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GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS IN THE WORKPLACE: HOW ARE LEADERS  
ADAPTING TO THEIR SHORT ATTENTION SPANS AND HOW WILL THEY  
KEEP THEM FROM LEAVING A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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by

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To: Interim Dean William Harding  
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This dissertation, written by Maribel R. Diz, and entitled Gen Z and Millennials in the Workplace: How are Leaders Adapting to Their Short Attention Spans and How Will They Keep Them from Leaving a Qualitative Study, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Jorge and my children, Gabriella and Sebastian. By demonstrating that anything is possible if you set your heart and soul into it. Education and knowledge is something that no one can take from you, Stay Curious and Intrigued. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to the Cohort 1 Wolf Pack. Without their support and comradery, this journey would not have been as enlightening and fun. We are true pioneers!

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

### GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS IN THE WORKPLACE: HOW ARE LEADERS ADAPTING TO THEIR SHORT ATTENTION SPANS AND HOW WILL THEY KEEP THEM FROM LEAVING A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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There is a new type of employee entering the workforce that is a true digital native with allegedly the shortest attention span known as Generation Z. Coupled with millennials, they will dominate the workforce. The problem investigated is the effects of short attention spans in the workplace and how this is being magnified by the incoming Generation Z cohort and existing millennials. Companies will need to adapt to short attention spans, along with what will engage and retain these two cohorts. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore both generations as there are no current studies with this cohort combination. The theoretical framework for this study was generational cohort, selective attention, and social exchange theory coupled with organizational culture. The target populations were Generation Z and millennials employees in good standing and Leaders with a minimum of one-year experience currently managing them in their function. The data collection process was conducting interviews with structured and semi-structured questions. A total of 72 participants were interviewed. The key findings of this study were that leaders and employees alike admit that there is an issue

with attention spans. Leaders have taken steps to adapt and assist in prioritizing, providing deadlines and engaging them with enjoyable projects. Gen Z and millennials have identified what their distractors are. During the study, there was a clear differentiation between attention span and focus. These are mutually exclusive. These cohorts have an uncanny ability to focus. They get distracted audibly versus visually, they plug in to tune out noise by using ear buds, listening to music or using noise canceling headsets. They are most engaged when working on projects that are rewarding and impactful, meaningful work and being challenged. They seek a protector of sorts and prefer a leader that provides guidance, has their back, coaches and provides feedback. They need psychological safety along with an importance placed on development. The cohorts favors an inspirational leadership style. Assuming that Gen Z and millennials are fairly paid with good benefit, they will stay if they have continued learning experiences and participate in rewarding and impactful work, which is intrinsic in nature.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

With the changes rapidly taking place in the workplace due to technology, leaders need to, now more than ever, know how to engage their employee's attention to continue to motivate and keep the deliverables on target. Today, technology has impacted how quickly we turn things around, how we interface via video conferences and share documents. The new generations are accustomed to getting things quickly, and thanks to mobile devices everything is at our fingertips. Google is used to answer any question in seconds. On our downtime, if we want to watch a television show commercial-free, chances are we can do that by accessing Netflix and binge-watch an entire season. If we get a craving for a favorite meal and do not want to cook or have the ingredients at hand, an order can be placed through Uber Eats, Postmates, or any other delivery food service available. In less than one hour our food delivery arrives. We have become a society of instant gratifiers and there is no exception in the workplace.

When it comes to managing different generations in the workplace, leaders can become confused about how they course-correct when trying to cater to differing needs. According to Roodin and Mendelson (2013), older workers are not enthusiastic about multitasking as this will have an impact on the quality of work. They expect their leaders to put people at the center and be present when it comes to hands-on leadership. However, this is not the case for newer generations.

We are beginning to see a new type of employee entering the workforce known as Generation Z. Gen Zs were born between 1996 and 2010 and are the true digital natives (McNeil, 2018). They are the offspring of Generation Xers (born between 1960 and 1979) (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Gen Zers learned to navigate an iPad before they said

their first word. They are used to being exposed to ever-changing screens and data saturation on multiple platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Snap Chat, TikTok to name a few. Little is known about their work habits as this generation is currently transitioning into the workforce today.

Generation Z are accustomed to being fast and focus on accuracy (Grail, 2011). A study discovered that due to Gen Zs' overconfidence, intolerance for criticism and abrupt communication style, this may create conflict in the workplace (Bencsik, Horvath-Csikos & Juhasz, 2016). Most of the studies related to Generation Z revolve around their study habits, preference towards technology, and entrepreneurial tendencies. Bloomberg published an article stating that almost one-third of the world's population was Generation Z, nudging ahead of millennials (Miller & Lu, 2018). This is a reality that corporations will be facing in the short term. The researcher believes that the ramifications of having such a large cohort enter the workforce can affect organizations from a cultural perspective, as well as a financial standpoint with strategic implications. It is unclear whether Generation Z will need to adapt to the traditional work setting or whether the work setting will need to adapt to this up-and-coming generation.

Millennials have been plagued by many comments related to their attitudes at work. Based on the literature reviewed, millennials value volunteerism, civic duty, and community. While others state that millennials are self-centered (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). One can say that there have been contradicting views related to millennials and how they have shaped the workplace during the last ten years. Empirical research demonstrates that these generations have a high degree of self-assurance and self-efficacy (Twenge, 2009).

Generation Z has learned from the missteps of the Millennial generation in their utilization of social media and how it also affects organizations and society (Merriman, 2020). Evaluating whether there will be an impact on productivity due to social media usage will be an instrumental measure in the study (Prakash Yadav & Rai, 2017).

### **Statement of Problem**

The problem addressed by this study is the effect of short attention spans in the workplace and how this is being magnified by the incoming Generations Z cohort and the existing millennials. Further, a large number of members in these two generations combined in the United States alone represent 166 million people according to Bookings' U.S. Census Bureau analysis of population estimates (Schneider, 2020). These generations have already affected the remaining generations. They dominate the digital space and marketers are catering to them by the speed commercials are aired and the amount of information that is covered according to the Digital Marketing Institute (2018). This is becoming the norm and has unknowingly affected the other generations where their attention span has also been compromised.

Meanwhile, these two generations have a tendency to hop around and not stay long with their employer, coupled with the upcoming Gen Zs having an entrepreneurial spirit (Gibbons, 2018). Employers would benefit from understanding how to retain these employees as they will soon make up the majority of the workforce.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of the study is to examine both Generation Z and millennials in the workspace to determine how leaders are adapting to them as far as their focus, motivation, and retention. There have been studies in the past that focus on multi-

generation in the workplace, but when it relates to Generation Z, research of the literature shows that the number of papers dedicated to this topic is low and disparate. Other studies focus on millennials' tendencies towards work; however, there are no studies that focus on both millennials and Gen Zs' low attention span and how it may impact their attitude towards work. Further, an article in Time Magazine stated that the average attention span dropped from 12 seconds to eight seconds (McSpadden, 2015). Low attention span will be a burning topic that will affect the future of work and how leaders will need to adapt to engaging and retaining these two generations.

There is literature on Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), which state that leaders engage with their followers utilizing different types of social exchanges, the leaders experience distinctive quality relationships because of the way they treat their followers in a differentiated manner (Graen & Cashman, 1975). However, leaders will have an issue in reconciling motivating, and engaging both generations plus delivering results coupled with short attention spans.

In addition, retention is an important factor when it comes to a company's return on investment, as personnel is the most expensive line in a company's profit and loss statement. Hiring and training a new hire accounts for 90% to 200% of an employee's annual salary (Simmn, de Sivatte, Olmos, & Shaw, 2013). This is a significant amount that employers will grapple with if by the time employees close the learning curve gap, they decide to leave.

## Theoretical Framework

The focus of the study was how leaders are adapting to Gen Z and millennials' short attention spans and how to retain and engage them. The epistemological assumption was that Generation Z was raised in the digital world. They have grown up with smartphones, tablets, 360-degree photography, 4-D just to name a few of the technology that they have at their disposal. Gen Zers, quickly lose interest in television shows, quickly browse their Instagram feed only pausing for a split second when something distracts them and how they are connected with different sensory stimulating tools when doing a task (e.g., listening to a playlist, while scrolling on social media and cleaning their room). It is unknown how this will transform the workplace.

The ontological assumption is that there may be different answers to the research question(s). The interpretive framework that was used was Pragmatism. Meaning that the focus will be on the outcomes of the research findings—the situations, actions, and consequences of inquiry—rather than the conditions of the antecedent (Creswell & Poth 2018). Not much is known about the Generation Z cohort. In the next few years, there will be a large numbers of them joining organizations in entry-level jobs (Chillakuri & Mahanandia 2018). The process used was an inductive one as there are little known facts as to the effects of their attention span in the workplace and what will entice these two generations to stay with their employers for an extended period of time. The research philosophy that was used as the foundation for this study was interpretivism philosophy, whereas the study will integrate human interests. Interpretivist researchers through social

constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments assume that access to reality (Myers, 2008).

The format used for this study was qualitative research instead of quantitative. Quantitative research examines data numerically using the relationship among variables and requires the use of specific approaches to sample, collect and analyze the data (Groeneveld, Tummers, Bronkhorst, Ashikali, & van Thiel, 2015). Even though scholars assert that this method is subjective, McLean, Jensen, and Hurd (2007) explore that there is a strong methodology and rigor. As stated by Jennifer Mason (2018), a qualitative researcher engages with important matters of epistemology and ontology from the bottom up and through their practice and critical thought, and not simply through digesting abstract treatises on these participants. Critical thinking is at the core of qualitative studies, especially when it is a phenomenon that is emerging due to environmental or societal situations. When studying generations at the workplace, this is an evolving subject matter as external forces may adjust or reshape characteristics of any given generation, namely the up and coming Generation Z. The purpose of the qualitative researcher is to understand situations in their particular context and interactions (Patton, 2015).

The theoretical basis that will ground the research is the generational cohort theory, which suggests that several generations were categorized based on the specific time periods of when people were born and the period of time they grew up in (Hemlin, Allwood, Martin & Mumford, 2014). Another theory that was utilized for the study is the theory of selective attention. Models of attention as defined by Broadbent (1958) and

Treisman (1960) are considered bottleneck models as all our sensory inputs cannot consciously be attended at the same time. This leads us to the current situation of digital overload on the senses and the ability and capacity to process. In theory, while stimulus selection can be random, individuals can perform specific selections to completion (Cohen, 2006). In comes selective attention, which is the mechanism responsible for the selection of stimuli.

Additionally, organizations need employees that bring ideas, feel connected, and are motivated to produce good work. Psychological presence is when employees' work motivation is fully present when performing tasks at work that require more of them personally (Kahn, 1992). Also, the effect of trust and influence in managers/leaders was a variable that was explored to determine if there was a correlation between motivation and satisfaction of the two generations.

## **Research Question**

This topic is important to human resources practitioners as well as top leaders of organizations. Human resources practitioners are faced with a shortage of talent, and adaptation is the option that will ensure differentiation among other companies competing for said talent.

RQ1. How are leaders adapting to millennials and Gen Zs' short attention spans?

RQ2. How will leaders engage millennials and Gen Zs?

RQ3. Which factors contribute to millennials and Gen Zs staying with a company?

## Significance of the Study

There is a concern related to the scarcity of talent. Companies are reinventing themselves and adapting their workplaces, including benefit offerings to appeal to the different generations as an employer of choice (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001). There is a bona fide concern in retaining talent as the cost of hiring and onboarding continues to rise. This issue becomes even more complicated when there are five generations at the same time in the workforce (Salzman, 2017). With the entering Generation Z, which allegedly possesses the shortest attention span, how they will affect the traditional workplace. Companies are faced with the daunting task of figuring out the impacts of the entering generation, (e.g., how they will impact the workforce, how will their attention span affect how they interface with other generations, what impact will their output have in the workforce and how do we retain them).

Several important concepts are at the focus of the study:

Table 1  
Definitions

Employee engagement	The commitment employees feel to the organization's objectives along with the level of recognition and value they feel in return for their efforts (Georgiades, 2015). Employee engagement, which was defined as a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001).
Generation Z	This generation cohort are the offspring of Generation Xers that were born between 1996 and 2010 and are the true digital natives (McNeil, 2018).
Intrinsic Motivation	State where individuals are willing to complete an activity because they consider the activity exciting and pleasurable (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Meaningful Work	This is a deeper level of intrinsic motivation and the instrument of work satisfaction and work commitment. Deriving a deeper level of satisfaction from the accomplishment of the task and an intrinsic, deeper level of a motivator to performing a task (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009).
Millennials	This generation was born between 1980 and 1994 (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).
Motivation	Employees should respond positively to four basic aspects of work: variety, task identity, autonomy, and feedback (Oldham and Hackman, 1981). Considerations conducted by researchers led to the creation of the Job Characteristics Model (JCM), which assumes that internal motivation is determined by three psychological states, which can occur if the work has certain characteristics. These characteristics include the variety of skills used to perform the task, the identity of the task, i.e. the degree of task performance from beginning to the end, the autonomy of the work, the importance and impact of the task performed on others, and feedback regarding the task performed. JCM assumes that an employee's motivational potential (MPS) should be highest when the job performed is characterized by high levels of autonomy, significance, and feedback (Koszela, 2020).
Organizational culture	Organizational culture encompasses the set of values, visions, norms, working language, systems, symbols, beliefs, behaviors, and habits found within an organization (Lukas, Whitwell & Heide, 2013).
Psychological Safety	Ability to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status, or career (Kahn, 1990)

This chapter was the introduction of the study. The purpose of the study is to understand how the two largest generational cohorts—Gen Z and millennials will impact the workforce with their alleged short attention spans, the expectation of leadership, and what will have them stay longer with organizations. Companies are facing a situation with retention of talent that is impacting their bottom line. Understanding what will retain employees will help address this issue long-term. The data gathered from this study will postulate a deeper understanding of what will engage and retain Gen Z and millennials. It will broaden scholarly analysis for the consumption of Human resources practitioners and

leaders alike. The following chapter will focus on the literature review to become familiar with existing research and determine what is still unknown with this important subject and broaden the researcher's knowledge base.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how Gen Z and millennials will impact the workforce, namely how leaders will adapt to these two cohorts that will dominate the workforce, how they will be engaged and what will retain them. This study took an in-depth view on whether leaders' suppositions are correct or if there is disparity among the actions the leaders take and the expectations that Gen Z and millennials have. Chapter 2 begins with a concise review of the literature and theoretical context of the study. An electronic method was used to search journals and relevant articles in the subjects of Human resources, Generation Z tendencies, Millennial tendencies, Retention, Psychological and Social Sciences. The criteria focused on peer-reviewed journals and search engines as in Google Scholar and the Florida International University Library.

### **Generational Cohort**

In today's workforce, there are multiple generations—five to be exact. Although there are varying dates depending on the source, the following are the five generations: Traditionalists (born before 1945) (Ozcelik, 2015), Baby Boomers (born between 1940 and 1959) Generation X (born between 1960 and 1979), Millennials (born between 1980 and 1994) and finally Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2010) (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). This theoretical basis suggests that generations are categorized based on the specific time periods of which people were born and period of time they grew up in (Hemlin, et al, 2014). According to a study by McHenry and Ash (2010) that examined generational cohort differences concerning knowledge management, they found that in the area of technology, the older generation stereotypes are true. Where younger

generations use technology as in social media, instant messaging, and texting actively versus the older generations using the internet passively. The younger generations do not know life without technology given their digital native status. Whereas the older generations, in a study conducted by the AARP (Anderson, 2017) in the United States where the participants were 50 years of age or older and yielded 1,520 respondent showed that the top usage of technology in these age groups were making purchases, getting news, and banking. This is mainly due to concerns with security and privacy. It appears that technology is a phenomenon in its own right. However, there is little difference with other areas of sharing and connectedness. The implication of this is that technology is undoubtedly morphing societal factors when it comes to different generations (Padayachee, 2017).

### **Theory of Selective Attention**

As stated earlier, when discussing the models of attention, Broadbent (1958) and Treisman (1960) predicted that one cannot attend to all sensory inputs simultaneously. Selective attention has been studied for many years and the consensus is that we are limited in our mental ability and are only able to select a fraction of the stimuli that surrounds us (Cohen, 2006). Cohen (2006) states that information's existence is for us to exert our ability to select it. These numerous studies led to a series of bottleneck theories related to attention studies and selective attention research. The most notable and influential theories were offered by Broadbent (1958), Treisman (1960), and Deutsch & Deutsch (1963) (Cohen 2006; Rossini and Galera 2006). Cohen (2006) noted, that when performing a task, the information is processed starts with our senses and then ends with

a behavioral action. Simply stated as input equal the senses and output equals the behaviors. In their work, the pioneers known as Broadbent, Treisman, and Deutsch & Deutsch examine the different stages where selective attention information processing occurs. The proposal by Broadbent in his earlier work was that physical properties in a scene are processed in parallel and without limitations. However, in Treisman's (1960) model it states that inbound stimuli is analyzed through an attenuation filter pre-attentively based on physical characteristics, becoming available to the individual via its consciousness. As the studies continued and evolved with time Deutsch & Deutsch (1963) proposed a late selection model. In their study, their model indicated that all incoming information would be provided a level of importance, pertinence since there is a limitation to respond to the incoming information. Therefore, only part of the information that is incoming will be responded to (Almeida, Veloso, Roque & Mealha, 2011). These theories seem to answer the question about the nature of short attention spans, but how are leaders reacting or leveraging them with the younger generations? This study has determined the main struggles Generation Z and millennials are facing when it comes to their attention span and their productivity.

## **Trust and Influence**

Trust in leaders has a direct correlation with satisfactions with one's job and affects behavior, hope, innovative behavior, and organizational citizenship (Simmons, Nelson, and Neal 2001). Influences by leaders have been proven to increase employee performance, commitment, learning, and satisfaction (Kohli, Shervani, and Challagalla, 1998; Johnson, Luthans and Hennessey, 1984). The study explored Generation Z and

millennials' expectations of their respective leaders in building a safe environment where they feel connected and can produce good work. Trust and influence are paramount and were explored to determine the correlation of engagement with the two cohorts.

### **Social Exchange Theory Coupled with Organizational Culture**

Research shows that social exchange theory is used to explain the social dynamics of relationships and workplace behavior (Janssen, van Vuuren & de Jong, 2016). Generally, social exchange theory posits that social interactions between two parties will generate a degree of obligation (Homans, 1958). Employees will repeat actions that were rewarded and will continue to repeat said actions for the reward effect. The process of social exchange has the potential of creating strong relationships. Said parties adhering to certain rules will evolve their relationship into a mutual commitment that is trusting and loyal over time (Crapanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This theory is of particular interest since these two generations are looking for lasting relationships in the workforce and some cases an extension of their parents who provide guidance and protection.

The theory of exchange between leader and employee—known as Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) states that several elements may influence employee's actions, behaviors, and motivation including leadership styles that result in the type of relationship among the employee and leader (de Oliveira & da Costa Rocha, 2017). Gen Z and millennials' relationships with their leaders will be analyzed based on (LMX) which will focus on the expected relationship and whether it has any bearing on engagement and retention. These expectations will not only manifest themselves in the

employees' output but in defining whether the employee's expectations aligned with the leader's behavior towards them.

For Gen Z and millennials, organizational culture is an important means to gauge whether organizations will support and protect them. Perceived organizational support is a notion that is developed based on social exchange theory (Rara, 2019). The values, attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of an organization are explained by the organizational culture. Organizational culture is the shared standards, values, and principles of employees and groups within an organization (Schein & Schein, 2017). Also referred to as corporate culture, this is the way in which organizations run and conduct their business, allow employees to freely express themselves, the employee commitment towards the organization, finally how employees are treated (Ruzgar, 2019). Organizational culture is what lures employees to organizations and repels them all the same. According to Schein & Schein (2017), Corporate culture is also an important factor that can improve performance and efficiency. The merger of social exchange theory and company culture would define an organization that has a blend of supportive leaders along with identifiable company norms that will appeal to Gen Z and millennials.

### **Gen Z and Millennial Behaviors**

Gen Zs represent the youngest generation in the workplace and their numbers are growing at a staggering rate. What is known of the Gen Z generation is that they are most interested in texting and would rather not communicate via e-mail, which may cause an issue in the workplace where email is the preferred method (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). This is along the lines of their rapid and abbreviated communication style. Both

generations are digital natives—meaning that technology has always been part of their lives. They find technology essential to their daily lives (Lebowitz, 2018). Gen Zs' technology usage and interest in flexibility are almost identical to millennials (Ryback, 2016). Gen Z understands the importance and value of being financially stable and performing well at work are important to them, however, sacrificing their personal lives to succeed at work is not acceptable to them (Flippin, 2017). Millennials are considered to be highly connected, adaptable given the remoteness that they crave and confident (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). Millennials appreciate stable companies that are dynamic and flexible, that provide a friendly environment that will allow for positive interactions among colleagues and leaders with less authoritarian management (Falaster, Ferreira, and Reis, 2015). In the evaluated literature there is no mention of attention spans and how they manage multitasking, which will be covered in this study.

### **Engaging Gen Z and Millennials**

The relationship between Gen Z and millennials needed to be assessed. There is an expected need for freedom, flexibility, empowerment and meaning in their work environment. Personal high touch when it comes to feedback, personal attention, especially when it relates to professional success (Allen, 2005). Employees that have meaningful work-life increase productivity, high performance, and commitment to the job (Barsh, Cranson & Craske, 2008; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Herman & Gioia, 1998). Besides money and rewards, work-life should provide inner purpose and a sense of meaning consistent with employees' value system (Bremner and Carriere, 2011). Gen Z and millennials need intrinsic rewards and motivators to be engaged, productive, and successful (Adams, 2012). This study will highlight this as an outcome. They value

rewarding, impactful, and meaningful work, along with new challenges where they can improve work processes and conditions. Gen Z and millennials are in search of meaning and purpose in their work, more than ever before (Holbeche & Springett, 2004).

Meaningful work is what these two generations crave. They have a sense of realizing their potential and purpose where the passions, core values, and strengths interact with work (Lieff, 2009). They work long hours without additional compensation, exhibit positive relationships with peers and leaders, and provide high-quality work (Stegar, Dik & Duffy, 2012). Studies indicate that employees engaged in meaningful work-life put less importance on compensation than in comparison to the impact of meaningful work (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

The leader involvement is equally as important as Gen Z and millennials have a certain expectation of them. Given they grew up in structured environments, they are used to these environments at work. Honesty, integrity, and respect are their preference in leaders (Brack, 2012). They are looking to be offered projects that include a learning component and challenge them to work harder and develop (Newman, 2010).

### **Retaining Gen Z and Millennials**

Employers find that the younger generational cohorts don't stay long due to lack of motivation and become disengaged with their job (Pontefract, 2018). This adds a level of complexity when it comes to leading these cohorts as Motivation and engagement are intrinsic in nature. Millennials have a reputation for switching jobs frequently and quickly earning them the label of job hoppers (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Li & Devos, 2008). Millennials' life expectancy in their jobs is approximately less than two years after their start date (Mayangdarastri & Khusna, 2020). As the saying goes, they work to live

instead of live to work. They are in pursuit of work-life balance and do not easily commit to organizations (Li & Devos, 2008). Creating a strong organizational culture that encourages sharing, innovation, open communication, flexibility, and relaxed--meaning less formal, will help retain millennials (Brack, 2012). When employees perceive meaningful work, they show commitment to work and organizations (Chalofsky, 2010). Further, if there is perceived organizational support linked to social exchange theory, there is a trade of effort and loyalty (Eisenberger, Armeli, Barbara, Patrick & Linda, 2001). When someone receives kind treatment from others, they. reciprocate by repaying them with kindness (Eisenberger, et al., 2001). Employees will show their loyalty to the organization if the organization appreciates and nurtures them and takes their well-being into account (Rara, 2019). Hence employees will demonstrate their loyalty to the organization.

Little is known of the tendencies and preferences of Gen Z, and the effects that they will have in the workplace. The business community is intrigued. There have been plenty of studies on millennials, but none with both generations. The empirical research on this subject is lacking. This chapter provided a literature review and theoretical context of the study. It is expected that this dissertation research will expand our understanding of the impact and expectation that Gen Z and millennials will have in the workplace. Grounding the research to the theories provides not only validity but an expanded view based on the recent findings from this qualitative study. The following chapter will focus on the research methods that were used in the study from methods, pilots, data collection and analysis, assumptions, limitations and ethical assurances.

## **Chapter 3: Research Method**

This international qualitative study explored how leaders are adapting to Gen Z and millennials' attention spans, how to engage millennials and Gen Zs, and finally what factors will help retain these two generations. This chapter will provide a description of the study as in the design, target population, and sample, procedures used for the study, including the protection of participants, data collection and analysis, study instruments, and ethical considerations.

### **Methodology**

The participants that took part in the study consists of the different generations at work, which includes different functions, levels of employees, and locations. Generation Z is the smallest group in the workforce; however, they will end up dominating due to the retirement of the Traditionalists and Baby Boomers, leaving Gen X and millennials, which are smaller in numbers. By coupling Gen Z and millennials that provided a solid sample for the study.

The study received FIU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before data was collected ensuring that all ethical and welfare parameters were adhered to. The participants for the study were employees of a Multinational Technology Company specializing in electronic funds transfer throughout the world. From this point forward the Company will be referred to as Future Company. Future Company is ranked among Fortune 500's most admired companies with presence in 200 countries and territories with over 20,500 employees around the world. Last year, it reported a market capitalization of \$494.3 billion dollars. Future Company has received numerous recognitions on its brand, corporate responsibility and reputation, culture and diversity,

and product development and innovation. Future Company is known for its inclusiveness winning the following awards: Great Places to Work, Best Places to Work for LGBT and Equality, Top Companies for Women Technologists, Bloomberg's Gender-Equality Index (GEI), McKinsey's Woman in the Workplace study, Diversity Best Practices Inclusion Index, 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers, Best Company for Multicultural Woman, NAFE Top 70 Companies for Executive Women. This is evidence of the openness of the company's acceptance and the importance it places on hiring employees of diverse backgrounds, which encompasses generations. The focus, nonetheless, was to interview employees and leaders that were based in Miami, Florida in the United States, and several countries in Latin America where there was critical mass. Upon scoping the region for demographic data on generation distribution, there were only 11 Generation Z employees based in Bogota, Colombia, and Miami, Florida, in the United States working entry-level roles. Consequently expanding the sample size to include millennials that were employed at Future Company.

The study used the ethnographic research method. This is the preferred method to study social or cultural problems; or document the beliefs, customs, perspectives, and practices of people, organizations, and communities alike in their environment (Reeves, Peller, Goldman, & Kitto, 2013). In order to identify factors, the selected method was structured interviews with a willing pre-selected group of managers and employees. Interviews are valuable data collection tools for qualitative researchers since data can be recorded, challenged, and archived (Jamshed, 2014). In this study, the interviews consisted of open-ended questions, which were useful for capturing facts and perceptions of the interviewees' based on their own experiences. The questions were structured or

semi-structured, which allowed them to be easily altered during the interview depending on the particular experiences of the interviewee (Jamshed, 2014).

The qualitative method further allowed the researcher to understand and explore the characteristics of Gen Z and millennials employees. The pre-selected group consisted of managers of Gen Z and millennial employees and Gen Z and millennial employees. The managers and employees were based across the following locations:

Table 2  
Employee Distribution

Location	Generation	Interviews
Buenos Aires, Argentina	Millennial	4
Sao Paulo, Brazil	Millennial	4
Bogota, Colombia	Generation Z	1
Bogota Colombia	Millennial	4
Mexico City, Mexico	Millennial	4
Lima, Peru	Generation Z	1
Lima, Peru	Millennial	2
Miami, Florida USA	Generation Z	5
Miami, Florida USA	Millennial	9

Table 3  
Leader Distribution

Location	Interviews
Buenos Aires, Argentina	1
Sao Paulo, Brazil	5
Bogota, Colombia	2
Mexico City, Mexico	3
Lima, Peru	1
Miami, Florida USA	26

During the interview, the question was asked of their country of origin, which varied and included a broader coverage of the Latin American and Caribbean Region. Sample interview questionnaire for managers and employees along with the interview

protocols are located in the Appendix section of the dissertation. The interviews took a maximum of 45-minutes. A total of 72 participants were part of the study. Making accurate observations and interpretations is of the utmost importance and where the background knowledge, training, and competence of the interviewer comes to play (Kvale, 1996).

### **Pilots**

An informed pilot was conducted, which yielded that engagement and motivation needed to be defined for the participants. Another recommendation was that the questions needed to be clustered by themes to increase ease when coding the interview data. A pilot was done with two individuals: one representing the employee group and another representing the supervisor group. The pilot study yielded that the questions were concise, clear, and easy to answer. The feedback received was to be ready to explain the entrepreneurial question located at the end of the interview session since it seemed to deviate from the engagement and motivation. Both participants enjoyed the experience and are curious to learn the results. Both interviews were concluded before the 45-minute mark.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The participants were sent an email (Appendix 1) where they were provided the context of the study, the interview format, and time allotment, confidentiality statement along with the consent form and contact information in case they wanted to reach out with questions. After which, they were sent an invitation for the interviews during a time that was convenient to the participants. The executed consent forms (Appendix 2) were collected before the interviews took place. The researcher followed a script (Appendix 3)

explaining the length of the interview, the purpose of the interview the importance of their participation, reaffirming that the interviews were being recorded, and ensuring that they agreed to proceed. The interviews started on time and were spaced out so that if one interview ran over, it would not keep the other participants waiting. All of the interviews were concluded at the scheduled end time. The interviews were recorded using Otter Voice Meeting Notes, which is an automated tool on the iPhone that transcribes texts. The researcher had to validate the transcriptions as the tool substituted words based on sounds and did not have the capability to transcribe in different languages (e.g., Spanish and Portuguese). Once the transcripts were validated, the recording was deleted as it was of no use to the researcher. The data analysis involved interpretations of the data captured through the interview transcripts. The transcripts should be seen as a tool of record for interpreting what was said or discussed during the interview and not be the subject matter of the interview study (Kvale, 1996). Member checking was conducted by forwarding the validated transcription to the interviewees. The vast majority of the interviewees did not appreciate the way that they came across in the transcriptions and asked for their pauses and filler words to be deleted. As such, the denaturalism approach to the transcriptions was used. Denaturalized transcription raises from an interest in the informational content (MacLean, Meyer & Estable, 2004) of speaking and/or unhappiness with the way in which one sound or comes across in the interviews (Billig, 1999). Still while working for accurate and faithful transcriptions (Cameron, 2001), denaturalism has nothing to do with representing accents or involuntary or unconscious fillers, but instead accuracy of the substance of the interview. In turn noting the meanings and perceptions created and transmitted during the interview (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005). Each transcript was

meticulously reviewed several times by the researcher to become familiar with data to identify common threads and emerging themes.

The system used to capture and code the information was NVivo. The analysis consisted of coding, creating detailed categories for data presentation, and framing descriptions of the research through those categories to reveal themes (Schaefer, 2016). The grounded theory approach for data analysis was done by using the Strauss and Corbin coding methods for transcribed interviews and field notes: Open Coding, Axial Coding, and Selective Coding. For instance, reading through the data many times then creating tentative labels in order to summarize what was emerging from the data. Then breaking down core themes and linking them back to the theories. After which, relating the codes to each other by inductive thinking and coding the data selectively. Thematic analysis was done to determine recurring themes, topics, ideas, and patterns that came up frequently. The data was coded to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewees for research reporting (Shaefer, 2016). The coding portion of the study was done by the researcher. The coding was cross-validated by two third-party individuals. A binder with printed copies of the nameless transcripts along with coding schema was provided. The two validators were not trained but merely instructed to classify the content of the transcripts using the codebook options (Appendix 4). There were a series of codes that were consolidated as a result of the validation process further grouping themes for concise evaluation (Appendix 5). This was done to ensure the objectivity of the researcher and avoiding any possible biases.

A comparison of the responses of leaders and employees was made to determine possible correlations, similarities, and/or disparities. The analysis yielded whether the

tactics used by the leaders are resonating with the Gen Z and Millennial generations as it relates to their attention spans and what will motivate them to stay.

### **Assumptions**

The researcher had a couple of assumptions for the study. Firstly, all participants would answer all questions in an honest, open, and direct manner related to attention span, motivation, and retention. Secondly, that once interviewees agreed to participate, they would attend the interview, answer all the questions and not withdraw before completion.

### **Limitations of Data**

The data was limited to the Future Company. Another limitation is the unpredictability of the data gathered while interviewing employees. They may have censored themselves for fear of the information leaking, and when interviewing managers, they may have omitted information that may place their leadership skills into question.

### **Delimitations**

The study was limited to employees from Future Company with more than one year of employment and in good standing which means receiving a performance rating of Meeting or above. The sampling had a geographical constraint that while being an international study, only employees from Miami, Florida and Buenos Aires, Argentina, Sao Paulo, Brazil, Bogota, Colombia, Mexico City, Mexico, Lima, Peru were interviewed. This selection sample was based on participants belonging to either the Generation Z or the Millennial generational cohort. The leaders that were selected were either part of Future Company's leadership team or supervisors of Generation Z or

Millennial employees with more than one year of supervisory experience. The focus of the research was limited to a specific population to gain and understand what factors would encourage employee retention and how leaders are adapting to short attention spans and engaging their employees.

### **Ethical Assurances**

The study abided by all FIU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethical standards. All participants executed a written acceptance regarding their participation in the research through a signed Consent Letter, which is attached in the appendix of this document. The Consent Letter assured participants that their involvement in the study was voluntary and they were free to withdraw from the study at any point for any reason whatsoever. Video Conference Interviews were scheduled given the limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The employees took the video conference calls from a quiet place that was familiar to them. Ethical assurances provided protection to the research. Ethical safeguards and standards maintained the privacy of the interviewees. Participants were provided with an outline of their rights to withdraw before, during, and after completion of the data collection process without consequences, loss of benefits, or risks. Participants were informed that they could email the researcher to be withdrawn from the study if they chose to. For these cases, a follow-up email was sent to the participants informing them of the extraction of the study and deleted from the participant database. The deletion would have been documented within the data if anyone elected to not participate.

This paper will extend existing theories related to generational cohorts and Social Exchange namely LMX as it relates to engagement and retention. It will highlight different aspects mainly related to the workforce and the contributions that a generation,

in particular, will have. Interested parties in the analysis are human resources practitioners and leaders that are responsible for business units. Corporate functions or market/geographies as organizations will also have a vested interest in the findings. This study will contribute to the existing literature on the different generations. It will be relevant for a myriad of academics, industries, and Human Resources Leaders that are responsible for establishing people's strategies and workforce plans for organizations.

Having the research questions top of mind allowed the researcher to focus and gather data in a structured unbiased way. This chapter described the design elements of the study, steps taken to select participants, interview protocols, transcribing procedures, and coding transcripts methodology. The selection process yielded 72 participants from countries located in Latin America and the United States. The same questions were used for employees and a slightly different set of questions were used for the leaders. This was done to compare responses to determine correlations or gaps in what Gen Z and millennials were expecting versus what the leaders believed the employees anticipated. Consistent measures were taken to protect participant's confidentiality and identities. Strict measures were taken to gather data and ensure anonymity. The data was collected and transcribed using a combination of an electronic and manual process. The coding was done manually with extreme care using the NVivo software to assist with the analysis. The following chapter will highlight the findings of the study including description of sample, presentation of data and results of analysis including direct quotes from the interviews, tables highlighting frequency of comments and linkage to existing theories.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

The purpose of the study is to determine how leaders are adapting to Gen Z and millennials' short attention spans, how leaders will continue to engage these two generations, and what factors will contribute to these two generations staying with Future Company. The researcher currently holds a senior executive level role for a Multinational Fortune 500 company and has over 30 years of work experience mainly in the human resources field. Having been exposed to different industries, cultures, and nationalities, the researcher brings a plethora of experience when it comes to different generations in the workplace and intimate knowledge of how successful companies are run. Understanding the different generations currently in the workforce will help leaders learn how the generations interact, are motivated, learn and develop (Gugercin, 2017). This knowledge will minimize tension and possibly increase retention as stated by Hechl in 2017, generational conflict leads to disengagement, challenges with succession planning, and turnover.

The researcher has extensive experience in employee relations, setting human resources strategies, including a keen focus on hiring and retention. The researcher started her career in Talent Acquisition, which is responsible for interviewing future talent and current talent for continued growth and development opportunities. The researcher is accustomed to interviewing via telephone, video conference, and in person. This is evidence that the researcher is skilled in interviewing and putting the participants at ease for them to open up during the interview. She also has deep experience in working with multigeneration and different cultures. The research was aware of the potential for bias due to her role in the organization and the industry (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The researcher practiced bracketing, which typically refers to the identification of possible biases that manifest themselves as vested interests, assumptions; clouded by personal experiences and cultural factors that could influence how the study data is viewed (Fischer. 2009). This was managed in a two-part process, first, the researcher continuously recorded her assumptions, and second, when evaluating the transcripts, she included reflective bracketing to deepen her understanding of the meaning of the subject matter. She also practiced journaling and consulted with colleagues throughout the process.

The research observed that the topic of Generation Zs in the workplace was scarce as this generation is entering the workforce. The evidence beyond some articles that focused on their study habits, did not address what their struggles would be related to attention spans, how to engage them, and retain them. The researcher decided to couple this generational cohort with millennials due to the low sample size of 11. In some cases, there was a supposition from the leaders that was fundamentally different than what Gen Z and Millennial employees were expecting or would be motivated by. This broadens the researcher's views. Through this dissertation, the researcher plans to add empirical data to the existing knowledge base to aid organizations in the management of Generation Z and millennials.

### **Description of Sample**

The criteria for participating in the study were that the employees had to be employed by the Latin America and Caribbean division of Future Company that is ranked among Fortune 500's most admired companies with 20,500 employees around the world. Employees had to be employed for a minimum of one year and be in good standing

which means receiving a past performance rating of Meeting or above. The employees needed to belong to the Generation Z or millennial generational cohort. Based on the filtering by tenure, performance rating/standing, and generational cohort that yielded a list of employees that were based in the following locations: Miami, Florida; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Bogota, Colombia; Mexico City, Mexico; and Lima, Peru. The leaders that were selected to participate in the study were to have a minimum of one year of supervisory experience. The leadership team members were also invited to attend, the prerequisite was to have a Gen Z employee in their function or currently supervise Millennial employees. The total number of participants was 72 employees and supervisors alike. There were a total of three participants that opted out of the study. All interviews were conducted virtually due to the COVID 19 Virus pandemic not allowing for face-to-face contact. Each participant was assigned a number to ensure confidentiality.

Tables 4 and 5 illustrate the participants' demographic make-up. Table 4 captures employees' characteristics as (a) Gender described as Female or Male, (b) Generation (GenZ or Millennial), (c) Location (current work location described as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Miami, Peru), and (d) Country of Origin (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Puerto Rico, United States, Venezuela). All efforts were made to ensure an adequate gender split. The end result yielded 59% female and 41% male participants. Location representation was also considered ensuring that there was adequate representation in the different Latin American countries: Argentina 12%, Brazil 12%, Colombia 15%, Mexico 12%, and Peru 9%. The majority of the employee population is based in the Hub, which is located in Miami, Florida where the

sample composition totaled 41%. The country of origin representation also varied due to migration tendencies in the sample group: Argentina 11.8%, Brazil 23.5%, Colombia 14.7%, Cuba 11.8%, Mexico 11.8%, Nicaragua 2.9%, Peru 8.8%, Puerto Rico 2.9%, Venezuela 8.8% and finally the United States 2.9%. All of the Gen Z population in Future Company were interviewed, which yielded 11 (32%) of the participants. The rest were millennials making up 68% of the interviewees.

Table 4  
Demographic Data: Employees Who Participated in the Study

Participant	Gender	Generation	Location	Country of Origin
P1	Female	GenZ	Miami	Cuba
P2	Male	GenZ	Miami	Brazil
P3	Male	GenZ	Miami	Nicaragua
P4	Female	GenZ	Miami	Cuba
P5	Male	GenZ	Miami	Brazil
P6	Female	GenZ	Miami	United States
P7	Female	GenZ	Miami	Venezuela
P8	Female	GenZ	Colombia	Colombia
P9	Female	GenZ	Miami	Colombia
P10	Male	GenZ	Miami	Brazil
P11	Female	GenZ	Peru	Peru
P50	Female	Millennial	Miami	Cuba
P51	Male	Millennial	Brazil	Brazil
P52	Male	Millennial	Mexico	Mexico
P53	Male	Millennial	Argentina	Venezuela
P54	Female	Millennial	Miami	Cuba
P55	Male	Millennial	Brazil	Brazil
P56	Female	Millennial	Colombia	Colombia
P57	Male	Millennial	Peru	Peru
P58	Female	Millennial	Miami	Puerto Rico
P59	Male	Millennial	Argentina	Argentina
P60	Female	Millennial	Argentina	Argentina
P61	Male	Millennial	Mexico	Mexico
P62	Female	Millennial	Colombia	Brazil
P63	Female	Millennial	Colombia	Colombia
P64	Female	Millennial	Argentina	Argentina
P65	Male	Millennial	Miami	Argentina

P66	Female	Millennial	Brazil	Brazil
P67	Male	Millennial	Brazil	Brazil
P68	Female	Millennial	Mexico	Mexico
P69	Female	Millennial	Mexico	Mexico
P70	Female	Millennial	Colombia	Colombia
P71	Female	Millennial	Peru	Peru
P72	Male	Millennial	Miami	Venezuela

Table 5 captures leaders' characteristics as (a) Gender described as Female or Male, (b) Location (current work location described as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Miami, Peru), (c) Country of Origin (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Salvador, United States, Venezuela) and Years of Experience (1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35). Using the same methodology as in the employee group, all efforts were made to ensure an adequate gender split, however, the result yielded 37% female and 63% male participants. Location representation was also considered ensuring that there was adequate representation in the different Latin American countries, however, the leadership concentration was predominantly in two countries—Brazil and Miami, Florida. The composition make-up was as follows: Argentina 3%, Brazil 13%, Colombia 5%, Mexico 8% and Peru 3%. Similar to Table 4, the majority of the employee population is based in the Hub, in Miami, Florida where the sample composition for leaders totaled 68%. The country of origin representation is especially varied at the leadership team level: Argentina 5%, Brazil 18%, Colombia 3%, Cuba 5%, Mexico 16%, Nicaragua 11%, Panama 3%, Peru 3%, Portugal 3%, Puerto Rico 5%, Salvador 3%, Venezuela 11% and finally United States 16%. Different from the employees, the leaders were asked for their years of experience leading people: 1 – 5 years, 3%; 6 – 10 years,

11%; 11 – 15 years, 26%, 16 – 20 years, 24%; 21 – 25 years, 16%; 26 – 30 years, 13%; and 31 – 35 years, 8%. There is a high concentration of leadership experience in the 11 – 20-year range equal to 50%.

Table 5  
Demographic Data: Leaders Who Participated in the Study

Participant	Gender	Location	Country of Origin	Years of Experience
P12	Male	Miami	Panama	26-30
P13	Female	Miami	Nicaragua	21-25
P14	Female	Miami	USA	6-10
P15	Male	Brazil	Brazil	21-25
P16	Male	Colombia	Portugal	11-15
P17	Female	Argentina	Argentina	16-20
P18	Female	Miami	Colombia	26-30
P19	Male	Miami	Peru	16-20
P20	Male	Miami	Argentina	16-20
P21	Female	Miami	USA	26-30
P22	Male	Miami	USA	21-25
P23	Male	Miami	Mexico	26-30
P24	Male	Miami	Salvador	31-35
P25	Female	Mexico	Mexico	31-35
P26	Female	Miami	Brazil	16-20
P27	Male	Brazil	Brazil	31-35
P28	Male	Miami	Venezuela	11-15
P29	Male	Miami	Mexico	6-10
P30	Female	Miami	USA	26-30
P31	Male	Miami	USA	11-15
P32	Female	Brazil	Brazil	16-20
P33	Male	Mexico	Mexico	21-25
P34	Male	Miami	Puerto Rico	6-10
P35	Male	Miami	Puerto Rico	16-20
P36	Female	Miami	Venezuela	11-15
P37	Male	Mexico	Mexico	11-15
P38	Male	Miami	Nicaragua	11-15
P39	Male	Miami	USA	6-10
P40	Male	Miami	Venezuela	16-20
P41	Female	Miami	Cuba	16-20

P42	Male	Colombia	Venezuela	11-15
P43	Male	Miami	Nicaragua	21-25
P44	Male	Peru	Mexico	11-15
P45	Female	Brazil	Brazil	11-15
P46	Female	Miami	Cuba	1-5
P47	Male	Miami	Brazil	11-15
P48	Female	Brazil	Brazil	16-20
P49	Male	Miami	Nicaragua	21-25

The researcher adhered to the protocols explained in Chapter 3 in the collection and analysis of the data. The questions were reviewed by scholars, colleagues, and the dissertation committee. The questions for employees and managers are included in Appendix 3 of the dissertation. For the Leader interviews, the first couple of questions were background questions establishing a rapport with the participant and putting them at ease. The questions were related to their country of origin and the length of time they had been a leader. The following two questions were related to leadership style and adaptation to different generations with a follow-up question asking them to provide examples. The following two questions were related to motivation and employee engagement. Development, empowerment, and entrepreneurial tendencies were the following set of questions that focused on what development opportunities they offered their employees, whether they felt that they empowered their employees and if entrepreneurial tendencies were expressed by their employees were expressed how they would manage. This question was specifically asked for the Gen Z populations since studies of Generation Z reveal a strong entrepreneurial spirit (Gibbons, 2018). The last two sections of the questionnaire focused on attention span and retention.

For the Gen Z and Millennial participants, the interview questionnaire varied a bit. The first question was about their country of origin, which opened the door for them to talk about where they are from. The researcher found that there was a sense of pride in discussing heritage and culture. This helped put the participants at ease. The following question was their description of the best leader they ever had. This question helps gather leadership attributes that were important to these two generations. Engagement followed by asking whether they were engaged in their roles and asked for examples. Development and empowerment were the next sections gauging whether they had taken advantage of development opportunities and if they felt empowered in their roles. In the Aspiration section, the question was if they felt that they considered themselves entrepreneurial. A total of 91% of the Gen Z participants considered themselves entrepreneurial. Whereas only 57% of the millennials did. In the Attention Span section, several questions delved into losing track, what they found themselves doing instead if they became distracted with surrounding events and what those were. There were follow-up questions if employees did not lose track of what they were doing, what techniques did they use to stay focused, or what they would do to prevent them from being distracted. Overall 53% of the employees responded that they did not lose track. Of those that belonged to the Gen Z generational cohort, 73% asserted that they did not lose track of what they were doing. Further, this same cohort stated that 100% of them became distracted audibly instead of visually. The last section corresponded to Retention (e.g., whether they were currently looking for a job internally or externally and what the Future Company can do to prevent them from looking or leaving).

The interviewed were audio-recorded using the Otter App on the iPhone. These recordings would automatically be transcribed, which the researcher had to validate for accuracy. Once the transcriptions were completed, they were sent to the participant for review and accurate depiction of what they mentioned during the interview. This action added trustworthiness and credibility to the study (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell & Walter, 2016; Iivari, 2018).

Before the coding began the transcripts were reviewed numerous times by the researcher to familiarize herself with the data and identify any emerging themes. These were grouped and labeled by codes. The initial list of codes is located in the appendix section under appendix four based on the literature review and question formulation. The researcher coded the data manually and subthemes surfaced throughout the process, which required the researcher to generate and assigned new codes. After open coding was concluded, the researcher combined redundant codes and moved to axial coding by listed in the appendix section under appendix five. These codes were organized by recurring themes and connected with concepts that linked back to relationships with the categories and subcategories. The results yielded concepts that described techniques to focus, development actions taken, distractions, solutions to focus, empowerment, engagement, leadership attributes and prevention of leaving. After the researcher conducted selective coding to uncover larger patterns and linked back to higher level theoretical concepts. The foundation of the study started to emerge. That is when saturation started to occur and no new insights were gathered. That is when the selective coding process was concluded.

These were inputted in NVivo qualitative software. The process was repeated by two independent third-party reviewers that were provided the hard copies of the nameless transcripts and code using the coding schema. Based on the coding observations of the reviewers, there was further consolidation of the themes. A thematic analysis was conducted which proved to be critical to understanding the meanings behind the collected data and make sense of it (Choy, 2014; Percy, Kostere & Kostere, 2015). The researcher conducted an inter-rater reliability testing using SPSS. The employee data resulted in .963 Combrach's Alpha, which represents an excellent inter-rater reliability score. For the leader data, the results were .944 also resulting in excellent inter-rater reliability.

### **Presentation of Data and Results of the Analysis**

The purpose of the research was to explore three research questions related to the Gen Z and Millennial generational cohorts. The first research question in support of this study was how leaders are adapting to Millennial and Gen Zs' short attention spans? The second question explored was, how will leaders engage millennials and Gen Zs? The final research question was, which factors contribute to Millennials and Gen Zs staying with a company?

The data gathered from the interviews were aligned to obtain intelligence surrounding the research topics. The main themes that emerged were preferences of Gen Z and millennials when it comes to engaging and empowering these two cohorts, retention, and attention distractors.

## **RQ1. How are leaders adapting to Millennials and Gen Zs' short attention spans?**

Based on the interview findings, leaders understand that there is an issue with attention spans. They have taken steps to assist by helping Gen Z and millennials prioritize their deliverables.

“I break things into small tasks that are deliverable. I cannot give a Millennial a 5-year project” said Participant 12. “As a leader it is important to set the priorities and measure how the team is meeting the goals and objectives,” said Participant 17.

Another technique that leaders have resorted to is providing deadlines to keep Gen Z and Millennials on track. They find that by having the employees on a tracker or letting them know what is due that week or which tasks have a sense of urgency, this minimized the distractions and provides a roadmap for them. Also offering projects that they find enjoyable and they like increases the focus. Leaders find that Gen Z and Millennials have a tendency of paying more attention to those tasks that interest them and make them happy. They lose their attention if they are not connected to the topic or is aligned to their interest. This is directly linked to engagement and retention and LMX theory. The researcher posits if employees are engaged in doing tasks that are of interest to them, not only will they be focused, but this will further engage them and fulfill them creating linkage to the company and their leaders. This requires a commitment from the leaders in ensuring that the employee’s needs are met by providing said opportunities and monitoring them to ensure that they are on task and there is clarity.



Figure 1: How Leaders are Adapting to Short Attention Spans

Three themes emerged when Gen Z and millennials were asked what distracted them. Gen Z and millennials do struggle with constant interruptions from their colleagues. Future Company's has an open layout to elicit communication and collaboration. However, that same open layout is creating an issue for the Gen Z and millennial generation.

“When people see you they come up to you and start to ask questions. It is hard to tell them, No, I can’t.” asserted Participant 68.

At times these interruptions may take over 10-minutes and the generations are having a hard time regaining their focus. This is also aggravated due to the company culture being friendly. A Brazilian participant mentioned that employees act as if they are in a restaurant or park where they speak loudly and engage those around them in

conversations. Another farce is illusion of being able to multitask. This has proven to be a challenge as employees are working on many things and having competing deliverables.

Participant 5 reported that, “A lot of times there are also distractions where you're focused on something and then you have an email come in and then you click on it and you go off. Or you have a call coming in or someone calls you on IM or wherever and you get these distractions. I do think that it is a higher tendency among younger people. Maybe multitasking too much.”

Another employee compared himself to an octopus, having to deal with different things and working long hours—some days as long as 14-hour days to meet deliverables and responding to emails. Finally, having competing deliverables was another factor that these employees need to grapple with. Being overloaded by multiple projects, and feeling an overwhelming responsibility to please, they are being overstretched. It is difficult for them to say, No given the commitment that they have towards their leaders. They find it problematic due to the connection that has been built, which ties back to social exchange theory. As mentioned throughout this paper, the foundation of social exchange theory is the interactions between people and/or relationships whereby it is founded on the principle of giving and receiving (Blau, 1964). By leaders being so supportive and caring toward them, employees feel hard pressed to reject additional work or for fear of missing out on an opportunity that will allow them to make a difference or perhaps make an impact. Instead they agree to take on additional work in hopes that they can leverage technology and turn their deliverable around quickly and move on to the next projects.

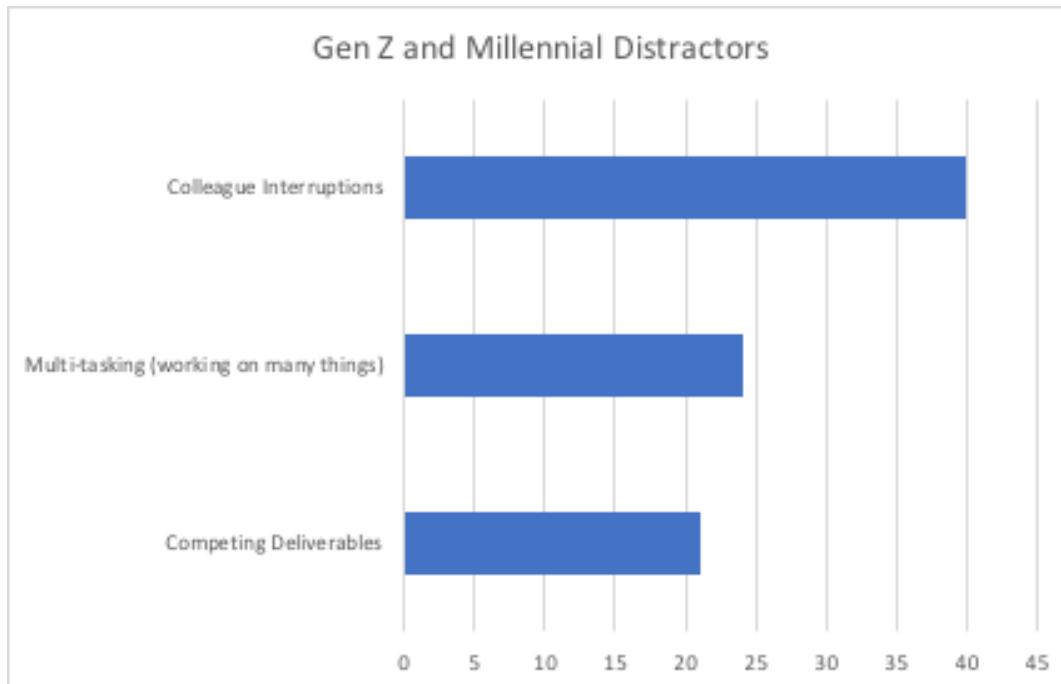


Figure 2: Gen Z and Millennial Distractors

Gen Z and millennials have taken safeguards to ensure that they control their attention span distractors. It was discovered during the study that there is a clear differentiator between attention span and focus. The results of the interviews were that based on the participant responses these are mutually exclusive. Attention span does not equal focus. These generations do not have a focus issue. In the contrary, they have an uncanny ability to focus and are able to tune out and hone in on the task at hand. They apply techniques to assist them in this. The first technique is to write things down. They take lots of notes and create checklists. They do their best in prioritizing work and what is important.

Participant 59 mentioned, “When you have like a big stack of things and priorities are changing almost every hour, it’s kind of difficult you know to keep track of

everything. So you have to implement some different ways of keeping track of everything.”

They find that blocking time on their busy agendas work to maximize their attention span. They isolate themselves and utilize meeting/conference rooms as to not have any distractions. They also leverage technology and place themselves in Do Not Disturb status and block time to focus on their deliverables. This further asserts the existing theory of selective attention proving that one is not able to do more than one thing at a time.

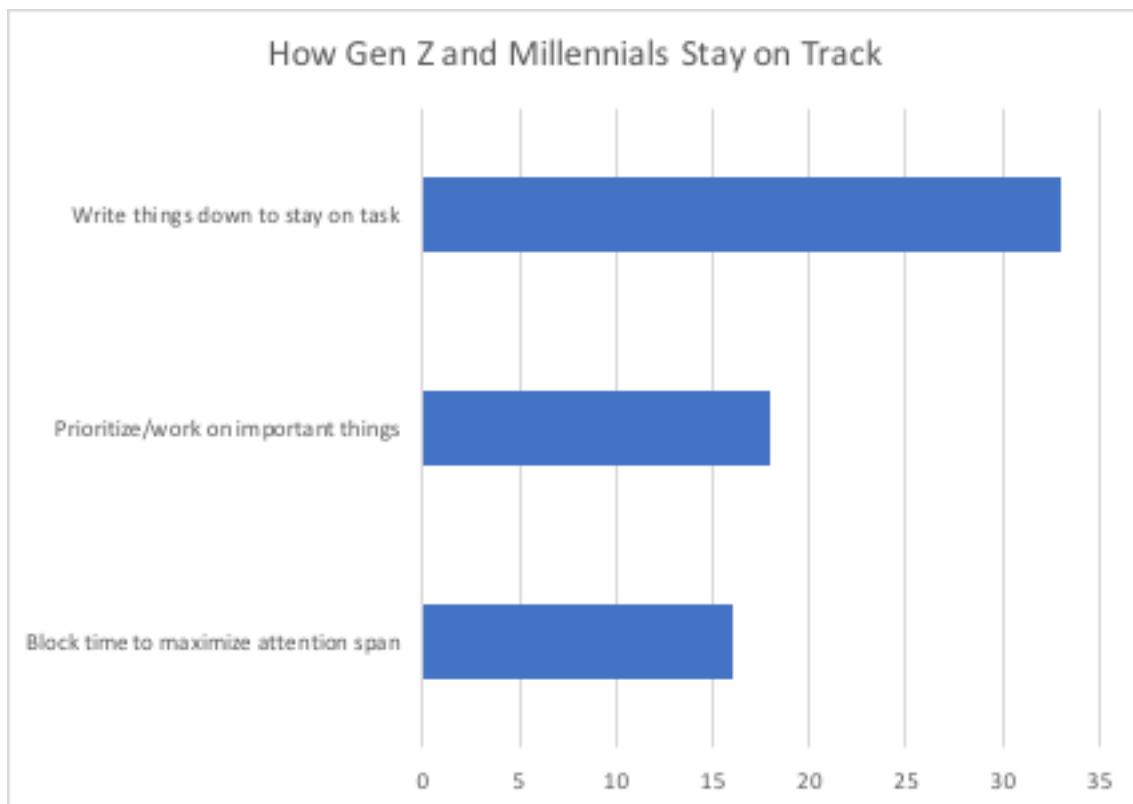


Figure 3: How Gen Z and Millennials Stay on Track

It was discovered during the study that as a result of open space and numerous distractors, the majority of these generations are distracted audibly versus visually. As stated earlier, these generations have a high degree of focus once they tune out the noise. Meaning they are distracted when they hear things instead of visually stimulated or when people are around. They have opted to plug in and tune out their auditory distractors, by using earbuds to listen to music or noise-canceling headsets.

“When I’m doing something that I need full concentration, I put my headphones” as stated by Participant 61. Participant 4 mentioned, “Sometimes if I’m trying to focus and I can’t tune out the noise, I just cover it up with music. If my environment is too loud or there’s a lot going on, I do have a little bit of trouble focusing, but I usually put music. No lyrics, just focused music and I just try to hyper focus and that seems to work.”

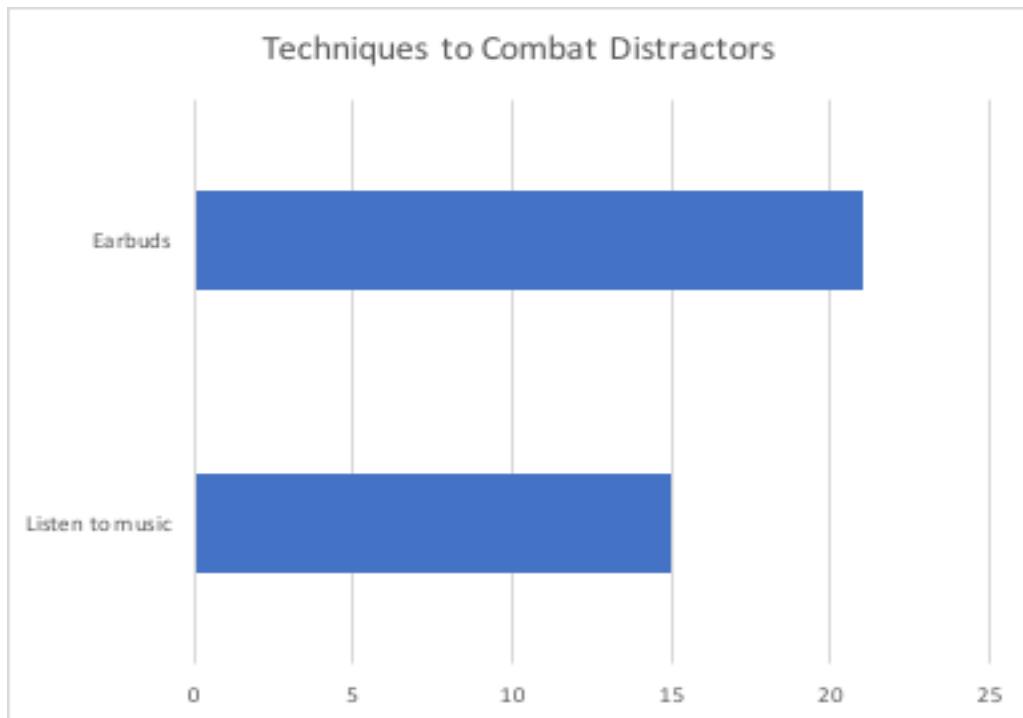


Figure 4: Techniques to Combat Distractors

## **RQ2. How will leaders engage Gen Zs and Millennials?**

The top three emergent themes during the interviews with Gen Z and millennials related to engagement is when working on projects that are rewarding and impactful to not only them but to society. They are highly engaged when the work that they do is meaningful, and they constantly seek new challenges. The importance of meaningful work, as an intrinsic motivator has a direct and positive relationship with engagement and retention. Millennials value authenticity and organization values (company culture). Especially if it aligns with their personal and societal goals.

Participant 2 shared, “I have been lucky in the sense that the partners that I get to work with are partners that I am familiar with through my everyday life. Some of those partners are video game companies. I am 22 and still play video games, so I get to go to these meetings, and they are like, oh I don’t know if you guys like video games because we don’t talk to people who play. I tell them, not I still play video games.”

This is primal when it comes to engaging these two generational cohorts and links back to generational cohort theory—finding connection based on the time period and environment that they were born or grew up in. Further the work needs to be meaningful and align to their values and beliefs. Having purpose at work makes them happy and fulfills them. They see themselves as stewards of societies and the environment.

Participant 66 stated, “I am helping both the organization and I’m helping the citizens of the economy. The thing that keeps me motivated is the challenge of

both, helping people and helping organizations.” Another participant (52) shared, “The things that we do in our company everyday are some very transformational things for the community.” They also have a quest for new challenges and growth. These two generational cohorts find it invigorating to be challenged and put in situations where it is uncertain and challenging.

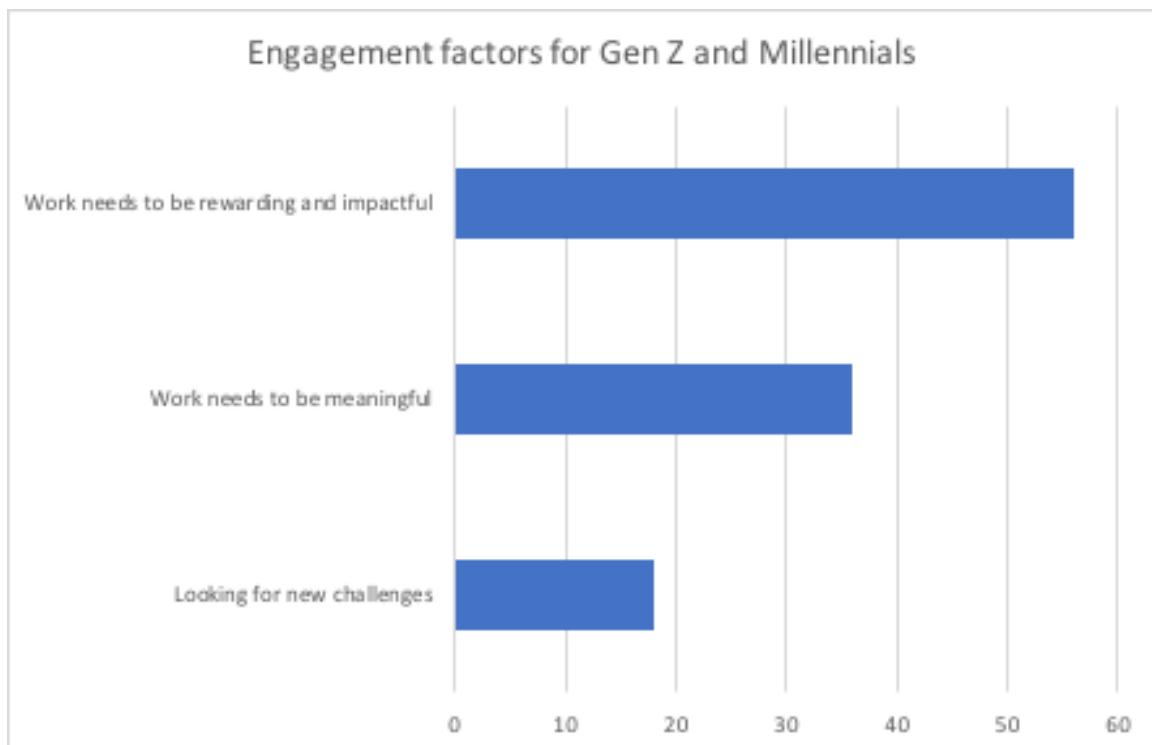


Figure 5: Engagement factors for Gen Z and Millennials

The responses to the interview show the top three emergent themes when it comes to Gen Z and millennials defining empowerment. They feel empowered when given more responsibility, can decide what to work on (self-directed work), and are able to voice their opinions in a safe space. There is a high degree of autonomy in these two

generations which is an enigma given that they have been exposed to highly structured environments while growing up.

Participant 50 asserted, “I feel empowered because I’m given the trust to work on things that are important to the clients.” While Participant 53 mentioned, “I think that sense of responsibility that you’re giving this company at a young part of your career and for those who like that war feeling in your stomach when you’re making decisions it really great.”

Others like the freedom that comes with no one really watching them do their work or being micro-managed. This was codified as self-directed work. There is a sense of being in control, ownership and empowerment that comes along with this. However, it has to be earned. This is based on a proven track record, being responsible and showing results. Getting to this stage has a lot to do with the trust that the leader imparts to their employees and also to the safe space they provide. By creating an environment free of judgment and repercussions for voicing one’s opinions, present ideas without ridicule and being part of the decision-making process fosters this safety net of psychological safety referred to trust and influence mentioned earlier in the paper.

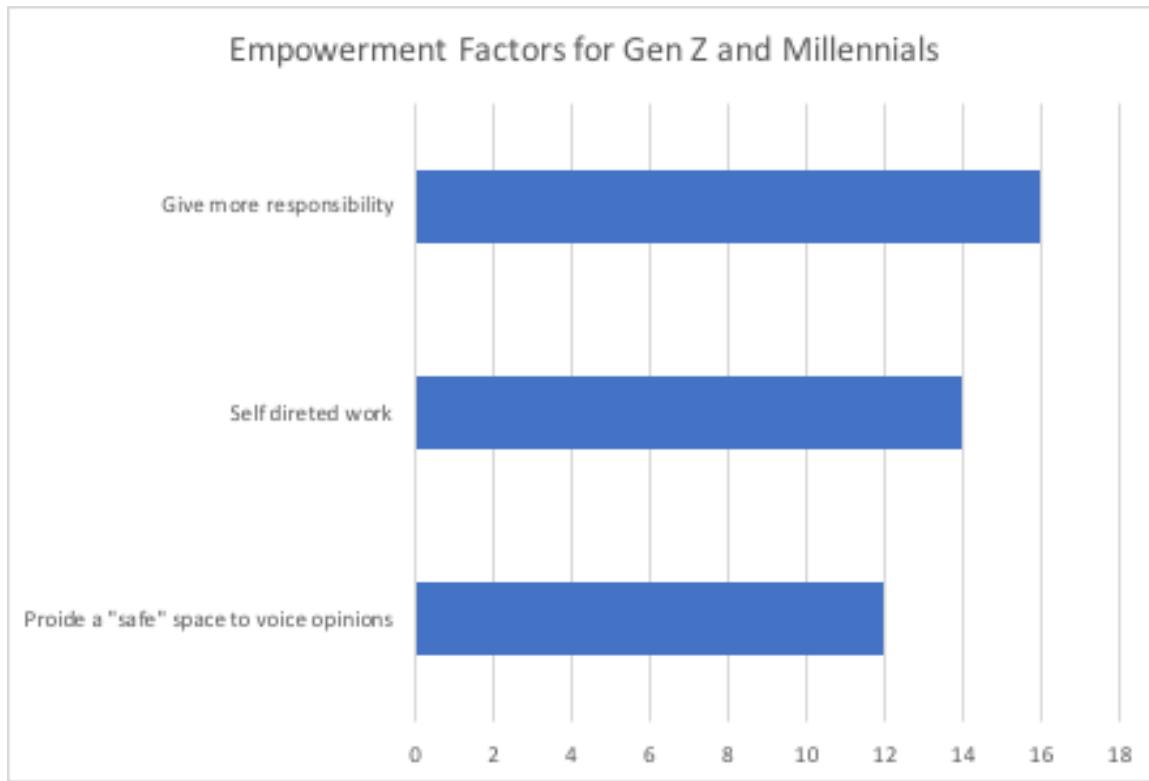


Figure 6: Empowerment Factors for Gen Z and Millennials

Based on previous studies that helped define engagement as a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001) and empowerment based on work developed by Spreitzer (1995) where empowerment is measured by four cognitions referenced by meaning, competence, self-determination and impact, when interviewing employees from Future Company there was some overlap between engagement and empowerment. The following statements appeared when asking about engagement and empowerment: Self-directed work/works during own time; safe space to voice opinions; high amount of responsibility; share ideas/not holding back. Participants including leaders see the above-mentioned statements interchangeably when asked about engagement and empowerment.

Gen Z, Millennial and Leaders Input on Engagement and Empowerment

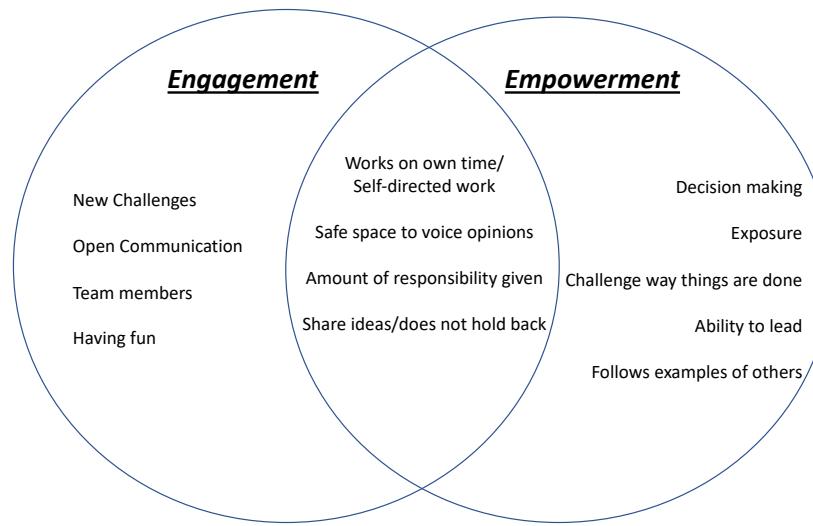


Figure 7: Gen Z, Millennial and Leaders input on Engagement and Empowerment

There was an emergent theme that clearly reflected disparity among the leader and employee populations. The disconnect came with what the leader perceived that the Gen Z and millennials want when it comes to engagement and empowerment whereas Gen Z and millennials are not interested in. Leaders imagine that Gen Z and millennials want exposure and decision-making authority. Combined these two themes were mentioned 47 times by leaders, however only 15 times from Gen Z and millennials.

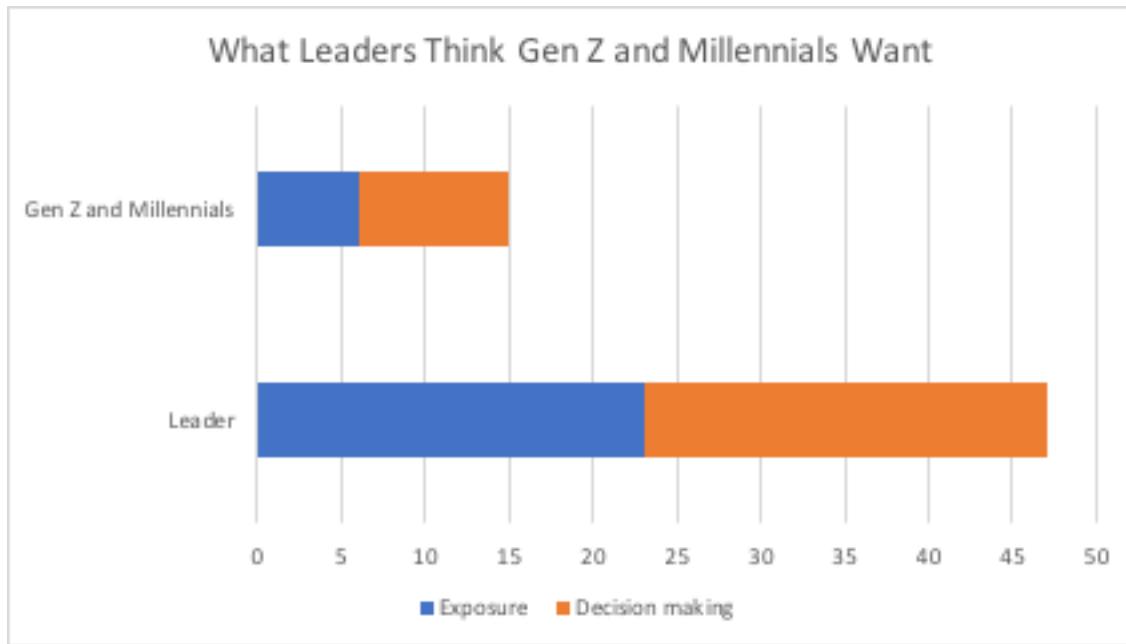


Figure 8:What Leaders Think Gen Z and Millennials Want

Gen Z and millennials were specific in describing what behaviors they look for in a leader. In the observed themes all participants including leaders concur that being a caring leader that values work-life balance is important. This is fundamental in the LMX theory and Social exchange theory. By creating an emotional link between the leader and employee, it will not only engage them to produce good work, but also will keep them from leaving.

Participant 65 mentioned, “Someone who is not only good on the work side, but also the empathy or just the understanding that there is also personal matters where we have our good and out bad days. This one leader was very understanding of our personal space.”

Someone who is also invested in their personal lives. Understanding the human aspect and struggles that they are dealing with. There was a reference to an instance where a

leader pulled an employee aside to talk about life and personal situations that the employee was facing. Most of the participants placed an importance on prioritizing families and managing unexpected events. Being understanding and humane are important attributes. This will not only help employees feel cared for but will allow leaders to continue to foster the social exchange in strengthening the bond between employee and leader. A leader that is authentic and relatable is essential. Gen Z and Millennial pay attention to not only interactions with them, but interactions with others. For instance, whether leaders have lunch at the cafeteria with other employees, how charismatic the leader comes across and how humble they are. They attribute these actions as a leader who is being real.

Participant 6 stated, “The best leader was the one that did not make me feel intimidated because of the big age gap. Sometimes when you come into the corporate world, you have that thought of, how can I relate to my manager. He made himself very relatable to me.”

Having a leader that is honest and trusting was important to Gen Z and millennials. They seek leaders that will not sugar coat and will be blatantly honest with them. They also understand that the process is reciprocal. Meaning that trust is something that is earned. One participant mentioned that at the beginning it is expected that at the beginning of every working relationship the leader is more hands on and present, but once one roves themselves, the leader allowed them to fly on their own and that opened the door to creativity and confidence. Trust is at the foundation of any relationship with these two cohorts.

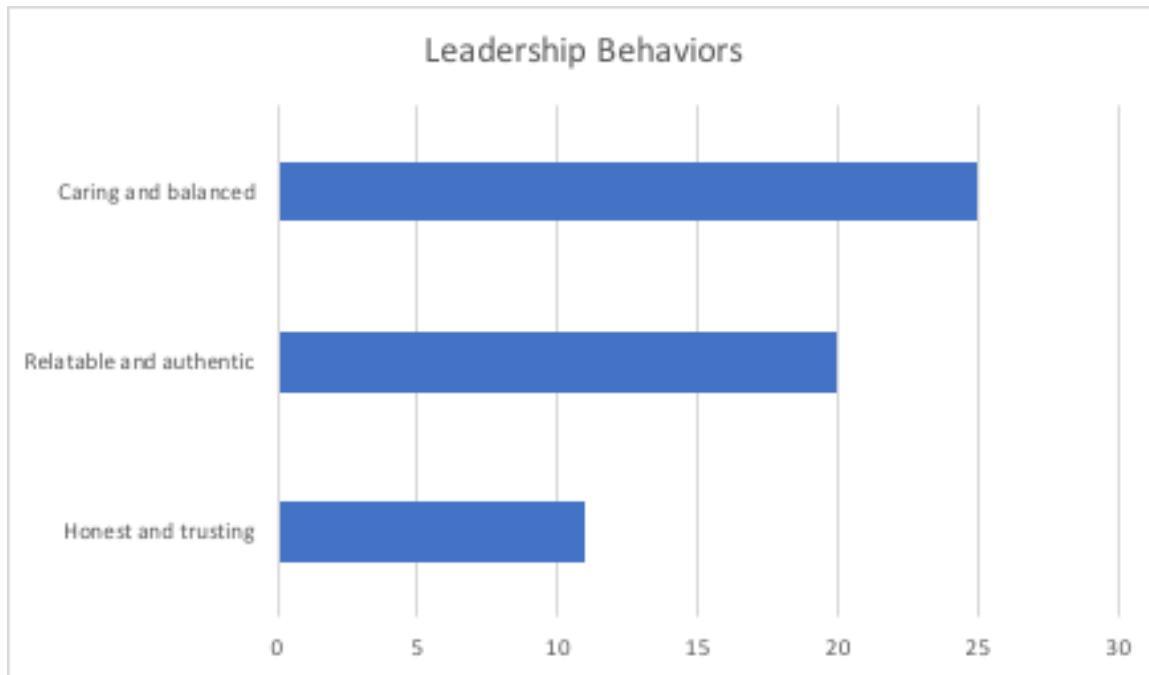


Figure 9: Leadership Behaviors

It was noted that Leaders are at odds with Gen Z and millennials when it comes to having fun at the workplace. Leaders place a higher value on this than Gen Z and millennials. Gen Z and millennials place a higher degree of importance on Leaders being serious, respectful, and confident. Gen Z and millennials are also looking for a leader that leads by example—18 mentions during interviews.

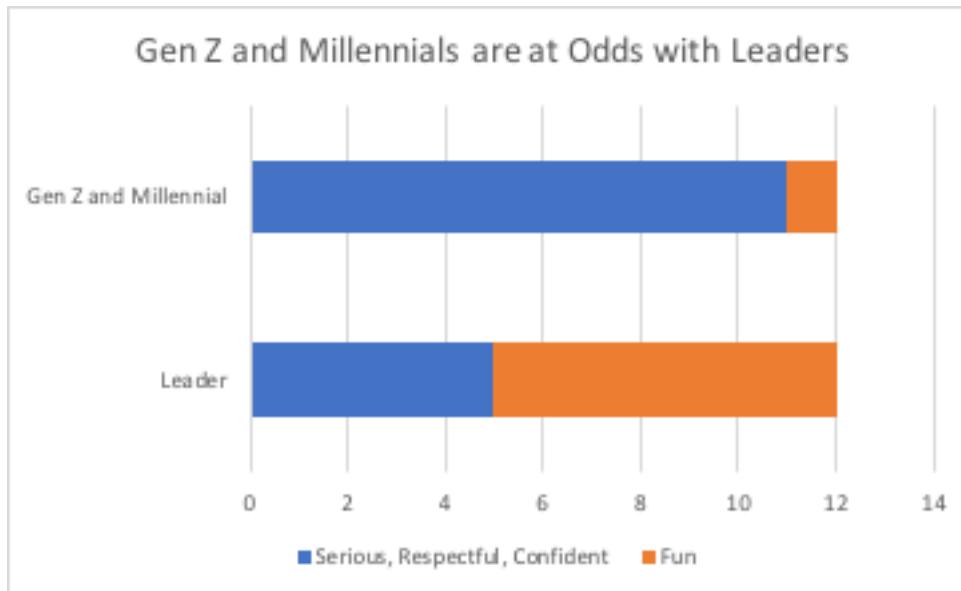


Figure 10: Gen Z and Millennials are at Odds with Leaders

As previously mentioned, Gen Z and millennials are looking for a protective leader that provides guidance, has their back, coaches, and provides feedback. This was evident throughout their interviews. Validating that they are looking for an extension of their parental units and how the workplace is a continuation of their home life.

They value a leader that is hands on and will illustrate how things are done and not lecture them. Someone that will guide them through the different tools available in order to do their job well and in an efficient manner. Being trained and told what to do is extremely important as they aim to please and want to feel proud of their work product. They seek knowledge and it is important to them to surround themselves with those that possess that knowledge and is hands on. They are also looking for a leader that will tell them when something is wrong in order for them to quickly course correct. They welcome feedback as this is tied to continuous improvement. Especially when the

feedback it tied to protecting them against making mistakes. They expect their leaders to be there to back them up and will be available to them if needed. Someone that will learn together with them and is open to learning as well. Coaching is also an area the Gen Z and millennials appreciate.

Participant 58 mentioned about their leader, “She is authentic, she’s a connector of people, she’s a great coach. She knows how to ask probing questions. She always listens and asks probing questions and allowed me to find my path.”

After establishing the trusting relationship, feedback is viewed as coming from a good place to and at times a loving place. Having open and direct feedback for both positive and constructive is respected. Also not becoming upset or angry when a mistake is made contributes to the psychological safety component of the relationship

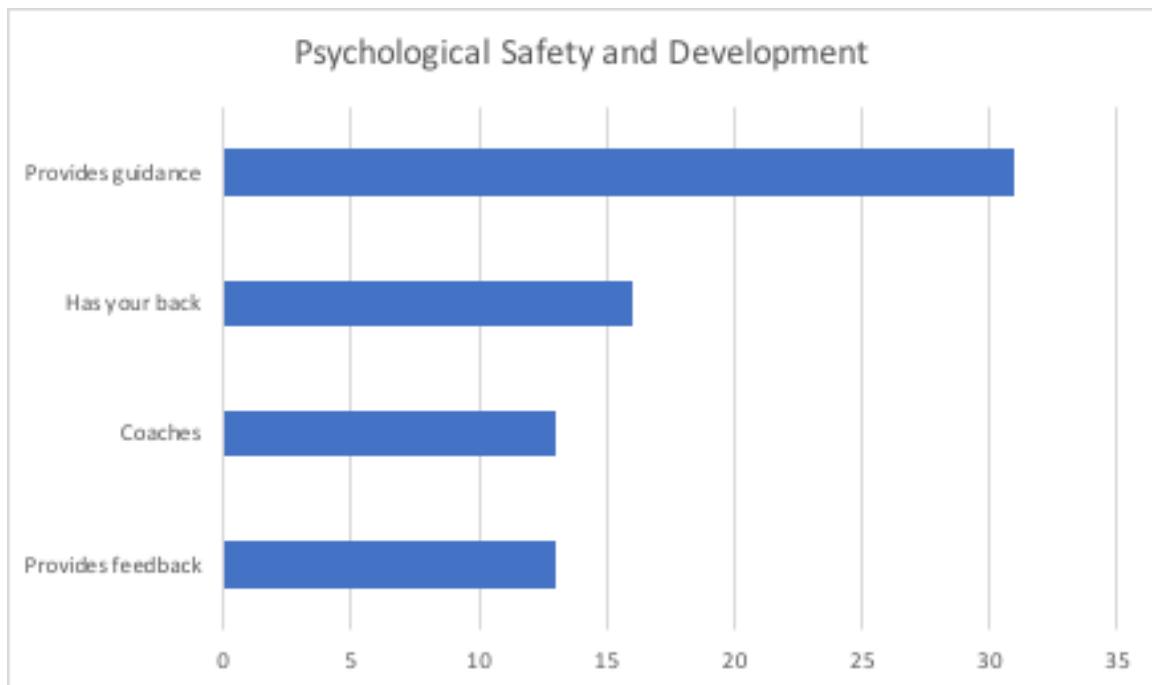


Figure 11: Psychological Safety and Development

When it comes to leadership style, Leaders feel that Gen Z and millennials are looking for a motivational leader, however, Gen Z and millennials are looking for an inspirational leader. Inspirational leadership is a method of leadership that focuses on inspiration or inspiring followers (Avramenko, 2014; Goffee and Jones, 2006). By admitting vulnerability by disclosing their imperfections, humanized them and made the leaders more inspirational (Ludeman & Erlandson, 2004). This makes the leaders more endearing to Gen Z and millennials. Motivation is externally driven and compels one to take action—pulling towards something. Whereas inspiration is something that comes from within where one pushes forward. This will create a conflict between the leaders and the generational cohorts provided that the leaders do not adapt to the needs of the employee. The leaders will be offering something that the employees do not value or will find productive.

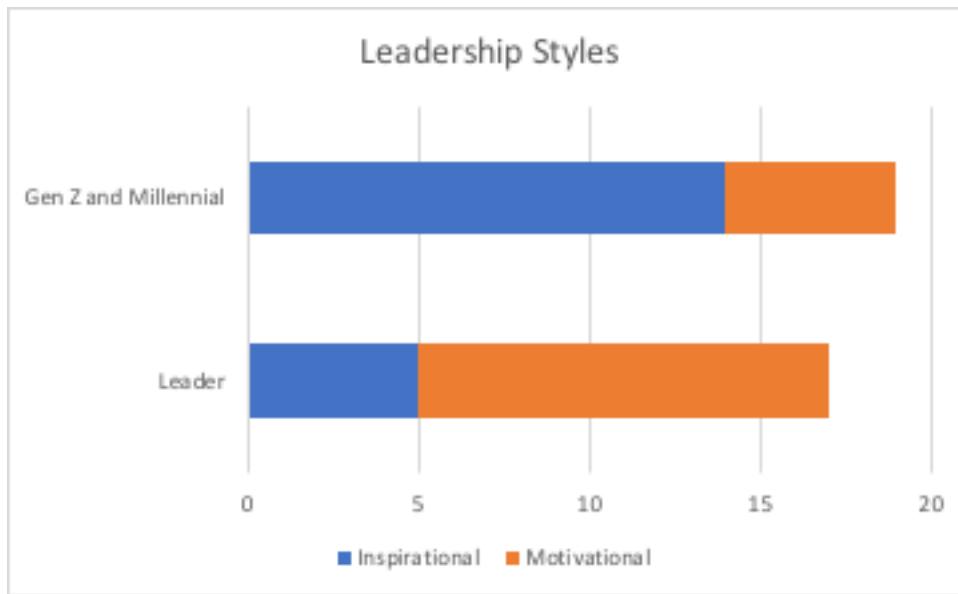


Figure 12: Leadership Styles

### **RQ3. Which factors contribute to Gen Z and Millennials staying with a company?**

Global talent sourcing has proven to be competitive and retention is becoming a significant challenge for human resources and corporate leadership. This research question will address what factors will contribute to Gen Z and millennials staying with Future Company longer and their expectations came out strong during the interviews. Parting from the assumptions that employees are paid fairly and have good medical health plans, what will retain Gen Z and millennials is intrinsic (e.g., continued learning and impactful work). Intrinsic motivation occurs when employees are self-motivated by the drive to perform and the satisfaction that comes from that, hence these intrinsically motivated employees do not need additional compensation, recognition, or other types of praise as stated by Mahmoud, Fuxman, Mohr, and Reisel (2020). Intrinsic motivation nurtures meaningful relationships, making contributions, and personal growth and gain. When a person is intrinsically motivated, the inner drive propels them to perform for their own pleasure and delight, instead of rewards, external pressures, or demands (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation includes compensation and popularity or admiration of others that are tied to societal values (Mahmoud, et al, 2020). Continued learning as defined by these cohorts is guided learning, which entails having a coach, mentor, or meaningful development conversations with their leader; participating in projects, exchange programs, or exposure to leaders; and finally, training sessions be it instructor-led sessions or web-based training. The meaning of loyalty to millennials is when an organization assures employees development, training, coaching and mentoring, and opportunities for growth (Hershatter & Epstein 2010).

When asked what type of continued learning was important to them, Gen Z and millennials responded that Future Company's university portal was essential as they did not plan on staying at a company that did not offer opportunities to become a better professional or person. These two generations highly value learning and the feeling that they are in constant development and movement. Having benefits as educational reimbursement to facilitate their continued development is something that is central to them. Not only that the offerings were available, but that the leaders were supportive.

The participants were pleased with the current benefit offering and felt that they were being fairly paid. This is due to there being an assumption that the benefits and pay lines were evaluated regularly. On the other spectrum, the work needs to be rewarding, challenging and impactful.

Participant 56 stated that, “As long as I am able to find fulfilment in the task, find value, my ideas taken into account, and find that I’m working toward things that are being implemented in the market” they would be engaged and say. Another participant (66) shared, “What the company delivers, not only to the client, but to society, as long as I keep admiring it, I am going to be here working together and trying to contribute to this.”

Leaders did not rank continued learning and rewarding impactful work as high as Gen Z and millennials. Leaders applied a higher degree of importance in career opportunities (38) than Gen Z and millennials (17). Similarly, Leaders applied a higher degree of importance in being valued (46) than Gen Z and millennials (16). Again at odds, Leaders need to focus on what will motivate Gen Z and millennials.

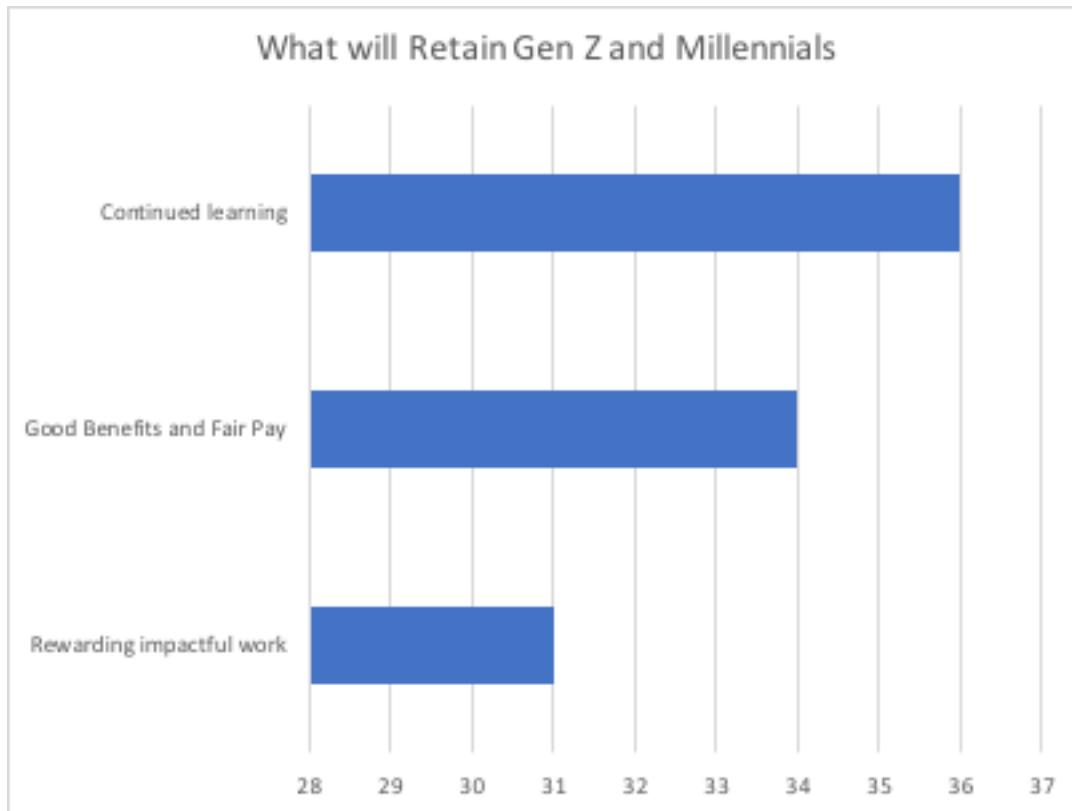


Figure 13: What will Retain Gen Z and Millennials

Upon investigating further on what Gen Z and millennials refer to as continued learning at Future Company, they were specific as to what their expectations were. When asked what they meant by training sessions, they felt that the company does offer lots of training sessions through Future Company's university portal. There are a myriad of training sessions that these two generations have taken advantage of as in, public speaking skills, coaching, presentation skills, along with technical courses that will allow them to continue growing in the organization and in their roles. They also have access to articles, books and Ted Talks. They appreciate the convenience of the portal being online and having the ease of signing on during the evenings or weekends.

When looking for experiential programs that offered further exposure and continued learning through projects and exchange program, these generations particularly value this way of developing. They not only learn about a different function, but it affords them an opportunity to network with other employees in different locations. This added exposure assists them in moving between functions and further develops them to be marketable within Future Company.

Participant 52 stated that, “My way to learn more, and in that matter, transcend in my role is to have the experience. I’m not so engaged in a specific training. It is more about the experience for me.”

Finally, guided learning which is defined as having a coach, mentor or having valuable career and development discussions with their leaders was primal to these two generations. When compared to other generations in Future Company, these two generations rely on their mentors more so than any other generation employee. The mentors and coaches do not necessarily need to be employees of Future Company. There was an employee (Participant 1) that made reference to a coach that assisted them in making the transition from their school to going into the corporate world during their first couple of years after graduating. They also value having conversations with their managers about career development, however the managers are always clear that their careers are the employee’s responsibility and they are responsible for creating their own career path. For those that select a mentor within Future Company, they are careful to ensure that the coaches have the appropriate profile that will help the employee’s advance in their career objectives.

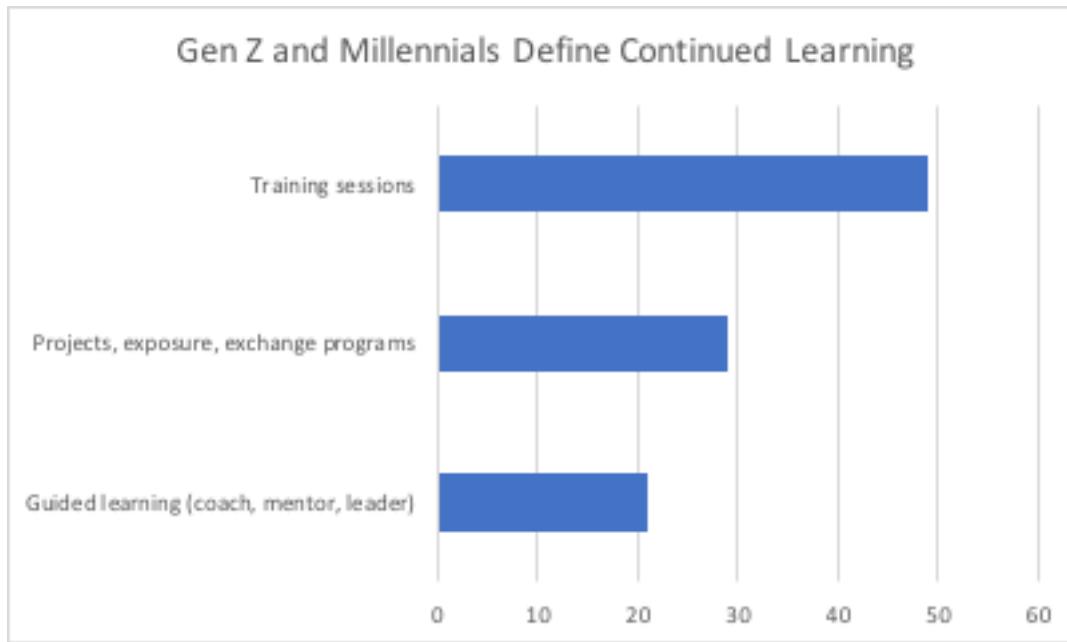


Figure 14: Gen Z and Millennials Define Continued Learning

This chapter presented the results and findings of the data collected, highlighting verbatims of the participants as it related to each of the research questions. The thematic analysis of the data included manual coding and using the NVivo qualitative data system. The analysis consisted of coding, creating detailed categories for data presentation, and framing descriptions of the research through those categories to reveal themes (Schaefer, 2016). Graphs were utilized to visually demonstrated the emergent themes along with the researcher's analysis answering each research question. Further, the researcher found that there was no difference in the generational responses due to location, country of origin, or culture. The responses were consistent throughout the generational cohort as is reflected by the emerging themes throughout this chapter. The following and final chapter focuses on the discussion of the dissertation. An in-depth look into the results of the study, theoretical and practical implications, limitations and avenues for future research closing with the conclusion of the study.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

The purpose of this qualitative study was in part to expand the existing knowledge of the two youngest cohorts (Gen Z and millennials) in the workplace.

The first chapter introduced the study, included the problem statement, purpose, theoretical framework used, research questions, significance of the study, and definitions. The second chapter provided the literature review laying out the theoretical framework and context of the study further positioning overarching theoretical grounding Gen Z and Millennial behaviors, engaging Gen Z and millennials, and retaining Gen Z and millennials. The third chapter explained the research method as in the methodology, performed pilots, data collection methods and analysis rigor, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, the process used to comply with confidentiality protocols to safeguard participants' identities. The fourth chapter focused on the findings of the study. This chapter offered the researcher's background, details on the sample, demographic data, and the emerging themes tied to the research questions as a result of the data analysis process. The last chapter—Chapter 5, focuses on a summary of the study, implications discussion, recommendations for a future researcher, and conclusion bringing the study to a close.

## **Results**

Since little is known of the Gen Z cohort as they are just entering the workforce and are currently holding entry-level positions, the researcher wanted to learn more about this cohort.

The following are details of the study, where it yielded ample data to analyze and advance in adequately responding to the posed research questions.

**Table 6**  
**Study Information and Stats**

Company information:	Fortune 500 Multinational Technology Company, referred to in the study as Future Company
Gen Z:	11 Participants
Millennials:	23 Participants
Supervisors and Leaders:	38 Participants
Nationalities of participants:	13
Females:	34
Males:	38

### **Theoretical Implications**

The findings aligned and expanded on previous studies associated to generational cohort theory, theory of selective attention and social exchange theory coupled with organizational culture. Generational cohort theory's basis is that generations are categorized by specific period of time when people were born or grew up. In the study, there was acute similarities to participants of the same generations irrespective of where they grew up or what their national origin was. Gen Z and millennials had very similar attributes as it related to their preference in leadership style, engagement and retention. Similarly when participants were interviewed their responses were aligned to the findings of the selective attention theory whereby it is not possible to do two things at the same time. These two cohorts struggle with this and have determined that there is an

impairment when doing more than one thing at the same time. Further, social exchange theory coupled with organizational culture was also studied and data was gathered on how the employees from Future Company viewed these. However, the main motivation for conducting this study was due to the lack of research on the Gen Z cohort and the lasting effects that the digital environment is having on attention spans. Further, the motivation and expectation that both Gen Z and millennials have on their leaders were also explored.

Social exchange theory highlighted that the interactions between people are founded on maintaining the balance between giving and receiving (Blau, 1964). Extrinsic rewards refer to the exchange or expectation of salary, bonus, and/or anything quantifiable in monetary form of value provided to the employees (Yin, 2017). While Intrinsic rewards include rewards that cannot be quantifiable in monetary form as in power, prestige, promotion, and any improvement in work resources (Tymon, Stumpf & Doh, 2010). The reality of having the future workforce dominated by Gen Z and millennials is clear that they are intrinsically motivated, which adds an additional level of complexity for leaders.

The first major implication of this research is to propose including leadership behaviors that revolve around being a caring leader that values work-life balance and a leader that is authentic and relatable, as well as a leader that is honest and trusting in the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory especially in the area of social exchange theory. These attributes are linked to how a leader is expected to show up demonstrating a high degree of care and authenticity that to the best of my knowledge was not present in any other studies evaluated for this research.

When an organization and by design leaders promise to provide justice, respect, and compensate employees well, in turn employees will reciprocate by working harder to repay the organization by better performance increasing trust as a byproduct (Masterson and Taylor, 2000). The second implication of the research is to include retention as an outcome along with engagement. Hence, caring including the above-mentioned behaviors as part of the social exchange theory, I posit that it will also not only increase measures of engagement but also retention for these two cohorts. The blend of supportive leaders along with identifiable company norms will appeal to Gen Z and millennials.

No longer will compensation solve for lack of engagement and discontent. It may solve for the short term, but if they are not impacting their communities or societies with meaningful important work they will leave. They have a leadership image that they pursue, which is inspirational leadership. They seek a human, trusting, caring, and honest leader. One who is authentic, admits vulnerability, and discloses imperfections (Avramenko, 2014; Goffee & Jones, 2006). In exchange for these behaviors from their leader, they will repay this treatment with engagement and loyalty. If their needs are met and have an inspirational leader, they will think twice before leaving. This study will provide leaders with a blueprint of how to effectively manage and gain the trust of Gen Z and millennials. Traditional leadership tendencies that create a barrier with professional and personal lives do not resonate with these two generational cohorts. Leaders that demonstrate caring and authentic behaviors will gain their trust and influence them.

The degree to which a subordinate feels psychologically safe is closely related to being able to show one's self without fear of negative consequence of status, career, or self-image (Kahn, 1990). The third implication of the study is that psychological safety

goes both ways not just for the subordinate. Leaders need to also feel safe in showing their true selves without negative consequences. Not doing so will hinder their ability to gain the trust of their subordinates (e.g., Gen Z and millennials). These two cohorts have this expectation of their leaders. I believe that this study has made a significant contribution to the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory especially in the area of social exchange theory.

### **Practical Implications**

The study has implications for perceptions on short attention spans and development practices. The two cohorts are independent, self-directed and will address their perceived low attention spans. After further research, it was discovered that there was no research conducted providing evidence of the frequent quoted statistic stating that the average attention span continues to drop from 12 seconds in 2000 to eight seconds = (Subramanian, 2018). This research found that the digital environment has oversaturated employees with information overload and competing deliverables, increasing stress levels and needing assistance when prioritizing work. The main distractors were constant interruptions from their colleagues and multitasking. The real issue is the illusion of the ability to multitask. It so happens that they don't have an issue with attention span and can focus for long periods of time on a single project so long as it is relevant, meaningful, and they have the appropriate time to achieve it. (Subramanian, 2018). It was discovered as a result of the study that as long as they are provided assistance in prioritizing their deliverables and are provided deadlines to keep them on track, this will maximize their focus. Additionally, as long as they are offered projects that are enjoyable and they like,

this will maximize engagement and focus. They are also leveraging the digital environment and tools to help them simplify work and maximize efficiency.

The two cohorts are on a quest for knowledge. This knowledge can be obtained in many different ways—web-based training, traditional training sessions, project work, exchange programs, mentorship, coaches, etc. Given today's demands on time and productivity, there is a growing preference towards replacing marathon—one to three day training with brief learning experiences referred to as micro-training, or burst training (Subramanian, 2018). Companies would benefit from implementing learning experiences that will satisfy the needs of Gen Z and millennials. The study reflected the intrinsic motivation that drives these two generations. Development is one of them. Their pursuit for continued growth and development will provide this need and ultimately continue to engage them and motivate them to stay with the company.

Business Leaders and Human Resources Practitioners will benefit from this data as it will provide insights for managing these cohorts and offering them the necessary development and opportunities to engage and retain them.

## **Limitations**

The data will be limited to Future Company; hence the information gathered may or may not be transferable to other companies. Another limitation is the unpredictability of the data gathered while interviewing employees. They may have censored themselves for fear of the information leaking, and when interviewing managers, they may have omitted information that may place their leadership skills into question.

The study was limited to employees from Future Company with more than one year of employment and in good standing which means receiving a performance rating of

Meeting or above. The sampling had a geographical constraint that while being an international study, only employees from Miami, Florida and Buenos Aires, Argentina, Sao Paulo, Brazil, Bogota, Colombia, Mexico City, Mexico, Lima, Peru were interviewed. This selection sample was based on participants belonging to either the Millennial or Generation Z generational cohort. The leaders that were selected were either part of Future Company's leadership team or supervisors of Millennial or Generation Z employees with more than one year of supervisory experience. The focus of the research was limited to specific populations to gain and understand what factors would encourage employee retention and how leaders are adapting to short attention spans and engaging their employees.

### **Avenues for Future Research**

Future research will be needed as the generations evolve with time. We studied millennials that are coming into age and are no longer the younger generation and Generation Z the incoming cohort. As Generation Z matures, their outlook may change. As more Gen Zs enter the workforce, the sample size will undoubtedly grow.

It is recommended to conduct the study with a larger sample size encompassing different industries as this study was limited to one company in the technology sector. Expanding the study to include other regions like the Asia Pacific, Europe, and Central Europe, Middle East, and Africa would be useful to compare findings.

There is an assumption that Gen Z is entrepreneurial. A suggestion for a future study would be to validate whether this generation is actually entrepreneurial and how will that affect existing corporations with a shortage of talent.

## Conclusions

The 72 participants involved in this study, no matter the location, national origin, or age group provided great insights into answering the research questions related to Generation Z and millennials. By organizations creating a robust and favorable employer brand is imperative in promoting positive attitudes in employees (Schlager, O'Cass, Bodderas, Maas, Lu Cachelin, 2011). If employees are proud to be affiliated with a company, it will indubitably lead to success in attracting Generation Z and Millennial talent. That coupled with being active participants in communities and societies will feed into the need of these cohorts in making an impact when aligning to their intrinsic needs. Company culture will certainly need to be tied to these aspects in order to attract and retain these two cohorts.

In response to the first research question of how leaders were adapting to Gen Z and Millennial short attention spans, it was found that leaders and employees alike admit that there is an issue with attention spans. However, it is a reality of the digital fast-moving times of today. Leaders have taken steps to adapt and assist the two cohorts in prioritizing their deliverables, providing deadlines to ensure derailment is minimal, and ensure that they are kept engaged by providing projects that they like and/or find enjoyable. Furthermore, Gen Z and millennials identified what are their main distractors in the workplace. Some factors aggravate short attention spans and those are constantly being interrupted by colleagues, multitasking or working on many things at the same time and having competing deliverables. However, these clever cohorts are taking precautions, in order to combat said distractions. They write things down to stay on task, prioritize and work on important things and block time to maximize attention spans. During the study,

it was discovered that there is a clear differentiation between attention span and focus. Having short attention spans does not mean that one has the inability to focus. These are mutually exclusive. These cohorts have an uncanny ability to focus. They apply techniques to assist them with this. As they get distracted audibly versus visually, they plug in to tune out noise by using earbuds, listening to music, or using noise-canceling headsets.

When it comes to engaging Gen Z and millennials, there were three top emergent themes: 1) Working on projects that are rewarding and impactful them and something greater than them (e.g., society, community); 2) The work that they do is meaningful, and; 3) Looking for new challenges in their work. There was an overlap in some cases when discussing engagement and empowerment. The following themes came up in both engagement and empowerment answers and are used interchangeably: self-directed work/works during own time; safe space to voice opinions; the amount of responsibility given; sharing ideas and not holding back. When discussing empowerment, Gen Z and millennials feel empowered when they are given more responsibility, are able to decide what to work on, and have a safe space to voice their opinions. There is a disconnect in what leaders believe Gen Z and millennials want when it comes to engagement and empowerment. Leaders feel that they want exposure and decision-making authority. Gen Z and millennials had a low mention of these, signifying that they did not apply the same level of importance.

Gen Z and millennials have a definitive view of what they are looking for in a leader. The soft skills that they require are caring, importance in work-life balance, authenticity, relatable, trusting, and honesty. Leaders find themselves at odds with Gen Z

and millennials when stating that these two cohorts are looking for fun at the workplace. This was mentioned considerably fewer times by Gen Z and millennials during the interviews. Nonetheless, they placed a higher degree of importance on having a leader that is serious, respectful, and confident. They are looking for a protector of sorts when they state that they prefer a leader that provides guidance, has their back, coaches, and provides feedback. There is an emphasis on psychological safety along with an importance placed on development. When evaluating the emergent themes, it was noted that Leaders feel that Gen Z and millennials are looking for a motivational leadership style, contrary to what was stated by the cohorts as favoring an inspirational leadership style.

The final research questions related to the factors contributing to Generation Z and Millennial retention. Assuming that Gen Z and millennials are fairly paid and have a good benefits program, the emerging themes were continued learning and rewarding and impactful work. The degree of being developed and educated with making a difference by having impactful work is intrinsic in nature and referenced in the previous chapter. Specifically, when defining continued learning, the three emerging themes were: providing training sessions; projects, exposure, and exchange programs; and guided learning by having a coach, mentor, or leader discussion on growth and development.

Whilst leadership attributes came out strong in the study, there is a high degree of importance in how the leader “shows up”. The interaction and level of connection are primal in Gen Z and Millennial’s decision to stay or go. These generations are notorious for moving between jobs, however, if the leader cares for them and their careers, while providing an environment where they feel safe, they will most likely stay longer. The

traditional style of leadership (e.g., Inspirational and motivational, transformation, and servant) came up in the study but were overshadowed by safety and the importance of providing a platform for development and guidance.

While engagement and empowerment are two different concepts, there seems to be overlap between the two, especially when it comes to sharing ideas and not holding back, self-directed work, the opportunity to voice opinions, and creating a safe space to do so, along with giving higher amounts of responsibility.

This international qualitative study provided data on a topic that will impact all workplaces no matter the location or industry. It will also arm leaders that are responsible for business units and human resources practitioners in how to navigate what will be the two largest generational cohorts in the workforce.

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## Appendix 1

Sample text for interview invite:

Dear (Name),

”” I am currently a doctoral candidate at Florida International University. As part of my doctoral program, I am to complete a project conducting a performance analysis. For my scholarly project, I am conducting an interview in an effort to gain a better understand how leaders manage different generations in the workplace. We expect that the information obtained will help provide analysis data to whether employees are engaged and motivated.

I will be sending and invitation for an interview to ask some questions. The interview should take no more than 45 minutes. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Florida International University and Eduardo Coello.

Your responses will be confidential. Data will be reported in an aggregate format so that no individual participant will be identified.

I have also attached a copy of the consent form for you to read and familiarize yourself with. This form will need to be signed/acknowledged by you and emailed back to me before our meeting. This is a voluntary process, and it is important that you feel comfortable. If you wish not to participate, kindly decline the invite.

I greatly appreciate your time and willingness to assist me in gathering information relevant to this research study.

If you have questions or concerns about the research study, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone (305) 328-1421, or by email at [maribeldiz@bellsouth.net](mailto:maribeldiz@bellsouth.net). Thank you for your time and consideration of participation.

Maribel Diz

## Appendix 2

Sample Consent Form:



### ADULT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

This interview is NOT affiliated with Visa, Inc.

This study is being done in conjunction with Florida International University.

#### SUMMARY INFORMATION

Things you should know about this study:

- Purpose: The purpose of the study is to evaluate leadership styles in today's digital age. I am conducting interviews in an effort to obtain data on different leadership styles and/or techniques. We expect that the information obtained will help provide analysis data on leading and motivating different generations in the workplace.
- Procedures: If you choose to participate, you will be asked to a few experienced based questions. The questions will ask about your experiences in leading different generations in the workplace. There are no right or wrong answers – We are interested in your experiences and opinions. The interview will be recorded for notetaking purposes. After the interview questions have been transcribed, the recording will be deleted.
- Duration: This will take a maximum of 45 minutes.
- Risks: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants other than devoting 45 minutes of time to taking the survey and no more than one would experience in regular daily activities. There is a low risk that the questions may bring upon memories of work experiences that create joy, sadness or anxiety. There are no foreseeable **physical risks, social or economic risks**.
- Benefits: The main benefit to you from this research is that you may gain some insights about yourself as an employee and/or leader.
- Alternatives: There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study.
- Participation: Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please carefully read the entire document before agreeing to participate.

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to evaluate leadership styles in today's digital age. I am conducting interviews in an effort to obtain data on different leadership styles and/or techniques. We expect that the information obtained will help provide analysis data on leading and motivating different generations in the workplace.

#### NUMBER OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 75 people in this research study.

#### DURATION OF THE STUDY

Your participation will involve a maximum of 45 minutes of your time.

#### PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, we will ask you to answer the questions during the interview. The interview will be recorded for notetaking purposes. After the interview has been transcribed, the recording will be deleted.

#### RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS

The study has the following possible risks to you: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants other than devoting a maximum of 45 minutes of time to taking the survey and no more than one would experience in regular daily activities. There is a low risk that the questions may bring upon memories of work experiences that create joy, sadness or anxiety. There are no foreseeable **physical risks, social or economic risks**.

#### BENEFITS

The study has the following possible benefits to you: None, however, through the process you may gain some insights about yourself as an employee and/or leader.

#### ALTERNATIVES

There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private and will be protected to the fullest extent provided by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher team will have access to the records. However, your records may be inspected by authorized University or other agents who will also keep the information confidential.

## COMPENSATION & COSTS

There are no costs to you for participating in this study.

## RIGHT TO DECLINE OR WITHDRAW

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to participate in the study or withdraw your consent at any time during the study. You will not lose any benefits if you decide not to participate or if you quit the study early. The investigator reserves the right to remove you without your consent at such time that he/she feels it is in the best interest.

## RESEARCHER CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the purpose, procedures, or any other issues relating to this research study you may contact Maribel Diz at, 305-328-1421.

## IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you would like to talk with someone about your rights of being a subject in this research study or about ethical issues with this research study, you may contact the FIU Office of Research Integrity by phone at 305-348-2494 or by email at [ori@fiu.edu](mailto:ori@fiu.edu).

## PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

I have read the information in this consent form and agree to participate in this study. I have had a chance to ask any questions I have about this study, and they have been answered for me. By clicking on the “consent to participate” button below I am providing my informed consent.

---

Signature or electronic acknowledgement

---

Date

## Appendix 3

### Interview protocol:

As all in-person interactions are currently on hold until further notice, all interviews will be done virtually. For virtual interviews, block a maximum of 45-minutes per interview. Send out an email communication informing of project and highlighting confidentiality of process including the consent form. Also enclosed a Skype video conference number with passcode. Ensure that the signed/acknowledged consent form is received via email before the interview commences. Have interview questionnaire up on the screen for easy access.

### Script for Interviews:

Thank you so much for taking the time away from your busy schedule to meet with me. I promise that our meeting will not take more than 45-minutes of your time. I am currently attending Florida International University in the process of obtaining my Doctoral in Business Administration Degree. I am on the last leg of the program, and as a graduation requirement, I need to submit and defend a dissertation. The topic that I have selected is evaluating leadership styles in today's digital age. I am conducting interviews in an effort to obtain data on different leadership styles and/or techniques. Your responses are confidential and will be reported in aggregate. What you will be helping me with today is providing honest insights as to your experiences when leading people or being led by your manager, your level of engagement and motivation. How does it sound so far? If you agree to proceed, I will need you to sign this consent form if you haven't already emailed a signed copy to me. Also this meeting will be recorded for note taking purposes. Once I have transcribed this interview, I will delete the recording. At the end of the interview, we will leave some time for any questions that you may have. In case I need to ask some follow-up questions after our meeting, I would be reaching out to you for an additional meeting. Would that be okay with you? After I complete my meetings, I will analyze my notes and come up with a theory and supporting hypotheses. May we proceed?

## Interview Questionnaire

Questions for Managers	Answers	Reflective notes:
<b>Leader Background</b>		
What is your country of origin?		
How long have you been a leader?		
<b>Leadership Style</b>		
How would you describe your leadership style?		
Do you adapt your leadership style to different generations?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
Can you provide examples?		
<b>Motivation</b> – the job performed is characterized by high levels of autonomy, significance and feedback		
How do you motivate your team members?		
Can you provide examples of successes?		
Can you provide an example of techniques that did not work or fell flat?		
<b>Employee engagement</b> – a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfilment that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption		
Are your employees engaged?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
How do you know?/Provide examples		
What do you do as a manager to keep them engaged?		
What do you struggle with most when it comes to engaging your employees?		
<b>Development</b>		
What development opportunities do you offer your employees?		
<b>Empowerment</b>		
Do you feel that you empower your employees?		
<b>Entrepreneurial</b>		
If your employees expressed entrepreneurial tendencies, how would you manage?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
How would you leverage this behavior in your team?		

<b>Attention Span</b>		
Do your employees lose track of what they are supposed to do?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
Can you provide examples? Why do you suppose that happens?		
Do your employees become distracted when things are going on around them?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
Can you provide examples? Why do you suppose that happens?		
<b>Retention</b>		
What steps do you take in order to retain employees?		
In your observations, have you been successful in retaining employees?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
If Yes, how?		
<u>Follow up questions –</u>		
No, why?		

Questions for Employees	Answers	Reflective notes:
<b>Employee Background</b>		
What is your country of origin?		
<b>Leader</b>		
Can you describe the best leader you ever had?		
<b>Engagement</b> – a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfilment that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption		
Do you feel engaged in your role?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
Can you provide examples?		
<b>Development</b>		
Have you taken advantage of any development opportunities?		

<u>Follow up question –</u>		
If so, which ones?		
<b>Empowerment</b>		
Do you feel empowered in your role?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
If not, why?		
<b>Aspirations</b>		
Would you consider yourself to be entrepreneurial?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
If so, how do you apply that in your current role?		
<b>Attention Span</b>		
Do you lose track of what you are supposed to do?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
If so, why?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
What do you find yourself doing instead?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
If No, what techniques do you use to prevent that from happening?		
Do you become distracted when things are going on around you?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
If so, why?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
What usually distracts you?		
<u>Follow up question –</u>		
If No, what do you do to prevent that from happening?		
<b>Retention</b>		
Are you currently looking for another opportunity?		

<u>Follow up question –</u>  <u>In Visa or externally?</u>		
<u>Follow up question –</u>  What can Visa do to prevent you from looking?		

## Appendix 4

### Original Coding Schema

- 1 : Audibly
- 2 : Earphones or buds
- 3 : Listen to Music
- 4 : Development
- 5 : Go Shares, Projects, Exposure
- 6 : Guided learning
- 7 : Development Conversations with Leader
- 8 : Mentor\_Coach
- 9 : Learning sources
- 10 : Attend Lectures
- 11 : Book, Journal, Articles
- 12 : Company University
- 13 : Training Sessions
- 14 : To busy to attend
- 15 : Tuition Reimbursement
- 16 : Distractions or focus blockers
- 17 : Competing deliverables
- 18 : Immersed in What is Doing
- 19 : Information Overload
- 20 : Interruptions from Colleagues
- 21 : Multi-tasking
- 22 : Need a Deadline
- 23 : Physical solutions
- 24 : Block Time on Calendar
- 25 : Goes to Conference Room
- 26 : Places Do Not Disturb
- 27 : Prioritization
- 28 : Social distractors
- 29 : Family and or Friends
- 30 : FOMO
- 31 : Social Media
- 32 : Unclear Project Purpose
- 33 : Work on Things that are Enjoyable or Like
- 34 : Write Things Down
- 35 : Empowerment
- 36 : Able to Lead

- 37 : Challenge Way Things are Done
- 38 : Decision Making
- 39 : Does Not Hold Back
- 40 : Exposure
- 41 : Follows Examples of Others
- 42 : Given More Responsibility
- 43 : Safe to Voice Opinions
- 44 : Self Directed Work
- 45 : Engagement
- 46 : Amount of Responsibility
- 47 : Having Fun
- 48 : New Challenges
- 49 : Open Communication
- 50 : Rewarding Impactful Work
- 51 : Interesting Work
- 52 : Meaningful Work
- 53 : Purpose in work
- 54 : Safe Space
- 55 : Share Ideas
- 56 : Team members
- 57 : Works on own time
- 58 : Leadership Attributes
- 59 : Allows Mistakes
- 60 : Authentic
- 61 : Caring
- 62 : Challenges employees
- 63 : Coach
- 64 : Confident
- 65 : Development is Important
- 66 : Empowers
- 67 : Fair
- 68 : Firm, but kind
- 69 : Fun
- 70 : Has your back
- 71 : Honest
- 72 : Inspirational
- 73 : Interested in Employees' growth
- 74 : Leading Generations
- 75 : Leading Gen Z

- 76 : Coaching
- 77 : Constant Feedback
- 78 : Emphasize Creativity
- 79 : Expectations
- 80 : Fast
- 81 : Impact of job
- 82 : Individuality
- 83 : Leading Millennials
- 84 : Clear in what they want
- 85 : Constant Coaching
- 86 : Constant Feedback
- 87 : Decision Making
- 88 : Empowerment
- 89 : Entitlement
- 90 : Flexibility
- 91 : Impact of Job
- 92 : Impatient
- 93 : Need to respect leader
- 94 : Leads by Example
- 95 : Motivational
- 96 : Not a micro-manager
- 97 : Not Aggressive
- 98 : Open Communication
- 99 : Provides Feedback
- 100 : Provides Guidance
- 101 : Recognition
- 102 : Relatable
- 103 : Respectful
- 104 : Serious
- 105 : Servant Leader
- 106 : Strategic Vision
- 107 : Transformational
- 108 : Trusting
- 109 : Work Life Balance is Important
- 110 : Prevent You from Leaving
- 111 : Being Valued
- 112 : Benefits and Pay
- 113 : Career Opportunities
- 114 : Colleagues

- 115 : Communication
- 116 : Company Culture
- 117 : Continued Learning
- 118 : Leadership
- 119 : Openness
- 120 : Posting Open Jobs
- 121 : Promotions
- 122 : Rewarding Impactful Work

## Appendix 5

### Updated Coding Schema and Count

Codes	Ees	Leader	Ees	Leader
Audibly	3%	0%	1	0
Earphones or buds	62%	32%	21	12
Listen to Music	44%	5%	15	2
Codes	Ees	Leader	Ees	Leader
Go Shares, Projects, Exposure	85%	129%	29	49
Guided learning	62%	71%	21	27
Development Conversations w/ Leader	35%	47%	12	18
Mentor_Coach	29%	29%	10	11
Attend Lectures	24%	11%	8	4
Book, Journal, Articles	9%	5%	3	2
Company University	62%	11%	21	4
Training Sessions	144%	66%	49	25
Tuition Reimbursement	18%	5%	6	2
To busy to attend	24%	11%	8	4
Codes	Ees	Leader	Ees	Leader
Competing deliverables	62%	34%	21	13
Information Overload	29%	21%	10	8
Interruptions from Colleagues	118%	47%	40	18
Unclear Project Purpose	9%	8%	3	3
Multi-tasking	71%	34%	24	13
Family and or Friends	18%	0%	6	0
FOMO	0%	24%	0	9
Social Media	12%	18%	4	7
Codes	Ees	Leader	Ees	Leader
Become Immersed in Task	24%	3%	8	1
Need a Deadline	26%	11%	9	4
Write Things Down	97%	8%	33	3
Work on Things that are Enjoyable/Like	29%	16%	10	6
Prioritization	53%	37%	18	14
Block Time on Calendar	47%	8%	16	3
Goes to Conference Room	26%	5%	9	2
Places Do Not Disturb	15%	0%	5	0

Codes	Ees	Leader	Ees	Leader
Able to Lead	6%	5%	2	2
Challenge Way Things are Done	24%	3%	8	1
Decision Making	26%	63%	9	24
Does Not Hold Back	12%	3%	4	1
Exposure	18%	61%	6	23
Follows Examples of Others	6%	3%	2	1
Given More Responsibility	47%	18%	16	7
Safe to Voice Opinions	35%	11%	12	4
Self Directed Work	41%	13%	14	5
Codes	Ees	Leader	Ees	Leader
Amount of Responsibility	41%	21%	14	8
Having Fun	12%	34%	4	13
New Challenges	53%	39%	18	15
Open Communication	18%	68%	6	26
Rewarding Impactful Work	165%	100%	56	38
Interesting Work	38%	16%	13	6
Meaningful Work	106%	39%	36	15
Purpose in work	26%	47%	9	18
Safe Space	21%	11%	7	4
Share Ideas	26%	58%	9	22
Team members	38%	24%	13	9
Works on own time	26%	8%	9	3
Codes-Behaviors	Ees	Leader	Ees	Leader
Relatable and Authentic	59%	63%	20	24
Fair, firm and kind	29%	29%	10	11
Caring and Balanced	74%	68%	25	26
Serious, Respectful, Confident	32%	13%	11	5
Fun	3%	18%	1	7
Honest and Trusting	32%	32%	11	12
Codes-Safety & Development	Ees	Leader	Ees	Leader
Challenges employees	21%	47%	7	18
Coach	38%	58%	13	22
Development is Important	26%	39%	9	15
Interested in Employees' growth	26%	26%	9	10
Empowers	29%	39%	10	15
Allows Mistakes	21%	34%	7	13
Has your back	47%	29%	16	11

Not a micro-manager	26%	32%	9	12
Provides Guidance	91%	50%	31	19
Provides Feedback	38%	76%	13	29
Codes-Traditional	Ees	Leader	Ees	Leader
Leads by Example	53%	42%	18	16
Strategic Vision	18%	11%	6	4
Open Communication	29%	50%	10	19
Recognition	0%	58%	0	22
Codes-Styles	Ees	Leader	Ees	Leader
Motivational	15%	32%	5	12
Inspirational	41%	13%	14	5
Servant Leader	0%	16%	0	6
Transformational	0%	16%	0	6
Codes	Ees	Leader	Ees	Leader
Good Benefits and Fair Pay	100%	66%	34	25
Rewarding Impactful Work	91%	58%	31	22
Continued Learning	106%	32%	36	12
Being Valued	47%	121%	16	46
Career Opportunities	50%	100%	17	38
Company Culture	18%	26%	6	10
Communication	12%	8%	4	3
Promotions	24%	5%	8	2
Leadership	3%	26%	1	10
Openness	3%	5%	1	2
Posting Open Jobs	6%	0%	2	0
Colleagues	3%	3%	1	1

Techniques to focus
Development taken
Distractions
Solutions of fixes to focus
Prevent from leaving
Empowerment
Engagement
Leadership attributes

## Appendix 6

Inter-rater reliability for Gen Z and Millennial Coding

### Reliability

[DataSet1]

### Scale: ALL VARIABLES

#### Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	86	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	86	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.963	.964	3

#### Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Code1	16.26	10.674	86
Code2	15.00	9.675	86
Code3	14.65	10.050	86

### Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	Code1	Code2	Code3
Code1	1.000	.924	.862
Code2	.924	1.000	.912
Code3	.862	.912	1.000

### Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
45.91	861.662	29.354	3

### Intraclass Correlation Coefficient

	Intraclass Correlation <sup>b</sup>	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig
Single Measures	.896 <sup>a</sup>	.856	.928	26.944	85	170	.000
Average Measures	.963 <sup>c</sup>	.947	.975	26.944	85	170	.000

Two-way mixed effects model where people effects are random and measures effects are fixed.

- a. The estimator is the same, whether the interaction effect is present or not.
- b. Type C intraclass correlation coefficients using a consistency definition. The between-measure variance is excluded from the denominator variance.
- c. This estimate is computed assuming the interaction effect is absent, because it is not estimable otherwise.

## Appendix 7

Inter-rater reliability for Leader Coding

### Reliability

### Scale: ALL VARIABLES

#### Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	86	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	86	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.944	.977	3

#### Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Code1	11.57	7.875	86
Code2	6.16	4.200	86
Code3	11.08	8.163	86

### Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	Code1	Code2	Code3
Code1	1.000	.917	.975
Code2	.917	1.000	.906
Code3	.975	.906	1.000

### Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	9.605	6.163	11.570	5.407	1.877	8.944	3

### Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
28.81	394.506	19.862	3

### Intraclass Correlation Coefficient

Intraclass Correlation <sup>b</sup>	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0				
	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig	
Single Measures	.848 <sup>a</sup>	.792	.893	17.777	85	170	.000
Average Measures	.944 <sup>c</sup>	.919	.962	17.777	85	170	.000

Two-way mixed effects model where people effects are random and measures effects are fixed.

- a. The estimator is the same, whether the interaction effect is present or not.
- b. Type C intraclass correlation coefficients using a consistency definition. The between-measure variance is excluded from the denominator variance.
- c. This estimate is computed assuming the interaction effect is absent, because it is not estimable otherwise.

## Appendix 8

Most relevant direct quotes from interviews

### **Write things down**

- (P9) “I take a lot of notes, writing down a lot of information.”
- (P11) “I write down everything I have to do like a checklist.”

### **Prioritize/work on important things**

- (P10) “So I think that if you prioritize the tasks that you have, I don’t think you’ll lose track.”
- (P59) “When you have like a big stack of things and priorities are changing almost every hour, it’s kind of difficult you know to keep track of everything. So you have to implement some different ways of keeping track of everything.”

### **Block time to maximize attention span**

- (P61) “If it’s something that is very important for me, I go to a meeting room and start working to not have distractions.”
- (P62) “I like closed rooms, rather than open spaces. Actually, because I can concentrate better and I’m more productive as well.”
- (P69) “Yes, I isolate myself. I go to the Innovation Center because I know that no one is going to be there.”
- (P8) “I change my status to Do Not Disturb.”
- (P1) “I do set my calendar, in order to avoid meeting invitations like if I know I have something that’s important to do.”

### **Earbuds**

- (P61) “When I’m doing something that I need full concentration, I put my headphones”
- (P65) “I always have my headphones on. I know I had to resort to other ways to, to set myself up for success because I do get easily distracted.”
- (P9) “The headphone situation really helps me in particular the air pods that have been noise cancelling, that helps a lot.”
- (P9) “Noise cancelling headphones”
- (P8) “When I really need to get concentrated at the office, I put on my earphones.”

### **Listen to music**

- (P4) “Sometimes if I’m trying to focus and I can’t tune out the noise, I just cover it up with music. If my environment is too loud or there’s a lot going on, I do have a little bit of trouble focusing, but I usually put music. No lyrics, just focused music and I just try to hyper focus, and that seems to work.”
- (P70) “I use my air pods to play music and concentrate in what I need to do.”
- (P51) “I put music to focus.”

### **Work needs to be rewarding and impactful**

- (P2) “I have been lucky in the sense that the partners that I get to work with are partners that I am familiar with through my everyday life. Some of those partners are video game companies. I am 22 and I still play video games, so I get to go to these meetings, and they are like, oh I don’t know if you guys like video games because we don’t talk to people who play. I tell them, no I still play video games.”
- (P7) “I can see the impact that I have.”

### **Work needs to be meaningful**

- (P10) “Having a purpose, having the work that you do creates happiness, contribution and feeling that it is meaningful.”
- (P66) “I am helping both the organization and I’m helping the citizens of the economy. The thing that keeps me motivated is the challenge of both, helping people and helping the organization.”
- (P52) “The things that we do in our company everyday are some very transformational things for the community.”

### **Looking for new challenges**

- (P2) “Trial by fire is like getting tossed into situations where it’s like new and uncertain but also kind of hard.”
- (P3) “The different projects that we participate in is for engagement and the other is for being challenged. We try to challenge ourselves.”
- (P51) “I always try to see something new, something different and challenge myself.”
- (P66) “I always learn something new. I am faced with a different new challenge every day.”

### **Give more responsibility**

- (P11) “As I learn new things, they give me new responsibilities. Also they consider me to new projects and let me do new things myself.”
- (P4) “I do feel like when I am owning certain projects or doing more than supporting on a project, I do feel more empowered.”
- (P50) “I feel empowered because I’m given the trust to work on things that are important to the clients.”
- (P53) “I think that sense of responsibility that you’re giving this company at a young part of your career and for those who like that war feeling in your stomach when you’re making decisions is really great.”

### **Self-directed work**

- (P10) “There is no one really watching me like what I am doing.”
- (P52) “Every single day, I perceive more and more control.”
- (P64) “I feel that I am the owner of my area. I love working on multiple things and working on different things. I don’t feel that I have to ask for permission or ask for approvals.”

- (P66) “I have the space and the opportunity to build, so I am empowered to build the space and the results that show the contribution to the company.”
- (P71) “No one needs to tell me what to do. I stay up at night if I have something to resolve.”

### **Provide a “safe” space to voice opinions**

- (P1) “There is actually a safe zone to feel like it’s okay to voice your opinion in a respectful way.”
- (P3) I feel empowered to share my thoughts to put my concerns on the table.”
- (P51) I always have the opportunity to present my ideas.”
- (P53) You are being asked to provide an opinion that gets taken into consideration for decisions.”
- (P72) “My boss and my bosses boss listen to me and my idea and I always have their support.”

### **Caring and balanced**

- (P65) “Someone who is not only good on the work side, but also on the empathy or just the understanding that there is also personal matters where we have our good and our bad days. This one leader was very understanding of our personal space.”
- (P72) “He would set me aside and ask how I was doing. I was going through a very rough patch in my life—in my relationship. He would see me, and say come to my office and let’s talk, the company is not going to stop.”
- (P1) “Someone who prioritizes family. Understanding of everyone’s different life situations.”
- (P4) “Gives you freedom to manage your life and any unexpected events that you need to attend to.”
- (P55) “She was also very cautious to transmit the message in a way that would not make me feel ashamed or my mistakes or somehow uncomfortable.”
- (P61) “Combination of a very human leadership.”
- (P62) “Thinks about the others. Is always putting others first.”

### **Relatable and authentic**

- (P2) “Someone who was relatable.”
- (P54) “He’s approachable.”
- (P6) “The best leader was the one that did not make me feel intimidated because of the big age gap. Sometimes when you’re coming into the corporate world, you have that thought of, how can I relate to my manager. He made himself very relatable to me.”
- (P53) “Leads with emotion and charisma and someone who is authentic. He is the real thing.”
- (P54) “He is very humble. He will sit with random people at lunch just to let them know that there is not actual hierarchy.”
- (P56) “We could be real to each other.”

- (P58) “She is authentic and that is something that I’ve always appreciated and especially from female leaders growing, starting up in consulting, a very male dominated career.”

### **Honest and trusting**

- (P62) “My leader is humane and can be trusted.”
- (P4) “The best leaders I’ve had is someone that trusts you to do your work. Someone you feel that you can trust.”
- (P55) “I could trust in her.”
- (P5) In the beginning, my boss would step in more and be there more. Now it’s kind of like, you already know this, I trust you to go alone to this meeting.”
- (P64) “She is a person who is human and can be trusted.”
- (P65) “It’s a leader that gives me confidence, that builds a relationship of trust and honesty.”
- (P72) “Once you show him that he could trust you, he would just let you fly. I think that’s so important because it opens the door to creativity, to people coming up with ideas. I really appreciate that.”
- (P1) “Someone who is honest, just blatantly honest and tells you everything like it is and won’t sugar coat anything.”
- (P66) “It’s a leader that gives me confidence, that builds a relationship of trust and honesty.”

### **Provides guidance**

- (P6) “The best leader was the one that was able to help guide me through all the different tools available that the company has to offer. In order for me to perform my tasks better and more efficiently.”
- (P7) “They take every opportunity to teach you, but not teach as a lecture, more like a living experience.”
- (P8) “Someone who helped me during my process of learning how to do things.”
- (P62) “I like a leader that is a giver, that is sharing his knowledge to the team and to others.”
- (P53) “A person that leads with knowledge.”
- (P54) “He was a hands-on leader.”
- (P55) “She was a person that has deep knowledge on what she was doing.”
- (P56) “He would be transparent, if I did something wrong or something needed to be corrected.”

### **Has your back**

- (P68) “She always backed her employees up.”
- (P66) “I know that since the beginning we established a very respectful relationship. He would say, I have your back, you have my back and we will learn together.”
- (P8) “She was always there when I needed.”
- (P1) “Someone will have your back.”

- (P55) “I knew that I would follow her path and she would be guiding me to a good place within the company.”
- (P5) “A good leader needs to have a right balance in stepping in when he or she is needed.”

### **Coaches**

- (P8) “I didn’t feel she was my boss, I felt like she was my coach.”
- (P58) “She’s authentic, she’s a connector of people, she’s a great coach. She knows how to ask probing questions. She always listens and asks probing questions and allowed me to find my path.”
- (P64) “Being a coach is important.”
- (P68) “She gave me instant feedback and provided coaching. She would say, I saw this, and you need to change by doing that. She would give helpful tips.”

### **Provides feedback**

- (P8) “Sometimes when I did wrong things that person didn’t get angry. She would say, maybe we should improve that or let me give you some advice.”
- (P71) “He was direct with both the positive and negative. I like the way he is.”
- (P50) “Has the ability to touch base and ask where we are at and if we need feedback.”
- (P55) “I felt the trust on her in whenever she had to give me any type of feedback.”
- (P56) “Even if he told me like things were wrong and he had to tell me, I know that he was doing it from love.”
- (P58) “They would open up in saying, ‘Hey can I share some comments with you?’ and always very respectful.”
- (P5) “He was very sincere and frank in terms of providing feedback, not positive and negative. When you do a good job and when you did a bad job.”

### **Continued learning**

- (P10) “Constantly learning opportunities for development such as the company’s university portal, I think that’s essential.”
- (P11) “Education reimbursement is important. It supports to keep improving yourself to learning and to develop yourself.”
- (P50) “Having resources available to continue developing myself as a professional.”
- (P60) “I think that the benefits of learning and feeling that I am developing myself and the work that I do is highly valued.”
- (P62) “If I’m not learning and I’m doing the same thing all the time, I will probably move on fast.”
- (P68) “The company’s commitment is there for continued development and growth.”
- (P8) “My generation does not want to stay in a place that doesn’t offer improvements, knowledge, becoming a better professional or person.”

## **Good Benefits and Fair Pay**

- (P1) “I think the company actively looks at benefits, kind of like on a rolling basis.”
- (P4) “We do have competitive pay and benefits.”
- (P2) “I think that obviously the benefits are really good.”
- (P50) “I think that the benefits are very good in terms of medical benefits and compensation. The 401K and stock program are very good.”
- (P54) “Well I mean, compensation is always a strong aspect to think of.”
- (P55) “Compensation and remuneration is also a strong topic.”
- (P5) “I think that the bonus package and the compensation is excellent, but I also think it makes people comfortable.”
- (P67) “Benefits and salary are above the medium.”
- (P8) “Tuition reimbursement for me is a really good benefit.”

## **Rewarding impactful work**

- (P10) “Having challenging work that has an impact.”
- (P2) “I think that the work has been extremely rewarding and it has also been hard.”
- (P56) “As long as I am able to find fulfilment in the task, find value my ideas are taken into account, find that I’m working toward things that are being implemented in the market.”
- (P66) “What the Company delivers, not only to the client, but to society. As long as I keep admiring it, I am going to be here working together and trying to contribute to this.”
- (P7) “What I do is very social, and it can impact the society. I find that to be super important.”
- (P9) “I see myself as that pioneer of this process for the company and for FinTechs and so for that reason, I don’t see myself pursuing anything anytime soon.”

## **Training sessions**

- (P10) “Whenever I have time on the weekends or sometimes after work, I just go on the Company learning portal. I always try to take as many courses as I can.”
- (P11) “I have found a lot of tools, a lot of data, a lot of trainings that have helped me to develop these capabilities. I had the opportunity to be part of a lot of courses during the Company’s Learning Fest.”
- (P1) “I’ve been reading books on how to manage, a lot of HBR books, so all that’s really interesting. Anything that I can see and understand like where I am now in my career and how I can be of use.”
- (P4) “The company does offer a lot of training.”
- (P50) “I had the opportunity to go to the Strategic Workshop at the University of Miami.”

- (P54) “I have been working on committing to developing public speaking skills, presentation skills, other skills that are complimentary to my work outside of the technical courses.
- (P58) “I just completed the Company’s Leadership training and it was wonderful to understand the difference of feedback and coaching.”

### **Projects, exposure, exchange programs**

- (P51) “I take advantage of working in the team and reach out to others to work in projects and get exposure.”
- (P52) “My way to learn more, and in that matter, transcend in my role is to have the experience. I’m not so engaged in a specific training. It is more about the experience for me.”
- (P63) “I have been able to work on some LAC projects and I think that shows me more of my role, not only the Andean region, but teaches me about the organization on a different scale. Not only local, but how the HUB works how the LAC team works. That gives me more networking.”
- (P66) “The opportunity that the Company gave me to work on different teams. So I started with Risk then Operations and then I moved to Products, now I am in Processing.”
- (P68) “I took advantage of the opportunity and my boss has been giving me more projects. I have earned his trust and one of the projects that help me a lot was a bid deal that was done.”
- (P70) “Working on multifunctional projects.”

### **Guided learning (coach, mentor, leader)**

- (P1) “Okay, so I have a mentor. I got like a mentor last year officially who helped propel me in a lot of just different things to grow out of the first two years of my transition like from school going into the corporate world. Those first two years I think were like training wheels.”
- (P3) “I try to be in close conversations with my manager about career development.”
- (P57) “I’ve discussed with my manager, who is very open minded about career conversations, he always mentions that you are the one that is creating your career.”
- (P58) “I’ve had a mentor since I graduated from college.”
- (P64) “Yes, a few months ago I stated having monthly meetings with a leader. She is my coach. I picked her because of her regional scope.”

## VITA

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1996 – 2007	Human Resources (various)
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2008 – 2010	Regional Head of Human Resources and Talent Acquisition
2010 – 2013	Senior Business Leader, Human Resources
2013 – 2019	Vice President, Human Resources, Latin America and Caribbean Region
2019 – Present	Senior Vice President, Human Resources, Latin America and Caribbean Region and Global Head of HR for HR

### INVITED TO PRESENT

Diaz, W., Diz, M., Litano, L., Phillips, S., (August 2020), *Global Effects of Blockchain Utilization on National and Household Welfare*. Invited to present at the Academy of International Business – LAC