

# **Y now**

## **An update of Generation Y in the municipal workplace**

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### **Abstract**

There has been much discussion lately about the pending mass retirement of the Baby Boomer generation, and, on the other end of the generational spectrum, the issues surrounding Generation Y coming into the workforce. Particularly among human resources management practitioners, there is a belief that important inter-generational differences exist among workers and that these differences provide challenges to supervisors in effectively managing their new workforce. HR professionals have been calling on both municipalities and supervisors to adapt to the expectations of their new Generation Y employees and change contemporary methodologies of recruitment and retention.

Given that Generation Y representatives have only been in the workforce a short period of time, there is relatively sparse empirical research published and it is often contradictory and sometimes confusing. For this research paper, a cross sectional study was conducted to determine whether the preconceptions of Gen Ys identified in some academic research, remain valid now that they have been working in the public sector for a number of years, or if other researchers were correct in indicating that the generational differences are fabrications created by untested assumptions and stereotypes, reinforced by popular media. If the latter is the case, municipalities and supervisors may be changing the way they relate to the next generation for no valid reason and limited resources, may be spent on a corporate culture change that is not necessary.

Four key areas were identified as the most important for corporations and supervisors to focus on to recruit, retain and motivate Generation Y workers:

- Mentoring, feedback and communication
- The use of changing technology
- Work/life balance and
- Impatience – promotions and intrinsic work values

To ascertain the expectations of current municipal Gen Y employees and supervisors in these four areas, two different surveys were conducted. Thirty-eight supervisors completed surveys to determine if they or their corporation implemented changes to adapt to Gen Y, while thirty-one Generation Y employees completed surveys indicating their reaction to the changes or lack thereof. It was determined that certain aspects within each of the four areas were important to Generation Y, and most municipalities and supervisors have successfully implemented modifications to policies or management styles and adapted to Generation Y expectations, specifically in mentoring, feedback and communication. However, the use of changing technology in social media and the ability to conduct virtual meetings was not as relevant to Generation Y as previously thought. Generation Ys also assimilated into the municipal corporate culture, even in the absence of a corporate culture change in areas such as vacation and telecommuting.

This subject is still a new and evolving issue with much more to come as Generation Y continues to enter the workforce and municipalities and supervisors implement relevant changes to their corporate policies and management styles to integrate this new cohort into the municipal labor force.

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction:**

### **Change for a Generation:**

Isaac Asimov (1978) said “The only constant is change, continuing change, inevitable change that is the dominant factor in society today. No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be”. As we venture into the new millennium, we are even more conscious of the rapidly changing world around us. It is inevitable that as humans evolve, the places in which we live, work and play will evolve with us.

Each generation has left their mark on this planet (and beyond). It can be argued, however, that over the past 100 years, the world has changed at an exponential rate. Each generation not only lives through change but also creates change for the next generation. This change is not solely based on developments of technology and medicine, but each of these cohorts has their own set of values and expectations based on their common life experiences such as world events, natural disasters, politics, economic conditions and pop culture (Smith & Clurman, 1998).

Since the Second World War, there have been copious amounts of research conducted about each generation and the differences between generations (Smola, 2002; Hammill, 2005; Yan & Guy, 2006; Levenson, 2010; Freidell et al, 2011; and Deal et al, 2010). This research continues today with the newest generation, Generation Y. Other terms for these 12 – 32 year olds (as of 2012) are the “Now Generation”, the “Me Generation”, the “Net Generation” or the “Millennials”.

In recent years society have not just been more aware of the differences in generational values and expectations, but supervisors and corporations are being told to adapt to the needs and wants of this emerging demographic by authors such as Buik (2008). Private businesses and marketers

have been doing this for many years as they sell a product or entice money from a unique segment of the population (Stevens, 2008), however, as this cohort starts to enter the workforce, the concerns turn to their recruitment, retention and productivity. Since 2008, literature and articles have made society well aware of the differences between this generation and the previous ones (Twenge, 2008; Martin, 2008; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; and Harrington, 2011). Particularly among human resources management practitioners, there has been a belief that important inter-generational differences exist among workers and that these differences provide challenges to managers in effectively managing their workforce (Benson & Brown, 2011).

### **Research Question:**

This research paper examines Generation Y, and their interaction with their Generation X and Baby Boomers managers in a municipal setting. The research conducted is a cross sectional study to determine whether the preconceptions of Gen Y identified in the academic research, (Benson & Brown, 2011; Barzilai-Nahon & Mason, 2010) remain valid now that they have been working in the public sector for a couple of years, or if other researchers such as Levenson, (2010); and De Stefano (2012) were correct in indicating that the generational differences are fabrications created by untested assumptions and stereotypes and reinforced by popular media and news sources. Other researchers (Xu & Bassham, 2010 and Deal et al 2010) explain the disparity not because of generation, but because of differences in age or stage in life compared to the older managers.

The research questions this paper attempts to answer are:

***Have municipalities and supervisors changed and adapted to Generation Y expectations, and if so, with what success? Or have the Generation Ys assimilated into the municipal corporate culture, even in the absence of a corporate culture change?***

Simply, has Generation Y changed the corporate environment or has the corporate environment changed Generation Y? The hypothesis to test this question is:

***Those managers and municipalities who have implemented changes to adapt to Generation Ys expectations have more productive Generation Y employees with higher job satisfaction and retention.***

To test this hypothesis and answer the posed research questions, there are specific areas to be analyzed. Levenson, (2010) and Twenge (2008) have spoken about Generation Ys upbringing, education, environment and focusing events that shaped their expectations and values as they entered the working world. Previous academic research (Martin, 2005, Ng et al, 2010; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) identified four key areas as the most important for corporations and managers to focus on to recruit, retain and motivate this new generation of workers. The areas for analysis are discussed in greater detail in the Chapter 2 – Literature Review. However some initial questions this research paper attempts to address are:

- Have supervisors changed their management style to give Generation Y employees constant praise, coaching and softer discipline? Has Generation Y adapted to infrequent and formal communication from their bosses?
- Have municipalities integrated new technologies for these technological savvy younger workers? Is Generation Y satisfied with the municipality's current technology?
- Do Generation Ys yearn for a work/life balance or have they fallen into the workaholic mentality?
- Does Generation Y expect quick career advancement and varied and challenging work immediately, or have they realized that they have to earn promotions over time and do jobs they may not like?

In order to define success of any changes, the following must be answered:

- Are Generation Ys satisfied with their job? Do they leave employers more quickly than those of previous generations? Is their productivity less compared to those who came before?

Two different electronic surveys were distributed to approximately 70 staff at twelve municipalities in November 2012. To get their perceptions, Gen Y employees completed the first survey. The second survey was answered by managers/supervisors of Gen Y staff to gain their point of view. Thirty-one completed surveys were returned from Generation Y employees, while direct supervisors of Generation Ys completed 38 surveys.

### **Who are the Generations?**

To better understand the workplace environment, we must first understand the generations that created the current environment. A generation's worldview has been shaped by the events they experienced during their most formative years (from 11 – 19 years of age), and they are individuals born around the same time who share distinctive social or historical life events during this critical development stage (Twenge and Campbell, 2008).

There are currently four generations in the workplace: Veterans/Silent Generation (persons born between 1922 – 1945), Baby Boomers (born from 1946 – 1964), Generation X (born from 1965 – 1980) and Generation Y/Millennials (born from 1981 – 2000) (Hammill, 2005). As noted above, some Millennials are currently going through their formative years and will continue to develop as they grow older and gain experiences.

The Silent Generation has completed their change to the corporate environment through their expectations, values and work over the years. Their numbers are very low and diminishing. Any contributions by them to Generation Y will be the legacy that is already in place. Because of this, they have not been included in recent research comparisons. No members of the Silent Generation completed the survey for this research report.

The civil rights and women's movements, the Vietnam War, Watergate and the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. affected the Baby Boomers adolescent years. Regarding work, they are said to be results driven, plan to stay for the long term and give maximum effort (Twenge et al, 2010). The automotive boom in their early working years has also defined some, as that industry was seen as having good paying secure jobs that one could stay in for their career. This also meant loyalty to their employers. They live to work.

Some of the events experienced during Gen Xer's formative years include the AIDS epidemic, economic instability, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. They share some of the same traits with the Gen Ys, but for different reasons: they are independent because their parents had record divorce rates and they were expected to do more for themselves at home. They are less loyal to their employer and more likely to job-hop due to fear of downsizing. Gen Xers also prioritize work/life balance, but because they have to take care of both their aging parents and young children, not to socialize like Gen Ys. They are also tech savvy and quick learners as they grew up when rapid technology changes were occurring, although at that time, personal computer technology was still new (Twenge et al, 2010). They work to live.

The Generation that a person is a part of is not the only factor affecting their behaviour. When thinking about generational differences, it is important to remember that individual behaviour is a result of an interaction between an individual's predispositions and what behaviour the environment encourages and discourages (Deal et al, 2010). Geography, culture, family configuration and economic condition often have greater effect on a person than the other overarching factors of generation. Although each person is an individual and should be treated that way, an understanding of cohort similarities is also beneficial.

Contrary to Deal (2010), Buik (2008) and Hammill (2010), others have suggested that more similarities than differences exist between the generations. Cennamo and Gardner (2008) did not find differences between Baby Boom, Generation X and Generation Y workers on extrinsic, intrinsic, altruistic or social values. This research however should be taken within context, for example, while all generation value job security, Gen X and Y value security in their profession rather than having security in their current job (Hansen & Leuty, 2012).

Again, this underscores the relevance of the question: should there be a change in municipal human resources policies or management styles to cater to Generation Y or will members of this generation assimilate into the existing workplace environment? Is it worth it for municipalities and supervisors to implement changes for Gen Y, especially in times of corporate fiscal restraint and with managers' time at a premium? Unfortunately, proper research will be too late to determine if these recommendations were wrong as we will not fully know until Generation Ys are in their 40s and 50s if the differences were generational or only due to age. But because of the great employment shift that will occur as the Baby Boomers retire and Gen Ys enter the workforce, it is very important that this subject be given the proper credence and study it deserves. The research presented here is a cross sectional snapshot in time when the first members of this generation are beginning their careers. This study will be one of many assessments of this generation in the workforce.

It should be noted at this point that most of the literature review and articles cited in this paper speak to the North American working culture and demographics. Although there are similarities that can be extended to most of the Western world, the generalizations and research conducted are for post war Canada and the United States. The technological growth, societal changes, advancement in medicine and media influence is mostly a Western and North American phenomena. Research for this paper has not produced any empirical data to show what

immigration, outsourcing and the current economic downturn will do to influence the corporate environment. Through the fullness of time, future research analyzing Generation Y in the workplace should show what effect these particular influencing factors have on Millennials' expectations.

## **Chapter 2 – Literature Review:**

### **The Impending Demographic Shift:**

There has been much discussion (Ontario Public Service, 2012; Hammill, 2005; NUR, 2001) about the pending mass retirement of the Baby Boomer generation, who make up 28.6% of Canada's population (Statistics Canada, 2011) and, on the other end of the generational spectrum, the issues surrounding Generation Y coming into the workforce. As the Baby Boomers retire, the Generation Xers will move into senior management roles and their old positions will soon be filled with those who are now in their early 30s or even late 20s. As the remaining pool of desirable employees shrink to satiate the demand of employee retirements, more focus will be on the younger generation to contribute to keep municipalities running and competitive. There will continue to be plenty of opportunity for the Millennials to achieve municipal employment because of this. Provincially, 28 percent of Ontario Public Servant executives are eligible to retire in the next 5 years, while 57 percent are eligible to retire in the next 10 years (OPS, 2012). Although immigration, downsizing, the recent economic downturn and Canadian Pension Plan eligibility will have their effect on all aspects of business, those in Generation Y will be in full demand like no other generation before them. Public sector workers are, on average, older than the national average employee (NUR, 2001), which will result in the federal, provincial and municipal governments noticing this trend more quickly than other sectors such as the private sector.

Research conducted by Deal et al, (2010) noted that some organizations have talked about the possibility of treating their employee populations differently based on their generation by offering different training options, communication choices and benefits. Because any implementations of such policies are very recent, there is scant evidence that different approaches have improved

employee relations, productivity or job satisfaction. Organizations that have strong policies and procedures around inclusiveness may be better served than those that chase generational differences.

Some say that today's challenge is that the new cohort has different expectations than those hiring them. What a Boomer or Gen Xer valued or expected from work when he or she was young is very different from what a Millennial values coming into the workplace (Ng, Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010). Thus, the management techniques such as hierarchical communication that were effective for young workers 20 years ago may not work now. In addition, previous recruiting techniques outlining the same uninspired job descriptions may not be effective for each new generation as it enters the workforce. For example, many companies recognize they should have stronger presence on Internet sites such as Facebook (Twenge et. al, 2010). Municipalities can also re-evaluate the importance of such websites to retain Gen Y. In a Cisco survey (2011), of 1,400 respondents, 64 percent of college students indicated that they ask about social media usage policies during job interviews and approximately 24 percent say it would be a key factor in accepting the offer.

### **From a Local Government Perspective:**

A third of Canada's work force will retire over the next five years, leaving businesses scrambling to fill vacant jobs (Arnold, 2012). As the Baby Boomers and even Gen Xers become an ever-decreasing segment of the population that is wooed to the municipal sector, Human Resources professionals have been calling on both the municipalities and their managers to change their methodologies of recruitment and retention. Clark (2009), Kister (2012), Yap and Tng (1990), Twenge et al (2010), and Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) have all provided suggestions that improve intergenerational relations in an organizational setting and recommend strategies for effectively integrating, accommodating, training and retaining Gen Y.

As noted previously, most of the recommendations fall into four specific categories:

- Mentoring, feedback and communication
- The use of changing technology
- Work/life balance and
- Impatience – promotions and intrinsic work values

As with any business, in the municipal sector, certain skills such as coaching, communication and management techniques can be learned through training and other HR programs. There are also harder initiatives to implement such as mentoring programs and continuous feedback. With such demand on today's busy supervisor, it is very difficult to find the time to mentor younger staff. It is also more difficult on the public side when residents are paying for both salaries and the perception from the public is that staff should already know their jobs, and time spent mentoring takes away from the time serving the public.

Private companies recognize the public's demand for technological improvements. Businesses are selling a product or service that must be up-to-date, easy to use and make life easier in general. The bottom line of the company depends on the novelty of the next new "it" thing. For municipalities, where the main business is providing services, the bottom line does not depend on the latest technology and that specific part of the budget must compete with all others. Some municipalities however, use technology to help provide those services in a more efficient and helpful manner. Some examples of this include: using smart phones to report potholes, online registration for recreation and leisure programs and Facebook campaigns for resident input. Although not as pioneering as the private sector, municipalities are starting to use innovative

techniques that are in response to the ever-growing part of their population that demand it. Generation Y will be a great help implementing this if given the opportunity.

Although private companies can adapt and change based on the company executive and shareholder direction, the public sector must be cognizant of taxpayer dollars. While at companies like Nestlé Purina you can take your pet to work or at Facebook where employees are offered amenities like on-site laundry, food services, and child care, immense municipal scrutiny in the media would not allow for this. In larger municipalities, flex time and telecommuting may be available, but in most situations, Council and the residents expect staff to be on site to respond to their inquiries. Providing options to enhance work/life balance is definitely harder to integrate into the public sector workplace (Grant, 2011).

Another area that may be difficult to implement for some municipalities is quick promotion and giving Gen Ys projects that are interesting to them. Smaller municipalities have a limited number of staff positions. New positions are difficult to obtain approval for from Council. Unlike in the private side where a new position is not influenced by political perception, municipalities are under high public scrutiny with every new hire. This scrutiny creates apprehensiveness by Council to approve new positions, especially ones that are paid for by the tax levy. Limited positions, especially in mid and upper management mean that there are a limited number of advancement opportunities. In the private side an employee can leave one company and create a new company where they can appoint themselves executive, in the municipal side that is not an option.

Due to municipal budget restrictions, there are also a limited number of projects, and certain menial jobs must be done to continue services. Generation Y is highly educated. They often think that they are too good for certain jobs and want better paying, more senior jobs more

quickly than their predecessors (Bendix & Shauls, 2011). The opportunities may be there in larger municipalities, but in most small and medium sized towns and cities, there will be few above the entry level.

### **The Generation Y Experience:**

Experiencing different historical, social and educational conditions during formative years is thought to influence the way people view, perceive and interpret their environment, including their work environment. To this point, a 'generation' as defined here, comes of age in roughly the same time frame and experiences life's passages, such as life events, pressure and cultural expectations similarly (Yang & Guy, 2006). Although work values also change as workers grow older (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Xu & Bassham, 2010), Gen Ys have not yet had that life experience and their current perceptions are what existing managers and corporations must currently consider. Many different things have influenced these Millennials.

Millennials have always felt loved and wanted by their doting "helicopter" parents, guided and cared for by teachers who instilled self-esteem, taught them to question authority and followed policies like *no child left behind* (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). There was little risk of failure, but much celebration and support of every accomplishment; everyone got a ribbon (Harris, 2011). This created young adults who were encouraged to voice their opinions (Ryan, 2000) and take chances in a structured environment without having the fear of failure. It also, however, created a requirement for continuous and instantaneous feedback from management, yet also a dislike of an authoritative management style (Harrington, 2011). Their parents put them in organized sports and school programs and expected them to capitalize on every opportunity presented to them by earning the grades, leadership positions and medals/trophies. They wanted their kid to be the best at all these 'competitions' (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). This may be because the parents themselves as late Boomers or early Xers fought over few jobs with an oversupply of people,

watched as globalization downsized their companies and they themselves had both parents working and felt the need to be good parents and push their kids to have things they could not (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Because of this, Millennials are noteworthy for desiring frequent feedback, expecting quick promotions and using mentors (Witt, Smith & Clark, 2010).

Generation Y is said to be the first generation to be born into a wired world; they are 'connected' 24 hours a day. They have every reason to assume that all necessary information can be gathered with the touch of a button on a 24/7/365 basis. They can generate massive amounts of data on almost any topic in extraordinarily condensed time periods, but have not had much experience delivering cohesive, engaging presentations without the benefit of technology. They are also blissfully unaware that most online sources rarely adhere to any standards of accuracy and validity (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). They do not question the correctness of the source when they easily and immediately retrieve the data from potentially unreliable website like Wikipedia. Because most Gen Ys grew up playing video games they are used to responding to visual stimulation and filtering information, however they are less adept in terms of face-to-face interaction and deciphering non-verbal cues (Small & Vorgan, 2008). The easily accessible, more impersonal and immediate information mediums are the first that they turn to, and the municipality and management should be ready to provide this form of interaction (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

While employees of all generations desire work-life balance, Millennials may have the confidence and conviction to demand it from their employers. In a Universum Incorporated student survey in 2007, 34 percent of American undergraduate students stated that the most attractive perk in a company is the "balanced personal and professional life" (Ferri, 2007). As well as being driven by the desire for higher pay and better benefits, they put a premium on interesting and challenging work, and a work environment that meets their lifestyles and needs

(Harrington, 2011). Younger workers are attracted to organizations that offer benefits and options to balance work and life commitments such as telecommuting and flexible work hours (Hansen & Leuty, 2012). Almost twice as many young people in 2006, than in 1976, rated having a job with more than two weeks of vacation as “very important”, and almost twice as many wanted a job at which they could work slowly. In 2006 nearly half the graduates questioned wanted a job “which leaves a lot of time for other things in your life” (Twenge et. al, 2010). This may seem like a dream to older workers, but as the Millennials start to enter the working world, they know that they are going to be in demand, so they are making demands of their potential employer such as more vacation, flexible hours and minimizing overtime. Staff & Schulenberg (2010) found that generations are remarkably similar in their work patterns during high school and that Gen Ys do not work fewer hours than did Boomers or Xers at the same age. Deal et al (2010) indicated Gen Ys do work less hours, however the study did not take into account level in the organization, as Boomers and Xers hold higher positions that require more hours. Work ethic and hours may change as Millennials grow older, but organizations are changing right now to adapt to their lifestyle. “Younger” offices such as Google and Facebook have social times, laundry services and a low stress atmosphere, which grow talent and create an environment that fosters creativity instead of productivity (Grant, 2011). These are some main reasons why the youth of today find these companies more desirable to work for than municipalities, as the public sector is reluctant or cannot change as fast as the private sector. While it may be impossible for most companies to create such policies like Google or Facebook, a manager can create a relaxed atmosphere with options like telecommuting, flex time, additional vacation and informal work atmosphere.

Deal (2007) found that 72 percent of participants across generations placed high importance on family, but (Ballenstedt & Rosenberg, 2008) found that for older workers this may be expressed by working long hours to earn a larger income whereas for younger workers it may mean working

fewer hours to allow more time with family. This does not mean that Gen Ys will not be productive. As noted before, they are multitaskers and have been raised to work smarter not harder. They have, however, seen their parents working on their Blackberrys while watching their soccer games, or missing breakfasts and dinners because they have to go in early and work later. Millennials will be less likely to do so. They want a balance from work and want to be judged on results rather than on their physical presence in the office (Harrington, 2011). During interviews of a high school graduating class in 2006 Hershatter (2007) found most interviewees indicating that they are looking for a place that is a good fit where “I’m challenged but not overstressed”. Currently those Gen Xers looking at work/life balance know enough not to want the promotion because they know it means more work and longer hours. Gen Ys also want work life balance, but they are unaware that next promotion may put this in jeopardy. Although they may be perceived as wanting to work fewer hours, once Millennials are promoted and realize their new job entails working more hours, they may change their expectations. Since most Gen Ys have not advanced to upper management, there is insufficient evidence that Millennials are fundamentally different than their predecessors, once predictable life cycle stages are taken into account (Levenson, 2010). However, managers should be prepared to give examples about the corporation’s commitment to work/life balance if it comes up in an interview and create policies and procedures that emphasize its importance.

Millennials are often confident, curious, goal-oriented, tech-savvy and can have a false sense of entitlement (Johnson, 2011). They also come more educated. In 1974, 16 percent of employees over 25 had a university degree. By 1998 it was 26 percent and in 2008 it was 31percent (Smola & Sutton, 2002 and Levenson, 2010). However this means that Millennials are associated with higher debt load (Scherschel & Behmyer, 1997) and want top-paying jobs right away to validate that education and to also help pay off student loans. Myers & Sadaghiani, (2010) show that Gen Ys have higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of depression than Gen Xers when they

were the same age. Consequently, Smola & Sutton (2002) support the conclusion that Millennials are extraordinarily confident in their abilities. This has been partially attributed to factors such as graduation inflation do to an increase in standardized test scores that make Yers think they are experts based on their marks. This may explain why Millennials want to take on significant projects early on in their careers (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Millennials, as compared with previous generations at the same age have been shown to be higher on positive traits such as self-esteem and assertiveness as well as negative traits such as narcissism (Twenge, 2008). Generation Y may ask about the next promotion even before they get the first job. Generation X may see this a pushy or too forward and think “these kids need to pay their dues”, meaning they require more experience before being given promotions. Generation Y often have high, perhaps unreasonable expectations about what they can bring to the workplace and what the corporation should offer them. They sometimes think they are better than they are.

### **Recommendations from the Literature:**

Because the Generation Y representatives have only been in the workforce a short period of time, most research cited in this paper has only been published within the past five years. This indicates a new and still evolving issue with much more to come as the Millennials continue to develop in the workforce and mature as employees.

Hansen & Leuty (2012) examined generational effects on work related variables, such as work attitudes, work values and personality and have been unable to distinguish large generational difference when controlling for age and period effects. Levenson (2010) identified that generations, at the same age, are more similar than different with respect to work expectations. Each generation goes through a natural life cycle evolution in their attitudes toward and decisions about work. When people are young and just entering the labour force, they go through a very steep learning phase about the world of work and the true opportunities and limitations they face.

The cost for employers to tailor an intervention to each generation should be weighed against the potential benefits. HR professionals, leaders and managers may be better served by identifying individual differences, including age, which might explain the discordance they are witnessing in their workforce between older and younger employees (Kowske et al, 2010).

In contrast, Myers & Sadaghiani (2010) and Hershatter & Epstein (2010) and many companies (Cisco, 2011, and Robert Half International, 2011) recommend preparing for the differences that this upcoming generation will bring to the workforce in values, behavior and expectations. Arnold (2012) and NUR (2001) have spoken about the tsunami of retirements and an impending wave of a generation that is coming into the workforce that is much different than any other before them.

### Mentoring, Feedback and Communication

Since research shows generational differences tend to inhibit organizational collaboration, it appears intergenerational communication creates more problems than possibilities. The first main area of perceived difference is coaching/mentoring. Buik (2008) and Deal (2007) have pointed out that current hiring managers should explain their managing style to the potential employee. Coaching can help Gen Ys to deal with reality in the workplace and to develop the skills and competence they are lacking (Buik, 2008). Some Millennials are fond of managers from the Silent or Baby Boom generations; so senior managers (of those particular generations) may want to make more time for mentoring and feedback (Harris, 2011). If those managers made themselves available for the first few months of employment to be a mentor, it would help to ease the transition into the reality of the municipality. This may be increasingly difficult, as senior municipal managers have had increased pressures placed on their time with respect to doing more with less and public demand on their time. There is a tendency to leave new hires to learn on the job with minimal direction or guidelines. After all, that is how previous generations were treated.

Through mentoring, however, expectations may be established in an easy and positive manner. The desire and need for mentorship is also another area where the two generations can learn from and help each other. Forty-seven percent of Millennials and 49 percent of hiring managers agree mentoring is the most helpful way for Millennials to overcome their weaknesses (Bendix & Shaults, 2011). Mentoring can help Millennials develop the more widely acceptable attitudes and behaviour that will not only empower them to build harmonious and productive relationships in the workplace, but transform them into the future managers and leaders many aspire to be (Buik, 2008).

Managers of Millennials frequently describe their employees as “high-maintenance” or “needy” when it comes to direction (Martin, 2005). Eighty percent of Gen Y workers want regular feedback and recognition, while 50 percent want feedback at least once a week (Mielach, 2012). This is because any elements of ambiguity, or any project or assignment that requires Millennials to work without guidelines, templates or examples, result in a great deal of angst, because they have not had much practice producing without explicit instructions, well defined criteria for success and specific deadlines set by others. Millennials expect very clearly outlined and objective rubrics and well-defined expectations, just like they received from their sports coach or schoolteacher (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). These expectations should be conveyed in a positive and up-front way. As noted in Bendix & Shaults, (2011), 51 percent of hiring managers believe Millennials exhibit an inability to accept criticism from their managers and 54 percent of Millennials agreed. The rules and expectations set by their supervisors in a positive and productive way help Gen Y focus on the task at hand and understand the support structure behind them.

A topic related to management style is communication. Although intergenerational communication is significant to organizational maintenance and development, corporations

currently emphasize more formal ways of communication than Millennials like (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Thirty-eight percent of Millennials believe their generation cannot communicate effectively and 35 percent of hiring managers agree (Bendix & Shaults, 2011). Today, older people perceive that younger people use too much slang or jargon and have poor communication skills. But this is nothing new as every generation from the “greasers” to the “hippies” to the “yuppies” has had their own way of speaking. Beliefs about whichever younger generation entering the workforce have remained remarkably stable over the past forty years (Deal et al, 2010). Technology such as texting and social media, twitter and blogs has created a type of writing and communication that is abbreviated, to-the-point and informal. Gen Ys must understand that if they are communicating with Baby Boomers or Gen Xers it is suggested they use more formal writing, even in an email. Additional training may be required for Millennials, including communications classes, writing workshops and other “people skills” tutoring which was almost unheard of only twenty years ago. Clark (2009) has shown that Millennials are ready to adapt their communication style in order to better deal with colleagues from different generations.

Myers & Sadaghiani (2010) suggest Millennials value and expect close relationships and frequent, positive and affirming feedback from supervisors. They also expect an open, transparent flow of communication from their supervisors and even senior managers. Young people view success as something shared across an organization through flattened leadership. No matter their role, they want to provide input and even collaborate directly with the CEO if relevant (Youth and Intrepid, 2011). This may be difficult to implement in larger municipalities, but outreach programs, Town Hall meetings and the use of technological communication mediums could contribute to successful new management and communication styles.

### The Use of Changing Technology

Millennials have had an early introduction and aptitude for technology, which distinguishes them from their older cohorts who were raised during a time when these devices did not exist. Since Gen Y has been raised with this Information Technology, they have always lived in this face-paced world and are better at multitasking, responding to visual stimulation and filtering information, but less adept in terms of face-to-face interaction and deciphering non-verbal cues (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Millennials are most comfortable with new technology; they devote more time to social media, and have an affinity for Information Technology and computer-mediated communication (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Millennials may do research about a municipality they are applying to via Google, Town website, Twitter, Facebook and blogs (Wesner & Miller, 2008). The municipality should use and promote the most relevant and attractive aspects of the municipality on these mediums. Slogans that resonate with twenty-somethings will differ remarkably from slogans that appeal to thirty-somethings or forty-somethings (Yang & Guy, 2006). A blog from a municipal employee, the ability to conduct an interview via Skype and an attractive, informative and visual website or Facebook page will draw Millennials to a municipality more than an advertisement in the paper or a headhunter calling. It also indicates to the Millennials that the municipality values using the latest technology, which is important variable in their choice of employer (Cisco, 2011). During recruitment, the municipality should promote themselves on different third party websites, including Facebook, and have the technological ability to conduct a virtual interview or let the interviewee present their attributes in a visual way such as webcast or YouTube. Different municipalities have implemented various aspects of this technological interface, however, there has been no research to date as to the success of these methodologies toward attracting Gen Y employees.

Managers should also think of the evolution of the corporation and how technology will play a roll in the future of the municipality. Gen Ys are not afraid of changing technology that may come while updating municipal processes and procedures. For the “Net Generation”, the IT revolution does not offer “the shock of the new”, but is an integral part of their life (Harrington, 2011). The municipality should take this opportunity with the new hire to implement software or expand into a new media. The Millennials may even have ideas of how to reach out to a new sector of residents or know of technology that can create efficiencies in services. The advance of technology is based on making it fit in so that you don't really even notice it, so it's part of everyday life (Gates, 2001). Since this topic has been highlighted in the media and popular culture, most municipalities recognize the need to explore and expand these possibilities, although it is unclear how much of a direct role the Millennials are playing in this change.

Municipalities must learn how to use technology to improve the efficiency of Gen Y and give them flexibility they desire, but still balance its misuse that could lessen productivity. A survey conducted by Cisco (2011) of 1,400 college students and 1,400 employees under 30 noted that one in four employees said the absence of remote access would influence their job decisions by leaving the company sooner than later, slacking off, lowering morale and declining job offers outright.

It was also noted by 40 percent of college students and 45 percent of young employees that they would accept a lower-paying job with more flexibility with respect to technology choice, social media use and telecommuting than a higher-paying job with less flexibility (Cisco, 2011).

Although in smaller or rural municipalities it may be difficult for staff to work from home as they are expected to interact with the public or have access to the municipal network, growing connectivity and internet/email coverage has made it easier to connect remotely to work. Fifty-

seven percent of the employees surveyed by Cisco (2011) could seamlessly connect to their corporate network from remote locations. Larger municipalities may have more options for their staff to work from home and still positively and efficiently contribute to the corporation. Three of ten Collage students feel that once they begin working, it will be their right – more than a privilege – to be able to work remotely with a flexible schedule (Cisco, 2011).

### Work/Life Balance

Millennials are more likely to communicate the desire for work/life balance and to seek a more flexible career path than did previous generations. They also see work in flexible terms (especially where and when work is done) and they desire flexible work schedules to accommodate their desire for work/life balance. This explains the increase in desire for telecommuting and virtual work (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Seven out of ten collage students believe it is unnecessary to be in the office regularly (Cisco, 2011). This generation wants to be judged on results rather than on their physical presence in the office (Harrington, 2011).

Because such benefits make working more satisfying for staff, they end up benefiting the municipality too. Corporations that have a strong work/life balance policies will be better situated for long-term success. These organizations tend to keep employees longer, and these employees tend to have higher job satisfaction. In turn, these employees tend to be more productive over the long term (Barzilai-Nahon & Mason, 2010). Indeed, work/life balance is about more than increasing a good reputation in attracting Gen Ys; it also helps companies retain their best employees. Offering flexible scheduling is the most effective way of improving employee retention rates, which helps companies decrease employee turnover. The more liberal corporations can be with letting staff pick their own schedule times, letting them work from home, or allowing them to leverage technology to work from anywhere, then the higher their retention (Grant, 2011).

Although none of the companies in the top 25 most flexible workplaces are municipalities (Grant, 2011), the trend is catching on in the public sector. In larger municipalities, options for telecommuting do exist. Smart Commute, for example is working in cooperation with some municipalities to increase the ability for their staff to work from home. This reduces green house gas emissions, reduces stress and allows more time to be spent with family or doing other work (Yap & Tng, 1990). Flexible work time is very important to Gen Xers and Baby Boomers as they tend to their children or aging parents, as well as important to Gen Ys as they balance their social life and work/life more intensely than previous generations (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Deal et al. (2010) found there were no significant differences in numbers of hours worked across generations. This suggests that work/life balance is not an indicator of decreased work hours, but serves as a flexible alternative to work scheduling. While issues such as work/life balance have been researched extensively, inconclusive results have been found when looking at work/life balance in relation to different generations (De Stefano, 2012). Generally, assumptions have been made regarding work centrality and age, converging on how younger generations tend to be less work centric than older ones. The link between age and work centrality seems to be established since many researchers believe that as a person grows older and has more economic responsibilities, they identify more with work (Sharabi & Harpaz, 2010 and Buik, 2008). However, evidence suggests that when age is kept constant, cohort differences in values remain the same at a certain age (Hansen & Leuty, 2012 and Levenson, 2010). Only future research will determine if expectations toward work/life balance change, when Gen Ys grow older and have increased responsibility with life stages and job positions.

### Impatience – Promotions and Intrinsic Work Values

Impatience becomes an issue due to a difference in expectations, as Boomers and older Gen Xers are claimed to believe Gen Y should “pay their dues” and be held to the same standard they were at the onset of their careers, while Millennials want to advance quickly and bypass work they consider menial (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) often using job-hopping as an alternative to traditional seniority based promotion tracks (Friedell et al, 2011). If they are not on the same page misunderstandings, miscommunications and mixed signals can lead to a missed opportunity (Fyock, 1990).

The expectation may have been fueled in childhood, when Millennials became accustomed to good grades regardless of what their work deserved. These heightened expectations for rapid career advancement may be a byproduct of entitlement. Almost 70% of respondents in an Ng et al. (2010) survey expected to get a promotion by the end of 18 months at their first job. These findings point to the notion that Millennials desire a faster timeline for promotion than their older counterparts (Friedell, et al., 2011).

The reality of today’s work context, with older employees working past retirement age and economic restrictions, suggests that organizations can no longer promise steady upward mobility or lifelong employment. Instead, municipalities may offer employees programs and training for a new position or just for personal fulfillment. Millennials have a high desire for meaningful (intrinsic) work, expect to be provided with job training and career development resources, and are more likely to consider leaving their jobs if those expectations are not met (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010). Intrinsic work values are defined as a desire for challenge, learning opportunities, personal fulfillment, and higher levels of responsibility (Friedell et al. 2011). They may not necessarily be specifically related to promotions, but to personal and professional growth. In fact,

the number one reason given in both the UK (34%) and the US (37%) for switching jobs was that the Gen Y employee “Just Needed a Change.” In other words, their job was monotonous. This need for change far exceeds the desire for a better salary, benefits, or a more senior position (Bendix & Shaults, 2011). Millennials’ unique desire for flexibility and expectations for career development may make them more receptive to lateral promotion strategies (Kowske et al, 2010). One survey conducted stated that the average 26-year-old has craved stimulation so much, they’ve changed jobs an astounding seven times from age 18, in search of something more (Youth & Intrepid, 2010). Other slightly contradictory research has found this to be an exaggeration. In a Bendix & Shaults (2011) survey, seventy-eight percent of Millennials speculate they will have five or fewer jobs over the course of their career.

Although the number of jobs a Gen Y expects to have differed throughout the research, there is a common theme that Millennials are impatient about being recognized as valuable contributors, and that may contribute to their desire to leave their employer (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Some perceive this impatience as disloyalty however Hershatter & Epstein (2010) found differences in how Millennial employees define this term in comparison against the organizational understanding. For instance, organizations expect Millennial employee loyalty to reflect “passionate, intelligent and enthusiastic work”, whereas Millennials’ loyalty is conditional. For instance, Millennials expect organizations to provide “ample opportunities, offer professional development and training, and provide coaching and mentoring” in return for their loyalty. There is an inaccurate perception of Millennials’ expectations and values by the Baby Boomers and Gen Xers. If supervisors focus only on salary as a measure of Gen Y job satisfaction the Millennials may leave to fulfill their more intrinsic needs (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Their loyalty depends on the corporation providing not just money, but also opportunities. Buik (2008); Twenge (2008) and Johnstone, (2011) suggest that Gen Yers want recognition and promotion, but also want the opportunity to give back to society.

A survey conducted by DeVry University of young professionals, ages 21 to 31 (in 2011), and hiring managers, indicates Millennials believe doing work that is personally meaningful to them and achieving a sense of accomplishment are just as important as earning a high salary for a successful career (Bendix & Shaults, 2011). In fact, 30 percent of Millennials identify meaningful work as the single most important measure of a successful career. Conversely, hiring managers believe high pay plays a greater role in Millennials' perception of career success. Forty-eight percent of hiring managers rank high pay as the number one way Millennials measure their career success. Only 11 percent of hiring managers say Millennials consider meaningful work as the number one measure of success.

### **Chapter 3 – Conceptual Framework:**

#### **Comparisons:**

Hershatler & Epstein (2010), Benson & Brown (2011), Buik (2008) and Harris (2011) indicate that if workplaces and managers are implementing the recommendations noted above, then the Gen Y employee should be satisfied with their work environment. Kister (2012) notes that if the Gen Y employees are satisfied with their employment they will contribute positively to the department and the corporation as a whole, be more productive and more loyal to their employer.

Others, such as Levenson (2010), De Stefano (2012) and Xu & Bassham (2010), indicate that these generational differences may, in fact, be fabrications created by untested assumptions and stereotypes and reinforced by popular media and news sources. If this is the case, municipalities and managers may be changing the way they relate to the next generation for no reason. Limited resources, money and time may be spent on a corporate culture change that is not necessary.

According to Xu & Bassham (2010), one explanation (maturity and experience), posits that personal and psychological changes will occur with age and experience. The other rationalization is the cohort explanation, which states that people from different generations have different values with regards to work. We will not know if the perceived difference is generational or only due to age and stage of lifecycle until Generation Y progresses through those phases.

As noted above, most of the recommendations from previous research (Benson & Brown, 2011; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Buik, 2008; Ferri, 2007 and Witt Smith & Clark, 2010) fall into four categories. Each category has specific areas, which inform the survey questions of this research

paper in order to determine if these changes are occurring and if they are working effectively for Generation Y.

#### Mentoring, Feedback and Communication:

- Do supervisors take time to coach Gen Ys when they are starting at the municipality to ease the transition into their new job?
- Do supervisors make time to mentor young employees?
- Do supervisors set clear expectations and give proper direction as to what exactly is required of the Gen Ys during projects or assignments?
- Is there feedback from supervisors on a regular basis?
- Is criticism conveyed in a positive way?
- After clear direction, are Gen Ys given enough freedom and flexibility to feel that they are not being micro-managed?
- Do Millennials feel that they receive recognition from their managers?
- Do Gen Ys want an informal and friendly relationship with their supervisors?
- Have Gen Ys continued to communicate in an informal way even with supervisors?
- Do Gen Ys lack people skills compared to previous generations?

#### The Use of Changing Technology:

- Does the use of social media attract Millennials to the municipality?
- Has Generation Y's familiarity with technology encouraged them to make suggestions as to how municipalities can incorporate new technology for efficiency purposes or for providing new services? Have municipalities taken advantage of this?
- How important is it to Gen Ys that the municipalities keep updating the technology that they use?
- Does the municipality have the ability to conduct virtual meetings? Does the municipality have the ability to connect to the office remotely? Do Millennials use that technology?

Work/Life Balance:

- Do municipalities have the ability for telecommuting and are Gen Ys doing it more than other staff?
- Do municipalities have and promote flextime policies? How often is it utilized by Gen Ys?
- Did Millennials negotiate more vacation time during the hiring process?
- Do Millennials prefer time in lieu or pay for overtime?
- Is the production/contribution of the Millennials different than previous employees?

Impatience – Promotions and Intrinsic Work Values:

- How long have Millennials been with their current municipality?
- How quickly do Millennials expect to be promoted?
- Do the municipalities offer career training and development?
- Do supervisors specifically make an effort to provide Generation Ys with more interesting, challenging and diverse work?
- What is more important to Generation Y in the workplace, personal fulfillment or money?

**Categorizing the Data:**

To test the hypothesis and answer the question as to the success of any changes, the Millennials and their municipality/managers would fall into one of four categories:

The corporation implemented recommendations to accommodate Gen Y AND the Gen Ys reacted <i>negatively</i>	The corporation <i>did not</i> implement recommendations to accommodate Gen Y AND the Gen Ys reacted <i>negatively</i>
The corporation <i>did not</i> implement recommendations to accommodate Gen Y AND the Gen Ys reacted <i>positively</i>	The corporation implemented recommendations to accommodate Gen Y AND the Gen Ys reacted <i>positively</i>

- 1) If the corporation implemented the recommendations and Gen Y still reacted negatively, then there was no need for the changes and there was a waste of resources

- 2) If the corporation did not implement the recommendations and Gen Y reacted negatively because of it, then there was a clear need for the changes
- 3) If the corporation did not implement the recommendations and Gen Y still reacted positively, then there is no need for the changes and Gen Y may be changing their expectations as they mature in the workforce
- 4) If the corporation implemented the recommendations and Gen Y reacted positively because of it, then the changes worked and it was resources well used

The survey developed for this research and completed by municipal supervisors ascertained if they or the corporation implemented some of the recommendations noted previously. The second survey, specific to the Gen Y municipal employees, determined the Generation Y reaction to the changes or lack thereof. Although this research did not compare and analyze the Gen Y responses specifically with the responses from their supervisor to create a direct correlation, this may be research that could be conducted in the future. This would limit the amount of other variables and provide a comparison of a specific case study instead of the generalizations provided in this research.

Because this data comes from a cross sectional study, at the early career stage of these Millennials, it is important to have an understanding of the relationship between the resources and effort expended by the municipality and supervisors to accommodate Gen Ys transition into the municipal field, as well as an understanding of the perceived benefit of successful recruitment, retention, contribution and productivity by this new generation.

## **Chapter 4 – Research:**

### **Restrictions and Methodology:**

To ascertain the effect of any potential changes to ease the transition of Gen Y into the workforce, the survey employee respondents were restricted to Millennials with at least two-years experience in the municipal sector. This was limited so the employee respondent had enough time to develop an understanding, updated expectation and opinion of the municipal corporate environment. Similarly, the supervisors had to manage the Millennial for at least one year so they would be able to reasonably generate an opinion of the employee's expectations, abilities and nuances.

The research design is limited due to the number of Gen Y employees (those born between 1981-2000, and currently to 12 to 31 years of age) in the municipal workforce as only the older members of this cohort have two or more years working experience. However, as Xu & Bassham (2010) have grouped the generations because of similar experiences, upbringing, values and expectations, the remaining members of the cohort should be fairly similar, although this may be a shortcoming of the research design. It is also too early to understand if Xu & Bassham (2010) maturity explication is valid. Although some Millennials have already had children, or have settled on a career choice, they would mostly be those in the first section of this cohort as the youngest are still pre-teens. This paper does not examine the difference of maturity or experience, but as Gen Ys age and have increased responsibilities; it is an important area for future study. Other differences that have not been analyzed are: differentiation between the expectations of distinctive ages within this cohort, union versus non-union employees or male versus female. Previous research has generalized the viewpoint of this generation collectively with respect to workplace expectations. Although these are all interesting topics for future

consideration, this research paper does not distinguish between these aspects because most policy or management styles changes would focus on the group as a whole and not as segments within a generation.

Seventy electronic surveys were sent out by email through various municipal contacts throughout central and southern Ontario. The original municipal contacts included 11 Generation Ys and 59 managers. All original contacts were inside office workers from various departments. Although there were limited numbers of Gen Ys and not all supervisors met the criteria of managing a Gen Y, the survey respondents were asked to pass the survey to their peers or staff that met the criteria, thereby creating a “viral” survey methodology to increase the amount of respondents and resulting in a total of thirty-one Gen Ys and thirty-eight supervisors completing the survey.

The surveys were filled out electronically on a third party website (Survey Monkey). A total number of 69 were returned complete representing a 98.5% response rate based on the original 70 contacts. There were two separate surveys and they were identified as either being returned by a “Generation Y staff” (those 32 years of age or younger) or a “Supervisor of a Generation Y” (that have supervised a Gen Y for at least one year). Each survey was mutually exclusive and could not be filled out by the same respondent.

Due to time restrictions for completion of the research, only one round of surveys were sent out with a two-week turnaround time requested. One reminder email was sent to the original distribution list as a follow up one week after the first mail-out. Although the number of completed surveys received was not significant enough to extrapolate for all municipalities in Ontario, there were a wide variety of large and small municipalities within the respondents, thus giving a good representation for generalizations of the surveyed area that included municipalities surrounding Toronto in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The size of the respondents’

municipalities ranged from lower tiers of less than 10,000 in population (10% of respondents) to upper tiers with a population of over 1,000,000 people (32.6% of respondents). To provide anonymity, no names of respondents or the municipalities they work for were recorded, however some did provide emails or correspondence back stating that they completed the survey.

The questions asked about the perceptions and expectations of each respondent concerning the four areas of perceived differences. Each area asked specific questions to determine how much the supervisors and corporations have changed to adapt to the Millennials and if those changes affected the incoming Generation Y cohort as intended.

### **Survey Data:**

Thirty-nine Millennials responded to the survey, however, eight worked in the municipal sector for less than two years making the majority of their responses invalid given the research design. The remaining thirty-one respondent's answers were completely analyzed. Of the 53 supervisors who responded to the survey, 14 of them did not have any Millennials reporting directly to them and one of them did not know the age of their staff. Therefore only the remaining 38 respondent's answers were analyzed. This issue arose due to the placement of the questions on the survey. The question that invalidated the respondent, if answered, was placed after the question on municipal population size, and for the supervisors, after the question identifying age and tenure in the municipal sector period.

The survey questions answered by the Millennials are included in Appendix 1, and the survey questions answered by the supervisors are included in Appendix 2. A summary of each survey is included in Appendix 3, for the Millennials and Appendix 4, for the supervisors.

### Generation Y

Only 30.8% of the Gen Ys who started the survey came from large municipalities of over 150,000 population. The majority (43.6%) of Gen Ys came from municipalities with between 20,000 and 80,000 people. As noted previously, larger municipalities may provide different opportunities for staff that are perceived as important to Gen Y, however, due to the research design, the survey was unable to directly correlate the size of municipality to the amount of implemented changes to accommodate to Generation Y by the corporation.

Of the Gen Y respondents, 62.5% had between 2 and 5 years experience in the municipal sector, while 37.5% had over 5 years, giving the respondents abundant time to create an understanding and expectations with respect to the municipal sector. All of the Generation Y respondents worked either mostly in an office environment or had a mix of both inside and outside work. Typically office workers have more contact with their supervisors than outside workers. This indicates a better understanding of each other and a closer relationship is better suited with respect to answering and analyzing the survey questions when asked to interpret each other's expectations.

### Supervisors

Of the original 53 supervisors who answered the survey questions, only three were from a small town of less than 20,000 people. The majority (43.4%) were from a municipality of over 150,000 people, with 15.1% from a municipality between 80,001 and 150,000 in population and 35.8% of supervisors were from a municipality with between 20,000 and 80,000 residents. This provides a good mix of respondents from both medium and larger municipalities. As noted previously, it is not known which supervisors from these respondents completed the survey because some of them did not meet the criteria of supervising a Gen Y for at least a year.

Only one of the supervisors who responded to the survey was from the Silent Generation and only two were Millennials, 49.1% were Baby Boomers and 45.3% Gen Xers. This indicates that almost all of the supervisors had a different generational perspective than their Generation Y employees. All but one supervisor had at least two years of municipal experience, with 75.5% having over 10 years experience in the sector. This indicates a familiarity of the municipal working environment for almost all supervisors. As noted previously, it is not known which supervisors from these respondents met the criteria to continue to the remaining questions on the survey.

Ten of the 38 supervisors that completed the survey had only one Gen Y employee (26.3%) while 28 (73.7%) had two or more. Although the number of Gen Y staff was not correlated with respect to the supervisor's expectations or actions toward the Millennials, this may be a subject of future research. It does indicate that any changes a supervisor may implement to accommodate their Generation Y staff may be utilized multiple times instead of just for one individual.

### **Analysis of Data:**

#### **Mentoring, Feedback and Communication:**

With respect to supervisors providing proper orientation when new Gen Ys are hired, the majority of the Gen Ys (77.4%) indicated that their supervisor provided good guidance and support to make them feel comfortable in their new position, with 6.5% indicating some guidance, and only 16.1% indicating no guidance. Although only 71.1% of supervisors indicated they provide proper guidance to new Gen Y staff and 21.1% indicating that they provide some guidance, only 2.6% indicated that there was no guidance. This seems to indicate that the majority of supervisors provide guidance and orientation to their staff, and it is recognized by the Gen Ys as positive.

Mentorship is another area where the expectations and perceptions of the supervisors and their Gen Y staff are also similar. Almost 82% of supervisors indicated that they make time in their schedule for one-on-one mentoring, with 77.4% of Gen Ys indicating they receive mentorship from their supervisor. This indicates recognition of the importance of mentoring on both sides. This is a positive correlation, however the amount of mentorship differs: while 52.7% of supervisors believe they provide mentorship more than one-hour per week, only 32.2% of Gen Ys think their supervisors provide that same amount.

Almost all of the supervisors indicate they give either fulsome (39.5%) or partial (55.3%) direction before giving their Gen Y staff projects or assignments. Over 45% of Gen Y staff know what their supervisor is expecting; with the same percentage stating their supervisors' expectations are *usually* clear but require some clarification. Only 9.7% of Gen Ys say they receive no direction and 5.3% of supervisors admit to not providing direction. Eighty-seven percent of Gen Ys find the direction provided to them by their supervisors either somewhat helpful (48.4%) or very helpful (38.7%). Again, this indicates an awareness of the need for direction and clear expectations for the Millennial employees and that supervisors make a conscious effort to provide meaningful direction.

Over 68% of supervisors indicate that they provide feedback to their staff between once per day and once per week, while 58.1% of Gen Ys indicate that they receive this same amount of feedback from their supervisors. Over 74% of Millennials indicate that the amount of feedback provided was "just right". Twenty-two percent of the remaining Gen Ys indicate they did not receive enough feedback from their supervisors, coincidentally, the same percentage of supervisors indicate that they provide feedback less than once per week. This suggests that although the majority of Gen Ys surveyed here are satisfied with the amount of supervision and flexibility they receive from their supervisors, additional feedback would be beneficial. De Stefano (2012) found

no differences between Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials relative to how frequently they communicate with their supervisors, but it appears that additional communication is warranted. The supervisors did note that they either often (50%) or always (26.3%) make a conscious effort to convey criticism to their Gen Y staff in a positive manner. Sixty-one percent of Millennials stipulated that they receive the expected amount of recognition with 25.8% of supervisors going out of their way to praise their employees. However, 57.9% of supervisors think they often go out of their way to recognize their employees. This discrepancy may be in the expectations of how much recognition is anticipated from staff and how much the supervisor thinks staff want to be recognized. This indicates that the supervisors are trying to implement these specific changes for the young generation as recommended in Benson & Brown (2011), but additional communication is still required.

Twenge et al (2010) and Martin (2008) noted the preference for informal relationships by Gen Ys with their supervisors. The survey results show 71% of Gen Ys indicate an informal and friendly relationship with their supervisors, and 86.8% of supervisors indicate the same. This discrepancy can be speculated as a perception of what the definition of informal and friendly is with respect to a supervisor/employee relationship. Myers & Sadaghiani (2010) also indicated Gen Ys customary use of informal language. According to the survey conducted here, 57.9% of supervisors responded that their Gen Y staff is “somewhat” informal with 13.2% indicating they were “too informal”. Forty-seven percent of these same supervisors replied that their Gen Y staff has fewer people skills than their older or previous staff, with only 13.2% indicating that Gen Ys were better with respect to demonstration of people skills. De Stefano (2012) suggested that the level of satisfaction with a person’s communication environment was the same across generations, but according to this data, this newer generation may be too informal given the preferences or perceptions of their supervisors. One supervisory respondent commented, “ Gen

Ys don't want face to face interactions with the public, they prefer electronic communication as it creates anonymity.”

#### The Use of Changing Technology:

Contrary to Wesner and Miller (2008), none of the Millennials used Facebook to research the municipality when applying for their current position. The majority, 93.5% went to the municipal webpage and 45.2% of respondents also conducted a Google search. None of the Millennials used Twitter, blogs or LinkedIn as a research tool, and 32.3% used the low-tech methodology of asking friends who worked at that or another municipality. This may be due to the fact that most municipalities do not use such social media. In this research, only 7.9% of the supervisors stated their municipalities advertised positions on Facebook, no municipalities used blogs, and 5.3% made use of Twitter and only 18.4% utilized LinkedIn. Although municipalities may use social media for resident outreach and information, it is not being utilized as an efficient recruitment tool.

All respondents from both surveys denoted use of new technology in the workplace between very important (approximately 50%) and somewhat important (approximately 50%). This indicates that all recognize that technology and equipment should be up to date. Over 65% of the supervisors surveyed are consistent with the recommendations from Martin (2005), and implemented modern technology/equipment to facilitate job duties of their staff. More importantly, 64.5% of Millennials agree. Although the remaining supervisors and Gen Ys noted that the current technology/equipment was older, 35.5% of Millennials have made their supervisor aware of different/newer technology while 25.8% have noted it in passing. Of the supervisors, 47.4% have had a fulsome discussion with their staff on new technologies. The investment in this area is seen as beneficial as 71.1% of supervisors state that familiarity with technology has facilitated Gen Ys ability to multi-task more easily than previous generations.

As all of the Gen Y respondents were office, or mostly office workers, the ability to conduct or participate in virtual meetings was seen as important or somewhat important to 48.4% of respondents. However, 38.7% said it was not important. Conversely, 62.7% of supervisors thought their Gen Y staff would think it was at least somewhat important. This may be an example where municipalities are providing resources concerning a matter where it is not necessarily warranted to keep Millennials engaged. Another area was the ability to connect remotely to the office network. Twenty-two percent of Gen Ys said it was not important, while 7.9% of the supervisors thought the same. This indicates that the predictions of Yap & Tng (1990) did not materialize as they thought a majority of Gen Ys would want this ability. However, this may be due to the fact that Gen Ys perceive using the office network remotely not as the ability to telecommute, but as the ability to work overtime from home. If this were the case, then this would be seen as contrary to work/life balance.

#### Work/Life Balance:

Due to the fact that all of the Gen Y respondents were office workers or spend the majority of their time in the office, only 6.5% noted that telecommuting was not applicable to their current job. However, 41.9% did not know of any telecommuting policy at their municipality. Forty-two percent of supervisors indicated that there was no such policy, and 15.8% did not know. This, in isolation, would indicate that more resources should be allocated toward the ability to telecommute. However, despite Myers & Sadaghiani (2010) recommendations; 16.1% of Gen Ys noted that they do have a policy but do not use it, with only 6.5% actually taking advantage of the policy. Almost 16% of supervisors commented that they have a policy but their staff do not utilize it. This would indicate that telecommuting is a lower priority for both the municipality and their Gen Y staff. Again, as previously noted, because most municipal employees are required to have considerable contact with the public and be on site more often than may be the

case with most private sector jobs, telecommuting would only be for limited positions in the municipal sector.

However, flextime is a policy that can be more widely used. Over 58% of Gen Y respondents utilize flextime with only 19.4% noting the lack of policy. Less than ten percent of Millennials did not use flextime although it was available. The supervisors noted that 26.3% of their municipalities did not have a flextime policy and for those who did, 47.4% of their staff used it. From the respondents, it seems that flextime is important to the majority of Millennials. Although more than a quarter of municipalities do not have policies regarding flextime, it is an area that Myers & Sadaghiani (2010) indicated should be a top priority to retain Gen Y staff.

Overtime is another area in which work/life balance is noted as important. Although no municipality surveyed forces overtime pay on employees, 21.1% mandate time in lieu only of overtime worked. With those who do have a choice, 61.3% of the Gen Y would pick time in lieu, with only 29% choosing pay. Ten percent of Gen Ys and 15.8% of the supervisors (speaking for their staff) note that overtime is not applicable. This illustrates that although a trade-off of time is what the majority of Gen Ys want for their work done outside of normal hours, additional pay is still important to some Gen Y employees. Providing the option, as 63.2% of employers do (according to the supervisors), is more important than predetermining what Millennials want. De Stefano (2012) found no difference in the number of hours worked by Millennials and Gen Xers at the same age (18-22), but this research data indicates that this new working generation may demand more time off instead of pay for overtime hours worked.

Twenge (2010) cited that almost twice as many young people in 2006, 31.3%, rated having a job with more than two weeks of vacation as “very important” as did those in 1976. However given the survey responses here, only 19.4% of Gen Ys even discussed additional vacation time during

their recruitment process. Although reasons can range from being timid, intimidated or lack of experience to perhaps explain this low response, further research might be conducted as to the desire for more vacation versus the effort put forward to negotiate that objective by the Millennials. Since vacation time is a major factor in work/life balance, this data is contradictory to the research such as Buik (2008) and Myers & Sadaghiani (2010).

One of a supervisor's main objectives should be to develop an understanding of Generation Y workplace expectations so that they can effectively integrate and engage this new cohort in the municipality. An understanding of this generation can be used to maximize productivity, improve employee satisfaction, and increase retention (Martin 2005). Through the survey data discussed above, it appears that supervisors are adapting to this new cohort very well. Twenty-one percent of supervisors noted that their Gen Y staff is more productive than older or previous workers. Fifty percent indicated that there is no difference in productivity. It should be noted that 15.8% of supervisors surveyed were not able to compare generational staff, as they did not have older staff members.

#### Impatience – Promotions and Intrinsic Work Values:

It may be coincidental, that 51.3% of the Gen Y respondents worked in the municipal sector between 2 and 5 years and 30.8% over 5 years, while approximately the same percentages indicated that same timeframe is when they expect to be promoted or find a new position. Supervisors, however, indicated that 42.1 % of their staff would look for new positions before they completed two years in the current job. This percentage is considerably lower than the findings from Ng et al (2010) when they discovered 68.5% of survey respondents “expect to be promoted within the first 18 months in their first job.” This does indicate, however, that Generation Y is only willing to work slightly longer in their positions before looking for a new

job. Levenson (2010) explains that the types of jobs this age group applies for at this stage in their career are entry level and most entry-level employees look for their next job shortly after starting employment. One supervisory respondent supported Levenson commenting “as they age, Generation Y staff is tending to align their career goals with other generations in the workplace.”

Given the decline in those wanting a position with more responsibility, career paths that allow growth but not advancement may need to be designed (Twenge, 2010). It seems that the municipalities surveyed in this research have already implemented training and development programs given that 83.9% of Gen Ys recognize that their municipality offers these types of programs that are relevant to their career. These are resources well spent as the Millennials utilize the programs in great numbers. Given the additional training that the Gen Ys have, 84.2% of supervisors indicated that they go out of their way to provide interesting and challenging work to their Gen Y staff as 89.5% of supervisors think this is somewhat or very important to their staff. Eighty-seven percent of the Gen Y staff recognizes that their supervisors go out of their way to provide these challenges, as it actually is somewhat or very important to over 93.6% of them. This reinforces Hershatter & Epstein, (2010) which suggested Millennials expect that organizations will provide “ample opportunities, offer professional development and training” in return for their loyalty.

In this research study, 64.5% of Gen Ys stated that they would consider a job that paid less but was more personally fulfilling if it would not reduce their financial stability while 25.8% said they would consider it unconditionally. This is contrary to Twenge et al (2010) and Cennamo and Gardner (2008) that identified Millennials as self-centered and valued intrinsic needs less than Gen Xers.

Overall, Millennials surveyed here are either somewhat satisfied (29%) or very satisfied (54.8%) with working in the municipal sector, and similar percentages are satisfied with their current employer. This illustrates that the changes that are currently being implemented are working. There are certain areas that are not as important to Gen Ys as previously thought, such as social media recruitment, and some that are more important, such as personally fulfilling work.

## **Chapter 5 – Conclusions**

### **What Happened When Generation Y Entered the Workforce?**

The research conducted for this paper indicates that a majority of recommendations from previous academic research (Martin, 2005, Ng et al, 2010; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) have been implemented to adapt to Generation Ys expectations. Orientation guidance, mentoring, providing clear direction, informal relationships, feedback and recognition have been successfully implemented in the municipalities surveyed, and Generation Y reacted positively toward the changes. Other areas of successful implementation include new technology, availability for time in lieu of overtime, flextime, training and providing challenging and meaningful work. Most Millennials, when compared to previous generations were equally or more productive than other cohorts and most indicated they were satisfied with both the municipal sector and their current employer.

Conversely, there are other areas where implementation of certain technology, such as the use of social media during recruitment or the ability to conduct virtual meetings, was not warranted. The Millennials did not utilize these technological options and indicated that their use was not important to them. Municipalities have spent resources that were not necessarily expected by Gen Y. Although Millennials did not have a negative reaction to these changes, they were not as positive as Wesner and Miller (2008) predicted.

Contrary to Twenge (2010) and Yap & Tng (1990), other areas such as additional vacation time or availability for telecommuting was not important to either the corporation or Millennials. There were no resources spent by management, but none were expected by Gen Y employees. In these cases the Millennials adapted to the existing work environment.

Given that Generation Y representatives have only been in the workforce a short period of time, there is relatively sparse empirical research published on Millennials and it is often contradictory and sometimes confusing (Deal et al, 2010). This indicates a new and still evolving issue with much more to come as the Millennials enter the workforce and advance in their careers. It is a very dynamic and relevant issue as we move into 2013 and have this new generation establishing themselves as tomorrow's leaders. Both Gen Xers and Gen Ys will be required to adapt to new peers and different ways of working. It may not require the complete change in mind frame that the media pundits are touting, but an understanding and reexamining of expectations would be beneficial so that a meaningful and constructive working relationship can be fostered from the beginning and that relationship can grow into a productive and positive experience. Knowledge of intergenerational differences and how they relate to the workplace serves to directly provide employers and employees with a tentative guide for how to interact with particular cohorts. However, it is important to understand that every individual is unique and assumptions should never be made based on generation alone (Kister, 2012).

This research paper has identified several areas that municipalities and supervisors have successfully changed and adapted to Generation Y expectations and other areas where Generation Ys assimilated into the municipal corporate culture, even in the absence of a corporate culture change. The employers' areas of successful adaptations include mentoring, feedback; flextime and providing challenging work, while the assimilation by Gen Ys appear to be occurring with expectations toward length of tenure before a promotion, vacation time and the minimal utilization of social media during recruitment.

Millennials require proper guidance, feedback, mentorship and challenging projects. They prefer positive informal relationships with their supervisors. To recruit and retain Gen Ys,

municipalities should focus on work/life balance issues and flexible schedules. Work programs based on intrinsic work values that provide challenge, learning opportunities and personal fulfillment will likely be more successful than they were for previous generations. The expectations of Generation Y should be reviewed periodically to understand if and how they have changed with age or maturation. Levenson (2010) explains, “The real issue is not whether things change—they do, of course—but more about whether that change is perceived as not very significant versus a defining characteristic for an entire generation”. Spending resources to foster productive and satisfied employees should be an obvious decision, however those resources should only be used when they are truly required and not spent because of speculation and false perceptions. For example, this research suggests that implementing technology for use in virtual meetings or telecommuting is not important to Gen Y and resources spent in other activities more specifically related to their jobs may be better utilized. To date, successful implementation of other changes noted previously have created Gen Y workers who are satisfied with their employment and are generally as productive or more productive than their Gen X or Baby Boom peers.

### **Recommendations for Future Research:**

This research paper did not examine the different expectations based on personal criteria of a Gen Y, such as cultural background, level of education, gender or life stage (for example, if they had children). All of these variables may have a large affect on the expectation of the individual in the workplace (Deal et al 2010). Future research may examine these individual factors to analyze if they are more prevalent in expectations than just generational cohort alone.

Other recent focusing events such as the great recession, austerity measures and raising the Canadian retirement age to 67 may have an impact on this generation and their expectations at work. Because these events are recent, previous data and research conducted before these events

may not be relevant or valid. Additional research should be conducted to examine if any of the above will make a difference in the expectations of Gen Y.

As mentioned previously, another way of conducting the research would be to directly compare the answers of the Millennials to their immediate supervisors. This would minimize all other variables and allow a comparison of a topic from one department in one municipality. If the two generations are giving input on a specific topic then the perceptions can be directly related and compared within the same environment. This would indicate a more precise evaluation of expectational differences on the same subject matter. This paper also compares job satisfaction to a number of variables collectively. Although it is normally the case that many factors are taken into consideration when determining job satisfaction, this paper does not analyze the effect of just one determining factor isolated from all others. Future research may want to examine each individual area such as work/life balance in isolation of other influencing factors to determine how important each is for Millennial job satisfaction. This may focus municipalities and supervisors to concentrate on one area or only those areas that are important to Generation Y, thereby directing scarce resources to the areas of highest benefits.

The subject of work related expectations is an important one in today's organizational environment. Some differences provide critical challenges and opportunities to the companies that seek to employ and retain Millennials; while other differences are irrelevant for the world of work (Levenson, 2010). As managers respond to the changing expectations of their employees, these expectations may ultimately affect organizational values and resources. Behaviors change over time with generational groups as a result of our societal environment and, to a lesser degree, the maturation process of individuals (Deal et al, 2010). One might wonder if indeed each generation is more lazy and self-centered than the last or if individuals become more conscientious and less self-centered with maturity – and then simply forget that they themselves

may have been like the younger generation they now complain about (Smola & Sutton, 2002). John F. Kennedy (1963) said, " Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future." With future study on Generation Y and the differences in their expectations compared to Generation X and the Baby Boomers research can examine the past and present to prepare for this exciting future.

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# **Appendix 1**

## **Millennial Survey Answer Summary**

## **Appendix 2**

### Supervisor Survey Answer Summary

## **Appendix 3**

### **Millennial Survey Questions**

# **Appendix 4**

## **Supervisor Survey Questions**