

# The Impact of Generation Y on Employee Retention in a Large Aerospace Company

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## Abstract

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*The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify and investigate the issues of employee retention in the aerospace industry; specifically, examining if employee retention, as well as turnover, is and will continue to be perpetuated by the Generation Y (Millennials) workforce. In addition, this research study will determine the perceptions of Generation Y employees regarding their aerospace employers and co-workers, and the influence of Generation Y regarding employee turnover and retention. To determine if Generation Y turnover is, in fact, generationally related, the researchers will examine dimensions of work environment that possibly influence Generation Y employees' intent to leave their current employment position, and provide approaches (recommendations) to cultivate retention rates of the Generation Y workforce. Private interviews are necessary to determine the perceptions of Generation Y employees currently employed in an aerospace company.*

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**Key words:** Millennials, Generation Y, Aerospace Industry, Employee Retention

## 1. Introduction

“The influx of new workers entering the workforce, most of who belong to Generation Y, is not filling the workforce gaps. This is largely due to the United States Aerospace & Defense (A&D) industry’s difficulty attracting and retaining younger employees” (Louie, Mulnix, & Nelson, 2009, p. 3). This is an ever-growing problem as the number of Generation Y employees (also known as “Millennials”) is increasing in the workforce while older generations are nearing retirement. It is now almost considered common knowledge that people among different generational categories function and think differently, occasionally disputably.

According to a 2013 research study, 60% of Generation Y will leave their current employment within three years. It is also projected that by the year 2025, 75% of the global workforce will be Millennials (Schawbel, 2013). This research study identified and investigated the issues of employee retention in a large United States aerospace company; specifically, examining if employee retention and turnover rates are, or will be, affected by the Generation Y workforce. In addition, this paper determined the perceptions of Generation Y employees regarding their aerospace employers and co-workers, and the influence of Generation Y regarding employee turnover and retention.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

As the aerospace industry continuously experiences an increasing volume of employee retirements, a shortage of Generation Y employees, due to retention issues, could have a significant impact on workforce needs for aerospace companies. Therefore, it is imperative that the aerospace industry identify and understand the factors and characteristics that influence employee turnover of this generation.

To determine if Generation Y turnover is generationally related, the researchers examined dimensions of the work environment that possibly influence Generation Y employees' intent to leave their current employment position, and provided approaches (recommendations) to cultivate improved retention rates of the Generation Y workforce.

Retention is not a new area of research for corporate America. The thousands of dollars that companies invest into the future of a new employee is not something they take lightly, especially when they are not provided the opportunity to reap the benefits of their investment in the newly-hired employee. It is estimated that a new employee costs a company approximately \$15,000-\$25,000 during the first year not including salary (Schawbel, 2013). Although this study will not resolve all retention issues, it may provide significant findings to assist aerospace and other companies in identifying and having a better understanding of Generation Y-related turnover, as well as identifying new efforts to secure and retain Generation Y employees.

## 1.2 Generational Differences

According to Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (2000), there are varying criteria and qualities that are said to make up what is considered a generation, thus providing further qualms as to what the specific birth year ranges should be for each generation. For instance, Generation Y (born 1980-2000) is often referred to as Millennials, Nexters, or Echo Boomers. Their work ethic is thought to combine the teamwork ethic prevalent among the Boomer generation, the can-do attitude of the Veteran generation, and the technological savvy of Generation X (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). As the number of Millennials starts to dominate the workforce, they have already been characterized as misunderstood, unappreciated, and constantly looking for another job. Millennial turnover is high for a number of reasons, including wanting to be challenged, being loyal to people versus a company, and addressing work-life balance (Sujanksy & Ferri-Reed, 2009). In 2015, Generation Y represented 24% of the workforce and is projected to occupy 75% of the workforce by 2025 (Schawbel, 2013).

Table 1 illustrates the core values and on-the-job characteristics of the Millennials (Nexters) as identified by Zemke et al. (2000).

Table 1: *Characteristics for the Millennial (Nexter) Generation (Zemke et al., 2000)*

MILLENNIALS		
Core Values	On the Job	
	Assets	Liabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimism</li> <li>• Civic duty</li> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• Achievement</li> <li>• Sociability</li> <li>• Morality</li> <li>• Street smarts</li> <li>• Diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective action</li> <li>• Optimism</li> <li>• Tenacity</li> <li>• Heroic spirit</li> <li>• Multitasking capabilities</li> <li>• Technological savvy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for supervision and structure</li> <li>• Inexperience, particularly with handling difficult people issues.</li> </ul>

## 1.3 Generation Y in the Workplace

According to Sujanksy & Ferri-Reed (2009), there are several things that Millennials look for in a job or company. Millennials are loyal to people, not to their employers as Baby Boomers are known to be. Work-life balance means just as much, if not more, to the millennial generation than preceding generations. Millennials want their career paths to move fairly rapidly, with promotions being in the imminent future.

A 1998 study titled "Generation 2001" conducted by Northwestern Mutual and Louis Harris revealed the wants and ambitions of Millennials in the workplace. Zemke et al. (2000) says about the study that "almost half plan to enter the workforce right after college" and hoped to "work side by side with other idealistic, committed coworkers" (pp. 142- 143). The Generation 2001 study also revealed that 88% of Millennials had already established specific work goals for the next five years and were optimistic and confident that they would achieve them.

Various marketing studies show that Millennials spend upwards of 18 hours a day communicating through some kind of technological medium (McCarthy, 2014). Lancaster & Stillman (2002) state, “Millennials are a pragmatic generation with a highly developed ability to sort through information” (p. 231). This allows for a new genre of communication and information sharing and often ignores previously known communication network barriers and formal chain of command. “It’s tough to tell a Millennial not to approach a senior vice president directly with a question when he or she has had the ability to e-mail the president of the United States” (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002, p. 231).

Sujansky & Ferri-Reed state that “Millennials will bring a new style and a new perspective to the workforce, but unless organizations are willing to adapt, they risk losing billions of dollars to unwanted turnover and lost productivity” (2009, p. 3). This turnover rate can cost corporations billions and can easily range from 50% to 150% of an employee’s salary. A majority of Generation Y tenure at a corporation only lasts between two to five years. Many decide to go into business for themselves instead of staying with a corporation (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009).

In a 2008 Life after College Survey conducted by Experience Incorporated, a survey showed that “43% of Generation Y employees are not in the career they expected to be in after college, either because they couldn’t find a job, or another opportunity presented itself.” Furthermore, the survey emphasized as a part of its results the “need to make career path decisions prior to graduation by interning, job shadowing, networking, finding mentors and getting involved in professional associations on campus” (Huhman, 2008).

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The researchers has developed the following research questions to align with the intent of this dissertation:

1. What are the personal and professional aspirations of Generation Y employees and can the aerospace company accept and foster these generational aspirations?
2. Have Generation Y employees adversely affected employment measures (turnover and retention) within the aerospace company?
3. What employment actions can the aerospace company introduce into the work environment to ensure and maintain a sufficient and productive Generation Y workforce?

#### **1.5 Assumptions and Limitations**

This research study was limited to a small sample of the Generation Y workforce employed full-time in a large United States aerospace industry. The researcher study assumed that the participating Generation Y employees would answer the interview questions honestly and without any influence, actual or perceived. In addition, this research study assumed that the participating employees would answer all questions to the best of their knowledge.

### **2. Methodology**

#### **2.1 Research Design**

This research study used a phenomenological approach through the identification and collection of personal experiences and perceptions of Generation Y employees at a large aerospace company. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), the purpose of phenomenological research is to investigate lived experiences of people in order to identify and understand the basic principles of human experience as described by research participants. Creswell (2007) states that, “Whereas a narrative study reports the life of a single individual, a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (pp. 57-58).

In this phase, interview questions were developed by the researchers to explore and understand the meaning of each employee’s individualized experiences (Creswell, 1998). In addition, a subset phenomenological approach was used in this research study. Moustakas (1994) states that researchers collect data from persons who have experienced a common phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience, consisting of the “what” and “how” they experienced it.

#### **2.2 Target Population and Participant Selection**

Eight full-time Generation Y employees at a large United States aerospace company were selected to participate in this research study.

The two employee groups interviewed by the researchers in 2017 included current Generation Y employees hired less than five years ago, and current Generation Y employees that have been employed with the company for more than five years. These employees born between 1980 and 2000 were selected by convenience sampling – that is, these eight Generation Y participants were selected based upon their response time and availability to schedule interview appointments. The first eight employee responses received by the researchers were chosen to be interviewed for this study.

These eight Generation Y employees were interviewed to ensure sufficient data was collected to analyze and answer the research questions. Sample size depends on the questions, why the questions are important, how the findings will be addressed, and what resources are available for the study (Patton, 2002). Though Patton (2002) states there are no specific rules for a sample size in a qualitative inquiry, Creswell (2014) states that anywhere between two and ten participants are adequate to satisfy a comprehensible saturation point.

### **2.3 Procedures and Ethical Assurances**

Each Generation Y employee interview consisted of twelve open-ended questions designed to explore the interviewees' perceptions and personal observations as a Generation Y employee; specifically, regarding their work experiences in an aerospace company and how their generational characteristics may have affected the overall employee turnover and retention measures within the company. These twelve interview questions were validated by a panel of academic and aerospace industry experts prior to the interviews. The interview method, consisting of seeking responses to a predetermined set of questions, remained constant for all participating employees. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recording system and the records of all interviews were kept private. The interview questions are located in the Appendix.

All participants were emailed an informed consent letter to review before their scheduled interviews with the researcher. The consent letter clearly stated the purpose of the study and the rights of the employees to participate on a voluntary basis. Participants were also verbally reminded that their interview responses would be recorded by the researchers. Interviews were conducted privately, within a public establishment, and considered neutral to both the Generation Y participant and the researcher. After the conclusion of each interview, all participants were coded with an assigning number and de-identified by personal name. The master key linking participant names to the assignment number was destroyed once transcription was completed by the researchers.

### **2.4 Research Instrument**

The rationale behind selecting the research instrument used in this study was the high-validity, reliability, and depth of data that can be produced in the one-on-one interview environment. Validity is the degree in which a test measures what it is intended to measure. "Validity is the most important quality of any test" (Gay, 1987, p. 127).

Reliability is the degree to which a test consistently measures what it is supposed to measure. "An account is judged to be reliable if it is capable of being replicated by another inquirer" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 262). In this study, the researchers also utilized data triangulation to improve the dependability of the data and the reliability of the study. Data triangulation and investigator triangulation were specific triangulation categories reflected in this research. Data triangulation was further subcategorized with time, space, and person. Investigator triangulation "consists of using multiple rather than single observers of the same object" (Berg, 2007, p. 7).

## **3. Findings of the Study**

The participants' birth years range from 1980 to 1990; the approximate ages of the eight participants at the time of interview were between 26-36 years old. All participants (Table 2) are within the birth year range to be considered Generation Y (1980-2000).

Table 2: *Generation Y Participant Demographics and Tenure*

<b>Participant #</b>	<b>Birth Year</b>	<b>Years of Employment (Aerospace Company)</b>
1	1982	8
2	1983	8
3	1981	10.5
4	1980	6
5	1985	4
6	1990	4
7	1987	4.5
8	1980	4.5

Participants who have held other full-time positions had employment history that ranged from one to six previous full-time positions. Eighty-eight percent have held prior full-time employment positions and only one participant stated that this was their first full-time employment position. Table 3 lists how many of the Generation Y participants have held other full-time positions prior to working at this large aerospace company.

Table 3: *Question 2- Full-Time Employment History*

<b>Participant #</b>	<b>First full-time employment?</b>	<b>If no, how many other full-time employment positions?</b>
1	No	2
2	No	3
3	No	3
4	No	3
5	No	6
6	Yes	0
7	No	1
8	No	2

Research Question 3 asked, “How would you describe the Generation Y employee? And what are the personal/professional aspirations of the Generation Y employee?” Table 4 summarizes the eight responses from the Generation Y employees.

Table 4: Question 3- Generation Y Employee Description &amp; Aspirations

Participant #	Employee Description	Personal/Professional Aspirations
1	Work-driven Motivated Works for incentives Strives to be recognized	Job satisfaction Money Power
2	Smart Efficient Needy Lacking social skills	Highest level of power in the lowest time
3	Self-motivated Driven Goal-oriented Very social	Work to live, not live to work
4	Lazy Productive	Desires job satisfaction Ample free time
5	Need quick turnaround on promotions More dedicated than other generations Hard working Dedicated More willing to learn and adapt	Money
6	Different levels of engagement	Rise to power quickly but do little
7	Tech-savvy	Money Job security
8	Technologically advanced Driven Highly educated	Create business ideals Not have to rely on an employer Entrepreneurship

Eighty-eight percent of participants believed that Generation Y is misunderstood and/or unappreciated as employees or co-workers. Participant #1 stated that other generations look down on Generation Y employees as if they “don’t know enough and are dumb.” Participant #5 felt unappreciated as a co-worker because there is a strong lack of knowledge transfer from older generations. Participant #6 stated that Generation Y employees are often talked down to, like children, and that Generation Y employees lack a level of respect from others in the workplace. There is a misunderstanding that Generation Y employees only “think for themselves”, which Participant #7 believed to be a false assumption made by older employees. Participant #8 stated they are misunderstood and not viewed as hard-working because of the methods of communication popular among Generation Y. If a Generation Y employee chooses to communicate via email versus a more traditional means such as telephone, they may be seen as less productive, or taking a shortcut.

Research Question 5 asked, “Why do you think 60 percent of Generation Y employees leave their current employment within three years after hire date?” Table 5 provides a summary of the participant’s responses.

Table 5: Question 5- Generation Y Employee Turnover

Participant #	Why do you think 60 percent of Generation Y employees leave their current employment within three years after hire date?
1	Lack of respect Seeking higher salary
2	Not getting promoted Not able to acquire desired skills
3	Not getting promoted Do not feel engaged Do not feel like they are making a difference
4	Not appreciated/recognized Seeking higher salary
5	Not appreciated/recognized Not getting promoted
6	Better opportunities elsewhere Want to work for better companies
7	Not enough growth opportunities Not getting promoted
8	New businesses overseas seem more appealing Lack of diversity

As indicated in Research Question 5 asked, “Why do you think 60 percent of Generation Y employees leave their current employment within three years after hire date?” Table 5 provides a summary of the participant’s responses. Table 5, the primary response from all participants centered around promotional and growth opportunities. Fifty percent of the participants believed that Generation Y employees leave their current employment within three years after hire date because they are not getting promoted quickly enough and that there is a lack of promotional opportunities. Secondary responses included leaving to seek a higher salary or because they do not feel appreciated or recognized as an employee.

Question 6 revealed that 75% of participants indicated this was their first time to work for an aerospace company. Two Generation Y participants reported they had interned or had been employed with another aerospace company.

There were various responses to Question 7, “What influenced you to seek employment in the aerospace industry?” but there was not a single dominant reply. Approximately 40% of participants referenced college in their responses.

Question 8 showed that 75% of participants perceived a bias toward Generation Y employees within the aerospace industry. Participant #1 believed the older generations are more biased toward Generation Y because they are “set in their ways and do not want to learn anything new” and that the older generations do not want to be “passed up” [on promotions] by younger generations. Participant #3 stated that there is a bias from the industry but it is not directed toward the work environment. Instead, the bias from co-workers relates back to the misunderstanding that older generations have about Generation Y; for example, that “all we care about are creating groups and beanbag chairs.” Participant #4 believed there is a bias toward Generation Y employees regarding how they should act in the workplace. Participant #6 thought a bias exists among the co-workers of older generations because of their unwillingness to share their professional knowledge, and that they may come off as snobbish when asked questions by their Generation Y co-workers. Participant #8 stated that co-workers have specifically referred to them as a kid and that there is a lot of frustration revolving around this culture. Participant #8 added that Generation Y will “never be viewed as an equal” in the workplace.

Question 9 revealed that only 50% of the interviewed participants believed there are professional growth opportunities at this aerospace company. Participants #2, 3, 5, and 7 provided additional thoughts that supported their beliefs. Participant #2 stated that if you “do your buy-in”, then promotions and opportunities will ensue, and advised fellow Generation Y employees to not get frustrated so quickly. Participant #2 received a management position after six years with the company. Participant #3 stated that opportunities are available for diligent and hard-working Generation Y employees, and was promoted to a management position.

Participant #5 agreed that professional growth opportunities are available, “but are really, really, really hard to get.” Although opportunities are present, Participant #7 believed they are only available to the “really high achievers.”

Four participants (50%) believed that there are no professional growth opportunities. Participants #1, 4, 6, and 8 provided additional comments supporting their beliefs. Participant #1 stated there are corruption and personal favors among management when it comes to professional advancement and believed there is too much misconduct involved around promotions. Participant #4 thought it is too difficult to receive promotions at this company, and Participant #6 stated that there are no professional growth opportunities because there is a current hiring freeze that includes promotions. Participant #6 also believed this hiring freeze shows a lack of company security. Participant #8 agreed there are no professional growth opportunities because corrupt managers find opportunities to hire their friends outside of the company, which does not allow the company to hire within; hence, no advancement.

Question 10 indicates that only half (50%) of the participants believed their current aerospace job has fulfilled their professional and personal expectations. Participants #2 and 5 believed their current employer has fulfilled their expectations. Participant #7 felt fulfilled “as of right now, but not last week;” Participant #7 would have answered no a week prior, but recently received news of being accepted for an internal business training opportunity and announced, “I’ve been trying to get in for a while and I finally found out right before this interview that I got it.” Participant #8 stated their expectations prior to receiving their current employment was to “only find a job working 40 hours a week making money”, and “so with that said, yes, my expectations are met with my current job.”

The remaining four participants (Participants #1, 3, 4, and 6) were not convinced their current aerospace employment had fulfilled their expectations. Participant #1 stated they hoped they would be further along in their career by now, reporting they had only received one promotion and one lateral move after six years of employment. Participant #3 believed their professional expectations were not currently being met due to a recent decrease in health and company retirement benefits. Also, Participant #3 stated there is no camaraderie in the workplace and their current aerospace job responsibilities “do not allow for focusing on family.” Participant #4 agreed they are not fulfilled completely, but that it has recently become better. Participant #6 strongly believed their current aerospace job is “a disappointment and a let-down.”

Seventy-five percent of participants agreed that there is a large turnover of employees at their companies. They cited various reasons that members of Generation Y leave their jobs. Participant #1 cited an archaic work environment with archaic practices, low salaries compared to competitors, radical decrease in health benefits package, and no growth opportunities. Participant #3 acknowledged that Generation Y employees were leaving because these particular jobs/job environments were not “measuring up” to employee expectations. Participant #4 stated that employees were underpaid and not appreciated, and there was constant worry about job security and layoffs because the company had become less stable. Participant #6 stated Generation Y employees were leaving because there is “too much favoritism and artificial networking” to receive a fair promotion opportunity. Participant #7 stated career progression was not as fast as they originally expected and also believed there is a lack of promotion opportunities. Participant #8 believed Generation Y employees were leaving because there were better paying jobs elsewhere, and that Generation Y prefers to live in a different geographic region. All eight participants had entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this particular aerospace company. Moreover, all participants stated they have recently or are currently seeking other employment opportunities and available positions.

The final interview question indicated that 88% of participants would work for another company within the aerospace industry; however, one participant confirmed they would not want to work in the aerospace industry again.

## **4. Summary and Conclusion**

### **4.1 Summation of Generation Y Employee Responses**

*Question 1. What are the personal and professional aspirations of Generation Y employees and can the aerospace company accept and foster these generational aspirations?*



There were various responses related to the personal and professional aspirations of Generation Y employees; however, there was a prominent underlying theme—an increase in salary (more money). Inversely, in combination with Generation Y workplace research and the interview responses regarding Generation Y turnover; the overarching theme was that Generation Y sought more recognition from their employer (including monetary recognition). Other responses from the employees included: (1) power, (2) achieving the highest power in the quickest amount of time, and (3) rise to power quickly. These responses were all variations regarding recognition.

Furthermore, in addition to the pursuit of recognition, Generation Y employees expect this recognition to occur as quickly as possible. According to a survey conducted by the Addison Group and Kelton, 40% of Millennials expect a promotion every one to two years (Maurer, 2015). This timeframe is faster than what other generations reported in this survey. The results from this Addison Group and Kelton survey are aligned with the promotional expectations and sentiment of Generation Y employed at the aerospace company.

*Question 2. Have Generation Y employees adversely affected employment measures (turnover and retention) within the aerospace company?*

The analyzed findings of Generation Y responses indicated this employee group adversely affected retention within this large aerospace company. The majority of the interviewed employees agreed there is a significant amount of Generation Y employee turnover at this company. Moreover, 100% of participating employees had entertained the thought of seeking employment elsewhere; while the majority of respondents had actively applied at other companies.

*Question 3. What employment actions can the aerospace company introduce into the work environment to ensure and maintain a sufficient and productive Generation Y workforce?*

The aerospace company implements employment actions into the work environment to ensure and maintain a sufficient and productive Generation Y workforce by understanding generational aspirations and fostering issues relating to Generation Y employee turnover. The first step toward any solution is to identify and understand the problem. The findings of this study provide the employer with opportunities to guide that first step. Proposed recommendations for this large United States aerospace company to aid in understanding and fostering the Generation Y employee-employer relationship are described below.

## **4.2 Recommendations**

After an analysis of the research findings, the following recommendations have been generated to address some of the underlying issues regarding Generation Y turnover in the workplace: (1) implementing an effective employee recognition system, and (2) educating and defining specific employee's expectations.

Recognition is defined by the Oxford University Press as “appreciation or acclaim for an achievement, service, or ability” (Recognition, n.d.). There is a significant difference in meaning between “recognition” and “incentives”. Incentives are defined by the Oxford University Press as “a thing that motivates or encourages one to do something” (Incentive, n.d.). Although this aerospace company did offer a variety of employee incentives, none of the interview participants commented on their effectiveness even though employee incentives and a recognition system were not included in the research questions. Nevertheless, to encourage top performance and productivity of Generation Y employees, this aerospace company must take a concerted look at the effectiveness of their current incentive and recognition programs they offer to ensure they meet the needs of this generation. Bernstein (2011) states “people are pulled towards behaviors that offer positive incentives and pushed away from behaviors associated with negative incentives” and that these “differences in behavior from one person to another or from one situation to another can be traced to the incentives available and the value a person places on those incentives at the time” (p. 17).

The majority of responses given by Generation Y employees at this particular aerospace company related to expectations of a higher salary and promotion opportunities. This particular aerospace company did not have standardized promotion criteria for their employees, which resulted in Generation Y employee frustration regarding unfair promotions and management bias toward employees. A recommendation for this aerospace company would be to consider smaller, and more frequent, tier-level promotions and title changes, similar to the civilian step pay scale program utilized by the US Government; instead of the fixed, full-level pay scale and promotion option currently being used by the company. Ross (2013) states promotions are the most rewarding when the next step up does not seem too far out of reach.

Studies also show that it is far less costly to promote from within, thus avoiding individual employee turnover and having to hire a new candidate to fill the same position (Sweeney, 2013). The latter scenario could cost a company as much as half of the employee's salary after advertising, interviewing, and training are complete. By absorbing employee turnover instead of promoting from within, companies also lose several months of productivity. In addition to rebuilding the current promotion options, this aerospace company should utilize clear and concise criteria required for employee wage increases and promotions. Lastly, the company must clearly define company and management expectations to eliminate all subjectivity related to wage increases and promotions.

Regarding employee expectations, employers must be upfront during employee interviews and orientation about the competitive nature of promotion opportunities at this aerospace company. Even though this may dissuade many applicants from securing employment, the employees that accept a position will have clearly defined expectations, and possibly a higher level of company loyalty. When employers effectively communicate and educate their new workforce, it can prevent unnecessary employee turnover due to generational issues.

Furthermore, the aerospace company should consider developing and implementing an unpaid internship program for prospective employees. The company will not be committed financially, and the intern employee benefits by earning college credit. Hence, the aerospace company assumes minimal risk regarding their payroll, especially if the intern does not meet company expectations for full-time employment, and a new generation of employees will gain work experience and an understanding of an aerospace company. Understandably, this is not a new business concept; however, this particular aerospace company was not utilizing the internship program while the researcher was conducting employee interviews.

The aerospace company must be consistent in explaining and enlightening Generation Y employees concerning feedback protocol and procedures and the value in productive feedback from the employer. Also, the company will need to respect and support Generation Y employees when they request employer feedback at regular intervals and demonstrate how Generation Y employees can better understand feedback and successfully use it to benefit their work performance (Louie, Mulnix, & Nelson, 2009).

In an effort to further reduce attrition of Generation Y employees, it is important to educate the company's first-line managers regarding how Generation Y employees will process feedback, and propose that managers provide consistent, detailed, yet informal feedback more frequently. "Informal feedback is a key mechanism for a young worker's development and highly important to Gen Yers" (Louie, Mulnix, & Nelson, 2009, p. 3).

Lastly, management should be willing to communicate the basic business and profit/loss lessons to their employees because these principles are not well understood by Generation Y. Managers are properly positioned to teach their Generation Y employees the broader contexts of business concerns, and the fact that companies exist to make a profit for shareholders, not merely to further employee development (Louie, Mulnix, & Nelson, 2009).

### **4.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

Employees cannot be fully engaged in the workplace if their most urgent needs or aspirations are not being met by their employer (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). Companies need to constantly assess the objectives of their workforce, as well as utilize exit interviews to assess turnover reasons. From a research perspective, it would be beneficial to retain current company data in quantitative form and conduct periodic employee interviews. Any found similarities between employee aspirations and turnover reasons should be regarded as direct indicators of a failure point and require immediate company action. For example, if the overwhelming response (50% or higher) from Generation Y employee goals is to "make enough money to support my family", and the overwhelming response (50% or higher) of Generation Y employees as to why they left the company is "did not make enough money to support my family" (and found employment with satisfactory salaries at competing companies), then this defines a failure point of the company.

There were several contradictory responses from participating Generation Y employees regarding employee turnover and employee aspirations. One would infer that the turnover and aspirations are relatable in a cause and effect correlation. For example, a reason an employee would terminate his employment (turnover) is because the job or company no longer satisfied his expectations; primarily, the lack of securing a higher salary. In turn, it could be assumed that this same employee would leave the company because a higher salary was not obtained or the employee was offered the higher salary at another company. However, the study showed that the responses to turnover and aspirations were not as causally related.

Overall, the list of Generation Y turnover stated in the findings did not reflect or match item-to-item in the list of Generation Y aspirations. There was a sufficient amount of Generation Y turnover reasons that were not listed as a Generation Y personal or professional aspirations, such as: lack of respect, acquiring new skills, not feeling engaged, seeking employment at companies with new concepts, and seeking a diverse work environment. Therefore, additional research studies are needed to review and possibly redefine Generation Y personal characteristics and employee aspirations in the workplace to ensure accuracy and consistency to identify reasons for the increase in turnover of Generation Y employees. This exploration will simultaneously evaluate whether workplace issues are fundamentally Generation Y-driven or if they are actually company-driven issues (outdated company policies, managerial issues, etc.).

#### **4.4 Conclusions**

A large United States aerospace company is losing Generation Y employees due to unnecessary and preventable turnover. The majority of Generation Y employees interviewed for this study were dissatisfied and actively seeking employment opportunities elsewhere; several had recently submitted resumes to other companies and aerospace competitors. It will be ultimately up to the aerospace company as to how they react.

Generation Y has brought a new attitude to the workplace and created a major stir in the way employers hire and manage their workers. Conventional practices for hiring and retaining good employees doesn't work for this generation of job-hoppers whose criteria for selecting a job is so unique that employers are adopting a concierge mentality to appeal to them. (Field, Wilder, Bunch, & Newbold, 2008, p. 203)

The aerospace company can indeed accept and foster these generational aspirations, mainly to acknowledge that Generation Y needs to be recognized (via promotion or a higher salary). The first step, like any other problem, is to identify and understand the problem. The researchers believe this study can aid in understanding and preventing the turnover of Generation Y employees.

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## 6. APPENDIX

### 6.1 Generation Y Workforce: Interview Questions

1. In what year were you born?
2. Is this your first full-time employment? If no, how many other full-time jobs have you had?
3. How would you describe the Generation Y employee? And what are the personal/professional aspirations (job satisfaction, money, power, etc.) of the Generation Y employee?
4. Do you believe your generation (Generation Y) is misunderstood and/or unappreciated as an employee or co-worker?
5. Why do you think 60% of Generation Y employees leave their current employment within three years after hire date?
6. How long have you worked for your current aerospace employer? Is this the first time you have worked in the aerospace industry?
7. What influenced you to seek employment in the aerospace industry?
8. Do you believe there is a bias towards Generation Y employees in the aerospace industry? If so, is this bias primarily coming from co-workers or your employer (supervisor/management)?
9. As a Generation Y employee, do you believe professional growth and promotional opportunity is possible with this aerospace company?
10. Overall, has this aerospace job fulfilled your professional and personal expectations?
11. Do you believe there is a large turnover of Generation Y employees within this aerospace company? If so, what concerns or issues are causing this high turnover rate?
12. Have you entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this company? Would you consider working for another company within the aerospace industry?