

## To Build Sense of Belonging in Young Workforce of 21st Century: Coaching Style Leadership

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### Abstract

We are living in a period of strengthening of social networks and weakening of social ties. We observe communication problems even between the same generation employees. Within virtual organizational structures, where digitalization and mobility are on an advanced level, business vision is changing so fast. Rapid changes occurring in the organizational structures increase managerial uncertainty in the companies and raise a need for revision of employee behavior. Virtually addicted human resources of 21st century need to be managed in a different way.

In 21st century, young workforce retention concerns raise first and foremost the question of how to manage. In particular, the characteristics of Y generation that will have a large share in global labor force, create a need to arrange the management in a coaching style. Coaching style leadership becomes even more important in order to understand working perception of Y generation, to make them gained by the company, to retain them, to develop organizational commitment, to guide their talents, to meet their expectations and to build long-term relationships with them.

This study is focused on coaching style leadership in order to build sense of belonging for the Y generation, the young workforce of 21st century. Because, expected to form %75 of global labor force as of 2025, this generation is shaping talents market with its work perceptions and expectations.

**Keywords:** Coaching, leadership, Y generation, sense of belonging.



## 1. Introduction

As social networks gain in strength, we keep living in a century of loosened social ties. With generation gap being one of the widely discussed issues in modern days, we observe growing distances even among the peer employees. Particularly as a result of globalization, digitalization, and development and proliferation of mobility, both organizational structures and conception of staff performance are changing rapidly.

Changes occurring in such organizational structures as downsizing, reengineering and restructuring have increased administrative uncertainties in business world (Beeson, 1998, p. 61). Transformations and continuous innovations in work life impact the working discipline and create need to review employee behaviours. Businesses operating in the dynamic environment of the 21<sup>th</sup> century need to manage the human sources differently.

Nowadays the term "manager" is being slowly substituted by the notions of leader, mentor, and coach. Analysing these candidate notions, you will see that all of them have a common point: approach to "authority-competence". The term "manager" stands for authority grounding on knowledge, experience and personal characteristics, rather than on authority with hierarchical differentiation. It is also called "acquired authority". Hereafter, those who take on management will have to acquire the needed authority as well. According to Kochel, the era of receiving the title of "manager" and "believing to be a manager" is coming to an end. Moreover, the working staffs stand out, whereas the management becomes of secondary importance (Kochel, 2013, pp. 66-67). Position of manager also advances from controller to supporter. In modern method of management, competences such as staff oriented development, support, guidance are gaining more importance (Baltash, 2008).

Coaching is a leader-audience relationship aiming at people with various skills and experiences usually from different circles of interest to work together and see one another as partners. Coaching is an administrative action that creates favourable conditions and environment to authorize, improve and encourage the individuals and teams to reach the results. Coaches help people to get from "where they are" to "where they want to be". During this period, they use the methods of encouragement, motivation and informing instead of punishment and threatening (Barutchgil, 2004, p. 359). Furthermore, coaching service is regarded as a significant tool to cope with changes in today's labour market.

Concern for retention of 21<sup>st</sup> century young workforce brings up the question "how should I manage?" in the first place. Particularly, peculiarities of Y generation that will have a major share in global workforce create a need to apply coaching style format in management. Coaching style leadership approach is gradually gaining more significance in order to understand the work perception of Y generation, introduce them to business, retain, make up organizational commitment, guide their abilities, meet their expectations and build long-term relations with them.

This research focuses on the young workforce of 21<sup>st</sup> century - Y generation. Because this generation, as expected to comprise 75% of global workforce from 2025 on, forms the skills market with its work perception and expectations. We can also see this generation to slowly become effective in company management. Their values and performance understanding differ from the previous generations, especially the X generation representing those who were born between 1960-1980. It is important to know these differences in recruitment, development and retention of workforce from this generation.

## 2. Y generation

Definition of this generation from sociological point of view can be described as: "Groups with common values, faiths, expectations and behaviours as a result of being born at certain dates, affected by common social, political, economic etc. developments throughout socialization period, incurring similar responsibilities due to circumstances" (Sural Ozer vd., 2013, p. 125).

Each generation is mixed up with different lives within its critical development period. The impact of such factors as parents, peers, media and popular culture creates common value systems among the same age people that make them different from other age groups. For this reason, growing up in 1990s is a totally different experience than growing up in 1970s, or especially in 1950s (Twenge & Campbell, 2008, p. 863). According to Kupperschmidt (2000), people demonstrate some behavioural patterns within the framework of these common experiences from youth (Çemberci, Sudak, Aşçı, & Civelek, 2014, s. 58).

Though literature contains different views on the age range of Y generation, it is generally defined as a generation born between the years of 1980-2000. This generation is also called Millennial, Generation Next, Digital Generation, Echo Boomers and Nexters (Lower, 2008). From these naming we can easily understand it's obvious difference from preceding generations.

**Habitat of Y generation:** As they are growing up in a period accompanied by fast development of technology, computers, and internet and communication technologies are an integral part of their life. Attracted by digital media, 2/3 of Y generation members have been introduced to computers before the age of five. They have a 7/24 access to friends, families, information and entertainment. They have reserved optimism, despite the more affection by global economic crisis compared to other generations. Compared to other generations, they have the oldest parents and have grown up in nuclear families. They are used to be in the centre of attention. 1/4 of them have at least university educated parents, whereas 1/3 have separated parents (Adiguzel vd., 2014, p. 173). According to Howe ad Strauss (2000), members of this generation have grown up in a protective and secure environment ensured by their parents. According to Hills and co-workers (2012), they are egocentric and excessively self-regarding as a result of upbringing. By their wealthy parents they have been brought up with "unlimited tolerance" and instilling confidence to do what they want. According to Notter (2005), members of this generation do not necessarily consider the ethnic differences among the people (Chemberji vd., 2014, p. 58-61). They lag behind the previous generation nationalistically (Sural Ozer vd., 2013, p. 139). According to Morton (2002), they have a high tolerance toward all kind of differences in society (Yelkikalan & Altın, 2010, s. 14).

**Peculiarities and expectations of Y generation:** members of Y generation are defined as individuals with social consciousness, focusing on human relations, prone to collaboration and with high learning will. They prefer to proceed with sound and clear instructions, face-to-face performance assessment, to be asked for opinion about the work and to integrate in management. They love doing miscellaneous jobs, instead of routine. Compared to previous generation, they tend to change their job more frequently. Change is a normal part of life. The main reason for changing a job is not seeing a perspective in the current position. They believe they can keep changing jobs until they get the targeted position (Chemberji vd., 2014, p. 61). They care about the compatibility of their work with social values. Level of loyalty

belonging to the employer company is low. They usually prefer to work at a company with sound reputation-brand name in the first place, and then come personal development and advancing in career (Hay Group, 2012).

According to Spiro (2006), the expectations of the Y generation consisting of the people who have grown up surrounded by technology, communicate via social media and messaging, demand immediate feedback and information and much better educated than the previous generations are rather high. They are seeking balance between work and private life. According to Shaw and Fairhurst (2008), they can easily challenge the managers with questions, since they have not had difficulties and obstacles to question their families and teachers either as a result of upbringing (Süral Özer, 2014, s. 57).

Moreover, members of this generation known as freedom addicts also demonstrate a different approach to the conceptions of authority and respect, which is one of the main reasons of generation gaps. (Yelkikalan and Altın, 2010, sp. 14; Kose vd., 2014 p. 152). As they have received a personalized attention both from parents and teachers throughout all their lives, as a continuation they expect to get differentiated professional training opportunities at employer companies as well (Kelesh, 2011, p. 137).

The fundamental work properties of Y generation accepted by most researchers are summarized as follows (Lower, 2008; Gursoy vd., 2008; Twenge & Campbell, 2008; Mengi, 2009; Yelkikalan & Altın, 2010; Kelesh, 2011; Zeeshan & Iram, 2012; Saxena & Jain, 2012; Aghirdir, 2013; Sural Ozer vd., 2013; Kose vd. 2014; Sural Ozer, 2014; Yuksekbilgili, 2015):

1. They are narcissist, individualist and freedom addict.
2. Entrepreneurship is one of their main qualities.
3. They have a high self-confidence.
4. They target to build their own business and rapidly advance in career.
5. They have high expectations, but not willing to pay a price.
6. They are seeking work-personal life balance.
7. They can simultaneously handle more than one assignment and are successful in many aspects.
8. They closely follow and use technological developments.
9. Internet is the most important communication space. It is significant to stay continuously in touch via social network within the office limits.
10. They usually prefer positions that are not under tight control and where they can work in comfort.
11. They describe themselves impatient, not willing to work long hours, get bored of routine jobs.
12. They are prone to team work.
13. They oppose authority more vigorously than the previous generations.
14. It is important for them to be known by name by the management.
15. They are seeking flexible work conditions and more close relationships.
16. They love anything customized, not collective.
17. This is the most caring generation about vanity, title and position.
18. They think they do not get enough respect and recognition due to their young age.
19. They seek justice and equality.
20. They expect feedback more.

21. They expect leadership and guidance.
22. They learn fast and are source of skills once well guided and motivated.
23. They expect to receive differentiated professional training opportunities at employer companies.
24. Since they consider "authenticity" very important, it is hard to reach it with imaginary products, imaginary projects, and imaginary heroes.

GM of Best Buy J. Thompson: "To my surprise, I have been concentrating on wrong unit for years. I have been looking at people's presence here. I should have looked at the results they make instead" (Mengi, 2009) expresses the importance of focusing on work, rather than on time spent at work to retain the Y generation.

Deloitte Global conducted an e-survey based research in 17 countries in 2013 with 5283 participants covering at least college educated and full time employees of Y generation. According to its findings, expectations of the Y generation are (Aghirdir, 2013, p. 7): In Turkiye an understanding of leadership that supports idea generation and sharing regardless of occupied position is of utmost importance for innovation, promotion of idea generation and creativity, giving spare time and initiative to employees, supporting freedom of expression and granting freedom to question the system.

According to the 2015 report of Deloitte, 6 of every 10 Y generation members tend to choose the current workplace for the company's meaningful reason for being. Only 3 or less of 10 persons believe that their skills are fully utilized by the employer companies (Deloitte, 2015).

Analysing the habitat, peculiarities and expectations of the Y generation, we can say that coaching style approach is appropriate for attraction and retention of this workforce in business.

### 3. Coaching

Coaching can be defined as a tool, a service that ensures a valuable individual, in other words, an individual with unused potential to get from one point to another (Beduk, 2007, p. 218). The focal point of the work is to play a leadership role in order to improve the individual's required knowledge and skills, develop social behaviours and direct to teamwork (Keskin, 2012, p. 125).

Studying the literature, we understand that coach is not an advisor with prepared responses, not a teacher that gives correct information, and even not a therapist that diagnoses and treats the psychological state and health of the counselee. Unlike other similar conceptions, coaching relationship can be described as settlement oriented, proactive, collaboration based, potential revealing, jointly planned target oriented and less guiding process.

In the consequence of wide scale researches about coaching, we can understand that it is a planned and scheduled administrative period featuring interactive attendance, learning, motivation and support, ensuring individual awareness and sense of responsibility, structured to build relations between coach and counselee to help the individual to reach the desired goal.

Benjamin Disraeli's "The greatest favour you can do to others is besides sharing your wealth, make them discover their own wealth." and similarly Galileo Galilee's several century old

quote "You can't teach others anything. At most you can help them discover it." perfectly express the notion of coaching.

#### 4. Coaching style leadership

"Stop Managing, Start Coaching!" is a main recommendation for the managers of 21st century. According to Jerry W. Gilley and Nathaniel W. Boughton (1996), all the managers spending their days planning, organizing, managing, coordinating and controlling are gone. Today's managers are obliged to try to become people's everything. Modern managers are responsible for improvement, quality and productivity. Though it is a long-term system, coaching style leadership is a good way to implement this change.

Coaching is accepted as one of the fundamental skills of modern management for two reasons. First, "develop others" is a very basic managerial action. Every manager should bring up someone to occupy his/her position in order to move more forward. In addition, the required fundamental skill for this purpose is coaching. Second, fundamental skills sought in performance management and performance assessment are the competences required from coach. Once these competences are ignored, performance assessment meetings become a useless process looking just like school grading (Baltash, 2008, p. 184).

If we assess the situation as a total with the habitat, peculiarities and expectation of Y generation, coaching is the most effective and productive way of collaboration in rising organizations from the point of new work relations. According to Kalinauckas and King (1994), management as a dominant organizational principle was replaced by leadership. To be a leader one has to learn to coach, motivate and gain other's commitment. If the new workforce of the 21st century, as a part of the deal, reaches its own goals, it will help the businesses to reach goals too.

According to Goleman (2000), though coaching is very important for organizations, it is not a widely used management method yet. It is stipulated by the facts that, majority of leaders find it very boring and slow to get involved in with employees. Goleman states that, managers who share this opinion are missing great opportunities. "I trust you, I invest in you and expect you to put in your best." driven coaching relationship will create cordial devotion in employees and it will turn back with positive effects both on organization and working staff. However, in case if employees are not willing to learn and build dialogue, coaching style management will not be effective at all (Kalkavan, 2014, p. 26).

Yes, general tendency among the managers is "I am too much busy to teach others." "If managers could do coaching, performance of businesses would have doubled on its own. However, most of managers can not coach. Moreover, they do not even know that coaching is a part, a very significant part of their job. They can be justified somehow. Because they themselves haven been coached either." This speech was made in 2001 at ASTD Orlando seminar and was widely accepted (Baltash, 2001).

One of the prominent names of management science Peter Drucker recommends senior managers the following: "A key to greatness is to seek people's potential and spend time on development of that potential. The only way to become a leader at a knowledge-based business is to spend time on promising professionals: to get to know them and be known by them, to guide and listen to them, challenge and motivate them. Employees might be our

major assets, but people are our main opportunity" (Drucker, 2003, p. 116-118). Benjamin S. Bloom gives a similar message: "Modern societies have to find ways to develop skills, since they can not be satisfied with selecting the skilled." (Bloom, 1979, p. 16).

## 5. Main qualities of good coach

A coach has to hold a binocular to answer the question "What is human?". I.e. he/she has to have an abstract binocular to observe human as a whole. Thus, it will become easier to discover the persons he/she renders service.

The required preconditions of a coach are as follows (Baltash, 2001): sincerely accept coaching as a part of his/her job; know himself/herself, brake impatience; not judge, be tolerant to mistakes and understand that mistakes are part of learning process; know basic communication techniques such as active listening, empathy, asking questions.

Another main quality sought in a good coach is to have a strong mental intelligence. To develop mental intelligence, first of all, coach has to know himself/herself, act flexible and spontaneously during decision making, look at the situation as a whole, find out and praise the different aspects of the speaker, have a vision, i.e. deep policy and beliefs and act under this vision, question the reasons of behaviours, learn from problems and make use of them, and put much effort on development of such values as respect, love, compassion, modesty (Akgemci & Bekish, 2013, p. 298).

Coach leaders with high mental intelligence have both sound and clear personal values and beliefs that guide their own activities and organizational vision and value defining sources that will help and impact the counselees to reach their goals. Thus, they will be able to realize any changes in order to get to the set objectives and values. With their strong beliefs these persons can think out of the system, are not afraid of differences, prone to entrepreneurship and productivity, change the rules and regulate the situation differently (Aydıntan, 2009, p. 259). With built self-relations and acting modest, they inspire employees, company, customers (Baloghlu & Karadagh, 2009, p. 176) or followers and serve them better. These persons get easily done with uncertainties, mistakes and dilemmas grounding on their inner power, and after overcoming hardships they might demonstrate even better performances. Questioning their lives, they easily adapt to fundamental changes and are very skilful in increasing flexibility (Kesken & Ayyildiz, 2008, p. 739; King, 2008, p. 45-46).

A good coach watches his/her own behaviours too, i.e. must be ready to change his/her behaviours while changing others'. Generally, senior managers are competitive, judging, focused on results and impatient. However, a coach must demonstrate an educative role rather than competitive, must observe and criticize to understand, not to judge (Dedehayır, 2001a).

## 6. Conclusion

Leadership is one of the most important trends in all developing and growing markets. Leadership is moving to a different position as a result of changes and developments in both workforce and labour markets of the 21st century. Wide scale researches found out that coaching style leadership approach can be recommended as an effective solution to sustain business, create the sense of belonging in new workforce and bring up future leaders.

Continuously developing and growing businesses must have skills to manage various markets together, rapidly adapt to changing conditions, and correctly manage differences and integration. Businesses gain these skills not by criticizing the existing and potential workforce, but by protecting and correctly understanding their peculiarities and expectations.

New workforce's expectations, such as work-personal life balance, flexibility, and satisfactory work space and career opportunity are the main factors in selecting the employer and further development of sense of belonging.

Human being is a rich source of skills if his/her inner potential is revealed and duly guided. On the other side, if this potential power is not duly guided, we are subject to face disasters. Effective management of new workforce and direction toward a common purpose will ease both the retention of existing skills and attraction of new skills.



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