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HR Strategies For Generation ALPHA: What Would It Look Like?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to focus on the outlook for HR practices and paradigm shift that are expected in coming years to be ready to adapt the next generation workforce i.e., 'ALPHA', as 'Generation Z' has already entered in the workforce and experts are talking about Virtual HRD and Agile HR strategies. The Alpha Generation would be more tech-savvy, highly inclined towards competitive salary, thriving in freedom and flexibility. They will be more loyal to their profession and not towards the organization, thus there will be high risk of employee attrition rates to the organizations as the Alpha Gen workforce will be easily shifting to the better paying job or more flexible and independent work environment. Thus, the dimensions of HRM i.e., acquiring, managing, developing and compensation of human resources will face a drastic change. The paper attempts to analyze and answer to the question that 'what those changes would be?' so that the HR executives be able to cope with changes and can have pro-active reaction to the upcoming changes which will be influenced by the alpha generation's characteristics projected in their behavior there by impacting organizational environment.

Keywords: Alpha generation, HR strategy, Generational Timeline, Organizational Environment, Future Workforce

INTRODUCTION

The technological advances that the world has been experiencing in the 21st century has changed the earth economically and socially. Especially after the Covid-19 pandemic digital revolution has ushered in every kind of workplace and industry. Now technology is being regarded as a new dimension of HRD and has brought changes that covers range from mechanical to computerized, information based to knowledge based, individualized to team based and hands-on to minds-on (Thite, 2022). The blistering pace at which the changes are happening all over the world, the skill, experience, innovativeness of the human resources has become the key asset of any organization and is of essential value in this highly competitive market. Every organization is giving in their best effort to attract, hire and retain the best human resources from the market to be on the top of the competition. HRM has also taken a shift from traditional form to E-HRM, as it has come-up as a new dimension of HRM (Singh, 2017). People living in the same changing world are impacted by it and that change

is reflected in their behavior because their learning environment also changes and these technological changes have become a part of that environment. This century has seen two human generations till now – Generation Z & Alpha (1995 – 2024) of which Gen Z is already entered in the workforce and alpha generation will be the workforce in coming 8-10 years. So, the question arises that “what will be the HR strategy for acquiring and retaining alpha generation as workforce?” Since the assumptions about generational change is not an exact science but a rough structure can be given up to some extent based on the studies on alpha generation till now.

Generations: Name, Timeline and Characteristics

The term Generation refers to a cohort or group of people living in same time period in social sciences. (Mannheim, 1928) explained in his essay “The problem of generations” proposed a theory that “humans are greatly affected by the social and historical environment, especially notable event that happens in their youth which give rise to social cohort that eventually influence events that shape future generations”. These time periods have been categorized and labeled with different names such as the Greatest Generation (GI)- 1901 to 1924, Builders- 1925 to 1945, Baby Boomers- 1946 to 1964, Generation X- 1965 to 1980, Millennials- 1981 to 1994, Generation Z- 1995 to 2009 and the newest Alpha Generation- 2010 to 2024. Following table entails the time period, names and a brief description of events and characteristics of each human generation:

Time Period	Generation Names	Description
1901-1924	Greatest Generation	Lived through great depression & WWII.
1925-1945	Builders, Silent Generation	Lucky generation to live in peace after WWII, built economy & infrastructure, Model T-Fords, Picture Theatre, invention of electric ovens, refrigerators, washing machine and television.
1946-1964	Baby Boomers	Last generation with longer than 15 years span of time, economic boom, boom in fertility rate, landing on moon, carefree childhood.
1965-1980	Generation X	1 st generation to see computers in schools & home, both parent working culture- called home alone generation, peer-oriented, independent & flexible, biggest part of the population & workforce, crash of stock market in 1978, MTV culture.
1981-1994	Millennials, Generation Y	Lived through 9/11, introduction to internet, more community & environmentally conscious, Mark Zuckerberg, Evan Spiegel, Melanie Perking, Daniel Ek are from this generation which shows entrepreneurship & work Flexibility.
1995-2009	Generation Z	Cultural diversity, global brands, social media and a digital world, working in digital economy with machine, robots, big-data and automation, more aware of global changes & technology trends, apps, tweets, memes, social media, tablets and colloquial slang term for communication.
2010-2024	Alpha Generation	Record birth number- almost 2 billion by 2024 globally, 1 st generation to be born and living in 21 st century completely. Further details discussed below.

The ALPHA Generation

The name generation Alpha refers to those who are born from 2010 onwards and will be born till 2024. The term “Alpha” for this generation was coined by **Mark McCrindle**, founder of Australian consultancy firm named ‘McCrindle Research’ in his book (*Generation Alpha - Google Books*). He explained as the Latin alphabet were exhausted with Generation Z, and naming it the letter “A” would have been starting of something old like reaching to an end and starting in a cyclical form, but according to him it is a beginning of something new, so the first time Greek alphabet was used to signify the new generation in new world and if this nomenclature to be followed then upcoming generation would be named Generation Beta and Gamma and so on. They are 1st generation to be fully born in 21st century and with the projection that 2 billion of alpha’s birth by 2024, they will be largest generation in history of mankind. This generation has experienced Covid-19, Brexit and the war going on between Russia & Ukraine that are worth mentioning. It is a generation who has known and grown with glass screen as a way of interaction, learning, expressing and a medium of working. They are living in the age of technology which has shaped childhood with customization and personalization and ease of accessing information at their fingertips. Social media is an integral part of this generation and many websites and apps are made keeping them in focus, especially the oldest Alpha’s who are almost going to be teenagers for learning, playing games and for interacting people their age like OMEGLE, TINDER, INSTAGRAM, SNAPCHAT, TIK-TOK, TWITTER etc. They are also being labeled as generation glass, digital natives and screenagers indicating their connection with technology (**Tootell et al., 2014**). They are soon to be frontiers of the workforce and will be one step ahead of Gen Z in technological advancement and innovation and will bring potential changes in organizational landscape and HR strategies, which can be projected by understanding their social, economic and technological environment globally influencing their characteristics.

Characteristics of Alpha Generation

This generation shares a lot of its characteristics with the characteristics of youngest gen Z, as (**Nagy & Kölcsey, 2017**) mentioned in their study that gen Alpha is gen Z 2.0 and are similar to their predecessors but that it carries their ‘legacy’. Despite that there are a lot of differences between the whole generation Z and Alphas. These distinctive characteristics have been discussed in detail: -

Family Dynamics

Generation Alpha is/will be the most diverse generation ever not just in their ethnicity and gender identification but also in their lifestyle, opinion and preferences. They will be raised in a single parent household. According to OECD- family database in 2016/17 around 6-28% household were single parent household and it has significantly increased more by 2022 with increasing rate of divorce and increasing trends of pregnancy options without having a partner essentially. The single parent culture is more prominently present in the childhood of alphas. This style of household make them more prone to poor mental health (**Fransson et al., 2018**). They feel less attached to their parents and are self-sufficient (**Aggrawal, 2019**).

Learning Environment

This generation cohort studies on screens. As we know alphas live in a technological world, its contribution to teaching is no exception. Especially after covid-19, the traditional teaching was replaced with e-learning and distance learning style has become more common. specialized apps and courses are available for students to access 24*7 and cater to child’s needs for personalization, which is not possible for a teacher in a classroom and parents became their guides at home (**Ziatdinov & Cilliers, 2021**).

Socialization

Alpha generation’s kids spend so much time online that they don’t have time to socialize in traditional ways. They interact with their peers through screens rather than face to face. Also, they don’t like interacting with elders. Screens are their means of communication and they connect to friends though app, play online games with them, create virtual pets and personalities as mentioned by **McCrindle** in his book (*Generation Alpha*).

Technological

They are called ‘digital natives’ as they are born in a highly digitalized world. They are very hands-on with smartphones, laptops, digital toys, visual games, wearable devices and AI based assistants like Alexa, Siri etc. Acquaintance with gadgets and electronic machine from primary age makes them a natural while it comes to understanding technology opposed to previous generations as mentioned by (Ziatdinov & Cilliers, 2021) in his study. They are hyperconnected which means always connected to technology that it make them experts in the use of new technology as mentioned in the article (*What Does Alpha Generation Mean? The First Digital Native Generation - Iberdrola*).

Self-Growth Focused

Gen Alpha is more agile and adept than any other generation. As McCrindle in his book (*Generation Alpha*) mentioned that they are raised in an education system where focus is on developments of multiple and innovative skills and are given time to reflect on themselves. They have a “can do attitude” and not afraid of challenges and asks for help if required.

Environmentally Conscious

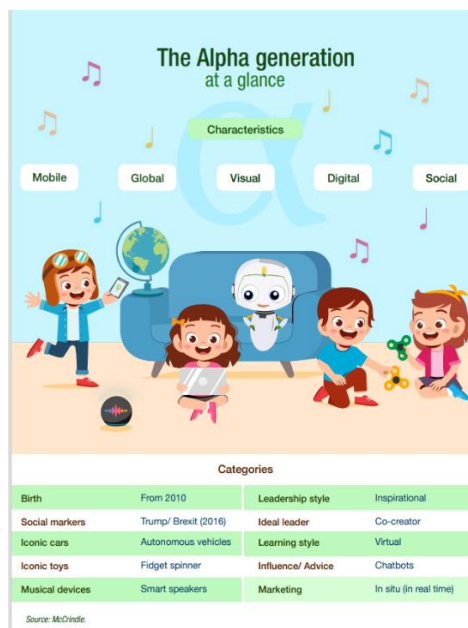
It has been said that gen Z is very conscious about climate change, pollution and environmental degradation and alphas look up to them. According to a survey conducted by Amnesty International (NGO) on 1000 people ranging from 18-25 years old show that Gen Z rank the issue of climate change at top. One such example is Greta Thunberg’s movement; this happens because of the realities they see online and share their opinions and get influenced by others’ opinions too.

More Sensitive

(Twenge, 2017) has stated in book that this generation is more vulnerable mentally and spend more time online than interacting in person. They have a very different opinion on relationships, gender and children and are not afraid to express their opinions. It has been observed that focus on themselves rather than social rules. The teens of this gen show abrupt behavior and emotional states and carrying childhood traits in their adolescence.

Problem of Generation Alpha

All these characteristics also lead us to certain problems that this Generation may have because of their social and technological environment in which they are growing. Hyperconnectivity makes them lack inter-personal as they interact more through screens and less in person. Always being online leaves no time for them to socialize. (Twenge, 2017) in her book iGen has explained that social media can increase mental issues in this generation such as anxiety, depression and loneliness. They will also face lack of focus and reduced span of attention due screen connectivity for longer periods of time. HR executives will need to cater these issues while hiring them.



HR Strategy for Alpha Generation

The business environment has become very dynamic and agile, in fact the whole world seems to be changing at a blistering pace and as a result the environment of business has changed too. These changes influence every organization because organizations do not work in isolation and they interact with its environment through a complicated system. These changes are not limited to geographical & economical boundaries but they happen globally. Same happens with human as they evolve every day, in fact they bring the change. As far as we talk about human resources 21st century has seen Millennials and Gen Z as workforce and the generation Alpha will be the next cohort of working humans for which the market needs to be ready to receive this generation and needs to be transformed in terms of technology (Reis, 2018). They are the most technology-oriented humans earth have seen till now. Many researchers have tried to speculate the changes for future workforce and after reviewing the relevant literatures following changes are to be expected in HR function to adapt alphas:

- **Employee Experience-** According to an article by (Baier et al., 2021) employee should be focal point and provide them a seamless experience. Organizations should adopt people first strategy to attract and retain human resources because the alpha generation is growth focused, and their loyalty lies with their career and not with the organization. This can be achieved through employee empowerment and engagement. Employers should provide hassle-free, digitized and quick feedback process to new hires or event to potential hires. They should feel comfortable and catered to from the very beginning of recruitment process.
- **Agile HR Practices-** An agile organization is a pre-requisite for innovation and creativity and alphas are known to be innovative, creative and challenge accepting. Agile HR systems focus on teamwork, flexibility, provides more independence through job enrichment, empowerment, participation, collaborative work space, staffing policies, and organizational communication patterns (Junita, 2021).
- **New Career Options-** As Generation alpha shows a characteristic of being self- growth oriented and when they will enter workforce, nobody knows what kind of jobs would exist then, but they sure be more multi- faceted, as alphas are multi-tasker too so they might hold multiple job too (McCrinkle & Fell, 2020). There might be new industries based on shift in consumer's demand and some would disappear too. So, HR experts should come up with innovative jobs focused on shift in emerging area of study or profession.
- **Employee Well- Being –** when generation alpha will be in workforce, well-being will be top priority of the employees. They expect to do well in every aspect of life. They are the most materially endowed generation and no tolerance for any obstacles in their well-being at workplace too (McCrinkle & Fell, 2020). Organizations are already hiring well-being managers and we might see a separate department for this function in a decade or so. Also, mental health would be a priority too as it has been mentioned above that generation alphas are vulnerable towards mental health, because there hyperconnectivity expose them to cyber bullying and crimes too.
- **Digital-Orientation-** While HR function will need to data driven and data analytics will guide management to make people decisions, maintaining their privacy and security will be a problem to focus on. Leveraging technology, empower employees and keep aside the negative consequences of digitalized work environment. Flexible and remote working makes organization's data spread on many devices and prone to digital attack (Nezami et al., 2021). Organizations will need to come up with policies and technological upgradation to defend their confidential data and corporate digital security.

Conclusion

The HR strategy for future workforce need to agile and adaptive to any sudden changes. For accomplishing that proper change management is required. HR managers will need to communicate the value of those changes to its every stakeholder. Aligning shareholders interest with employee interest will do the trick. A proper and continuous flow of employee centric communication flow will be necessary to inform – what’s in it for them. Overall, the workplace environment of youngest gen z and oldest alphas seems to be pretty much same. Because these generational timelines are not scientific at all, as there won’t be a lot of difference between a child born in 2009(Gen Z) and 2010 (Gen Alpha). These changes and its influence on organizational environment can’t be predicted accurately. These are speculations made on the events of Alpha surrounding in their formative years but a lot can change in a decade.

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