Beliefs, attitudes, values and engagement of generation X, Y employees

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Abstract. This study starts with employee opinion survey, which is a measurement tool of employee engagement and satisfaction. The result of the survey, performed among 1480 employees of international construction company, points at certain targets for improvement in well-being field. We strove to find a correlation within least contented employees, between such factors as their seniority status in the company, gender, age and their low satisfaction, thus we found out that generation X employees are more satisfied (9% more) and as a result more engaged in the company culture than Y employees. This article reveals the reasons of this difference in satisfaction level between employees of two generations. Our first hypothesis was that shift in value orientation cause inconsistency with corporate culture, but after having used method of values ranking (system of «Life Meanings» by V. Yu. Kotlyakov) for a group of 620 employees of both generations, we had to accept that our hypothesis was only partially true and value changes in two generations were not dramatic. Our second hypothesis stated that deeper changes in reality perception like beliefs and self-concept could lead to lower satisfaction of Y generation employees with their work. We supposed that these deeper changes include beliefs as the basic elements of any complicated construct. We applied method of collectivism and individualism orientation measuring by Pochebut L. G to the group of 248 respondents of both generations. The outcome of this study shows that generation X employees’ beliefs reflect collectivism orientation and beliefs of the generation Y employees reflect individualism in 50% of the sampling.

1 Employee engagement is a mighty tool in retention strategy

Last two decades managers of companies are struggling to improve productivity and effectiveness under pressure of fast pace of digitalization and sharp competition. At the same time psychologists and sociologists search for peculiarities in psychology of different generations [1-5]. Organizations should work hard to be competent and successful in the highly competitive and global environment, especially on the human resource side, so they must take into consideration differences in perception of reality by employees of different generations [1;6]. Finck et al. [7] stated that organizations must recognize that the human factor is more important for organizational continuity and business success when

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employees are happy and feel wellness throughout their life. Chinamomo and Mofokeng [8] state that developing and maintaining a relationship with employees has become a necessary thing for businesses to be competitive in today’s dynamic environment. Matzler & Renzl [9] prove that commitment of employees is critical in ensuring competitive ability of an organization. As Morgan and Hunt [10] noticed, commitment has an emotional connotation and it has correlation with engagement and satisfaction. One of the success factors in human capital retention is work and life balance (WLB), the last one makes employees work more effectively and raises effectiveness of the whole organization [11].

Same point of view is shared by many scientists, for example Chinamomo and Mofokeng [8] underline that committed employees are more likely to facilitate the provision of superior service quality. Baral and Bhargava [12] also agree that WLB entails employees' positive attitudes and behaviors, which are crucial to an organization's effectiveness, called organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) as stated by Van Dyne [13]. While OCB refers to organizationally beneficial behavior, this behavior is discretionary and goes beyond existing role standards Van Dyne et al. [13]. Greenhaus claims three elements of WLB as retention instrument: time, involvement, and satisfaction [14]. As we measured satisfaction we could realize which spheres of well-being needed our attention.

Communication also plays great role in engagement. As Howell and Annansingh [15] stated an inadequate supply of information and lack of communication restrains employees from fulfilling their duties better.

Robbins & Judge [16] state that some causes of employee engagement could be: appreciation and a good manager, enjoyable meaningful work and clear goals.

Taking all above said into account engagement includes satisfaction, commitment, transparent communication, also WLB is necessary for satisfaction and OCB as high level of commitment.

Above mentioned factors are the determining factors of employees’ productivity and engagement in the corporate life. In order to measure the engagement level of the employees the construction company held employee opinion survey (EOS) and found that the engagement level is lower than the management expected.

This employee opinion survey was conducted in 2021 with measurement tools and support of professional HR consulting company. Employees of a multinational development company in the number of 1480 individuals took part in the survey simultaneously. Their answers were analyzed in the framework of qualitative and conventional content analysis. The aim of the survey was to reveal influential factors, which lie beyond lower engagement level of generation Y employees in comparison with generation X. This survey brought us to an opening that generation Y employees’ beliefs encompass individualism culture and are inconsistent with corporative culture of the company, which is oriented at generation X employees’ necessities.

2 Method of engagement survey and problem statement

2.1 Core statements to measure engagement level

Core statements to evaluate engagement are presented below. Statements were organized in three groups, two questions in each. First couple of questions is aimed at verbal communication about the company (Whenever possible, I tell people about my company; I will recommend this company to a friend without a doubt), second pair of questions is aimed to measure if the person is ready to stay or not (I will not leave easily from this company; I do not think of working somewhere else apart from this company), the third pair of questions (I do not think of working somewhere else apart from this company; this
company encourages me to do more than my job requires). The results of the whole company in Russia are presented in Figure 1.

![Loyalty Statements Results](image)

**Fig. 1.** Three sets of questions to measure commitment with results.

Overall result of engagement was in the lowest level of medium area (lower quarter up to 65 per cent), the result of the company was 65 for some categories of employees and lower or a little higher for other categories.

The problem which needed to be solved: what were the factors causing low level of engagement among the personnel? If we look at the figure 2 we will discover that people of generation Y (we took 1981-2000 years according to classification by Howe and Straus [17]) compose the majority of the company. It was decided to investigate why the Y generation employees are 9% less engaged than generation X employees (born between 1961 -1980 according to classification by Howe and Straus [17]). We do not look here into generation Z employees since we have not enough data (16 respondents). According to this data we can propose that there are some specific necessities of generation Y employees, which were ignored. What was special or lacking in the Company culture that Y generation employees disapproved.

### 2.2 The following categories of personnel took part in the survey

1. Construction project employees – 1281 individuals (both managers and engineering staff), headquarters - 204 employees (engineers and management).

3. Seniority of employees up to three years and more than 3 years
4. Due to the field of activity of the company (construction and development) gender diversity is not widely presented (1188 – male employees and 258 female employees).
5. To analyze engagement of employees 3 sets of questions were asked.

They were organized to 1. evaluate leadership, 2. evaluate talent focus, 3 evaluate agility.

For the analysis employees were divided into 2 categories (generation X -258 respondents and Y – 1188 respondents – both figures were taken as 100% for their category).

The overall evaluation consisted of 46 beliefs (Table 1). The respondents were supposed to choose an answer out of strongly agree-positive-negative-strongly disagree. In the table 1 it is showed the statements reflecting employees’ beliefs about the top management (the left column) and agreement in percentage provided by X and Y generation. We included in category «agreed» answers ranged from “agree” to “positive”. We must consider that
generation X employees mostly occupy managerial and senior positions, so their perception predictably differs at some points.

Table 1. Statements for evaluation in EOS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Agreement by employees of generation X</th>
<th>Agreement by employees of generation Y</th>
<th>Difference in perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My direct upline gives me the support I need to be successful.</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Top Management inspired me about the future of this organization.</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Top Management is open and transparent in communication.</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My direct upline appreciates my efforts and business results.</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Top Management shows clear direction for the future.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I can explain clearly the positive aspects of working here compared to working at other companies.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. This company's mission/purpose gave me a meaningful direction.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am working at the most suitable company for someone with my skills and experience.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. This company has important social message</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Senior Management employees are the most valuable assets of the company sees.</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Top Management is open about communication and it is transparent.</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Top Management shows a clear direction for the future.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Senior executives clearly explained how we would implement our strategy.</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. This company offers very good career opportunities to me</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. This company strongly supports the initiatives</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. This work has enough opportunities to work on assignments/projects that will give me new skills.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Future career prospects in this company look good.</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. We get quick and accurate decisions.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. We take reasonable decisions backed up by data.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I understand business goals and company goals.</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Performance management approach is dedicated to revealing my strengths and areas of development.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. My performance in my job has a significant impact on my salary.</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Salary I receive is based on my contributions to the success of the company.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. There is an appropriate recognition (apart from my salary and benefits) for my contributions and achievements.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. My colleagues respect my feelings and thoughts.</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Cooperation between different groups/departments in my company is good.</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. We respond quickly to the changing needs of our</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to these answers the perception is dramatically different (more than 12 points difference) in beliefs about:

1. 5, 13 - perception how open the top management is
2. 7, 9 -content/discontent of employees with social message which company makes and meaning of their input
3. 29 - perception of individual significance in the company
4. 14, 15, 16 - perception of the future in the company
5. 30, 35 - perception of agility of the company
6. 46 - work and life balance

In general generation X employees are more contented with the company’s environment than generation Y.

After further analysis we can state that there is a clear disadvantage of communication with top management, which is significant to Y generation employees, who feel confident when aware of the whole picture, and can see potential and clear future in comparison to generation X, the representatives of which went through personality formation in hard economical and unstable political environment and can take volatility easier (questions 5,
13). Low level of individual significance in the company reflects underestimation of employees of Y generation by executives, which includes denial to share ideas and vision, excluding of important meetings and project groups. This also can result from the absence of opportunity to share and promote their ideas (question 29).

Questions 30 and 35 show that agility of the company, its flexibility and decision-making culture is also a field of concern for Ys. This may be explained by the fact that Ys are flexible and expect this from the employer.

Reflection of the perception of the future in the company also causes risks: if employees do not see their future in the company their level of performance can hardly be high, as well as risk of leaving the company arises (questions 14, 15, 16). Work and life balance is what mostly make generation X and Y different. The Ys more often have entrepreneurial mindset and find it difficult to stick to job discipline (question 46). After COVID 19 a lot of companies started practice of hybrid working schedule, distant work and flexible working hours, such innovations did not touch the company where EOS was held. This fully coincides with the generations description by V.I. Pischik [18-21].

The research held by Hamed M. S. Ahmed [22] and others shows strong impact of work and life balance (WLB) on the organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) as stated by Van Dyne et al., [13]. Importance of WLB was proved by numerous researches like Baral and Bhargava, [12] Bosworth and Hogarth [23], Clark [24].

The question which arises is why exactly now and especially generation Y employees are less satisfied with work and life balance and other stated above points. Our hypothesis was that these changes are required due to the shift in value system of generation Y employees.

To check validity of this hypothesis we measured values of generation Y employees, using Kotlyakov’s method.

3 System of «Life Meanings» by V. Yu. Kotlyakov

In order to check to what extent low engagement on the mentioned above points in EOS connected with generation Y representatives’ peculiarities, method by V. Yu. Kotlyakov was applied to the group of 620 employees. Respondents were divided into 2 groups: 310 employees of generation X and 310 employees of generation Y.

The questionnaire consisted of 24 statements, which respondents were to rank softly from 1 to 8. In this way each value was to be ranked 3 times and was able to score a number from 3 to 24. The most important value was supposed to gain lower scores since it goes first (e.g. first place – 1 point) and the least important value was supposed to gain the highest scores since it goes last.

The weight of the following values was measured: altruistic, existential, hedonistic, self-realization, status, communicative, family, cognitive.

After the answers were collected they were as following:

For each value of each respondent the rank was counted, then the number of respondents in each value were distributed between those for whom this value has high importance, medium and low. Below you can see the 300 ranked results of generation X employees. In the tables 2 and 3 the number of respondents with high, medium and low significance of the stated above values are represented.

The highest results are marked in blue, number differ little, but general tendency looks similar. It is seeable that generation X are less hedonistic (the biggest number of respondents gave highest scores, which means gave last places, to this value). More employees of generation X than generation Y pay attention to their status. More employees of generation Y gave last place significance to communication. Twice more Y employees gave lowest significance to the family values compared to X generation employees.
To understand if this data is worth further consideration or not we combined results of high and medium significance of each generation and applied to these 2 samplings the Mann–Whitney U test. First sampling included positive results (high and medium) for values of generation X and the second sampling included positive results (high and medium) for values of generation Y (Figure 2).

**Table 2.** Number of respondents of generation X employees crediting maximum and minimum importance values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of significance</th>
<th>Altruistic</th>
<th>Existential</th>
<th>Hedonistic</th>
<th>Self-realisation</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Communications</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.** Number of respondents of generation Y employees crediting maximum and minimum importance values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of significance</th>
<th>Altruistic</th>
<th>Existential</th>
<th>Hedonistic</th>
<th>Self-realisation</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 2.** Samplings for Y and X generation.

The Mann–Whitney U-test is 27.5 The critical value of the Mann–Whitney U-test for a given number of compared groups is $1327.5 > 13$, therefore, the differences in the level of the trait in the compared groups are not statistically significant ($p>0.05$)
After analysis of this data we realized, that our hypothesis did not prove itself-difference in value significance could not explain that fact that generation Y is less engaged then generation X employees, such values as family, self-realization are still mainstream for both generations. Minor differences in status, hedonism, communication perception in this way we were driven to the conclusion that we need to search deeper into orientation and beliefs of different generations.

4 Method of collectivism and individualism orientation measuring by L. G. Pochebut

Collectivism/Individualism is relatively newly formed construct, not many scientists have research in this field. We can note the works of the following authors who explore its individual aspects: [25-31] and others. G. Hofstede [32] included this construct in his organizational culture model.

Y. Kashima [33] proved that it makes sense to consider collectivism and individualism as different cultural patterns. The Russians are mostly inclined to collectivism pattern – this specific feature of Russian people was noticed by [25-29].

V.I. Pischik [19] differentiates horizontal and vertical collectivism and individualism (Table 4). Horizontal individualism involves beliefs, attitudes and values equality of all people and at the same time understanding the uniqueness of each person. Horizontal collectivism is based on attitudes and values of universal equality, status privileges are not allowed. Vertical individualism means considering status privileges. There are no uniform rules for this, each person sets his own measure of their individuality and importance. Vertical collectivism is characterized by attitudes and norms of a rigid status hierarchies in relationships.

This method was developed on the basis of cultural syndromes test by H.C. Triandis. Cultural syndromes consist of shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, role and self-definitions, and values of members of each culture that are organized around a theme. In other words, it tests cognition map with its beliefs and Triandis pointed out at 2 kinds of maps: collectivism and individualism. As V.I. Pischik [19] states collectivism and individualism were earlier accepted by sociologists and psychologists as opposite orientations but recently they are treated as 2 poles of one scale.

Triandis method adapted by L. G. Pochebut is also based on beliefs which people share about sociocultural environment: behaviour, feelings, attitudes about what is right or wrong, self-concept, styles of communication and interaction, systems of relationships. H. Triandis on the basis of statistical data showed that in one culture both collectivist and individualist models can coexist, but the percentage of one of them will always prevail.

Table 4. Criteria for individualism/collectivism construct by V.I. Pischik, Criteria of construct collectivism/individualism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Construct features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Self-concept</td>
<td>interdependent self, not disturbed by cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>inconsistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>at the group, considers the context, strives to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>themselves for the sake of the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Two hundred and ninety-eight employees’ statements of generation X and Y (148 and 150 accordingly) were evaluated. The purpose was to receive the proportion index and evaluate what orientation (collectivism or Individualism) prevails in one generation group. The closer the index to 1, the more equal is representation of two orientations in the group.

Employees were offered thirty statements, varied in such a way that indirectly they manifested collectivistic or individualistic set of beliefs about life. Each respondent was supposed to choose either one or the other statement. These statements reflected attitude and beliefs on such subjects like: orientation, self-concept, communication style, interaction style, norms and attitudes. After interpreting the results which meant counting points for each statement supporting individualism pattern and collectivism pattern.

### 5 Results and conclusions

Out of 148 employees of generation X only 48 employees demonstrated collectivism orientation and 100 employees demonstrated individualism which indicates proportion index is equal to 0.48. In the Y generation group the portion of individualism was higher: 73 respondents demonstrated individualism and 87 employees displayed collectivism orientation, so proportion index in the Y generation sampling is 0.84. As stated V.I. Pischik
one of the important characteristics of the construct is its variability. As we see out of this research it can change from generation to generation.

Out of these results it follows that Y generation employees who are less engaged into the corporative culture have more individualism-oriented mind maps than generation X. Secondly, we can state that collectivism orientation is more numerable in both groups, which is predictable for Russian employees. Russian culture has mostly collectivistic roots [2;3;18;25-28].

After two tests for X and Y generation groups we can suppose why younger generation is less engaged and satisfied, but we can state a hypothesis that individualism orientation which is highly demonstrated among generation Y makes people to strive for more independence, healthy competition, open, changing roles easier and expecting such a behavior from others, they are more hedonistic, so they find well-being part of corporative life more important than generation X, they appreciate hybrid schedule, distant work, which the company did not have at the moment of the study.

The last but not the least is the question about dynamic of variability of the mentality construct: if generation Y has more individualism-oriented representatives, does this mean that Z generation is going to be even more individualistic.

References