# STUDY OF WORK MOTIVATORS ACROSS GENERATIONS

## (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GEN Z)

**Ms. Rachna Bansal**[*]

**Dr. Shradha M Banga***

**Abstract:**

Expectations play a significant role in job selection and as the mindset across different generations is different so are their work motivation factors. The future employees who are currently occupying college benches in higher education institutes (Gen Z) have dynamic mindsets and expectations. The rising army of white collar unemployed youth can be controlled by considering the changed opinion about their job motivators and addressing them. This paper aims to identify the motivating factors that generation Z seeks in a job. The work is an extension of a study by Montana and Petit (2008) which examined the factors that motivate generation X and Y and compared them with pre baby boomers and baby boomers generation.

A descriptive research is carried out to identify the motivating factors of the youngest generation- Gen Z. Respondent were asked to rank top six motivators from a list of twenty four, previously used work motivation factors, based on the check list authored by Leslie E This and Gordon L Lippitt. This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of Motivational Factors among five different generations.

Key Words: Motivation, Motivational Factors, Generation Z, Generational Diversity, Multigenerational workforce.

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[*] Assistant Professor, Sharda University

## Introduction:

For the first time in history four generations are working together (Jimenez, L. 2009; Kyles 2005) categorized as: Traditionalist, Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. World War II generation known as Traditionalist also account for approximately 5 % of the workforce (Jimenez, L. 2009). Whereas, the traditionalist and boomers are moving towards retirement, a new generation: Generation Z, is being ready to enter the workplace. Their up-bringing, schooling and exposure is different from older generations, similarly their expectations from an employer are also different. They are in a process of forming their perception and attitude towards work, authority, and career. It's right time for Businesses to understand about Gen Z and start preparing for them. Organizations have to find out what attracts members of Gen Z in a job and what may be helpful in retaining them. What motivated older generations to work hard might not be considered important by Gen Z. Organizations looking to attract and retain this new generation of employees will need to understand the motivating factors related to job, work environment, pay and benefits etc. It is time to assess what current Gen Z students are seeking as their career motivational priorities for the future in comparison to their predecessors.

**Generational Diversity:** Organizations are facing challenging in managing and motivating the employee who are diverse in terms of race, religion, culture, gender and ethnicity. Out of all the diversity issues one least talked out issue if generational diversity. Generation can be defined as group who shares the birth years and go through the similar experiences in their life. People of one generation develop a common attitude towards the outer world, because they go through the similar experiences into their life. Similarly in organizations also they tend to have a common outlook towards workplace practices and policies like communication pattern, authority structure, values, leadership etc. This common attitude towards world gives them an identity as a generation, which leads to generational diversity. It's important to understand these generational differences in order to leverage benefits from their knowledge and skill set.

**Traditionalist:** They are also known as Veterans, Matures, World War II generation, Silent Generation and Pre-Boomers (Kyles 2005; Jenkins 2008; Bartley, Ladd and Morris 2007; Capezza 2010) and born before 1947. They have experienced Great Depression and witnessed World War-II. They respect authority and follow chain of command and believe in autocratic style of leadership. They believe in direct, formal and written communication. They are dutiful, loyal, disciplined and stable.

**Baby Boomers:** Individuals born between 1945- 1965 are known as Boomers (Kyles 2005; Jenkins 2008; Bartley, Ladd and Morris 2007; Capezza 2010). They have lived through the post war optimism and economic prosperity. They grew up during the era of civil rights, the women's movement and Vietnam War. They are optimistic, hard working and believe in participative style of leadership. They prefer face to face, open and honest communication.

**Gen X:** People born between 1965- 1981 are known as Xers (Kyles 2005; Jenkins 2008; Bartley, Ladd and Morris 2007; Capezza 2010). They were raised at a time of changing values, single parenting or both parents working. They were exposed to technology in the development years of their life. They are more family oriented and need work-life balance. They are skeptical about authority and believe in self directed leadership. They prefer brief and politically correct communication.

**Gen Y:** Generation Y are also known as Millennials and Nexters, youngest generation in today's workforce, born between 1980- 2000 (Kyles 2005; Jenkins 2008; Bartley, Ladd and Morris 2007; Capezza 2010). The major event they have witnessed is 9/11 attack. They have always been around technology. This is a generation of facebook, twitter and linkedin. They have friends without face on their social networks. They are pragmatic, multi-tasker, and socially responsible. They prefer informal, immediate and fast communication. They believe in cooperative and collaborative style of leadership. They have witnessed the changing role of women in society.

**Gen Z:** There is no agreement on the dates of this generation. Some sources tell their starting at the mid or late 1990s whereas others believe it's starting from the mid 2000s. Gen Z includes those who are born since 1995-2009 (Williams 2010; Grayson 2014), and come under age of 19 or under. This is a generation which is still in making. They are the one born with a digital gadget in their hand and obsessed with technology. They are born and live in the era of facebook, twitter, linkdin, and other social networking platforms. They are growing in a world of smartphones, tablets, i-phones. They might have learned to use a smart phone, even before they learned talking. They are more entrepreneurial and tolerant of diversity. Next generation born after 2010 may be called Generation 'Alpha' or 'iGen' (Williams 2010; Gold Coast Bulletin 2009).

**Motivation Concept Building:** To practice motivation it is important to understand motivation as a concept and theories related to it. Motivation is a set of processes that arouse, direct, and maintain human behavior towards attaining some goal (Greenberg and Baron 2009). Motivation can be defined as a process that accounts for an individual's Intensity,

Direction, and persistence of efforts towards a goal (Robbins & Sanghi 2005). From above definition three important elements are identified i.e. intensity, direction and persistence. Individual's behavior and actions are directed towards a goal or motive. Intensity of a behavior is how strong efforts are made to accomplish the task. Most of people consider only intensity element while defining motivation. Direction element includes the alternatives people choose to accomplish a task, which is equally important to intensity element. Final element of motivation is maintaining the consistency into efforts, known as persistence. Motivation requires all three elements- intensity, direction and intensity. As expressed in following model unsatisfied needs leads to tension and discomfort that stimulates drives in an individual. These Drives further triggers an individual to search for various alternatives available (Direction). With one chosen direction and persistence of actions he/she satisfies his/her needs and reduces the tension.
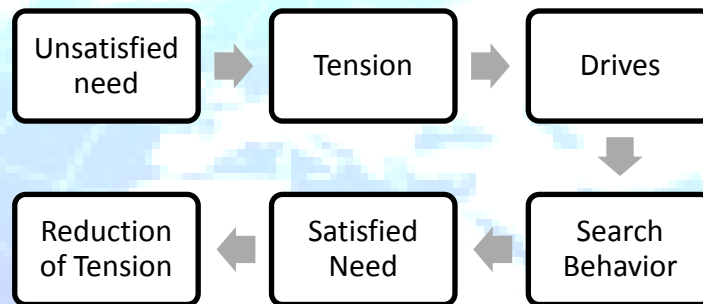


Figure 1: The Motivation Process: Adapted from Organizational Behavior: Concepts, Controversies, and Applications, Robbins 1993, pg 206

**Motivation Theoretical Framework:** There are various approaches used to explain motivation by different theories. Need (content) theories believe that an unsatisfied need motivates an individual. Behavior of a person is motivated by an individual's unsatisfied needs; hence these needs become motivating factor for an individual. Need Hierarchy Theory, Two factor theory, ERG theory and McClleland's Theory of Needs come into the segment of need theory of motivation. Goal setting theory specifies that people are motivated by goals. Their efforts and performance tend to increase if they are provided with certain set goals. It gives them a feeling of self efficacy and goal commitment. Another approach of motivation is explained by equity theory stating that people get motivated if they perceive equity between their input and output compared with others. People are motivated to maintain equitable relationship between themselves and others. Apart from need, goals and equity another approach of motivation is motivating by expectations- expectancy theory of motivation. Strength of efforts made by an individual is dependent upon the strength of his

expectation that the efforts will result in a certain result and the importance of that result to the individual. Individual's needs, goals, expectations are not the only consideration in motivation. A proper job fit and job characteristics are also important. To explain the importance of a job in motivating an individual, job characteristic model has been given. An approach which explain that the core job dimensions i.e. skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and job feedback; produce critical psychological states which in turn leads to positive outcomes for individual and organization. Organization have derived number of practical implication from all above mentioned theories of motivation and developed such practices and procedures which motivates the employees.

## Motivational Variations among Previous Generations

Organizations can apprehend benefits by reaching across generations by tapping the perspectives and talents of people from different generations. Generational diversity may be equally harmful because of pejorative judgment of one generation about another generation's characteristic, thinking and behavior (Stauffer 2003).

We may find employees from many generations ever before, because of re-entering into job after retirement, young people starting their career at early age with important roles. Companies promote team based structures which are a mix of people from all generations. Traditionally, old and experience used to be in charge and younger used to do what they were told. Now a fresher may be instructing to an older employee. Managers should be age sensitive now.

Finding out ways to mix up generation Xers and Yers with boomers, silents and other generations has become a necessity not a choice. To manage different generation one has to understand unique characteristics of each generation. When we understand the characteristics and uniqueness of the generations, we reduce the likelihood of legal and enforcement issues. Workplace tensions are eased out and more stronger and effective relationships are built among all generations (Stauffer 2003).

Montana and Petit 2008 examines the factors that motivate Generation X and Y and those factors that will be affecting generation Z. which shows how these factors have changed over time in comparison with the baby boomer generations. They found that 'getting along with others on the job' is the leading motivator of Generation Y in comparison with 'respect for me as a person' and 'feeling my job is important' most rated traditional factors by previous generations. Although these factors also ranked in top six factors by younger generations. They found that Gen X and Gen Y did not share the same motivational factors. They showed

that gen Y ranked the following six factors as their top motivators-respect for me as a person, good pay, getting along well with others on the job, chance for promotion, opportunity to do interesting work, and opportunity for self development and improvement. Generation X varying only in preferring 'Feeling my job is important' over 'getting along well with others on the job'. You be the leader, change me, let me work with friends, let's have fun, respect me, and be flexible are the factors which attract millennial generation in a workplace.

Bunton & Brewer 2012 aims at finding the workplace rewards and motivators which are most attractive for generation Y in IT Employees. 'Respect for me as a person' was rated as the most important factor and top motivator. There was no significant difference between the top seven motivators in comparison to the original research conducted by This and Lippitt. 'Good Health Insurance Coverage' was the only motivator which was not included in the original research. 'Good pay' was not in the list of top motivators.

Generational variation is negligible in motivational drivers like ease and security, immersion, and personal growth. Affiliation, power and progression have significant intergenerational variation (Dash & Panda 2010).

Managers need to study and understand the generational differences. To remain sustainable over the long run, companies need to set up the right processes and practices, and develop proper attitude towards the succession planning. It is important to create such an environment which can embrace generational differences and maximize their strengths (Macon & Artley 2009).

Dash & Panda (2010) studied the presence of variations in personality traits and motivational drivers across the three generation (Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y) of Indian working population. Results of the study indicate the existence of intergenerational variations in personality traits and motivational drivers in an Indian Occupational Setup. Out of six personality factors studied, four factors which have reflected significant intergenerational variations are achieving, affiliation, conscientiousness, and optimistic. Variety seeking and independent minded have no significant intergenerational variations. Generational variation is negligible in motivational drivers like ease and security, immersion, and personal growth. Affiliation, power and progression have significant intergenerational variation.

Cross generational managers work to create positive interaction and communication among members of different generations. Aggressive communication and Difference Deployment are the strategies to develop a successful intergenerational workforce. Intense and over communication will help in solving problems associated with generational diversity.

Difference deployment is forming a team to take advantage of diverse skills, experience, and knowledge, background of different generations (BARTLEY, LADD, & MORRIS 2010).

Yusoff (2013) suggested significant difference in intrinsic and extrinsic factors of motivation for both generations X and Y. Factors studied under intrinsic factors were Achievement, promotion, recognition, and work itself. Factors studied under extrinsic factors were pay and benefits, work conditions and company policy & administration. Generation Y employees have shown less satisfaction on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors in comparison to Generation X.

Bristow et al. (2011) compared 12 motivational factors related to a sales career between Gen X and Gen Y, using rank order method by 1390 college students. Findings of the study suggest that Gen Y gave lower ranks to hygiene factors i.e. supervision, job security, co-worker, fringe benefits and working conditions; when compared to Gen X. Gen Y gave higher ranks to satisfiers i.e. recognition, sense of achievement, advancement, status, job itself and personal development; when compared with gen X.

Guha (2010) tested the validity of Fredrick Herzberg's two factor theory. Fredrick Herzberg's Two Factor Model was used to test the motivators for the present generation. Findings suggested that the model does not explain sufficiently the motivators for the present generation. Theory need to be revisited and the factors need to be identified which motivates new generation.

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In the rank order type questions the motivators representing the total reward category of pay was highest ranked. When given a choice to choose between 'increased pay' and 'longer vacation allowances' participants choose increased pay. When given a choice between 'increased stock option' and 'reduced health insurance cost' participants choose reduced health insurance cost.

**The Research Work:**

Based on the previous researches it is observed that different generations have revealed different motivations towards employment. This work aims to find the motivating

factors preferred by Generation Z while seeking employment. Research findings are based on a survey conducted among 99 students in Greater Noida.

**Research is divided in three parts:**

**Part 1** Studies various work Motivators across four generation namely Pre-Baby Boomer, Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. This would be based on secondary data analysis. The outcome would be in the form of top six motivators identified by various scholars specializing in the field of motivation.

**Part II:** Adhering by the two basic characteristics of questionnaire i.e. "validity and reliability" workplace motivation checklist prepared by Gordon Lippitt was offered to the respondent. The same check list was used by previous researchers to study Gen X and Gen Y. In addition to this the standardization of the tool has also been taken into consideration.

Questionnaire was sent to 500 students of M.B.A and B.B.A. using Google Doc Forms, out of which 115 responses were received. 99 responses have been included in the final analysis after data editing. Respondents (Generation Z) were asked to identify top six motivators out of total 25 motivators given in the list, along with few demographic questions and two questions related to their career preference.

Participants: Participants in this survey were Under Graduate and Post Graduate Business Administration students of a Private University located in Greater Noida. For the purpose of this study we have considered all those college students in generation Z who are at present undertaking regular studies.

**Part III:** The top six motivators which have been extracted from part 1 would be used as the foundation for comparing the top six motivators for gen Z. This would entail comparison of top six individual rankings allotted by the respondents of Gen Z with the top six work motivators identified for older generations on the basis of prior research in the field of motivation.

**Research Objectives:**

1. To review top six factors of work motivation for four older generations.
2. To identify the motivating factors that the youngest generation finds attractive in organizations
3. To conduct a comparative analysis of Motivational Factors among previous 4 and present Generation Y.

## Results and Analysis

**Part I:** A comparison is established between motivators for previous four Generations. Comparison has been established between previous four studies conducted for 6000 managers of Pre-Baby Boomers' generation (1970's) , 500 senior level executives of baby boomer's generation (1980's) , 200 Business students of Gen X (1990's) and 200 undergraduate students of Gen Y (2005-2007).

Table 1: Top Motivators of Previous Four Generations

| Rank | Pre-Baby Boomer Generation | Baby Boomer Generation | Gen X | Gen Y |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Respect for me as a person | Respect for me as a person | Respect for me as a person | Respect for me as a person |
| 2 | Good Pay | Good Pay | Good Pay | Good Pay |
| 3 | Opportunity to do interesting job | Opportunity to do interesting job | Chance for promotion | Getting along well with others on the job |
| 4 | Opportunity for self development and improvement | Feeling my job is important | Opportunity to do interesting job | Chance for promotion |
| 5 | Large amount of freedom on the job | Opportunity for self development and improvement | Feeling my job is important | Opportunity to do interesting job |
| 6 | Feeling my job is important | Large amount of freedom on the job | Opportunity for self development and improvement | Opportunity for self development and improvement |

Source: Author's compilation from previous studies

The four previous generations have placed more importance on self respect and monetary growth in the form of pay. The third motivator is to get an opportunity to do work that is interesting, or that gives growth opportunity in the form of promotion however Gen Y feels a chance to get along well with others is important. The fourth rank is also related to self development, promotion, growth and feel good factor. In lower ranks the freedom related to job and opportunity related to self development and growth has become important.

On the basis of previous studies conducted for older generations eight factors were identified as principal motivators. Factors were ranked using the Reverse Rank Weighted Average

(RRWA) Technique in order to identify the top six ranks across four generations. The rank that received first rank was given highest weight of six; thereafter it was multiplied by four as all four generations deemed it as first motivator. A total of twenty four points have been allotted to the first rank thereafter twenty, thirteen, seven, seven and six for top six motivators across the four generations.

 Results of RRWA are as follows:

1. Respect for me as a person
2. Good Pay
3. Opportunity to do interesting job
4. Chance for promotion and
4. Opportunity for self development and improvement
5. Feeling my job is important
6. Getting along well with others on the job
7. Large amount of freedom on the job

As seen in table 1 'Chance for Promotion' was more preferred and ranked high in comparison to 'Opportunity for self development & improvement'; whereas 'Opportunity for self development & improvement' was most popular among all older generations. So both the factors got similar ranking while applying RRWA.

**Table 2: Reverse Rank Weighted Average (RRWA)**

| Factor | (a) Ranks Given by various generations | (b) Frequency of a particular rank | (c) Weight allocated to a rank | (c*b) | Total | Final Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respect for me as a person | 1 | 4 | 6 | 6X4= 24 | 24 | 1 |
| Good Pay | 2 | 4 | 5 | 5X4=20 | 20 | 2 |
| Opportunity to do interesting job | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4X2= 8 | 13 | 3 |
| | 4 | 1 | 3 | 3X1= 3 | | |
| | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2X1= 2 | | |
| Opportunity for self development and improvement | 4 | 1 | 3 | 3X1=3 | 7 | 4 |
| | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2X1=2 | | |
| | 6 | 2 | 1 | 1X2=2 | | |
| Chance for promotion | 4 | 1 | 3 | 3X1=3 | 7 | 4 |

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| | 5 | 1 | 4 | 4X1=4 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Feeling my job is important | 4 | 1 | 3 | 3X1=3 | 6 | 5 |
| | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2X1=2 | | |
| | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1X1=1 | | |
| Getting along well with others on the job | 3 | 1 | 4 | 4X1=4 | 4 | 6 |
| Large amount of freedom on the job | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2X1=2 | 3 | 7 |
| | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1X1=1 | | |

**Part II:** In the second part the list of 24 motivators identified from Gordon L Lippitt was circulated amongst the respondents of Gen Z and they were asked to identify their top six motivators for a job. The data collected through Google Doc was analyzed in Excel Sheet using Pivot Table. The ranks allotted to a particular motivator by Gen Z were further added. Thus, respect for me as a person was ranked by 22 respondents as first motivating factor in any job however 9 ranked it second and so on. However, on the basis of popularity and the highest number of times a motivator was selected 'Good Pay' has featured as the top motivator of Gen Z. The results of pivot table are as follows:

**Table 3: Motivators of Gen Z**

| Sr. No | Work Motivators | One | Two | Three | Four | Five | Six | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Steady Employment | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 17 |
| 2 | Respect for me as a person | 22 | 9 | 11 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 54 |
| 3 | Adequate rest period or Coffee Breaks | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 |
| 4 | Good Pay | 19 | 19 | 9 | 11 | 6 | 10 | 74 |
| 5 | Good Physical Working Condition | 5 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 14 | 1 | 39 |
| 6 | Chance to turn out Quality Work | 1 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 24 |
| 7 | Getting along well with others on the job | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 16 |
| 8 | Having a local employee paper | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 9 | Chance for Promotion | 2 | 8 | 11 | 10 | 6 | 9 | 46 |
| 10 | Opportunity to do interesting work | 19 | 12 | 7 | 12 | 10 | 1 | 61 |
| 11 | Pensions and other security benefits | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 18 |
| 12 | Not having to work too hard | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| 13 | Knowing what is going on in the organization | 3 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 24 |

| 14 | Feeling my job is important | 4 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 34 |
| 15 | Having a written job description | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 16 | Being complimented by my boss when I do a good job | 0 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 18 |
| 17 | Getting a performance rating | 0 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 23 |
| 18 | Attending staff meetings | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 14 |
| 19 | Agreement with organization's objectives | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| 20 | Opportunity for self development and improvement | 14 | 7 | 13 | 14 | 8 | 7 | 63 |
| 21 | Fair Vacation Arrangements | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 15 |
| 22 | Knowing I will be Disciplined if I do a bad job | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 8 |
| 23 | Working under close supervision | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 9 |
| 24 | Large amount of freedom on the job | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 12 |
| | | 99 | 99 | 99 | 99 | 99 | 99 | |

Top six most preferred factors by Gen Z were extracted on the basis of most popular motivators. Good pay was opted by 19 respondents as top motivator, by 19 respondents as second top most motivator and so on. Thus Good pay appeared 74 times as the most popular motivator of Gen Z. Similarly the other top six motivators were identified for Gen Z and they are mentioned in Table 4.

**Table 4: Top six motivators of Gen Z**

| Rank | GEN Z |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | Good Pay |
| 2 | Opportunity for self development and improvement |
| 3 | Opportunity to do interesting work |
| 4 | Respect for me as a person |
| 5 | Chance for Promotion |
| 6 | Good Physical Working Condition |

'Good pay' featured 74 times out of which it appeared in first two ranks 34 times: 19 respondents ranked it first and 19 ranked it as second motivator.  Opportunity for self

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development and improvement is featured 63 times and thus has made it's position in top motivators. Opportunity to do interesting work is selected 61times and 19 respondents have allotted first rank to it. The fourth motivator for Gen Z has turned out to be 'Respect for me as a person' having frequency of 54 out of which it was ranked first 22 times and second 9 times. Chance for promotion has been selected 46 times and the new entrant has been 'Good physical working conditions' which were not quite popular with other generations.

**Part III:**

The Generation: Z, which is yet to enter the work force is keeping 'Good Pay' as the primary motivator followed by opportunity for self-development and improvement vis-a –vis previous generations which could be attracted towards a job by respect them and their talent followed by good pay and opportunity to do interesting job.

**Table No. 5:**

**Comparison of Work Motivators between Gen Z and four older generations**

| Rank | GEN Z | Motivators of Four Older Generations Part I –RRWA |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Good Pay | Respect for me as a person |
| 2 | Opportunity for self development and improvement | Good Pay |
| 3 | Opportunity to do interesting work | Opportunity to do interesting job |
| 4 | Respect for me as a person | Chance for promotion and Opportunity for self development and improvement |
| 5 | Chance for Promotion | Feeling my job is important |
| 6 | Good Physical Working Condition | Getting along well with others on the job |

It has been observed that the feeling of one's job being important has subsided overtime and the Gen Z is more attracted towards money and self development. This can very well be linked to young generation starting their own business ventures.

Moreover, chances of promotion is rated high amongst 24 motivators outlined by Gordon L Lippitt which was not found in top six ranks of previous generations. Thus the present generation does not want to grab a job only looking at it's short term prospects but is more interested in knowing the future prospects also.

The good physical working conditions which was not the top motivator of previous generations has come up in top six motivators of generation Z representing the attractive office infrastructure and amenities to keep students tied up in office.

At the same time the sixth motivator of previous generations of getting along well with others on the job' is hardly found to be popular amongst the younger generation with the total frequency of 16.

The research work has been instrumental in outlining the multi generation diversity by identifying the motivators for previous generations who are working and contributing towards economy and the generation that is studying and on the verge of joining the work force. The differences in terms of top motivator have come up as a lesson for corporate sector which has been reluctant to offer good pay. The Gen Z expects good pay as the top motivator and is more focused on self development, promotion opportunity and good physical infrastructure of office in comparison to the previous generations that placed more importance on self respect, development and getting along well with others on the job.

We can identify that the respect and sustainability of job in addition to having good relations with others are the motivators for the working generations as against good pay, development, promotion and good physical conditions required for Gen Z.

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