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Attracting and Retaining Generations X, Y and Z in the Workplace

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## Abstract

Human Resource Management has been challenged with maximizing production and increasing the bottom line since its introduction to the work place. Various techniques have been utilized over the years, customized to the values and beliefs of the generations making up the work force. Now that we are in recovery from the recession it has become an employee's market and human resource departments find themselves in what is now being described as a war for talent. During our history, attraction and retention of quality employees has been accomplished by offering a higher wage, better benefits package, or pension plan. Employees were motivated to do well in the hopes of keeping their job for a lifetime and therefore enjoying the retirement benefits provided by their employer. Loyalty to employers was high and it was not uncommon for an individual to spend their entire career with one corporation. Generations of late have seen these opportunities all but disappear. Money is no longer the motivating factor it once was. Work life balance, schedule flexibility, freedom to express ideas, team atmosphere, and personal beliefs meshing with those of the company you work for, have become more important. Individuals want to work in a place whose beliefs and values mirror their own; they want to work for companies that exhibit social responsibility, and have a reputation of operating with fairness and integrity. Companies who are able to establish themselves as a great place to work will have the competitive advantage in the marketplace of the future.

### Attracting and Retaining Generations X, Y and Z

One of the goals of a Human Resource Management (HRM) system is to attract and retain employees who are considered valuable to the company. Various systems of HRM have been utilized in the past and these systems are constantly updating. When viewed through generations, the methods match the values. Older generations were motivated by opportunities for pay increases earned through hard work, and the promise of a pension after a lifetime of giving to their company. The Silent Generation is all but removed from the work force and the Baby Boomers are nearing retirement age. This researcher looks to the future of our work force which will consist of gen X, the millennials (Y gen), and the Z gen (I gen). When considering these future employees, studies show that they are more likely more enticed by a particular companies' reputation and values as opposed to only considering the dollar amount offered as a starting salary. Where it was once commonplace place to work for the same company for a life time; the workforce has now become a place of relatively high turnover and it is commonplace for employees to work for several employers over their careers. Loyalty to one's employer is not based on a regular paycheck and an opportunity to climb the ladder; younger generations are mobile and have shown that they will leave their employer if they feel that their employers values no longer match their own. As the economy moves from an employer's market to an employee's market, competition for the best and brightest will become more intense. At the same time, the workforce will move from being dominated by the silent generation and baby boomers to the younger generations of x, y and z.

### **The Generations**

We have adopted the term “generation” to describe groups of people born around the same time who have shared experiences that have shaped their values and lives in a similar fashion. Scientists have identified five different generations; Traditionalist (Silent Generation, Greatest Generation), born 1900 – 1945; Baby Boomers, born 1946 – 1964; Generation X, born 1965 – 1979; Generation Y (Millennials), born 1980 – 1994; Generation Z, born 1995 – ?. As time passes, each generation is replaced by the next generation with its own unique set of values and characteristics (Bennets & Rademacher, 19997). For the purpose of this paper, I will describe some of the generally accepted traits and attributes of the different generations.

The Silent Generation was influenced to a large degree by The Great Depression and World War I and II. Living their lives under economic hardship and wartime affected the traits of this generation. They liked to save their money and lead a modest life. They wanted permanency in their jobs because security was of paramount importance. Traditionalists had confidence in authority and their main approach to work was to “work hard”, “work to live”, and “work before pleasure”. Securing lifetime employment through a single corporation was seen as ideal (Weingarten, 2009). The youngest of this generation today would be in their early 70’s. and will likely be completely out of the workforce in the next 10 – 15 years.

Baby Boomers are regarded as a competitive generation mostly due to the sheer volume of people it includes. Their basic rule is “live to work” and “work hard to get to the top”. This generation came of age during a time of social turmoil. They witnessed the Vietnam War, The assassinations of Kennedy and King, the sexual revolution, and protests against power (Tolbize, 2008). They are loyal to their employers and believe that working for a single employer could lead to success, and therefore be a desirable course (Berkup, 2014). Baby Boomers are motivated

by appreciation, money (salary and bonuses), prestige, and status symbols (Olson & Brescher, 2011). They had a strong desire to achieve their own personal goals, but saw the value in using teamwork. This generation had difficulty balancing work and family life and is credited with creating the term “workaholic”.

Some of the events that shaped Generation X were the Vietnam War, Watergate, Iran Hostage Crisis, AIDS Epidemic, Space Shuttle Disaster, and the Fall of the Berlin Wall. This generation grew up during a period of financial insecurity, many had parents lose their jobs, and they witnessed a weakening of America as a global power; The market trend was downsizing and job mobility and wages were stagnant. They were the first generation to be forecast to earn less than their parents (Tolbize, 2008). Generation X is seen as less competitive, global thinking, tolerant of diversities, and more creative. They see the balance of work and family as important and therefore they “work to live”. Their working goal is to improve their career, and they may easily switch employers to increase their opportunity of achieving that goal (Berkup, 2014). The employees of Generation X are open to change. They see their workplace as a place to learn and develop. They want for their workplace to be an enjoyable, free and pleasant environment with flexible hours. They will seek a working environment to suit them or they will create one themselves (Miller & Washington, 2013) (Berk, 2013). Unlike older generations who equate working long hours to achieving success, Generation X prefers to work wisely and save time for themselves. A good way to motivate a Generation X employee would be to explain the details and expectations of a job, and then leave them alone to accomplish it (Berkup, 2014).

Generation Y (Millennials) witnessed the Dissolution of the Soviet Union, Terrorist Attack of September 11, the Death of Princess Diana, and War in the Middle East. They were born into

technology; it is a part of their daily lives and they follow its development closely. They are seen as impatient, have a high capacity for adaption, and are open to, or even expect, change. Like Generation X, Generation Y also considers the workplace as somewhere to learn and grow. They want to be led by a mentor at work, they expect feedback, and they want to perform individual work and be supported by coaching (Adiguzel, Batur, & Eksili, 2014). They want to work in a place that allows time for a balance of work and family time, they want to participate in the operational process, and they want to create something meaningful. Generations X and Y both prefer an easy going work environment geared toward their personal growth and autonomy in accomplishing tasks.

Generation Z is the most technologically advanced generation. Individualism, freedom, and an addiction to technological speed are traits given to this group of young people. Having grown up with Facebook, products of the Apple Company, and Twitter; it is assumed that social media will play a substantial role in this generations lives. They are just now entering the workforce and so there are no observations to draw on as of yet. It is expected that they will be similar to Generation Y in that they will be impatient, and technology will be an integral part of their lives. It is hypothesized that Generation Z will have the highest motor skill synchronization for hand, eye and ear in the history of humanity and they are expected to be better at multitasking, be creative, and prefer a non-standard and personalized workplace (Berkup, 2014).

While they may not be successfully managed by older strategies, companies that can adapt to these requirements and allow the younger generations to make use of their familiarity with technology, achieve personal growth through the company while helping to form its values, may become the superpowers of the future (Berkup, 2014).

### **Labor Outlook**

The most recent recession from 2007-2009, also known as the “Great Recession” resulted in a decline in jobs of about 6 percent and the process of recovery has been slow. Although the rate of unemployment has fallen to near pre-recession levels, it has taken almost ten years to reach this point. In addition, the employment-to-population ratio has fallen considerably and has not yet completely recovered (Kalleberg & Till, 2017). The U.S. economy is slowly “returning” to a new normal that is characterized by a higher level of unemployment, permanent job losses in sectors which employed less-educated individuals, and an overall increase in demand for a more educated highly skilled workforce. It has been suggested that some of the reasons for the slow recovery are due to companies permanently restructuring and as a result they have new skill demands that cannot be met by the old employees. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, during the recession, companies engaged in massive downsizing and restructuring, slashing more than 8.5 million jobs in the United States. Now the pendulum has begun to swing back, with monthly job creation projected to return to about 200,000 per month. Employment is projected to increase by 11.5 million over the 2016-26 decade, an increase from 156.1 million to 167.6 million, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report released in October of 2017. This growth—0.7 percent annually—is faster than the 0.5 percent rate of growth during the 2006–16 decade, a period heavily affected by the 2007–09 recession.

Since the end of the great recession, employment is up in most industries, and earnings has increased in all (Green, 2017). As employment opportunities rise, so do voluntary turnover rates as skilled workers are willing to go mobile in the workforce in order to find the job that meets their needs. In 2013, 51% of companies surveyed noted a rise in voluntary turnover compared to 30% in 2012 (Money Magazine, 2013). In the aggregate, according to the US Bureau of Labor

Statistics, the number of voluntary leavers each month surged from about 1.7 million in June 2009 (when the US recession officially ended) to almost 2.4 million per month by the end of 2013. Both of these indicators suggest that employee turnover is accelerating, and that has organizations worried (Cascio, 2014). Market power is swinging from companies to workers. The new supply of workers is small when compared to the loss of retiring baby boomers. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) reports that from 1950 to 2016, the U.S. labor force grew an average of 1.4 percent a year. Now the CBO projects annual growth of only 0.5 percent, about a third of the post-1950 average. The business cycle compounds the effect. At 4.3 percent, the unemployment rate is at its lowest in 16 years, and there are some places where the unemployment rate is 2 percent. If companies compete fiercely for scarce employees, workers would benefit. Companies would increase wages and benefits or risk losing their best employees to firms with more generous compensation packages and they would fail to attract replacements (Samuelson, 2017).

### **Challenge for Business**

Good news for job-seekers will mean challenges for companies needing to add skilled workers. The numbers of job openings are at high levels; many industries have increased hiring either to increase their workforce or replace workers lost to turnover. With more competition for skilled workers, companies now need to stand out to job applicants who have more opportunities from which to choose. Organizations must understand the motivations of job candidates, they must realize that candidates are being more choosy and looking for the right fit. Company's should then present the values of their company and qualities and culture of the work environment that they provide, and demonstrate how they are different than the competition. If all other aspects are equal, candidates will choose the employer who has the strongest employer

brand. In younger generations studies show that job-seekers may choose a lesser paying job at a company with a more positive image. As the competition grows more intense and brand becomes more significant, company leaders understand that their ability to attract talent depends on more than the job description; it is also based on things like citizenship, honesty, and perception (Enterforce).

The days of accepting a position at a company and expecting lifelong employment, regular opportunities to advance, and a pension waiting at the end of a career are all but gone. Workers in the U.S. are leaving their jobs faster, typically this higher turnover rate is a sign that the labor market is getting stronger. The Bureau of Labor Statistics announced in January of 2016 that the length of time a worker has been with his or her current employer was 4.2 years. This number is down from 4.6 in January of 2014. The drop is the first since 2000. Less time at a current job indicates there are more people starting new jobs, some returning to the workforce and others changing jobs (which can also be viewed as voluntarily quit their previous job). The quit rate rose from 1.7 percent in January of 2014 to 2.1 percent in July of 2016. The quit rate is generally viewed as an indicator of job-seeker confidence. In addition to general confidence of all job-seekers confidence leading to the rise in the quit rate, it is also partially attributed to the number of Generation Y entering the workforce; due to the nature of their willingness to change jobs in order to meet their personal goals (Maurer, 2016).

Over the course of an individual's tenure with a company, organizations investments in them can be quite substantial. It is a challenge and a benefit for companies to retain their employees once they have been recruited and trained. The cost in terms of production lost while short-handed, overtime paid to cover shifts, and hiring and retraining new employees can be substantial (Thomas & Mitchell, 1994). The demise of the one employer career model and the

increased mobility of younger generations has created a competitive employee market. It is accepted that generally it is less expensive to keep an employee than to replace them. An organization with high turnover rates must consider decline in customer service, loss to the company's knowledge base, and lower morale in addition to the previously mentioned labor costs. Companies cannot afford to be complacent about keeping their talented employees. Because of the shortage of skilled workers in the workforce, companies are attempting various strategies to reduce turnover and keep their employees (Chhabra & Mishra, 2008); the adaption of an Employer Value Proposition and expression of an Employer Brand are two methods being implemented.

### **Attitudes toward work**

Attitudes toward work are changing as viewed through the generations. The generation known as Traditionalist prefer to work in places where there is a hierarchy and a clear chain of command. They keep their family lives separate from their work and they have respect for authority. They are motivated by the opportunity to move up the ladder and thereby gain position and wealth. They work hard because of a sense of determination and pride.

Boomers are described as being extremely hard workers and as being committed to both their personal and professional goals. They count on their work ethic and focus to advance their careers. They are motivated by prestige, their position, and by perks. Baby Boomers are considered independent, competitive, goal oriented, and typically they associate their position at work with their self-worth, as a result, they want to be in positions of authority, valued, and rewarded.

Gen X employees typically expect to maintain a balance between work and family life and do not work exceptionally long hours for money or titles (Leibow, 2014). Gen X feel less obligated

to remain with an employer than previous generations and expect some flexibility in their work arrangements. They are considered direct, independent, and pragmatic. They expect change and require flexibility in rules or regulations. Generation X prefer engaging in interesting self-paced work that they can accomplish without taking too much of their personal time. They find micromanaging bosses undesirable, and enjoy some informality in the workplace. They work to live and do not see their work as a representation of their self-worth.

Generation Y is more confident and therefore social; they also seek balance between their personal life and work. They are generally less independent, more community oriented, and seek a sense of meaning in greater contexts. This generation expects more supervision and immediate face-to-face feedback. They are driven by technology, prefer clear goals, and structure.

Generation Y employees are adept at multitasking and like to use their creativity and approach projects from a variety of directions. They enjoy the process of discovering new solutions and vantage points, and are motivated by belonging to communities they consider meaningful and feeling a sense of purpose. Generation Y is drawn to companies and businesses that embrace technology in the same manner that they do. They are excited by these advancements and wish to be happy at home and at work. (Wiedmer, 2015)

Generation Z is just beginning to enter the workforce. They are viewed as being particularly tech savvy, they have exhibited higher IQ scores than previous generations. They are accepting of diversity and stay connected to their peers through various forms of social media. typically tech savvy; socially connected to their peers through social media; bright, with IQ scores higher than previous generations; and generally accepting of diverse populations (Renfro, 2012).

Generation Z will be confident in their abilities to use their technological expertise to accomplish anything, they will not be the type of workers to spend 40 hours a week in a cubicle, they will

require flexibility and will consider themselves experts at what they do (Renfro, 2012) (Wiedmer, 2015).

The importance of work is decreasing, both with the aging existing workers as well as with new, younger employees entering the workplace. Employees now want to be treated as valuable members of the company and not simply as material assets. They are seeking employment in workplaces that make them feel happy. Workers want to have opportunities for growth and they want to feel valued and appreciated (Tolbize, 2008). An increasing number of applicants are pre-assessing the social environments and performance of prospective employers (Pierce & Madden, 2005) through websites like; Glassdoor, LinkedIn, and Career Bliss. Some things being considered are: job security, respect and rewards, opportunities to learn, intellectual interest, the organizations' contributions to society, and ethical management. In a survey conducted by GlobeScan in 2003 68% of students surveyed disagreed that salary is more important than an organizations environmental and social reputation (Pierce & Madden, 2005). When it comes to current employees recommending their workplace to others, studies show that they are four times as likely to do so if they feel that their bosses have integrity and the overall company displays strong ethics.

Many practices to promote retention can be applied unilaterally across an intergenerational workforce, as members from the different generations share similar reasons for remaining at their place of employment. Acknowledging the older workers experience and showing respect for new employees' ideas may contribute to higher retention rates. It is also important for organizations to demonstrate a willingness to create an environment that assists employees' desires to balance work and personal goals by providing things like quality-of-life programs, flexible work schedules, or on-site day care (Tolbize, 2008). While many best practices for recruitment and

retention are applicable across generations, there are differences in the younger generations and therefore they require focus in different areas. Typically, older generations have a negative view of younger individuals work ethic, Generation X's "work to live" attitude and Generation Y's "life before work" belief, are contrary to the idea of "work before play" and "live to work" beliefs of Traditionalists and Baby Boomers (Berkup, 2014). So while the older generation might find a work environment with flexibility enjoyable, it is not something that they would demand in the workplace. Generations X, Y, and Z have a different approach to communication, work-life-balance, and use of technology; they are more open to diversity, and their ideas of what is considered a benefit is different than the previous generations. They are concerned about flexibility and tuition reimbursement more than healthcare and earning overtime, and they want for their employer to be on the same page. Companies will need to utilize social media for recruitment and training, and immediate performance feedback will replace the annual review (Eisenberg, 2017).

Taking a broad look at the younger generations, my research has shown that in comparison to the previous generations, they are more educated and more willing to change jobs in order to meet their personal goals. They would like for their work to be a place where they feel a connection and they desire opportunities to contribute their ideas to something that has meaning to the community, if not society as a whole. They value strong leadership, but don't want to be micromanaged. They want flexibility in how many hours they work, when they work those hours, as well as where they accomplish their work. They believe in teamwork and feel that if given a task and the expected results, they can accomplish most anything. They embrace diversity and social responsibility and they expect for their place of work to do the same. These younger generations will be in the position of being able to choose from various employment

opportunities. Their expectations of a prospective workplace are high and they will use the technology that they are comfortable with to research these companies. They will have at their fingertips societal contributions of an organization, past scandals, and future forecasts. They can access websites and read reviews provided by current and previous employees. What a business represents other than a paycheck will be transparent, and it will need to be authentic. Many businesses are addressing this by focusing on their Employee Value Proposition (EVP) as well as their Employer Brand.

### **Human Resource Management**

Human Resource Management has evolved from non-existence 100 years ago to being a key aspect to any successful organization. HRM began as Personnel Management or Industrial Relations with a focus on improving the bottom line through employee selection, compensation, and training. The idea of earning profits while paying well, providing steady employment, and treating others fairly was originally suggested by Henry Rowland in 1896 (Kaufman, 2008). In the 1910's some large companies were experiencing turnover rates over 300%, and they were realizing the cost of this turnover as well. The desire to curtail the high turnover inspired initiatives focused on the creation of a loyal and stable workforce. There was a focus on best practices in regards to hiring, training, compensation and providing opportunities for promotion (Kaufman, 2008). The 1950's saw a focus on individual issues, such as testing, training, and motivation and in the next decade relationships between individual personalities and company personalities were explored. In the 1990's HRM evolved beyond record keeping and staff maintenance into functioning as a strategic partner with other aspects of a corporation and the importance of aligning HR goals with the overall goals of the company was realized (Ferris, Hochwarter, Buckley, Harrell-Cook, & Frink, 1999).

Although the workplace transformation has been a huge cultural change, it was caused by economics. Employers were accustomed to viewing everything through the lens of capital and labor costs and although the term labor did represent flesh and blood people, all people were factored in as costing money and they were not considered as individuals with feelings, hopes or desires (Byrd, 2008). Human resource management consists of activities that relate to the maintenance and operation of an organization. Individuals in human resource management positions, place people within the organization where the company has the best chance to meet its strategic goals (Amayah & Gedro, 2014). Human Resource Managers now realize that companies long term success occurs if they are able to recruit individuals who are motivated and flexible enough to respond to the challenges of the future. These employees will have the ability to create a competitive advantage through their ability to adapt to changing markets. They will have the capability to learn from customers, suppliers, and colleagues, and they will build influence through long lasting and effective partnerships (Pierce & Madden, 2005). Human resource managers or departments now are involved in helping to establish strategic organizational goals, identify corporate core values, determine the management style of the company, lead community outreach, develop the workplace culture, be responsible for talent management (compensation, development, and identification), as well as, recruiting, advertising, and maintaining the company's social media. (SHRM, 2008)

Employees are motivated by a variety of factors; from opportunities for promotion, financial security, recognition, and new challenges. Successful creation of an engaged employee through opportunities and incentives will lead to a company that is able to adapt quickly to changing environments (Pierce & Madden, 2005). If employee and company values are in sync, the company is operating ethically, an opportunity for work-life balance is provided, and a concern

for employees well-being is demonstrated, then morale and commitment will increase along with productivity (Pierce & Madden, 2005).

The climate in which HRM is operating is different now than in the past. As we move farther away from the Great Recession and younger individuals of different generations are becoming more prevalent in the workforce. One key change is that candidates for employment today are considering the benefits of working at one company over others. They have an opportunity to shop for a place of employment and they are considering their options carefully. They want to know if the company's values and goals mesh with their own (SHRM, 2008).

The demise of the labor unions which protected many employee rights left young Generation X groups to start fending for themselves. This change in cultural viewpoint fits well with what the leaders in the work/life field have been saying. Work-life specialists researched and declared for many years that the mind set based on forty hours a week of face time had to go. It no longer was fitting the lives of real people. Employees were to become entrepreneurs, either in or out of the corporation or organization. The work-life movement started with the workers at the bottom in all kinds of work places. The effect was that decision makers at the top had to scramble to make sense of what was happening, and they were not sure how to deal with it. In addition, work-life benefits, while created with one age in mind, have had an effect on everyone in the work force. Changes in employee attitude and commitment are coming about slowly, but they are occurring. Dictators in the work place are an old fashioned idea and they are being replaced by leaders who respect the needs of their employees, see them as individuals with lives outside of the workplace, who are willing to compromise and negotiate with reason, and sometimes compassion, in order to accomplish goals. With the new work-life policies have come increased satisfaction of employees, customers and clients, along with improved work place morale.

Human resource research continues to document the positive results of work/life benefits suited to today's workers, even when different generations want different benefits. In some cases, mission statements of organizations indicate that employees are the companies number one asset. Those employers find that customers are satisfied and productivity and profits rise. It is a big shift for employees to have some control over their work/life balance, but the changes are here to stay. (Byrd, 2008)

Every so many years a new generation of individuals enters into the workforce. When the new generation enters the workforce, managers who are from a previous generation struggle to understand the new comers. The managers have to adjust the way they manage in order to maximize production. The new generation understands the world differently, each generation views the world based on shared experiences that shape their attitudes and behavior. It is important that managers understand this concept. As we move into the future the labor force will consist of the baby-boom generation ascending the age ladder until the group moves out of the labor force, bringing to an end one of the major drivers of labor force growth over the post-World War II period (Toosi, 2006). At this point in time Generations X, Y, and Z will make up the majority our workplaces.

Human resource management has evolved from personnel management to a more holistic approach of management that considers the employees overall well-being. The psychological contract, common to most organizations of the past, promising a lifetime of pay and benefits for loyalty and dedication is gone and is being replaced by the idea of an Employee Value Proposition which can be very specific to a particular organization. It is through this EVP and development of employer brand that individuals can see and feel the values of an organization and therefore make a determination on which company will be a better fit.

The concept of organizational citizenship identifies five dimensions of organizational citizenship behaviors: (1) Altruism- helping another employee; (2) Conscientiousness- devotion, showing respect by obeying the organizations rules; (3) Sportsmanship- refraining from making petty complaints; (4) Courtesy- consulting with work partners about actions that may affect their work; and (5) Civic virtue behaviors- involvement in the organization's political life, such as participation in meetings (Organ, 1988). Exhibiting these behaviors demonstrates an employee's commitment to a company because it shows their willingness to go above and beyond what is expected of them (Amayah & Gedro, 2014). The workplace now has employees looking back at their organizations and measuring their degree of citizenship, values, and degree in which they appreciate their employees. Younger generations are asking themselves questions before they accept job offers. Employees want to be proud of the place where they work. They want to work for competent leaders with integrity and vision. They expect a working environment that allows them to maximize their skills and provide the technology, resources, and training needed for them to perform their best. Employees want to work in an inclusive environment where all members of the work environment are valued, respected, and treated fairly. They want for their opinions to matter, their voice be heard, and to be rewarded and recognized for their contributions. Employees also want to enjoy their workplace. They want to look forward to joining their peers and accomplishing something meaningful every day (Pfau, 2016).

### **Social Media**

Social media span a wide range of platforms and services, such as blogs, discussion boards, chat rooms, forums, consumer product or service rating Websites and, perhaps most notably, social networking sites. Their increasing convenience and accessibility have made such social

networks a highly frequented channel for accessing information during employment searches. Job-seekers are checking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn as sources for finding employment. Because social media uses many forms of communication, including video, audio, pictures, and live chat, it is also a good tool for communicating the employer brand. According to Ambler and Barrow (1996), Employer branding aims to build a positive employer image and proffer a unique employer value proposition that features attributes that potential employees perceive as valuable and attractive. A strong employer brand enables the firm to develop an image that offers a differential advantage, relative to weaker brands with the same attributes, thus making it an attractive place to work. Given that selecting a job involves a degree of risk and uncertainty, a strong positive employer brand can reduce that uncertainty to and make the decision making process more comfortable. When communicating through social media, contact with the target group is personal, realistic and interactive, as well as cost efficient and wide ranging. It provides an opportunity for companies to communicate what they stand for easily and directly (Kissel & Buttgen, 2015).

Prior to social media and the advancement of technology, recruiters and job-seekers alike, depended on help wanted ads, networking, employee referrals, and cold calling to select a possible fit when seeking a potential employee or employer. Recruiters would try to reach as many applicants as possible, and job-seekers would send out numerous job applications, and they would depend on the interview process to determine whether there was a match between the organization and the individual. Now that online job boards, and various social media sites are available, the process has become more personalized and targeted. Recruiters can access sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, You Tube, and Twitter and learn a lot about potential candidates. The same can be said from the perspective of the job-seeker, applicants want to hear firsthand what it

is like to work in that organization and social media is often where they start their investigation. They can access the same sites and get a feel for things like the company's values, community involvement, and environmentally friendly practices. Job-seekers also can read reviews written by current or former employees, view webinars, read blogs, or watch videos posted by organizations. It is likely future applicants would consider information gained from these sites as accurate internal realities, especially if they feel they are listening to past or current employees (Blacksmith & Poepelman, 2014). In conjunction with the recruiting process, social media is being used in employer branding efforts. Employer branding focuses on developing the image of organizations as potential employers. Job-seekers focus on several concepts when considering applying for a job, such as image, reputation, brand equity, and overall attractiveness. Studies have shown that when an organization closely monitors its output on social media and maintains a focus on developing positive aspects of its organization, that can lead to a positive corporate reputation. Studies have also shown that a positive corporate reputation increases a job-seekers likeliness to apply at that place of work (Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen, 2013). With the younger generations attachment to technology, including social media as part of their everyday life, it will be imperative that corporations involve social media as part of their human resource management program, particularly in regards to recruiting and retention of employees. The content of these sites will need to be carefully monitored as it is possible for negative information to damage the reputation of a corporation to the same degree that positive information can improve a company's image (Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen, 2013).

## **Branding**

It has been hypothesized that the trend for organizations to focus on employer brand is a reaction to the lessening of trust in business. As a result, organizations, in particular human resource management, are under pressure to show that their company is a good place to work. The employer brand is used to increase confidence internally from existing employees as well as externally from the perspective of a potential applicant (SHRM, 2008)

Simon Barrow (1996) defined employer brand as, “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company”. Employer brand creates the image of a company in terms of values, systems, policies and behaviors (Ainspan & Dell, 2001). An organizations employer brand can communicate to targeted future employees that a particular company is, “a great place to work” (Ewing, Pitt, de Bussy, & Berthon, 2002). Branding is a strategic tool used by an organization to showcase their unique employment offerings or value propositions to potential and existing employees (Sengupta, Bamel, & Singh, 2015). A brand is a name, symbol, design or combination that identifies the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers, and distinguishes them from the goods and services of competitors. Consultants, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals sometimes identify their businesses by their personal names. Their names are therefore their brands, and everything they do that is known by the public is associated with their names. Other organizations identify themselves by their company names. Those company names are therefore their brands. Each employee is a representative of his or her company, and is known for all that his or her company stands for (good and bad). ‘Brand’ is shorthand for the goods and services provided (e.g., Apple, Google, Coca Cola, CNN, Sony). More important, brand is shorthand for

the quality and distinctiveness of those goods and services. In general, the public is attracted to good name brands and repelled by bad name brands (Cascio, 2014). Organizations are using branding as a strategic tool in today's business environment with increasing regularity. Although brands and branding are not new ideas, firms are applying them to more diverse settings where the role of branding is becoming increasingly important (Wentz & Suchard, 1993). The approach and reasoning for building a strong employer brand has changed over the years. As mentioned previously the term "employer brand" was first introduced in the 1990's it described an organization's reputation as an employer, as opposed to its more general and external corporate brand reputation. Building a strong employer brand first became a major focus of activity between 2004 and 2008, when in response to the growing competition for talent, companies like Unilever, P&G, and Shell began to apply the same focus and consistency to their employer branding as they applied to their corporate and consumer branding. This led to the development of an Employee Value Proposition, which defined the key benefits offered by the company as an employer, and guidelines for the employer brand. It was meant to bring consistency to the company's recruitment advertising efforts. Employer branding was predominantly outward facing, targeted, and driven by the human resource department (Mosley, 2015).

The first step for a company in defining their brand is to develop an Employer Value Proposition (EVP). This is defined as a set of values, associations, and other offerings that are unique to an organization that has a positive influence on target candidates and employees (Chadha, 2017). The EVP is an agreement between an organization and an employee; It is what unique characteristics a company has to offer in return for the employee's contributions and performance. An EVP helps an organization attract and retain the type of people it values. An employer brand is an integral part of the employee value proposition. It includes the mission,

culture, values, and personality of the organization. Employer brand effects recruitment of prospective employees, retention of current employees, as well as how the organization is perceived overall. When considering employer brand as a recruitment tool, organizations should consider the vision, mission, and culture of the business; know how the company is perceived by its current employees; identify the desired attributes of their top talent; understand the company's position in regards to the competition and define an employee value proposition that is aligned with their brand. It is also important that the brand is supported internally; and companies should track the brand's success through quality of hire, awareness, employee satisfaction, and employee referrals (Society for Human Resource Management, 2014).

Retaining and attracting current and potential employees requires the employers recognize the value preferences of employees and they also must recognize that these values can change over time (Sengupta, Bamel, & Singh, 2015). Having employees who accept and agree with the company's EVP and employer brand leads to engaged employees who are motivated and capable of keeping up with the changing values of their target consumers and potential employees. As the employees become active representatives of the employer brand, they allow companies the flexibility to change. Companies must be capable of evolving in terms of perspective, values, and connection with society or they will become stagnant and lose their competitive edge.

When deciding on a prospective employer, younger people today are influenced to a greater degree by what a company stands for as opposed to where they can earn the highest dollar. Studies show that younger generations while very loyal to their chosen brands, can also be quick to change if that brand does not keep up with their ideals. Younger Generations want to be a part of something meaningful, they will work for a company that shares their ideals even if the pay is less than what is offered at an organization that is viewed as less favorable.

When developing an employer brand, organizations should know and understand their vision, values, and culture; they should know their business objective and what talent is required to accomplish them. The organization should understand what sets them apart from their competition. Conducting internal research is a good method to learn how the company is perceived by its current employees, as well as by its target group. When conducting this research, the companies need to ask what current and prospective employees want and expect out of the organization. They should identify their current top-talent and ask them what it is that they like about working for the company, and also determine what specific attributes these employees possess that would like to see in new recruits. Companies should then carry out external research in order to determine how the organization is positioned in regards to the competition, this can be accomplished through surveys or social media. The organization should then work to define an Employee Value Proposition that clearly communicates the value of the brand that they are working to develop. The employer brand should be in alignment with the brand conveyed to customers. The organizations recruitment strategy should be focused on the determined target base. Attention should be directed to the career page of the company's website, other recruiting sites, as well as social media sites. The employee value proposition must also be regularly communicated to existing employees in order to encourage retention and engagement. The organization should encourage a holistic approach with all departments and functions in alignment with the employer brand message. Lastly, an organization should develop means to assess the success of their implemented employer brand. They can accomplish this by evaluating quality of new hires, employee satisfaction surveys, and retention rates (SHRM, 2014).

Creating an employer brand that is sincere may be particularly important since sincerity is strongly associated with brand affect and trust (Ewing, Pitt, de Bussy, & Berthon, 2002).

Sincerity in employer brand may be initially established through communications of existing employees. These communications might contain testimonies of fulfillments of promises or expectations from the beginning of their careers. Communications delivered by current employees might also successfully give the employer brand a face to go with the personality traits of the brand. Potentially, it may be also useful to give an employer brand “a face” and to strengthen positive brand personality traits. Research shows that attractiveness and accuracy are two necessary dimensions required in creating a positive emotional response that leads to an organization being considered a great place to work. The sincerity and accuracy of the portrayal of the employer brand is critical to its relevance. This emphasis on accuracy highlights the importance of consistency between the employer brand and employment experience, company culture and values (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). The power of brand should not be underestimated. Recent research by the Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA), has found that a company’s reputation is one of the top three most important factors for British people seeking new employment, with a third of respondents citing that employer reputation was more important in their choice making than flexibility at work, benefits, culture or location. Similarly, in its Winning Talent report, LinkedIn has revealed that 53 per cent of respondents said they would rule out a job offer from an organization that was known for its poor job security, dysfunctional teams or poor leadership. More concerning still, a less-than-glowing reference from current or previous staff was also among the top five reasons for jobseekers to dismiss an organization (Shay, 2016).

Following are some examples of companies who have been successful at presenting their employer brand and some aspects that encouraged positive results: General Electric used a video series based on humor, consistency, and sincerity as a formula in their “What’s the Matter with

Owen” series. They introduced a character who was trying to get everyone excited about his new job. The problem was that nobody knew what Owen actually did. In conjunction with the introspective, perhaps honest view of a typical developer, they created a high quality video with an embedded job apply button. When L’Oréal reached the 300,000 follower mark and realized that 70% of their followers were interested in job opportunities, they created the “Are You IN” campaign. This campaign became a long-term social media strategy that was focused on engaging their top followers and brand enthusiasts. In 2015 Netflix announced its parental leave policy of unlimited time off during the first year after a child’s birth when paired with the company’s overall focus on culture earned them a high rating on the social media employer review site, Glassdoor. Lithium used a low budget, authentic video production to deliver their branding strategy to candidates that accurately provided insight on what it was like to work there. Salesforce utilized Instagram and Snapchat by using the hashtag #dreamjob they allowed their existing employees to bring their employer brand to potential candidates. They combined real stories and high quality photos on their Instagram page and recently won an employee’s choice award for one of the best workplaces for working parents as well as for LGBTQ equality (YOH, a Day and Zimmermann Company, 2017). Veterans United Home Loans focuses on values and culture and as a result their employees have become the biggest advocates of the employer brand by posting positive messages of employment regularly on Twitter. Tasytt has made extensive use of branded promotional merchandise to present their company in a positive manner; using magnets, sticker, shirts, hoodies, guitar picks, and socks. They also have introduced a stuffed beaver (Obie) as their mascot. Their Instagram account is full of examples of their merchandise being used. Pebble {Code} utilizes a combination of artfully arranged still photos and gifts to create a photo-essay representation of the company’s culture. PwC uses employee stories

highlighted by photos, bios, and career timelines, thus providing potential candidates with some insight to the kind of people they would work with as well as potential career paths. Universum has a career page that is focused on the candidate and provides an open application that may be filled out even if the candidate is unsure about how they might fit into the organization. Shopify focuses on the company's mission and values. CKR has a separate people page linked to their career page. The people page consists of bio of existing employees where not only their job titles are listed but also their personalities are described. This demonstrate that the company values its people as people and not simply tools to be used (Kosinski, 2016). These examples illustrate a need for collaboration between human resource and marketing departments to develop brand messages. Great brands are built from the inside out, and human resource professionals are realizing that in the digital age, when audiences are continually bombarded with content from an ever expanding array of platforms, marketing can assist HR in finding and defining inspiring, authentic stories to share (Shay, 2016).

### **Engagement**

One of the reasons for the focus on employer brand, is the understanding that being a part of the brand creates an engaged workforce. Organizations with an internal branding approach try to position a specific brand image in the minds of their employees, who are then expected to project this through brand consistent employee behaviors, both within and outside the firm. The more the workforce consistently delivers a customer experience aligned with the brand promise, the higher the competitive advantage. Concerning this issue, engagement of employees is more important than ever, for it goes much further than just simple employee satisfaction, involving feelings of deep commitment, pride, honor, and pioneering about the organization's brand

(Ahmad, et. al, 2014). Engaged employees are highly motivated in their jobs and emotionally attached to the organization with great enthusiasm for the success of their employer. They often do more than what is written in their employment contract (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010). William Kahn (1990), the generator of the concept “employee engagement”, argued that this is a form of workplace identity, whereby the more employees believe in what they do and identify themselves with their work, the more determined they are to contribute to the success of their organization (Kahn, 1990). Employee engagement can be enhanced by internal branding efforts in that encouraging employees to live the brand fosters motivation in employees, provides them with a clear direction in their work and increases their commitment to the organization, all of which contribute to the success of the business strategy. Creating a positive emotional response like inspiration and pride in employees will increase employee retention and from a talent perspective, the most successful organizations are those that succeed in employee retention by developing positive employer brands, innovative approaches to human resource development and those that provide performance management strategies that maximize employee potential (Ozcelik, 2015).

Engaged employees may express pride and satisfaction with their employer. As well as job satisfaction, they may be inclined to give effort above and beyond the minimum. Engaged employees understand the link between one’s job and the organization’s mission, prospects for future growth with one’s employer, and may express an intention to stay with one’s employer. Companies with engaged employees may experience lower absenteeism, lower turnover, fewer safety incidents, fewer quality incidents, higher productivity and profitability. Engaged employees may also provide higher levels of performance, commitment, and loyalty (O’Bryan & Casey, 2017). Workers who are Engaged are more open to new ideas and information, they have

higher productivity, and they proactively change their work environment in order to remain engaged (Bakker, 2011). Research has identified the employee's relationship with their immediate supervisor was the most frequent engagement driver. Positive performance management can enhance engagement and poor management by immediate supervisors can damage employee engagement. The number one cause of damage to engagement has been identified as employer reputation, which could lead to an employee losing pride in the company. Understanding the drivers and threats to engagement is important because human resource management can design interventions that favor the positive drivers and limit the negative. The result would then be an increase in benefits to the organization (Schullery, 2013). As generational differences in the workplace indicated different requirements for job satisfaction and the encouragement of engagement, attempts to attract younger generations by adding fun to the workplace have been made, pool tables, rock climbing walls, volley ball courts, meditation rooms, and private lakes to name a few (Alsop, 2011) (Tapscott, 2009). While these efforts increased attention and application rates according to internal studies, they did not seem to have the desired effect when considering employee engagement. In addition there was also noted some resentment by older generations to the amount of investments adding fun to suit the younger generations when no such effort was made for them (BlessingWhite, 2011) (Schullery, 2013). Employee engagement is a challenge for organizations, one particular concern is that the disengaged do not necessarily leave the organizations, they often remain and do damage to productivity and working relationships. The more closely employees personal values are aligned with those of the organization lead to higher levels of employee engagement, this indicates a positive link between employer branding and engagement (Bhatnagar & Biswas, 2010). The engaged employee would also be aligned emotionally and intellectually with their organization

and would be enthusiastic, fully involved in his or her work, and work for the organization's interests (O'Bryan & Casey, 2017).

### **Retention Methods**

Turnover can affect organization by reducing morale, negative effect on relations with the community, loss of knowledge, drop off in the quality of production, demise of employee relationships, as well as having a negative effect to the bottom line of the organization. Managers have identified four basic strategies to implement in order to begin to retain employees. First, organizations should research and ensure they are offering competitive salaries, benefits, and incentive packages. The pay should be comparable to talent required and amount of work and benefits should at the minimum be on an even plane with the competition. Secondly, companies should make sure that they are in the habit of offering adequate recognition for a job well done. Organizations should establish individual recognition programs that offer incentives to employees. The strategy, direction, and results of the company should be shared with its employees. Third, career development and advancement opportunities should exist for employees from within the organization. Training should be provided as well as cross-training when appropriate. Lastly, corporations should ensure a healthy work-life balance and allow for flexibility to assist in creating an environment conducive to work-life balance. Flexibility should also include management realizing the individual needs of its employees. In addition to these considerations companies are creating employee engagement plans to ensure open communication channels, providing a learning environment through employee training and development, and implementing talent management technology systems to manage the employee experience (Manhertz Jr., 2011).

As the global economy picks up, there is growing concern among CEOs about finding and keeping the best talent to achieve their growth ambitions. Various surveys show that in 2014, 36% of employers reported talent shortages, that is the highest percentage since 2007, and in a more recent 2015 survey, 73% of CEO's reported being concerned about the availability of key skills. Strengthening employer brand is one method of competing for and keeping this talent. Social media has made companies a great deal more transparent. Engagement with current employees is viewed as more reliable than messages sent out by a recruiting team. This means that talent attraction depends more on employee engagement and advocacy (Shay, 2016).

Employer branding is a relatively new approach toward recruiting and retaining the best possible human talent within a recruiting environment that is becoming increasingly competitive. The term is often used to describe how organizations market their offerings to potential and existing employees, communicate with them and maintain their loyalty thereby promoting the message inside and outside the firm, a clear view of what makes a firm attractive as an employer (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employer branding has the potential to be a valuable for managers. They can use employer branding to coordinate employee recruitment and retention activities into a coordinated human resource strategy. Accordingly, employers can control brand power to engage their employees in emotional ways to achieve change, outstanding results or increase attraction and retention. According to Dell & Ainspan (2001), organizations have found that effective employer branding leads to competitive advantage helps employees internalize company values and assists in employee retention (Sokro, 2012).

Marketing is also seen as playing a more important role in retention by helping to shape the employer brand. Because social media has intertwined company reputation with the customer

experience, consumer-facing communications are increasingly important in shaping the employer brand. Many firms now highlight the quality and dedication of their employees in their consumer marketing, and this naturally affects how others judge them as potential employers. Likewise, the strength of the employer brand can have a significant effect on the quality, pride, and engagement levels of those employees involved in having a positive employment experience and delivering that positivity to potential candidates. Finding an individual who fits the culture of your organization will help in retention. Culture can keep employees engaged and create a positive reputation for the organization. One contributing factor to a positive culture is maintaining a diverse environment. Diversity encourages creativity and productivity in the workplace, and consumers of different ethnicities prefer to do business with an organization that employs people like them (Arenofsky, 2017). Projecting your brand accurately, and honestly will also attract individuals who want to be a part of your culture.

Researchers have found that self-managed teams provide more opportunity for workers to hone their skills, which leads to greater job satisfaction, better performance, and less turnover. It ultimately creates a greater degree of trust, especially if ideas are respectfully listened to by the team leader even if the ideas are poorly thought out or unorthodox. This also would contribute to the development of quality relationships, which then support team building, collaboration, trust, and respect, which would be building blocks for an excellent company culture, image or brand. It has been suggested that through relationships founded on integrity and worth, emotionally intelligent leaders can project a positive company image that can differentiate the organization from its competition and add value to its goods. At the same time encourage attraction and retention of employees, as most people want to work hard for a brand they admire (Basso & Pittman, 2017).

Research has shown that the younger generations are looking to make a difference in the world. Retention rates are likely to be higher at companies that contribute to the community and allow their employees to be involved. A particular popular method of community involvement is through the use of social media. One thing that organizations can do to encourage involvement in these social media communities is to make it easy for individuals to participate; have an easy to navigate web site and keep an up to date presence on popular social media sites. The company should have a strong leader with exceptional interpersonal skills, thick skin, and tact. They should exhibit compassion, have grace under fire and be extremely tolerant to criticism. The organization should interact with the community. Be colloquial, engage in a timely fashion with those who are making positive contributions and address those that are not by engaging them privately. If negativity is expressed that does not contribute to the discussion; don't be afraid to delete comments that shut down conversation rather than contribute. Welcome new contributors, avoid making people feel like outsiders. Encourage diversity whenever possible, more diverse communities attract more people. Identify the culture you are trying to build and engage your heavy contributors that fit the image. Showcase user generated content, let people know that contributing is an opportunity to have their voice heard. Reward valued contributors and engage with existing communities or groups (Betancourt, 2009). Other types of community engagement involve being a physical presence by attending existing local events like festivals, parades, or concerts. This may provide an opportunity to interact with members of the community, perhaps by having a tent set up that makes your presence known. Pictures of employees at the events can then be used on social media along with a written account of happenings. Involvement in the community can also be achieved through volunteering for local charities or organizations. Encouraging employees to participate will foster a feeling of outreach and personal fulfillment

tied with the company. This type of community outreach gives the younger generations the feeling of making a difference that they are looking for, and simultaneously builds these feeling into your brand. Having a manager serve on a local board is another opportunity to interact with the community, and demonstrate that you are eager to serve. Forging partnerships with other local businesses would give your organizations employees a chance to interact with other businesses in the area and spread the message of your brand. Holding public events is a good way to bring people to you and showcase the culture, climate and brand of your organization. Reward your local supporters by offering special rates or giveaways and consider sponsoring a local youth sports team or organization like, “adopt a highway” (Alton, n.d.). Employees’ involvement with community engagement programs offer companies an opportunity to develop teamwork and communication skills, but also provide a sense of purpose and help foster a positive culture in the workplace. In addition to boosting morale and motivating employees, it can improve performance, reduce absenteeism, and improve an organizations ability to attract and retain employees. A 2011 Deloitte Volunteer survey of adults aged 21-35 in the U.S. found that even if individuals do not usually volunteer in community engagement activities, the majority consider a company’s commitment to the community when making a job decision. The same survey also found that employees who frequently volunteer are twice as likely to rate their existing corporate culture as “very positive” compared to non-volunteers (International Tourism Partnership, 2012). Some additional areas of focus in community involvement that may be of particular interest to younger generations due to their global implications are: Environmental improvements, through conservation efforts, clean-ups, recycling, energy efficiency, or wildlife protection or habitat preservation; health and education improvements such as raising awareness of health issues, supporting medical care, or working to provide educational opportunities

through scholarships or building schools; investment in infrastructure and facilities such as roads, public utilities like water and sewer upgrades; conservation efforts to local structures of historical value or supporting local heritage like local artisans or craftsman (International Tourism Partnership, 2012).

Attention to career development through mentorship programs, coaching, cross training, or offering career counseling, demonstrate an organizations commitment to its employees and create a learning environment that the younger generations desire. Participation in the workplace is positively associated with profitability, productivity, and reduced employee turnover. Being involved in some form of decision making motivates employees to excel. Involving current employees in the recruitment process, as well as performance and training programs, provides opportunities to gain insight into the causes of turnover and gauge employee engagement. Employee assistance programs like mental health assistance, financial counseling, health savings accounts, critical care accounts, medical flexible spending accounts, and long and short term disability are offered at many organizations as well as preventative health programs that include weight loss programs, fitness center membership discounts, nap rooms, massage therapy, and bonuses for completion of certain health challenges. Other benefits are health information, genetic testing, social service programs, substance addiction treatment, referrals for eating disorders, stress, or depression. Offering these services results in a reduced amount of stress and anxiety in the workplace. Child care benefits are important for attraction and retention of employees, many allow bringing a child to work in crisis situations, and some companies offer referrals, or in house services. Some companies have found an increase in retention through concierge services like dry cleaning, banking, vehicle service, haircuts, meals, and banking. Assistance on repayment of student loan debt is important to the younger generations, and credit

union memberships, vehicle allowances, and housing relocation costs to assist financially. Other perks being offered involve the allowance of pets in the workplace tickets to cultural and sporting events, and time off for participation in volunteer programs (Arenofsky, 2017)

Research shows that better pay packages and benefits generally contributes toward employees remaining at their current jobs longer. Pay and benefit systems that invest in human capital also reduces turnover and voluntary quit rates. Competitive salary packages in conjunction with benefits considered better than the competition reduces turnover, as does more favorable health insurance policies when it compares favorably against the prevailing practices in the industry. Training and development opportunities are becoming more important in employee retention, especially given the fact that younger generations entering the workplace are looking at their place of employment as needing to provide an opportunity to learn and grow. On the job training opportunities and career progression paths can act as an incentive for individuals to remain at their current place of employment. On the job training can also help retain older workers by keeping their skills at the necessary level and increasing their career satisfaction (Presbitero, Roxas, & Chadee, 2016). Organizations that have outstanding learning and development programs are found to have better job satisfaction rates, increased productivity, and greater profits (Joo & Park, 2010). Studies have shown that a lack of opportunities for career advancement within a company contributes to employee turnover and intention to leave. Systems practices that could foster better retention include improving wages and benefits, creating a professional identity, promoting the direct support profession, as well as using consumer directed support models (Hewitt & Larson, 2007). Creating a professional identity and career path, may create structured and consistent guidelines for some professional industries. These programs would have policies for wage increases and pay scales, thus creating a

professional identity as well as a sense of belonging and would decrease employees feeling the need to change jobs in order to find opportunities. In organizations with multiple generations in the workplace, retention rates are realized when the company acknowledges the experience of older workers to increase their feelings of being respected and valuable; and also demonstrates respect for the talents and contribution of new workers with new ideas and new ways of accomplishing tasks. When an organization is focused on retention, it would be useful to gather information from their top performers by asking them questions in order to determine where their successes and shortfalls are. The organization can determine if employees feel that they are being given the proper tools to succeed, and if they feel that they are making contributions and if those contributions are appreciated. Companies can ask employees if they feel that they are making a difference in the community and if they feel that their abilities being fully utilized. By talking to employees an organization can hear opportunities for improvement measure degrees of job satisfaction; they can learn of challenges faced by their star performers and make adjustments to policies or procedures. Hearing the answers to these types of questions can drive retention among staff (Henderson, 2014). Studies also show that employers who accommodate their employees' desire to balance work and personal goals may also have higher retention rates. Suggestions to achieve this goal include providing better cafeteria benefits, flexible work schedules, quality-of-life programs, on-site day care, and even elder care (Smola and Sutton, 2002).

### **Work life balance**

Work-life balance occurs when it is possible for an employee to be satisfied at both work and home without one causing conflict with the other. Companies that offer individuals an

opportunity to manage their own time, provide the individual with the means to determine when to focus on each aspect of his or her life. Work- life policies and organizations that promote family-friendly environments at the workplace, have been shown to decrease turnover. These practices have been shown to decrease employee stress, improve job satisfaction, and have a positive impact on an employee's decision to remain with a firm (Presbitero, Roxas, & Chadee, 2016).

There has been a shift in society in regards to what makes an attractive workplace, things like a defined pension and benefit plan may be represented in a more flexible package. Factors affecting prospect of professional development and job security have changed. These shifts can be attributed to generational differences, with the younger generations preferences coming to the forefront. These new workers value flexibility in hours and work environment, leading edge technology, recognition, and serving a good cause. All generations still rate compensation and benefits as the number one category in terms of correlation to retention but work-life policies play a large role in retention of valued employees. Companies can offer flexible scheduling were employees have the flexibility to arrange their hours were they are physically at the office to suit their needs, in return they may perform work duties while at their residence. This freedom allows for keeping Dr. appointments, attending teacher conferences, or caring for elderly family members. Job sharing is another example of a benefit that allows more freedom for work-life balance. Two employees share the responsibilities and compensation for one full time position at a company. Compressed work weeks, where employees work longer days during the work week in exchange for additional time off through extended weekends or shorter working days within the same pay period. Employees may enjoy this options to allow for a day off during the week, or possibly arranging their workdays so as to miss heavy traffic times on their commute.

Alternating locations is an additional flextime arrangement although together with shift time, not necessarily seen as providing a great benefit to many. Allowing the customizing of schedules within certain time frames can allow for even more flexibility than compressed workweeks. In a results only work environment, employees are allowed to work when and however they want as long as required projects are completed by a deadline. Paid family care and maternity leave, as well as sick leave, and paternal leave are efforts by companies to allow employees more time with important issues outside of work (Arenofsky, 2017). There is no one universal way to provide employees with work-life balance. Companies have their own unique solutions which suit their target employee. At VMware employees have opportunities to practice dance or take a gym break in between work sessions. Managers feel that by allowing this type of flexibility and the freedom to make strategic decisions promotes leadership and creativity. VMware also celebrates its diversity by supporting activities related to the many ethnicities and cultural heritages represented by its employees. W by Worth allows employees to build their own work hours. If an employee has a family illness or needs time at home, they are allowed the flexibility to perform their duties from outside the office. Fetch Robotics combines the concept of a flexible work schedule with maintaining a fun atmosphere at the workplace, which sometimes includes games of laser tag. Management feels that the playfulness increases energy and creativity and employees feel a report feeling a reduction in stress knowing that they can take time off when needed. Urban Airship has a culture club that engages employees and the community by hosting events like game nights, service projects, and pancake breakfasts. The company also invests in its employees by providing an expenses paid vacation every three years to provide an opportunity for employees to relax and reset. Urban Airship also makes it possible for employees to contribute a full day's work from any location. Moz gives its employees the

ability to manage themselves and grow professionally and personally. The company hires remote employees, but takes steps to ensure that they feel part of the team. Individuals career trajectories are tracked and compared with their goals and feedback is provided along the way. Omnigon plans outings to exciting destinations and hosts happy hour with foosball tournaments once a week. They have on site massages, an espresso bar, as well as a fully stocked pantry. Windsor Circle does community service as a team. Each quarter the company has a team day when employees spend half of the day learning new skills and the other half volunteering downtown for childhood education organizations. Ascend HR Corp's allows employees to work from home, but also provides a laid back office environment that allows them to bring their dogs to work. AddThis has many perks, but the main focus is on providing free food all day long, including lunch catered daily. They also have an open leave policy that encourages employees to take time off as they see fit; their culture is built on trust and mutual responsibility. Employees can also work from home or remotely. Plated provides spinning and yoga class, and has a monthly book club. Employees are invited to try new food products before they are offered for delivery. Employees at Pinsight describe their culture as being idea focused and creative. Employees feel as though they have the freedom and flexibility to operate as a startup company while having support and access to resources from Sprint. The company also provides a wide variety of recreational games on site where employees have free access to enjoy as they see fit (Kalish, n.d.).

Managers, specifically first line supervisors, may have a substantial effect on an employees work-life balance experience. Sturges and Guest (2004), found that the newly employed felt their degree of work-life conflict was lessened with support from their employer and the degree of consideration felt for their non-work lives. Researchers have identified specific behaviors that

affect perceived support of work-life balance: Coaching, encouraging development and growth, creating a positive work culture, treating employees with fairness, and building trust. Coaching similar to life coaching can be achieved by managers when they concentrate their coaching efforts toward the personal growth of employees as opposed to coaching to benefit the organization. The goal of this type of coaching is to help individuals realize their potential and make a positive change in their lives. With the goal being work-life balance, coaches look at situations and reflect on how individuals might use their strengths to improve an undesirable situation (Hawksley, 2007). There are three main aspects of coaching according to Pavur (2013): training and development, health and self-actualization, and adaption and resilience. Work-life balance falls under the self-actualization category, which is meant to promote wellness and personal growth of the employee. Even though the coaching is focused on the individual, the company still gains benefits. Coaching that assists in achieving work-life balance leads to individuals feeling more confident, better able to deal with conflict, be more productive, be absent less often, and provide a better customer experience. Successful managerial coaching also has been shown to help employees performance improve through increase in problem solving skills and increase the ability to achieve work-life balance and encourage employee retention. In addition to coaching, managers can strive to support an individual's growth and development through training and mentoring. Through these processes employees' may become more competent and efficient and learn how to better allocate resources, like time, and learn to make better decisions in regards to achieving work-life balance. As an employee becomes more efficient and competent they also develop the ability to take on more challenging assignments, which can help to retain an employee for two reasons; one is that they may be more eligible for advancement and secondly, younger employees get bored performing non-stimulating tasks and

this would help them be capable of higher impact projects. When managers provide employees with opportunities for personal development and growth, they give these employees what is necessary to complete their tasks more efficiently, which affects the balance felt between work and non-work activities. Managers can positively influence organizational culture by acknowledging that employees have a life outside of work, and that it is important to balance the two. Work often encroaches on personal time, this concern led Gurvis and Patterson (2005) to report that work-life balance issues are often the cause of workplace retention issues. Although an organization may have certain policies in place that seem to support an employee experiencing work-life balance, it is more important whether or not these policies are implemented and its culture actually supports these policies. An employee's perception of the organization's support of work-life balance is largely dependent on their immediate supervisor. Their direct supervisor communicates organizational values, expectations, and the implementation of policies. Values are subject to interpretation, so the manager's opinion in flexibility and understanding influence the interpretation of these values by the employee (Gurvis & Patterson, 2005). Being supportive of work-life balance has been determined as necessary to an organization's success, this includes emotional and instrumental. Instrumental support, such as policy and procedure, and emotional support, such as showing appropriate understanding or expectations, are important to the implementation of practices to support work-life balance (Grawitch, Barber, & Justice, 2010). Younger generations prefer a nurturing environment and the quality of the manager is the top factor in determining that environment. Despite younger generations desire for work-life balance, they also want to be challenged. An organization with a self-directed culture provides them with an opportunity to control when, how, and where they choose to accomplish their work, which leads to more control over achieving work-life balance

(Ng, E.S.W., Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). Allowing employees flexible work practices affords them more discretion in how they allocate their limited resources, such as time and energy. The organizations culture plays an integral role in the employee's perception of the degree of support offered in their quest for work-life balance. It is important that management reinforce supporting policies and send a consistent supportive message to individuals wanting to lead a balanced life (Janasz, Behson, Jonsen, & Lankau, 2013) Managers can impact employees' levels of work-life balance through their actions and how their employees perceive them. Employees who feel that their manager is fair and just experience a higher level of work-life balance (Siegel, Post, Brackner, Fishman, & Garden, 2005). Managers who are aware of their employees' perceptions can ensure that their actions are conveying the desired message in regards to work-life balance. It is usually the responsibility of the manager to implement the policies intended to be supportive of work-life balance and it is important that they are genuinely understanding and sympathetic to employees' concerns regarding work-life balance. Research shows that if employees feel that fair and just policies are in place, they have a lower rate of perceived work-life conflict. Studies also showed that in instances of high work-life conflict, the effects were not reflected by a lack of organizational commitment. Managers promote the concept of fairness through communication, assisting in maintaining the desired culture, and taking employees views into consideration when implementing policies. This magnifies the importance of the manager in conveying a policy of work-life balance in that being perceived as fair breeds trust and employees are likely to trust that their employer will implement and follow through with balance friendly policies in a consistent and fair manner and employees will not fear negative ramifications when they take advantage of such policies. Managers who are perceived as fair and understanding of employees' needs will form a more trusting relationship with their workers

and the workers will respond reciprocally and promote a feeling of trust to their manager. The trust and understanding of work-life values and the reciprocal relationship with their managers will lead to employees experiencing greater work-life balance (Gilley, Waddell, Hall, Avery, & Gilley, 2015).

### **Conclusion**

The U.S. economy is slowly “returning” to a new normal that is characterized by a higher level of unemployment, permanent job losses in sectors which employed less-educated individuals, and an overall increase in demand for a more educated highly skilled workforce. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, during the recession, companies engaged in massive downsizing and restructuring, slashing more than 8.5 million jobs in the United States. Now the pendulum has begun to swing back, with monthly job creation projected to return to about 200,000 per month. Employment is projected to increase by 11.5 million over the 2016-26 decade. Since the end of the great recession, employment is up in most industries and as employment opportunities rise, so do voluntary turnover rates as skilled workers are willing to go mobile in the workforce in order to find the job that meets their needs. As the number of job opening increases, this will mean good news for job-seekers and challenges for companies needing to add skilled workers. With more competition for skilled workers, companies now need to stand out to job applicants who have more opportunities from which to choose. Organizations must understand the motivations of job candidates, understand that they are looking for the right fit, and present the values of their company and qualities and culture of the work environment that they provide. If all other aspects are equal, candidates will choose the employer who has the strongest employer brand. In younger generations studies show that job-

seekers may choose a lesser paying job at a company with a more positive image. As the competition grows more intense and brand becomes more significant, company leaders understand that their ability to attract talent depends on more than the job description; it is also based on things like citizenship, honesty, and culture.

In twenty years the Baby Boomers will be all but retired and the workforce will consist of Generations X, Y and Z. The idea of a universal psychological contract promising a lifetime of wages and benefits in exchange for loyalty and hard work will be obsolete and give way to organizations offering their own unique employee value proposition projected in their organizations culture and brand. Given the coming retirement of the Baby Boomer Generation and their replacement by Generation Y, it will be important for companies to understand generational shifts in values in the work place. Most studies show that Gen X and Gen Y rate work as less central to their lives and put a higher value on leisure time than generations before them. This trend is expected to continue into Gen Z as well. When considering recruitment of members of these generations it will be important for companies to focus on things like flexible schedules and work-life balance.

Human Resource Management has been challenged with maximizing production and increasing the bottom line since its introduction to the work place. Various principles and techniques have been utilized over the years, customized to the values, beliefs and wants of the generations making up the work force. In addition to guiding managers in how to motivate their employees, HRM has also been task with the challenge of attracting and retaining the best employees. Sometimes this is accomplished more easily, such as during the great recession from 2000-2009 when unemployment was high and individuals in the workforce were less particular about their employer. Pay cuts and layoffs were the norm and individuals felt fortunate to have

jobs. Human resource managers could select the best candidates through an interview process and feel confident their offer would be accepted. Now that we are in recovery from the recession it has become an employee's market and human resource departments find themselves in what is now being described as a war for talent. During our history, attraction and retention of quality employees has been accomplished by offering a higher wage, better benefits package, or better pension plan. Employees were motivated to do well in the hopes of keeping their job for a lifetime and therefore enjoying the retirement benefits provided by their employer. Loyalty to employers was high and it was not uncommon for an individual to spend their entire career with one corporation. Generations of late have seen these opportunities all but disappear. Money is no longer the motivating factor it once was. Work life balance, schedule flexibility, freedom to express ideas, team atmosphere, and personal beliefs meshing with those of the company you work for, have become more important. Individuals want to work in a place whose beliefs and values mirror their own; they want to work for companies that exhibit social responsibility, and have a reputation of operating with fairness and integrity. Companies who are able to establish themselves as a great place to work will have the competitive advantage in the marketplace of the future. One of the ways organizations are adapting to the changing marketplace is through the use of social media. Prior to social media and the advancement of technology, recruiters and job-seekers alike, depended on help wanted ads, networking, employee referrals, and cold calling to select a possible fit when seeking a potential employee or employer. Recruiters would try to reach as many applicants as possible, and job-seekers would send out numerous job applications, and they would depend on the interview process to determine whether there was a match between the organization and the individual. Now that online job boards, and various social media sites are available, the process has become more personalized and targeted. Recruiters can

access sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter and learn a lot about potential candidates. The same can be said from the perspective of the job-seeker, applicants want to hear firsthand what it is like to work in that organization and social media is often where they start their investigation. It is therefore important for organizations to make use of these systems as a means for showcasing their individual personalities, cultures, values, and their brand. An organizations employer brand can communicate that it is a great place to work, it can be used by a company to showcase their unique employment offerings or value propositions to potential and existing employees. A brand distinguishes one organization from the next, it attracts like-minded prospects and repels those unlikely to match the existing culture. The first step for a company in defining their brand is to develop an Employer Value Proposition (EVP). This is defined as a set of offerings that are unique to an organization that has a positive influence on target candidates and employee. The EVP is an agreement between an organization and an employee; It is what unique characteristics a company has to offer in return for the employee's contributions and performance. Through the use of pictures, videos, and message boards an organization can closely monitor its output on social media and maintain a focus on developing positive aspects of its organization, that can lead to a positive corporate reputation or brand. Studies have also shown that a positive corporate reputation increases a job-seekers likeliness to apply at that place of work. With the younger generations attachment to technology, including social media as part of their everyday life, it will be imperative that corporations involve social media as part of their human resource management program, particularly in regards to recruiting and retention of employees.

One of the goals of a Human Resource Management (HRM) system is to attract and retain employees who are considered valuable to the company. Various systems of HRM have been

utilized in the past and these systems are constantly updating. When viewed through generations, the methods match the values. Older generations were motivated by opportunities for pay increases earned through hard work, and the promise of a pension after a lifetime of giving to their company. The Silent Generation is all but removed from the work force and the Baby Boomers are nearing retirement age. The future of our work force will consist of gen X, the millennials (Y gen), and the Z gen (I gen). When considering these future employees, studies show that they are more likely more enticed by a particular companies' reputation and values as opposed to only considering the dollar amount offered as a starting salary. Where it was once commonplace place to work for the same company for a life time; the workforce has now become a place of relatively high turnover and it is commonplace for employees to work for several employers over their careers. Loyalty to one's employer is not based on a regular paycheck and an opportunity to climb the ladder; younger generations are mobile and have shown that they will leave their employer if they feel that their employers values no longer match their own. As the economy moves from an employer's market to an employee's market, competition for the best and brightest will become more fierce. Research has demonstrated that newer generations are more concerned with the image, values, integrity, and therefore employer brand than previous generations. In order for companies to effectively attract and retain these employees, they should be expending efforts to bolster their Employee Value Proposition and employer brand image to a positive one. Image and reputation can attract employees, but the employer brand and EVP must be genuine in order to retain them. The concern for retention comes from knowing that it is imperative in order for an organization to be successful, there are many costs involved in losing and replacing employees. Turnover can affect an organization by reducing morale, having a negative effect on relations with the community, resulting in a loss of

knowledge, a drop off in the quality of production, a demise of employee relationships, as well as having a negative effect to the bottom line of the organization. Organizations should research and ensure they are offering competitive salaries, benefits, and incentive packages, and they should make sure that they are in the habit of offering adequate recognition for a job well done with incentives and recognition; career development and advancement opportunities should exist for employees from within the organization and training opportunities should exist to bolster employees' qualifications for those positions. Corporations should work to create an environment conducive to achieving work-life balance. Work-life balance is of particular interest for retention as it has been identified as one of the most important factors that younger generations take into account when considering a workplace. Whether or not genuine work-life policies are in place and carried out is a major factor when measuring employees' intention to quit. Managers also play a role in retention of employees through coaching and support of growth and development through training and mentoring. Managers can positively influence organizational culture by acknowledging that employees have a life outside of work, and that it is important to balance the two. A manager is responsible for communicating organizational values, expectations, and the implementation of policies. Younger generations prefer a nurturing environment and the quality of the manager is the top factor in determining that environment. It is usually the responsibility of the manager to implement the policies intended to be supportive of work-life balance and it is important that they are genuinely understanding and sympathetic to employees' concerns in that regard. Research shows that if employees feel that fair and just policies are in place, they have a lower rate of perceived work-life conflict. The trust and understanding of work-life values and the reciprocal relationship with their managers will lead to employees experiencing greater work-life balance and decrease their desire to seek employment

elsewhere. Employees want to have a good working relationship with their supervisors and supervisors achieve a positive relationship with their subordinates by being approachable, demonstrating respect, providing support and encouragement, listening to concerns, and showing genuine sensitivity.

Successful organizations will develop an employer brand; it will be intentional, monitored, and directed to a targeted audience. The employer brand will be created and delivered utilizing social media sites that are widely used by younger generations today. Once the candidates become employees, the authenticity of the branding message, along with managers who are supportive of the individual and the desired culture of the business, will create an environment of which they will want to remain connected to. The result will be higher productivity, lower turnover costs, and an organization that is able to change with market demands.

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