

The Impact of Social and Emotional Intelligence on Employee Motivation in a Multigenerational Workplace

Caroline Ngonyo Njoroge¹ and Rashad Yazdanifard²

¹ Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, Cyberjaya, Malaysia

Received: 10 December 2013 Accepted: 1 January 2014 Published: 15 January 2014

Abstract

In today's globally competitive corporate environment, effective employee motivation is essential to the success of any organization. The classical perspective of management was essentially analytical and rational, and employee's emotions were not considered. Nonetheless, it is crucial for organizations to recognize that employee motivation goes beyond the usual monetary reward systems for a multigenerational workforce. In motivating today's human capital, organizations have to engage their minds and captivate their hearts, which can be achieved by incorporating social and emotional intelligence. Social and emotional intelligence equip managers with skills to turn challenges of generational differences into positives. These skills assist managers attend to individual employee needs irrespective of their generation. Socially and emotionally intelligent managers enable their organizations to offer an environment that motivates and develops employees despite the generational differences in the workplace. This study discusses the implications of emotional and social intelligences by outlining how these skills can enable organization to cultivate cultures that enhance employee motivation.

Index terms— employee motivation, multigenerational workplace, social intelligence, emotional intelligence, generational differences.

1 Introduction

In the current global economy, companies are striving to survive in a highly competitive environment. An organization may have managers endowed with a myriad of impressive technical skills and extensive educations. But, can they effectively relate to the employees and other managers? Can they motivate the employees to be productive? Presently, employee retention challenges are common to managers regardless of the company's size, technology and market focus (Manzoor, 2011). One outstanding challenge is the management of a workforce that has notable variations in perspective and goals due to generational differences (Glass, 2007). These differences must be addressed in an effort to recruit, retain and motivate the best talent in an organization.

A multigenerational workforce is essential to the growth of an organization. The benefits of working in a multigenerational workplace surpass the challenges involved (Hughes, 2011). But the big question remains, how to keep employees motivated in a multigenerational workplace. The answer to this question is as diverse as the workforce itself. Organizations need to find ways to retain and make the most of their talent. Additionally, they need to find ways to meet the challenges of a fastevolving multigenerational workforce (Gladwell & Dorwart et al., 2010).

In today's globally competitive business environment, successful employee motivation in a multigenerational workplace is still one of the biggest challenges to many organizations. Human capital has become an organization's main asset; its success is dependent on the employee performance. Ability and motivation are joint functions used to describe employee performance (Devadass, 2011). Employee motivation is an intricate and sophisticated

subject; considerable studies on employee motivation have been conducted, providing numerous models and theories on motivation. These numerous literatures provide mechanisms that organizations can adapt to keep their multigenerational workforce motivated. There is no exact formula to the exact mechanism of motivating employees as every organization offers a unique workplace. Therefore, organizations must focus on employee motivation practices that meet employees' needs regardless of age. Managers need to be aware of a variety of employee motivational factors and the changes in priorities of these factors over time.

The notion of emotional and social intelligence in management has been popularized by academia due to its positive impact on employee performance (Goleman, 2006, Riggio & Reichard, 2008, Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008 ?? Albercht, 2009 and Emmerling & Boyatzis, 2012). Hence, many companies are changing towards this notion. Part of the answers to keeping a multigenerational workforce motivated lay in social intelligence principles since they give organization tangible ways of managing and harnessing diversity. A socially intelligent workforce is able to work harmoniously as a strong collective team. Moreover, it is able to develop relationships and business networks that will promote the interests of the organizations over the long I workforce is passionate, motivated and inspired (Emmerling & Boyatzis, 2012).

This study intends to give a general review of the concept of emotional and social intelligence as integral parts of employee motivation in a multigenerational workplace. First, a general overview of the common mechanisms used by organizations for employee motivation in a multigenerational workplace is given. Next, the key elements of emotional and social intelligence as described in literature are outlined. Finally, a discussion on the implication of social and emotional intelligence when used as skills in leadership is provided.

2 II.

3 Multigenerational Workplace

Majority of today's multigenerational workplaces are represented by four different generations of employees, namely Traditionalist (Matures/Veterans), Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y (Millennial) (Gladwell & Dorwart et al., 2010). Multigenerational workplaces can bring out the best and worst of the organization and their employees (Bennett & Pitt et al., 2012). Consequently, managers must understand the values and attitudes of each generation to effectively influence the different generations' satisfaction in such a diverse workplace (Gladwell & Dorwart et al., 2010). The positive impacts of a multigenerational workforce can lead to increased productivity among the employees and ultimately a successful company.

A successful multigenerational workplace understands the dynamics and challenges of generational differences and is able to design a workspace that empowers effective communication and transfer of knowledge across the generations (Hughes, 2011). With decades of experience, the older generation conveys wisdom to the younger generation, who in turn convey fresh ideas and technical skills. Nonetheless, challenges of communication and cooperation within the generations are evident on a daily basis in a multigenerational workplace (Glass, 2007). Hughes (2011) further indicates that despite the challenges of accommodating the needs of its multigenerational workforce, a company creates an unprecedented opportunity in its overall business performance.

Different research literature show that employees from different generations require different management strategies when it comes to recruiting, retaining and motivating employees (Glass, 2007 ?? Hudges, 2011, Bennett & Pitt et al., 2012). To effectively manage a motivated multigenerational workforce, managers must take to account the diverse values and attitudes of each generation that may influence different generations' drive in the workplace (Gladwell & Dorwart et al., 2010). Understanding what makes each generation's talent tick is critical to optimizing an organization's culture.

Interestingly, most challenges within a multigenerational workplace are associated with the more traditional differences of gender and ethnicity (Rathman, 2011). Management stereotypes believe that there are huge differences among the generations in terms of employee motivating factors. Nonetheless, recent studies show that different generations in the workplace have more in common than early literature shows. Compelling research has shown that employees are motivated by equally similar things in the workplace (Wong & Gardiner et al., 2008).

4 III.

5 Employee Motivation

The English dictionary defines motivation 'as the reason(s) one has for acting or behaving in a particular way'. Devadass (2011) describes Employee Motivation as a set of both environmental and intrapersonal forces that influence an employee's work related behavior. Hence, employee motivation can be seen to cuts across many disciplinary boundaries such as psychology, human resource management, economics, sociology and organizational behavior.

In an effort to increase effectual job performance amongst employee, many organizations' management struggle to implement effective employee motivation policies (Guillen & Saris, 2009). Manzoor (2011) illustrates that motivating employees to perform to the best of their ability even in strenuous circumstances has remained one of the most challenging tasks faced by managers. In our rapidly changing workplaces, employee motivation remains a crucial survival strategy for many organizations. When employees are motivated, they become responsive to

the organization's goals and objective and can efficiently direct their talent towards achieving them (Manzoor, 2011).

Early studies show that monetary rewards had a great influential value as a motivational technique. In management science, Fredrick Taylor attributes money to have a supreme effect to maintain and motivate industrial workers towards higher performance and greater productivity. Over time, organizations have used mostly extrinsic rewards (increased pay, bonuses, promotion) as a management tool to encourage high employee performance as well as maintain high employee motivation (Ali & Ahmed, 2009). Nohria and associates defined a new model of employee motivation. In this model they argued that managers try to increase employee motivation by satisfying the four fundamental emotional drives; that is the drive to acquire, the drive to bond, the drive to comprehend and the drive to defend (Nohria & Groysberg et al., 2008). Elsewhere, Rukhmani (2010) suggests that motivation is purely a leadership behavior that comes from The presences of numerous theories, models and views on motivation continue to indicate that employee motivation is an intricate and sophisticated subject. More so, in a multigenerational workplace where monetary rewards have become less effective in keeping employees motivated. The younger generations of employees are driven by advancements in their careers (Wong & Gardiner et al., 2008). Subsequently, recognition and empowerment are playing an essential role in enhancing employee motivation in today's multigenerational workplace (Manzoor, 2011).

IV.

6 Social Intelligence

The psychologist Edward Thorndike was the first to explore the concept of social intelligence in 1920. He defined social intelligence as the ability to think, understand, manage and act appropriately in social human relationships. It was not until years later that Daniel Goleman and Karl Albrecht further explored and popularized this concept. According to Goleman (2006), social intelligence is concerned with the best interests of others; hence it goes beyond sheer self-interest. Social intelligence is basically understanding and getting along with people, above and beyond the skills to interact and cooperate successfully with them (Albrecht, 2009). Hence, social intelligence can be defines as the ability to interact effectively with others in any social situation (Crowne, 2009). Hopkins and Bilimoria (2008) imply that to be considered socially intelligent one has to be adept at human relationships not just about them. Emmerling and Boyatzis (2012) describe social intelligence competency as the ability to be aware of, understand and act on emotional information about others that leads to effective performance.

Karl Albrecht (2009) elaborates the five major dimensions of social intelligence as situational radar, presence/bearing, authenticity, clarity and empathy. Nonetheless, the consistent aspects of social intelligence among all researches in this field include: knowledge of the social situations, accurate interpretation of the social situation and the skills to behave appropriately in that social situation. Social intelligence requires skills that allow employees to get along with one another (Riggio & Reichard, 2008). Karl Albrecht (2009) also terms people with low social intelligence as 'toxic' people. They make others feel angry, inadequate, frustrated and devalued through their toxic behaviors that directly contribute to conflict, alienation and worse, animosity in the workplace (Wawra, 2009). On the other hand, people with high social intelligence have a 'nourishing' personality and presumably possess magnetic powers that attract others to them (Albrecht, 2009).

Joseph and Lakshmi (2010) elaborate that an individual's social intelligence depends on a lifelong learning process. Socially intelligent employees exhibit confidence in social situations, demonstrate a genuine interest in their fellow workmates, are assertive and appropriate in expressing their feelings and emotions, are capable of adapting, understanding and responding effectively, and show a great level of self-awareness (Joseph and Lakshmi, 2010).

V.

7 Emotional Intelligence

Daniel Goleman is credited to popularizing the concept of emotional intelligence to the academia and general public in 1995 through his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Emotional intelligence as defined by Goleman (2006) is the ability to identify, understand, use and manage one's and other's emotional states effectively. This involves an intellectual process that leads to the use of those feelings to motivate, plan and achieve. Emotional intelligence can be used as a term that refers to the ability to recognize, manage and influence one's and other's emotions (Keating & Harper et al., 2013). Therefore, emotional intelligence can basically be described as an interconnection between feelings and thinking; Chopra & Kanji (2010) put emotional intelligence in simple terms as an individual's selfperceived skills of their emotional abilities.

There are four major clusters of emotional behaviors as outlined by Goleman and Boyatzis (2008); self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Even so, Emmerling & Boyatzis (2012) felt that emotional intelligence is best understood as a competency. They went further to describe emotional intelligence competency as an individual's ability to perceive, understand and use their own emotional status leading to effective performance. According to the trait-based model (Petridges & Pita et al., 2007) emotional intelligence can be used to refer to an individual's perception of their own emotional abilities, and encompasses behavioral dispositions and self-perceived emotional capabilities.

In the book, Salovey (1995) claimed that emotional intelligence could be a better success predictor of job performance and leadership ability than IQ (Salovey, 2010). Further studies show that emotional intelligence plays an important role in the organization, direction and motivation of human activity (Chopra & Kanji, 2010). Individuals who are emotionally intelligent exhibit better skills in people-oriented services such as recruiting, sales, management intelligence is highly significant in development of human potential, teamwork, effective leadership, stress reduction, creativity and innovation (Chopra & Kanji, 2010).

8 VI.

9 Discussion

It is not new that workplaces have generational differences, but the magnitude of these differences is new and poses unique challenges for organizations worldwide. Today's multigenerational workplaces require that organizations understand and value diversity in order to benefit from it; after all, the need to feel important and respected cuts through all generations. In the current era, employee needs are significantly changing and organizations are in a constant search of motivation.

A review of common employee motivation mechanisms in the workplace reveals that organizations acknowledge that employees from every generation need to feel engaged and integrated in a purpose-driven organization culture. In a multigenerational workplace, a one-size-fits-all approach to employee motivation rarely produces the desired results (Wong & Gardiner et al., 2008). Some of the common mechanisms that have led many organizations to maintain a motivated workforce include provision of work-life balance, sharing of rewards, engaging employees with customized rewards, offering benefits to everyone and building lasting relationships through open communication (Gladwell & Dorwart et al., 2010). These mechanisms have been positive to some extent in establishing successful employee-employer relationships. Despite the positives of these mechanisms, the continually changing workplace demographics mean that managers still face the challenge of building exceptional workplace cultures where motivation and innovation are employee-driven.

Emotional Intelligence has emerged as a measurable skill that managers can conveniently use in informing successful recruitment, retention and motivation skills within an organization (Sharma, 2012). In a multigenerational organization, employees see things differently depending on a generation's mindset and individual perspective. Emotional intelligence gives the multigenerational workforce the ability to recognize social cues and respond appropriately in a manner that makes evident their empathy of others' perspectives (Emmerling & Boyatzis, 2012). Managers with a high level of emotional intelligence can quickly determine their employees' needs and respond to them efficiently. Hence, emotional intelligence is a crucial factor in determining a manager's work efficiency. Managers who have developed a certain level of emotional intelligence are able to make time for their employees. This way they have a great awareness of the team's needs. Further, it enables them to be able to provide their employees with regular effective feedback that gives the employees an opportunity to improve their performance in the organization. Emotional Intelligence is valuable to a multigenerational workplace in that it enhances employee productivity, job satisfaction and leadership competency; in addition, it creates mutual employee-employer relationships which increase employee's commitment to an organization.

Social intelligence is quickly becoming a global requirement and a critical element of success for organizations. The process of becoming more socially intelligent involves investigating what motivates, drives and influences people (Sternberg, 2007). Managers who do not possess social intelligence lack social skills. They do not know how to genuinely connect to people much less inspire, motivate and lead them effectively. On the other hand, socially intelligent managers focus on people, motivating them to high levels of performance. These Managers help their employees develop to their highest potential. Moreover, they demonstrate the emotions and behaviors they wish their employees to adapt. This aspect of social intelligence enables managers to effectively establish an exceptional workplace culture that is inclusive and motivated yet diverse. A socially intelligent company is able to have a deeper understanding of what motivates individuals and how better to utilize the diversity of a multigenerational workforce. Social intelligence is useful in many ways: it helps in the creation of a sense of identity for the individual in addition to emphasizing self-management and interpersonal skills; more importantly, it focuses on thinking and resultant behavior within social contexts.

Companies that encompass both emotional and social intelligence as part of their culture can effectively use their employee's potential and have wonderful achievements. When both emotional and social intelligence are valued in a multigenerational workplace where there is so much diversity, everyone's ideas are respected, teamwork is enhanced and toxic behaviors are controlled. Investing in a corporate culture that allows employees freedom and space is an essence of what makes many organizations successful. Employees will feel empowered and engaged when they have a choice. A workplace that provides its employees with personal choices will attract top talent employees no matter their generational differences. Despite the generational differences, people are motivated by interesting work, new challenges and increased responsibility, which are mostly intrinsic motivating factors over the commonly assumed extrinsic factors. Employee motivation is dependent on an individual's way of perceiving things. Emotional intelligence and social intelligence help co-existing generations in the workplace to understand and value each other despite their vast differences in perspectives and goals. The two VII.

10 Conclusion

Companies continue to struggle with finding the most effective way to keep employees motivated in a multigenerational workplace. People from different generations and different cultures are transforming office life. The popular notion is that generational differences in the work place lead to differences in personality and motivation. Most personality differences observed are better explained by age. Job security and immersion to work are among motivational drivers that cut across all generations in the modern workplace. Hence, it is important for managers to acquire high level skills on social and emotional intelligence. These skills will assist them to attend to individual differences irrespective of generations. Managers who value emotional and social intelligence find it easy to turn the challenges of generational differences to positives.

Evidently, emotional and social intelligence have the potential to positively impact employees' behaviors with outcomes such as job satisfaction, positive work attitudes, self-efficacy, and leadership potential and change management. When people with different backgrounds cooperate, creativity and innovation happens. The result from this diversity in the workplace is that people learn how to communicate and generate ideas that usually creates high-impact change with low economic and emotional risk and high economic and emotional gain. Given such diverse behavioral outcomes social and emotional intelligence become key success factors for employee motivation in a multigenerational workplace.¹



Figure 1: 1 2014

¹()© 2014 Global Journals Inc. (US)

[European Journal of Business And Management] , *European Journal of Business And Management* 3 (3) p. .

[Antonakis et al. ()] 'Does leadership need emotional intelligence?'. J Antonakis , N M Ashkanasy , M T Dasborough . *The Leadership Quarterly* 2009. 20 (2) p. .

[Rukhmani et al. ()] 'Effect of Leadership Styles on Organizational Effectiveness'. K Rukhmani , M Ramesh , J Jayakrishnan . *European Journal of Social Sciences* 2010. 15 (3) p. .

[Emmerling and Boyatzis ()] 'Emotional and social intelligence competencies: cross cultural implications. Cross Cultural Management'. R J Emmerling , R E Boyatzis . *An International Journal* 2012. 19 (1) p. .

[Keating et al. ()] 'Emotional intelligence dilutes the toxins'. R J Keating , S C Harper , D J Glew . *Industrial Engineer* 2013. 45 (6) p. 30.

[Chopra and Kanji ()] 'Emotional intelligence: a catalyst for inspirational leadership and management excellence'. P K Chopra , G K Kanji . *Total Quality Management* 2010. 21 (10) p. .

[Nohria et al. ()] 'Employee motivation: a powerful new model'. N Nohria , B Groysberg , L Lee . *Harvard Business Review* 2008. 86 p. 78.

[Devadass ()] 'Employees motivation in organizations: an integrative literature review'. R Devadass . *International Proceedings of Economics Development & Research* 2011. p. 10.

[Rathman ()] *Four Generations at Work. Offshore*, V Rathman . 2011. 71 p. .

[Wong et al. ()] 'Generational differences in personality and motivation: do they exist and what are the implications for the workplace'. M Wong , E Gardiner , W Lang , L Coulon . *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 2008. 23 (8) p. .

[Goleman ()] D Goleman . *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Social Relationships*, (New York, Bantam Books) 2006.

[Manzoor ()] *Impact of employees motivation on organizational effectiveness*, Q Manzoor . 2011.

[Gladwell et al. ()] 'Importance of and satisfaction with organizational benefits for a multigenerational workforce'. N J Gladwell , C E Dorwart , C F Stone , C A Hammond . *Journal Of Park And Recreation Administration* 2010. 28 (2) p. .

[Sternberg ()] *Intelligence, competence, and expertise. Handbook of Competence and Motivation*, R J Sternberg . 2007. p. .

[Guillen and Saris ()] *Making sense of managerial competencies: a motive-based approach*, L Guillen , W E Saris . 2009. (INSEAD Working Paper)

[Hughes ()] 'Managing the multigenerational workforce: from the GI generation to the millennials'. L W Hughes . *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 2011. 32 (6) p. .

[Sharma ()] 'Measuring social and emotional intelligence competencies in the indian context. Cross Cultural Management'. R Sharma . *An International Journal* 2012. 19 (1) p. .

[Hopkins and Bilimoria ()] 'Social and emotional competencies predicting success for male and female executives'. M M Hopkins , D Bilimoria . *Journal of Management Development* 2008. 27 (1) p. .

[Wawra ()] 'Social Intelligence'. D Wawra . *European Journal of English Studies* 2009. 13 (2) p. .

[Goleman and Boyatzis ()] 'Social intelligence and the biology of leadership'. D Goleman , R Boyatzis . *Growth: Journal Of the Management Training Institute* 2008. 36 (2) p. .

[Joseph and Lakshmi ()] 'Social intelligence, a key to success'. C Joseph , S Lakshmi . *The IUP Journal of Soft Skills* 2010. 4 (3) p. .

[Albrecht ()] 'Social Intelligence: The New Science of Success'. K Albrecht . *Personal Excellence* 2009. 10 (12) p. 5.

[Riggio and Reichard ()] 'The emotional and social intelligences of effective leadership: an emotional and social skill approach'. R E Riggio , R J Reichard . *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 2008. 23 (2) p. .

[Ali and Ahmed ()] 'The impact of reward and recognition programs on employee's motivation and satisfaction: an empirical study'. R Ali , M S Ahmed . *International Review of Business Research Papers* 2009. 5 (4) p. .

[O'boyle et al. ()] 'The relation between emotional intelligence and job performance: a meta-analysis'. E H O'boyle , R H Humphrey , J M Pollack , T H Hawver , P A Story . *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 2011. 32 (5) p. .

[Crowne ()] 'The relationships among social intelligence, emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence'. K A Crowne . *Organization Management Journal* 2009. 6 (3) p. .

[Glass ()] 'Understanding generational differences for competitive success'. A Glass . *Industrial And Commercial Training* 2007. 39 (2) p. .

[Bennett et al. ()] *Understanding the impact of generational issues in the workplace. Facilities*, 30 (7/8), J Bennett , M Pitt , S Price . 2012. p. .