passive,

laissez-faire). Next, the average values were calculated for individual leadership styles (transformational, transactional and passive).

Analysis showed that the most preferred style is transformational (3.26), then transactional (2.60) and the least preferred is the passive style (0.95). In individual components, the first place went to components of transactional leadership: Inspirational Motivation (3.24), followed by Idealized Influence (Attributes) (3.34). Third place is divided between two components reaching the same average (3.28): Idealized Influence (Behavior) of the transformational leadership and Contingency Reward of the transactional leadership.

Respondents' average scores of leadership preferences:

Transformational leadership	
Idealized Influence (Attributes) (IIA)	3.34
Idealized Influence (Behavior) (IIB)	3.28
Inspirational Motivation (IM)	3.42
Intellectual Stimulation (IS)	3.15
Individual Consideration (IC)	3.11
3.26	

Transactional leadership	
Contingency Reward (CR)	Management by exception: Active (MBEA)
3.28	1.91
2.60	

Passive leadership	
Management by exception: Passive (MBEP)	Laissez-Faire (LF)
1.49	0.41
0.95	

Source: self-processed

Influence of age and gender

Analysis of age, divided into sub-groups 19-25 years, 26-31 years, 32-38 years, shows score assigned to individual leadership style progressively decreasing with higher age. The exception is the passive leadership which, compared to other groups, scored the highest with the oldest group (1.04). Results show that the transformational leadership style is preferred by the youngest segment of respondents. According to analysis, the gender plays only a small role in the leadership style preference for transformational leadership (the score difference is 0.05) and for passive leadership (the score difference is 0.01). Only for the transactional leadership, we can see more significant difference; men's preference score is higher (2.71) than women's (2.41).

Satisfaction with the current state

Statement that the current leader satisfies the respondent's preference - 11% strongly disagree and 9% disagree. Strongly agree 14% and agree 32% of respondents. After summation of individual polarities of the scale (strongly agree + agree vs. strongly disagree + disagree), we find that total of 20% of respondents rate their current leader as unsatisfactory to their preferences and 46% as

satisfactory. 34% chose the neutral rating. With the statement that leadership style in the company transforms to respondents' satisfaction, strongly disagree 5% and agree 25% of respondents. 32% of respondents agree, and no one chose the strongly agree option. After summation, the result is 30% of respondents rate the transformation of leadership in their company as unsatisfactory to their preferences and 32% as satisfactory. 38% of respondents chose the neutral option.

Respondent’s loyalty to the organization

The goal of this part is to find out, whether is the leadership style a significant factor in deciding to stay with the company. Another goal is to find out how big a portion of respondents are thinking about leaving the company in near future (within 2 years). With the statement that leadership style plays role in respondent’s staying with the company, 2% disagree and no one strongly disagrees. 55% of respondents agree and 18% strongly agree. After summation we get the result that for 30% of respondents the leadership style plays role in their loyalty to company. For 2% it doesn’t play role. 2% of respondents chose the neutral option.

Ideal leader’s preferred traits

The goal of this question is to find out whether characteristic traits of generation Y correspond with the traits the millennials expect to see in their preferred leader. We are also trying to establish, whether the typical traits and requirements of millennials we introduced in the theoretical part, are preferred by them in their leaders. In the question: “Name any leadership traits you consider the most important for your leader to have”, respondents were asked to name the most preferred leaders’ traits. It was an open question without pre-defined options and respondents could chose up to three arbitrary traits. Analysis of the quantity of words showed, that the most important traits correspond with the typical traits of the millennials, stated in the theoretical section (below chart shows the first 6 positions).

1.	Open communication	17
2.	Mentoring	11
3.	Trust	7
4.	Feedback	4
5.	Honesty	3
6.	Vision	3

Source: self-processed

Discussion

The results show a significant tendency towards the transformational leadership amongst members of generation Y, working in global corporations in the industry area. The only other significant rating was given to Contingency Reward, which is the transformational leadership’s logical addition. Transformational leadership is preferred as a whole because there were no significant differences found between its individual components. More detailed age division rating of generation Y showed stronger preference for transformational leadership in the 19-25 years category.

Men prefer transactional leadership more than women. This can be explained by the fact that men are more competitive.

Questions about satisfaction with the current state of leadership show almost equal division between positive, neutral and negative ratings of this factor.

Significant conclusion is that applied leadership style is an important parameter in deciding whether employees stay with the organization long-term. It can also often be the reason for them leaving the company.

Likewise, a significant conclusion is that amongst preferred ideal leader's traits is namely the ability to communicate openly, the ability to help the employees grow using mentoring and credibility.

In the next phases of research of this problematic, it will be appropriate to do a broader qualitative research, not only with generation Y but also with their colleagues from generation X. Broader context and focusing on both generations, Y and X, and their differences (if any) is the next necessary step for understanding ties of the employees to their leader and to each other. This will lead to a better collaboration and satisfaction. Researching the relation of preferred leadership styles and personal parameters of individual respondents is the next big research opportunity. Their understanding of themselves, how do they work, their perception and their motivation for quality performance, is the primary step for further development.

Results of the research are well applicable in the area of education and training of ambitious individuals or of people with the responsibility to lead. Very useful is also discussion of this topic in the workplace and, ideally, cooperation of the leader and his/her team. Co-activities of leader and followers may lead to the improvement of interpersonal relationships in the work environment.

Summary and Conclusion

The goal of this study was to analyze preferences of generation Y in the area of leadership and to offer suggestions leading to work performance increase and to higher loyalty of this generation to the work team.

The theoretical part introduces personality traits of generation Y and their contrast with other generations. Principal values are vision, honesty and open communication. Members of this generation require to feel challenged by demanding tasks, coached and mentored. Next were introduced basic approaches to leadership.

Next goal of the study was to analyze current state of generation Y members, who are working in a global industrial corporation. Also to analyze their satisfaction with the leadership style utilized by their direct superior as well as satisfaction with the company on the whole. Aim of this work was also to analyze generation Y's leadership style preferences and to find out which leadership style is the most suitable for them. A modified version of Full Range Leadership Model was chosen as an appropriate tool for the analysis. The results of the analysis showed the transformational leadership is the preferred style of the generation Y. Significant fact is also the result, that full 34% are considering leaving their companies within 2 years. 30% is unsatisfied with the current leadership style in the company, but the degree of satisfaction with their direct superior is higher. Results show that the way the generation Y is being led is fundamental for them. 96% of respondents stated that the leadership has a direct impact on whether they will stay in their current jobs, or not.

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