Management characteristics desired by talented employees from different generations within a South African consulting organisation

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ABSTRACT

Talent retention is an important aspect for South Africa in general. The shortage of talented individuals exacerbates the dearth that exists in the workplace today. Coupled with the shortage of talented employees are the three generations that pervade our working landscape. Under these circumstances, the consulting industry places a high demand on recruiting talented individuals and this industry is seemingly never satiated when it comes to talented employees.

Twelve employees were interviewed to gain their views on the impact of their managers on the decision of the employee to remain with the company or leave. Baby Boomers, Generation Xers and Millennials were equally represented. Interviews were conducted with each respondent and their responses analysed.

A key finding was that Baby Boomers place emphasis on empathy, trust, respect, integrity and humility of their managers. Another was that Xers value inclusivity, trust, integrity, communication of management decisions, empathy and consistency in their managers. Finally, a divergence from the literature was found in that Millennials look for the characteristics of trust, empathy, acknowledgement (with monetary and non-monetary rewards), being supportive and clear communication in their managers.

In conclusion the research found that the experience a talented employee has through the interaction with their manager plays a role in their decision to remain with or leave the company.

DECLARATION

I, Junaid Elias, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Junaid Elias

Signed at …………………………………………………

On the …………………………….. day of ………………………… 2012

DEDICATION

To my darling wife, beautiful children and pillars-of-strength parents, I dedicate this piece of work to you. Without your love and support none of this would have been possible. For all the sacrifices and the pain we endured together (and the prayer) I would have not reached this point had it not been for your love and support.

Nazia, for all those study sessions and time I spent away from home at lectures, syndicate meetings, and assignments; that left you with our “little captain” Uwais, I will be forever in your debt. I hope and pray that the sacrifices we made will benefit us and that the pain we took will serve to strengthen our bond as a family. As we end this chapter in our lives, our newborn, Zaynab, will provide a fun new chapter to look forward to.

To my parents, Iqbal and Zohra, you have and will always be my pillars of strength, guidance and spirituality. I also cannot thank you enough for your time to listen to me and for the loving advice, guidance, encouragement and prayers at every step.

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To the Faculty members who imparted their knowledge through the classroom and coffee break discussions, thank you for your dedication and I hope you will continue to make your invaluable contributions to higher education in years to come.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to identify the characteristics that talented employees look for in managers. The research further investigates retention based on the generational backgrounds of the talented workers, i.e. Baby Boomers (or Boomers) – those born between 1946 and 1964 (Frandsen 2009; Hoffman 2009); Generation X (or Xers) –born from 1965 to mid-to-late 1970's; and Generation Y (or Millennials) – born from 1965 to mid-to-late 1970's (Patterson 2007; Frandsen 2009; Hoffman 2009); in terms of how they view management's role in their decision to remain with a company. The research is aimed at understanding the above within a South African business management consulting company.

1.2 Context of the study

As the world faces a recession, retrenchments have known no geographic nor industry boundaries, as companies endeavour to cut costs to remain in business. South Africa has not been insulated during the economic downturn. Marais (2009) points out that output in the mining sector shrank by 33% in the final quarter of 2008, its biggest decrease on record. The author goes on to note that the manufacturing sector shrank by 22% (also a record), and more than 21% of factory productive capacity is standing idle. Furthermore, consumer spending shrunk by almost 5%, its biggest contraction for 13 years, with a 47% rise in company failures in the first four months of 2009 and household debt had risen to about 80% of disposable income (from around 50% six years ago). The recession has had a noticeable impact on the South African economy resulting in the loss of a million jobs in 2009 (Groeneveldt 2009).

Companies have laid off staff in these large numbers in order to remain in business according to the decline in economic activity. However, companies have had to understand which of their employees to lay-off and which to keep, in order to ensure that the company remains economically viable. Concurrently, companies had to ensure that these retained employees are high value adding as well as committed to the company, as organisational commitment is desirable, not only so that employees support the company's common goal and contribute their knowledge most effectively while they are with the company, but also to improve the retention of these employees (Wickens 1995). Such employees are referred to as talented employees and are generally the knowledge workers that companies strive to retain and develop.

Retention is an important indicator of organisational commitment, given the costs and time spent on finding the right skills in a skills scarce environment. According to Frank, Finnegan and Taylor (2004), what makes the issue of turnover so serious is that the costs of labour turnover are significant and far-reaching. It is estimated that replacement costs of particularly talented employees can be as much as 150% of the departing person's salary (Branch 1998). Loss of knowledge workers who have specialist expertise, as well as intangible and non-transferable 'tacit knowledge', means loss of knowledge and potential competitive advantage for companies (Calo 2008).

Furthermore, companies attempting to retain those employees (referred to as 'talent') considered core to its purpose and continued success, face a challenge in determining the factors instrumental in turnover amongst this group (Birt, Wallis and Winternitz 2004). A compounding factor in the battle for talent is that globalisation of the workforce is leading to a greater need to compete effectively against competitors (Grantham 2003; Patel 2002 cited in Frank et al. 2004).

Compounding the aspects of globalisation and competition for talent, is the generational mix that exists in the workforce. While talented employees span across generations, companies must ensure that they understand what drives employees and impacts on their retention. The current workforce contains four generations, the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y (Patterson 2007). However, in analysing the birth date range of the Silent Generation, the youngest "Silent" employee (born in 1945) would have been about 65 years old in 2010 – three years on from Patterson's paper – and facing retirement. Therefore, this paper excludes the Silent Generation as part of the research. Nevertheless, it is important to examine what divides the distinct generations and what is important to each of them (Frandsen 2009).

This is specifically where managers or management plays a role, as it is important to note that instead of trying to mould individuals to be the same, managers should profit from the positive traits and qualities that the employees bring to the company (Hoffman 2009). According to Patterson (2007) top-down leadership that does not consider the input of all employees is not going to be effective in retaining younger workers. Frank et al. (2004) go on to note that with the exception of the projected talent and labour shortages (in the case of retention), nothing has affected retention and engagement more than the loss of trust and consequently the erosion of loyalty – the first line of interaction being with one's direct manager. While remuneration, benefits and other employee rewards are recruitment sweeteners for potential employees, poor managers cause them to leave (Frank and Taylor 2004).

1.3 Problem statement

Main problem

The purpose of this research is to identify the characteristics that talented employees from the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y look for in managers in order to remain with a company.

1.4 Significance of the study

As noted in section 1.2, labour turnover and attrition is costly, and more so with talented employees. As time passes the upcoming talented employees are predominantly from Generations X and Y with the experienced talented employees predominantly from the Baby Boomer Generation, and managers must understand how to manage these talented employees in order to stand a better chance of retaining them.

This study fills a gap in that South Africa has not had many studies that look at talent retention based on the impact of generation gaps. Glen (2006) examined "effective, practical and holistic people strategies" that address key skills retention, employee engagement and employee motivation and attendance gaps, with a view to positively impacting company costs, productivity and business performance. The paper also examined the value of assessment and feedback in talent engagement and retention, and to look at developing employees through experience-based development initiatives.

While Glen (2006) focused on nine employee engagement predictors, viz.

i. process,
ii. role challenges,
iii. values,
iv. work-life balance,
v. information,
vi. stake / leverage / reward / recognition,
vii. management,
viii. work environment, and
ix. product,

the paper does not look at the aspect of generation differences with respect to retention.

The current study will provide guidance to managers as to how to understand and interact with talent from different generations, as well as how to engage with such a group in attempting to retain talent across the generational divide.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

This study is delimited to:

- A South African business management consulting company
- Eliciting and analysing responses from Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees

1.6 Definition of terms

Knowledge workers: Knowledge workers have high degrees of expertise, education or experience and the primary purpose of their jobs involves the creation, distribution, or application of knowledge Davenport 2005).

Talent: employees who are high value adding as well as committed to the company. By nature of the rigorous hiring process, consulting companies seek individuals who generally rank above average in terms of grades, problem solving abilities, leadership potential and innovation. As such, the pool of potential respondents at the company is considered as “talented employees” for the purposes of this paper. These are within the top 15% performers and are seen as the talent core of the company (Harari 1998).

Baby Boomers: individuals born between 1946 and 1964 (Frandsen 2009; Hoffman 2009).

Generation X: individuals born from 1965 to mid-to-late 1970's (Patterson 2007; Frandsen 2009; Hoffman 2009).

Generation Y or Millennials: individuals born in a range from the late 1970's to 2000 (Patterson 2007; Frandsen 2009; Hoffman 2009).

1.7 Assumptions

- The recession may influence the respondents to behave and act counter-intuitively to what they might have, had the market been in the boom preceding 2008.
  - With the anecdotes from USA and UK of mass retrenchments and lay-offs, local professionals may feel that they should hold on to their jobs until the recession has safely passed.
  - This insecurity may increase the tolerance threshold of talented individuals in order to ensure job security.
  - If talented employees are bound by systemic influences to their current employment this could impact negatively on the reality of generational theory and as such the reliability of this study.

- Honest and candid respondents
  - If the responses are not honest or candid from the respondents, this will impact negatively on the validity of the research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A literature review should look at related studies to build a logical framework through thoughtful and insightful discussion (Marshall and Rossman 2006). The authors go on to note four reasons for conducting a literature review.

The first function of the literature review is to demonstrate the essential statement or theory behind the research questions. The second function is to exhibit the knowledge that the researcher has about the related area of interest. The third function is to indicate that the researcher has found certain gaps within older related research and to stipulate that his or her study will try to fill those necessary gaps. Finally, “the review refines and redefines the research questions by embedding those questions in larger empirical traditions” (Marshall and Rossman 2006: 43).

In this section, the aspects of knowledge workers, generation theory and talent management are discussed. The first subsection provides some background to the topic of research as well as some pertinent definitions. The following section moves on to how to manage talent and the generations before concluding the literature review.

First, the concept of a knowledge worker will be discussed. What is a knowledge worker? According to Davenport (2005), “Knowledge workers have high degrees of expertise, education or experience and the primary purpose of their jobs involves the creation, distribution, or application of knowledge”.

Despres and Hiltrop (1995) identify the following characteristics of knowledge workers as opposed to traditional workers:

- Knowledge workers’ career formation are external to the company through years of education and socialisation as opposed to internal through training and development and prescriptive career schemes;
- knowledge workers’ loyalty is to professions, networks and peers as opposed to the company and its career systems;
- knowledge workers have specialised and deep skills/knowledge sets with diffuse peripheral focus as opposed to a narrow functional focus;
- knowledge workers tend to work on projects and in groups as opposed to around individuals;
- knowledge workers deal with customers, problems and issues as opposed to tasks, objectives and performance;
- knowledge workers have more rapid skills obsolescence as opposed to gradual obsolescence of traditional workers;
- knowledge workers have lengthy activity/feedback cycles as opposed to primary and of an immediate nature;
- knowledge workers process effectiveness as opposed to tasking deliverables; and

- knowledge workers impact the success of a company by making a few major contributions of strategic importance as opposed to many small contributions that support the master plan.

The nature of consulting is that which is defined by the work knowledge workers conduct. The fight for talented employees is greater for companies competing in the consulting industry, where the core offering of the organisation is the ingenuity, skills and knowledge of their workforce (Domsch and Histrozoza 2006). Organisations historically referred to ‘talent’ when talking about a select group of their high performing employees, with the top 10 to 15% of performers within the company being referred to as the talent core of the company (Harari 1998).

With regards to the different generations as applicable to this research, various definitions have been discussed in section 1.6. However, at this juncture, it would be prudent to include and confirm these according to Graeme Codrington. According to Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2005), the birth dates of the various generations are as follows:

- Baby Boomers: Born 1940’s to 1960’s
- Xers: Born 1960’s to 1980’s
- Millennials: Born 1980’s to 2000’s

While the definitions in section 1.6 seem to clearly distinguish where one generation ends and the other starts, Codrington and Grant-Marshall’s date ranges overlap and are seemingly vague at the start and end of each generation. The reason for this, according to Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2005), is that some people may not totally identify or fit into a specified generation. These people are called “cuspers”, and are born either early in a generation and adopt some of the characteristics of the generation before them or vice versa.

This aspect of “cuspers” may be relevant depending on the sample of respondents and the responses elicited from them. If for example there is a seeming discrepancy between a respondent and their generation, further investigation into the birth date or year could resolve the discrepancy.

2.2 Definition of topic or background discussion

Talented individuals are sought after in South Africa (Kock and Burke 2008). Within the consulting industry, employees are put through rigorous selection processes, including screening interviews, psychometric testing, case study analysis – individually and/or in groups and culture fit interviews. As such, the cost (Branch 1998), and time of the hired employee are of substantial magnitude.

Keeping this in mind, it would result in more than financial losses if these talented employees were to leave the company. Therefore, this paper aims to understand what the different generations (of talented employees) look for in their managers as part of the larger retention decision.

2.3 Managing talent and the generations

This section aims to discuss the need to retain talented employees as well as to create an awareness of the challenges associated with this imperative, before concluding with an overview of the characteristics of the various generations, i.e. Baby Boomers, Xers and Millennials.

2.3.1 *Why is talent important?*

Knowledge workers are the key drivers of every company and more so the talented amongst them, as they are responsible for sparking innovation, inventing new products and services, design the marketing programs and create the strategies (Davenport 2005). Drucker (1994) describes the new economic and social order of the 21st century as one in which “knowledge, not labour or raw material or capital, is the key resource”.

Drucker further explains how, by virtue of their pension funds and savings, knowledge workers own the means of production and through their knowledge, own the tools of production. This shift in wealth and competence is transforming relationships between employer and employee in the 21st century, similar to how collective labour transformed these relationships in the industrial era (Drucker 1994).

In today’s information economy, people’s knowledge, skills and relationships are a company’s biggest asset and main source of competitive advantage (Tucker, Kao and Verma 2005). The value of talented individuals is noteworthy and the competition for talent is intense on a global scale and is not limited to the managerial level (Maria-Madela and Mirabela-Constanta 2009). In the USA there will be a demand for 30 million new college graduates in the next 10 years while less than 80% of this demand, 23 million graduates are expected (Tucker et al.

2005). There is a war for talent (McKinsey & Company 2001) despite unemployment on the rise – the issue is not a job shortage at the knowledge work spectrum of the job market – it is a shortage of skills, shortage and companies offering the type of environment that employees are looking for today (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005).

In fact, the war for talent is particularly fierce in South Africa which is in the midst of a skills crisis and the South African government has associated the binding constraint on economic growth with the shortage of skills (Kock and Burke 2008).

If companies are to be more profitable, strategies to be successful and societies to be more advanced, it will be through the effective and productive work of knowledge workers. They think for a living and their heavy lifting is intellectual in problem solving, not physical (Davenport 2005).

Organisations historically referred to talent when talking about a select group of their high performing employees, with the top 10 to 15% of performers within the company being referred to as the talent core of the company (Harari 1998). This group of talented knowledge workers are highly sought after and fought for in the war for talent as discussed below.

2.3.2 *Managing and Retaining Talent*

Understanding the value of talented employees requires a concerted effort on the part of companies to manage and retain such individuals. However, most large companies are underutilising their managerial and professional talent and are using outdated talent management practices (Tucker et al. 2005). Talented employees can be the most unstable, because they are the first that are sought after by competitors (Maria-Madela and Mirabela-Constanta 2009). As the demand for talent continues to grow, so does the competition for that talent, and even if external talent can be bought, the competitive costs will continue to increase (Calo 2008).

Besides the financial costs, the reality in most companies is that the knowledge resides with the individuals, and many of these are the older Baby Boomers, who are at risk of retiring before transferring their knowledge to the younger employees (Calo 2008). Calo goes on to state that knowledge cannot simply be extracted from an older experienced knowledge worker and transplanted into a younger employee as tacit knowledge is a personal element. As such the knowledge workers must be incentivised and get the opportunities to pass on the knowledge, which should be a key component of talent retention.

There are several obstacles in the way of efficient talent management and McKinsey Quarterly has identified the top seven obstacles as per Figure 1 (Guthridge, Komm and Lawson 2008).

Besides the second obstacle in Figure 1, all obstacles are related to the manner in which executives or managers deal with employees. Previous research shows higher turnover among employees when supervisors treated them poorly (Hausknecht, Rodda and Howard 2009).

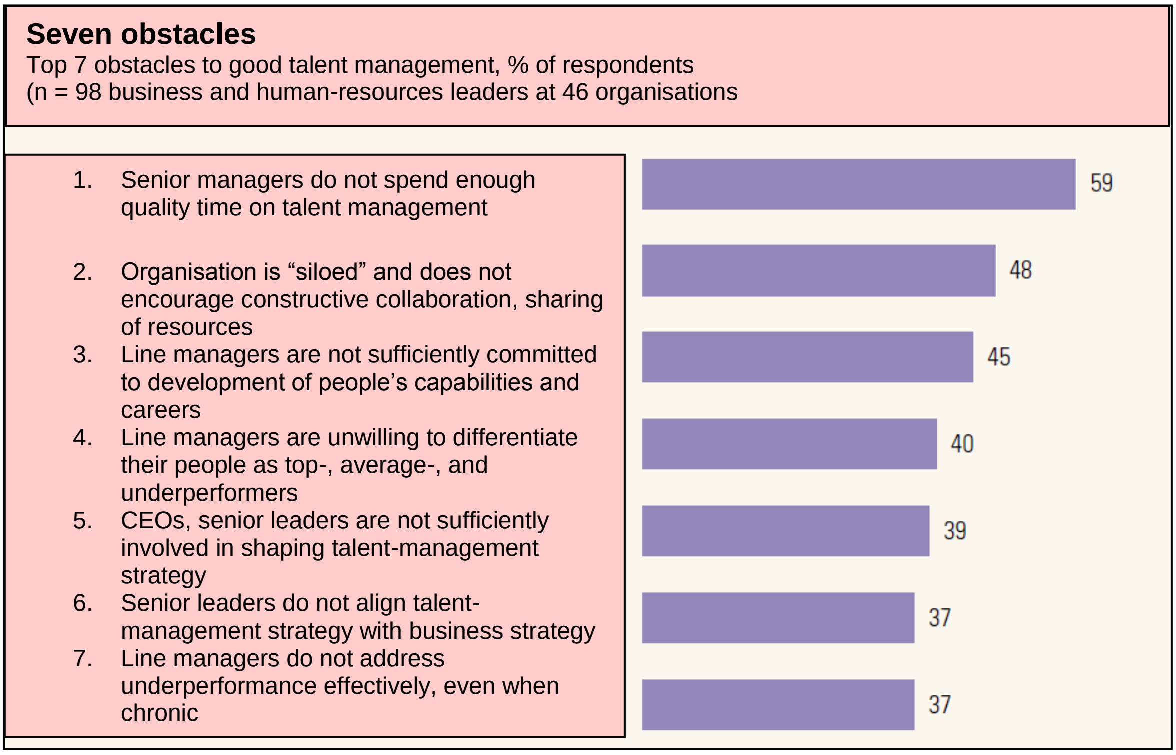

Figure 1: Top seven obstacles faced by executives in managing talent (Guthridge et al. 2008)

It has been found that managers often lack the conversational skills to discuss employees' strengths and weaknesses, and as such managers may require training and coaching to conduct such discussions effectively (Kock and Burke 2008).

Kock and Burke also note that management characteristics are heavily represented among the top drivers of both improved performance and intent to remain with the company. In their paper entitled "Targeted Employee Retention", (Hausknecht et al. 2009) evaluate various models or frameworks regarding employee retention. They go on to synthesise and build on the various works to develop a 12 factor model of retention factors. Amongst these, the second factor noted is “constituent attachments” which cover the degree of attachment to individuals related to the company, i.e. managers, co-workers or customers. An interesting finding of this research was that the best performers in the companies regarded constituent attachments as the third most important factor (out of 12) for remaining with a company, after job satisfaction and extrinsic rewards.

The characteristics of managers in their roles as supervisors and leaders are thus critical for this aspect of retention. Goleman (1998) has identified five characteristics that ensure the success of senior management, as defined below:

1. **Self-Awareness:**
    - the ability to recognise and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others

2. **Self-Regulation:**
    - the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods
    - the propensity to suspend judgment to think before acting

3. **Motivation:**
    - a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status
    - a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence

4. **Empathy:**
    - the ability to understand the emotional make-up of other people

- skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions

5. **Social Skill:**
    - proficiency in managing relationships and building networks
    - an ability to find common ground and build rapport.

Later work by Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2001) indicate that the mood of the leader either energises or deflates those around him, thus impacting performance and ultimately company results (Goleman et al. 2001). This does not mean that managers or bosses are not allowed to have bad days or situations wherein a stance or approach that is more serious is required. In fact, effective leaders and in this case managers, should, when the situation requires, practice 'tough empathy', i.e. giving people what they need, not what they want (Goffee and Jones 2000). The authors also note:

> *"There's nothing worse than seeing a manager return from the latest interpersonal skills training program with "concern" for others."*

Alternative perspectives and models around emotional intelligence (EI) are presented, viz. leadership styles (Goleman 2000) and an update to the five characteristics model of EI, where Goleman refers to the **'four capabilities'** around EI as found in Table 1.

For ease of comparison regarding the characteristics that different generations look for in their managers, the updated 'four capabilities' model presented by

Goleman (2000) as detailed above will be used as the basis of analysis and discussion further on.

Goleman (1998) argues that EI can be learned and increases with age. However, there is a genetic component to emotional intelligence (Goleman 1998) and as such some people have natural characteristics that lead to higher levels of EI. Therefore, the term “characteristics” is used inclusively in this research to encapsulate what some may term as capabilities.

A survey conducted in 2008 by Watson Wyatt and WorldatWork showed that the loss of talented employees can be mitigated through an integrated approach of talent management and compensation (Maria-Madela and Mirabela-Constanta 2009). Since high performers are most likely to possess the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to contribute to the success of the company, talent management programs should be tailored for such talented employees (Hausknecht et al. 2009).

Companies that adopt such approaches are 20% less likely to encounter problems with attracting and maintaining talented employees. Furthermore, these companies have about 18% more chance of being more profitable from a financial perspective (Maria-Madela and Mirabela-Constanta 2009). The authors go on to assert that managers must understand the diverse motivations that determine the retention of employees across different ages, sexes and nationalities. Companies will have to use a number of approaches, including the manager-employee relationship to personalise rewards and communications (Tucker et al. 2005).

Table 1: Model of Emotional Intelligence Capabilities by Goleman (2000)

Self-Awareness • Emotional self-awareness: the ability to read and understand your emotions as well as recognise their impact on work performance, relationships, and the like. • Accurate self-assessment: a realistic evaluation of your strengths and limitations. • Self-confidence: a strong and positive sense of self-worth.
Self-Management • Self-control: the ability to keep disruptive emotions and impulses under control. • Trustworthiness: a consistent display of honesty and integrity. • Conscientiousness: the ability to manage yourself and your responsibilities. • Adaptability: skill at adjusting to changing situations and overcoming obstacles. • Achievement orientation: the drive to meet an internal standard of excellence. • Initiative: a readiness to seize opportunities.
Social Awareness • Empathy: skill at sensing other people's emotions, understanding their perspective, and taking an active interest in their concerns. • Organisational awareness: the ability to read the currents of organisational life, build decision networks, and navigate politics. • Service orientation: the ability to recognise and meet customers' needs.
Social Skill • Visionary leadership: the ability to take charge and inspire with a compelling vision. • Influence: the ability to wield a range of persuasive tactics. • Developing others: the propensity to bolster the abilities of others through feedback and guidance. • Communication: skill at listening and at sending clear, convincing, and well-tuned messages. • Change catalyst: proficiency in initiating new ideas and leading people in a new direction. • Conflict management: the ability to de-escalate disagreements and orchestrate resolutions. • Building bonds: proficiency at cultivating and maintaining a web of relationships. • Teamwork and collaboration: competence at promoting cooperation and building teams.

Stemming the tide of losing talented employees would require having front line leaders who are retention experts. Remuneration, benefits and other employee rewards are recruitment sweeteners for potential employees, but poor managers cause them to leave (Frank and Taylor 2004). High performers are likely to leave companies where they feel underdeveloped, undervalued, and underpaid (McKinsey & Company, 2001). Frank and Taylor (2004) go on to confirm that employees will stay with a company if they have a good relationship and open communication with their immediate boss.

Managers will have to develop personalised employment agreements with workers, outlining project details, deadlines, personal development plans and incentives. Over and above the manager-employee relationship, companies will also have to tap into the power of organisation culture to personalise rewards and communication. They will need to create cultures that convey that they care about their employees' most basic and personal work needs. Humanity, respect, and dignity will be integral to these environments where basic worker rights will include opportunities to participate in productive, meaningful work, share ideas and receive acknowledgement, and be treated as adults (Tucker et al. 2005). Hence the key focus area of this paper is the manager-direct report relationship and the impact thereof on talent retention.

2.3.3 *Generational Theory*

More generations are in the workplace than in recent times (Tucker et al. 2005). Concurrently, older workers – motivated by longer life expectancies, changing cultural expectations and the availability of knowledge work – are staying longer in the workplace (Tucker et al. 2005).

With specific reference to Baby Boomers, they are ambitious and competitive. They are also workaholics and represent the largest generation in the workplace. The Boomers are also politically influenced and want to see that the world becomes a better place (Simoneaux and Stroud 2010).

The Xers were born to Boomers and as such did not have much adult supervision due to their dual working parents. They were taught to not trust strangers. Generation Xers are therefore more independent than and not as social as other generations. Seeing their parents' lives, work/life balance is important to Xers (Simoneaux and Stroud 2010).

Millennials were brought up under heavy parent supervision and incentivised throughout for achievements. They are techno-savvy and live seamlessly with collaboration and social networking tools. They are also energetic and keen to participate in work and out of work activities (Simoneaux and Stroud 2010).

In order to get a summary understanding of each generation's context and traits, refer to Table 2. Table 3 provides a view of how the different generations behave and interact in the workplace.

As discussed previously, the generations that will be the focus of this paper include the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y (Millennials). It is important to note the differences amongst these generations with regard to various aspects, viz. what the workplace was like when each generation entered it, what the work environment should be like for each generation, how each generation perceives a career and relates to teamwork.

These aspects are discussed below with regard to each of the generations as per the work of various authors and particularly from Dr. Graeme Codrington and Sue Grant-Marshall, from their book, Mind the Gap (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005).

i. Baby Boomers

According to Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2005), when Baby Boomers entered the workplace it was a time of abundance – jobs were easily available and generous bursaries were available to almost anyone who did tertiary studies. The authors go on to state that multinational companies were becoming common and rapid growth was considered normal and taken for granted. Baby Boomers are known for being workaholics as work is a defining part of theirs and others' self-worth (Simoneaux and Stroud 2010; Zaporzan 2010).

The office must reflect the Boomers' style and branding is important – comfortable café type eating areas replaced sterile canteens, ostentation in office furniture and layout is evident and bringing the nature element into the office environment through water features and much glass. Boomers also introduced chats at the coolers (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005). The authors further state that

Boomers respect the hierarchy and are the last generation who insisted on dedicated parking bays.

When setting out on a career path, Boomers seek opportunities that will allow them to show that they are worthy members of society and they like to be noticed for this (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005). Baby Boomers enjoy working with colleagues on projects and peer-to-peer coaching. They value lifelong learning, public recognition, perks, prestige, professional rewards and long-term compensation (Zaporzan 2010). However, as Boomers are nearing the end of their careers, they focus on the future, where new career paths must be something meaningful and not necessarily for money (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005).

As far as teamwork is concerned, Boomers are of the democratic type, wanting each team member to have an equal contribution and to be able to contribute in every area – a concept of all round development and expertise (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005). They also prefer open and direct communication that is less formal. They enjoy staff meetings and face-to-face or phone communication (Zaporzan 2010).

ii. Generation Xers

When the Xers entered the workplace things were not looking as good as the boom was coming to an end (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005; Simoneaux and Stroud 2010). They felt let down by the promises made by the Boomers and, economies and companies shrunk with work being difficult to come by (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005). Due to these socio-economic factors facing them, Xers favoured the values of self-reliance and work-life balance (Simoneaux and Stroud 2010; Zaporzan 2010).

In the office, Xers will work on a first come first serve basis and are not unnecessarily worried about most things and their work spaces should be tailored to reflect their individuality – the elements of fun and relaxation must exist in the office space. They are also responsible for introducing the concept of flexible working hours and working from home (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005).

Xers are not prepared to stick to one company or industry – having seen their parents being loyal; only to be retrenched in difficult economic times makes the Xers looking to build a portable career. With this type of career, Xers should expect to change jobs at least five times and change industries at least three times in their working lives (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005).

Xers believe recognition and advancement should be based on merit and expect rapid advancement toward their goals. They value time off, work flexibility and cash rewards, and dislike micromanagement (Zaporzan 2010). This will challenge employers to manage this job changing generation by providing portability from within so that staff will not leave them (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005). They need to feel empowered and want to be asked for feedback (Zaporzan 2010). One way to settle their nervousness around their careers is to find new areas of expertise in the company where Xers could be retrained (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005).

Xers pride themselves in their uniqueness and do not concern themselves with everybody being on the same line of the same page (as with the Boomers) (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005). They dive in to the work and focus on getting the job done. They like the bottom-line approach — results and plenty of them (Zaporzan 2010).

iii. Generation Y's

In their book, Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2005) postulate that Generation Y's or Millennials will enter the workplace as the world bounces back from the current downturn and starts a new wave of development and innovation amidst cutting edge technologies. This could also be applicable from the 2008 recession. They further state that careers will probably look like a portfolio of jobs and constant change will be a given, where working hours are flexible and telecommuting will be considered normal. This is also a techno-savvy generation for whom technology and instant communication are part of everyday life (Simoneaux and Stroud 2010; Zaporzan 2010).

Millennials will come into the workplace wanting a family friendly environment, meaning that crèches and playgrounds for after school care will be a requirement. Satellite offices and telecommuting will become normal and the home will be very much a part of the work environment (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005).

Millennials, like Xers, will also develop a portfolio of careers, where it is predicted that they will have ten different career changes in a lifetime and will completely change their careers at least once a decade (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005). The authors explain that in the case of the Millennials, the change is not necessarily from one company to another, nor even to higher positions or salaries – it could be out of the corporate world altogether in order to develop their life skills. Millennials expect more coaching than any other generation. They want structure, guidance and extensive orientation. They want to challenge and change things, but also require personal feedback. They seek out internships, self-improvement opportunities, formalised coaching and mentoring programs, and work flexibility. If their needs are not met, they will leave for a new opportunity somewhere else (Zaporzan 2010).

Millennials are more team orientated, based on the way their Boomer teachers taught them in the classroom. Along with wanting to know the goal and why they are working to achieve that specific goal, they also need to know what their role is on the team – and favour diversity (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005). Although it may take Millennials longer to get to work than Xers, the authors go further to note that their slower start pay off once their energy is put into action through understanding. They like having informal team meetings to communicate, and dislike having to read and remember lengthy policies and procedures (Zaporzan 2010).

Millennials represent specific characteristics which must be factored in when planning an efficient retention strategy, and these characteristics include a demand for more flexibility, professional liberty, larger recompenses and better work/private life balance (Maria-Madela and Mirabela-Constanta 2009). As confirmed by Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2005), they see their careers as two to three year chapters and as such will easily change jobs, thereby increasing the risk of employee loss if companies do not meet their expectations.

Some companies put new graduate recruits through a process of on the job learning and how to operate in a more seasoned work environment. The point of this exercise is to communicate to the young graduates that these companies are more than one stop or chapter in their careers – it can offer them multiple jobs throughout their career (Tucker et al. 2005).

Table 2: Workplace traits of the generations (Simoneaux and Stroud 2010)

Category	Radio Babies	Baby Boomers	Gen Xers	Millennials
	1930–1945 (<1940)	1946–1964 (1940–1960)	1965–1980 (1960–1980)	1981–2000
a.k.a.	Silent generation, Veterans	Boomers, Sandwich generation	Generation X, Xers, Busters	Gen Y, Gen Why?, Nexters, Echo Boomers, Bridgers
Shaped their beliefs	Parents' views	Views of family and friends	Television/world events	Television/world events
	Values held in community	Political events	Views of family and friends	Parents' and grandparents' views
	Views of respected leaders	Civil rights	Respected mentors	Values held in community
Mantra	Sacrifice/duty	Change the world	Be careful out there	Protect the environment
Core values	Loyalty	Involvement	Skepticism	Optimism
	Discipline	Optimism	Diversity	Achievement
	Duty	Personal gratification	Pragmatism	Diversity/global awareness
		Work	Informality	Sociability/fun
				Civic duty, volunteering
Views on authority	Respects authority	Questions authority	Distrusts/ignores authority	Respects authority and expects mutual respect from authority
Family	Traditional, moms at home	More working moms, more divorces	Latch-key kids, career working moms, single parents	Split families, some stay-at-home dads, soccer moms, "helicopter" parents
Money	Don't borrow, pay cash, save	Buy now, pay later	Conservative, save now	Earn enough to buy what you want, save later
Education	A dream	The way to get ahead in life	Means to an end	A huge expense
			Personal growth	Life long learning
Telephones	Rotary phones/party lines	Touch tone phones	Cell phones	Smart phones
Exposure to technology	Radio	TV	Nintendo, PC, MTV	Internet, X Box, Wii
	Learned technology at work	Learned technology at work	Learned technology in school	Learned technology while learning to walk and talk
Music	Big band	Rock & Roll	Rap	Pop rock, techno
Work & family life	Keep work out of home	No balance; work to live	Work/life balance	Life/work balance
The People	John F. Kennedy	Bill & Hillary Clinton	Jeff Bezos (Amazon)	Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook)
	Robert F. Kennedy	Bill Gates	Pierre Omidar (eBay)	Ezra Klein (political blogger)
	Martin Luther King Jr.	Stephen Spielberg	Tiger Woods	Kelly Clarkson
	Warren Buffett	Oprah Winfrey	Kurt Cobain	Danica Patrick
Influences/ events	The Great Depression	JFK, RFK & MLK assasinations	Challenger explosion	Columbine, 9/11, terrorism
	Pearl Harbor	Civil rights, women's rights	AIDS	Parents laid off work
	Atomic bomb	VietNam War/Cold War	Parents laid off work	Difficulty finding work
	Launching of Sputnik	Watergate	Recession, dot.com crash	Recession, global economy
			CNN, USAtoday, Internet	Social networking, blogs

Table 3: How the generations interact in the workplace (Simoneaux and Stroud 2010)

Category	Radio Babies	Baby Boomers	Gen Xers	Millennial
	1930–1945 (<1940)	1946–1964 (1940–1960)	1965–1980 (1960–1980)	1981–2000
Communication style	Respectful	Politically correct	Informal, abrupt	Eager to please, inclusive
Work ethic	Hard work	Workaholic	Be efficient, get it done	Multi-taskers, what's next?
	Duty before fun	Personal fulfillment	Career development	Goal oriented
	Letters/memos	Call me anytime	Call me only at work	E-mail, text or IM me at work
		Faxes/Express mail	E-mail	Social networks
View of technology	Difficult and complicated to use and learn	Improves personal productivity, source of information, good for data storage, and processing transactions	Critical for personal and work efficiency, interactive way to connect	Core to life and work and way of thinking, always looking for the next cool thing
Workplace needs	Organization	Mission	Efficiency/results	Values
	Long term goals	Status/recognition	Technology	Collaboration
			Independence	State-of-the-art technology
			Values	Ability to learn/grow
Feedback/ rewards	No news is good news	Money, title, recognition	How am I doing? Freedom	Needs continuous feedback, meaningful work
Interactive style at work	Individual	Loves meetings	Entrepreneur, independent	Team player/seeks input
	Hierarchical	Team player	Focused on product	Engaging/helpful
Work advantages	Committed	Team players	Independent	Collaborative
	Respectful	Service oriented; good at relationships	Technoliterate	Technologically savvy
	Wealth of experience	Technical experience	Creative	Multi-tasking abilities
	Hard worker	Driven	Adaptable	Heroic spirit
Work challenges	Resistant to change	May put process before results	Impatient/cynical	Need for supervision and structure
	Difficulty accepting direction from younger generations	Judgmental of those with other viewpoints	Poor people skills	Inexperienced, especially with difficult people issues

2.4 Conclusion of Literature Review

From the literature we understand that managers have a vital role to play in retaining talent. The literature clearly points out that the various generations perceive, understand and react to situations differently. Each has their own biases, likes, dislikes and aspirations. In order for managers to effectively manage these talented employees in a climate where there is a shortage of talent, the generation specific traits and needs must be catered for in the workplace.

A strategic imperative of every company is to retain and manage talented employees, and as such managers who understand what characteristics to exude in order for their talented subordinates to remain with the company, will assist in achieving this strategic objective. These **four** key characteristics (Goleman 2000) that managers should have are **self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skill**. In terms of the literature these four characteristics, when super-imposed against the research by Simoneaux and Stroud (2010), Zarporzan (2010), Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2005) and Maria-Madela and Mirabela-Constanta (2009), are favoured by each of the applicable generations as represented in Table 4. Table 4 summarises the most strongly favoured characteristics that each generation looks for. As such, we know from the literature that Baby Boomers and Generation Y's would like recognition for their work. Baby Boomers and Xers want managers with consistent reactions/temperaments and honesty and integrity. Generation Xers and Y's also look for empathy in their managers. Finally, Baby Boomers and Generation Y's also favour their managers to have good communication, leadership and developmental skills.

It must be noted that although each generation will subscribe to all these desired traits in their managers, this synthesis represents the traits or characteristics that come through as the strongest or most emphatic for each generation.

Table 4: Primary characteristics that the different generations look for in their managers

Generation	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
Self-Awareness	✓		✓
Self-Management	✓	✓	
Social Awareness		✓	✓
Social Skill	✓		✓

2.4.1 *Research Question:*

What are the characteristics that talented employees from the Baby Boomer generation, Generation X and Generation Y look for in their managers and the impact of such on their decision to leave or remain with a company?

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the methodology that will be used to conduct the research. The first sub-section will discuss the qualitative method that will be used and the following sub-sections will discuss the research design, the population and sampling process. Issues dealing with data collection and analysis will then be discussed before completing this section with a discussion around the reliability and validity of this study.

3.1 Research methodology / paradigm

Understanding the most appropriate method of data collection and analysis determines whether a qualitative or quantitative approach is used (Willig 2008). According to Creswell (2003) a qualitative approach requires the researcher to collect open-ended, emerging data in order to develop themes from what is collected. Furthermore, all qualitative research has two things in common – it focuses on real world phenomena and it involves studying such phenomena in all their complexity (Leedy and Ormrod 2005). The goal of qualitative research is to learn about a research topic from the respondent's point of view and in their own words, rather than to test relationships between variables as would be the case with quantitative research (Kalof, Dan and Dietz 2008). The aspect of talent retention from a perspective of how the manager-employee relationship is maintained is subjective to the individual and potentially across generations as well. As such, the qualitative approach is best suited to gathering the required data.

The qualitative approach employs various types of data gathering techniques, including questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, objects, electronic or print media and observation (Kalof et al. 2008; Leedy and Ormrod 2005). Interviews are better suited for in-depth, open ended questions and allow the interviewer to probe, clarify and ask follow-up questions (Kalof et al. 2008). As such, the primary data gathering method will be that of one-on-one semi-structured interviews that will be recorded, with the participants consent, as recording serves to capture all that is said during the interview, as well as keep the note taking distraction to a minimum (Willig 2008). This data gathering technique will allow participants to provide detailed and descriptive responses (Kalof et al. 2008) so as to give the research the depth and understanding required. For this research, interviews will be used to understand how the employees view the role of their managers in deciding to remain with the company.

3.2 Research Design

The research design took the form of a single site case study, as case studies are suitable for learning poorly understood situations (Leedy and Ormrod 2005). As mentioned previously, the method used within the case study approach was that of interviews, whereby a sample of employees will be "studied" in-depth for their views on manager traits that will ensure the employees remain with the company.

The advantage of face-to-face interviews is that they allow for a greater depth of information to be drawn that cannot be achieved through a quantitative approach. Factors like discomfort, bias, prejudice or emotion can be picked during a face-to-face interview as compared to a quantitative approach. Another advantage is that this approach will allow to probe, clarify and ask follow-up questions (Kalof et al. 2008).

Conversely, with a face-to-face interview the researcher should understand that respondents may not be as honest as with a quantitative approach. Quantitative approaches allow for a greater degree of anonymity which would allow respondents to be more honest without fear of recourse, whereas in a face-to-face interview a respondent may not be willing to divulge their honest opinions to the researcher. The disadvantage of qualitative approaches is that these data gathering methods take a great deal of time (Leedy and Ormrod 2005).

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 *Case Site*

The company to be researched is a Supply Chain consultancy. The reason a consultancy has been chosen, is for the nature of work and specific type of knowledge worker (or “talented” individuals) that would suit a consulting environment. The rigorous recruitment process as discussed in section 2.2 ensures that the employees of consulting companies are of a generally higher calibre. The reason for this is that employees’ ability to solve problems, thinking on their feet, lead, communicate effectively and working under pressure is what is required of employees to thrive in the consulting environment.

3.3.2 *Sample and sampling method*

Qualitative researchers often purposefully select their samples (Leedy and Ormrod 2005). As such, the sample frame for this research was all employees at the company. Numerous participants were invited and a convenience sample of 12 accepted and was drawn to be interviewed. These participants were selected from across the three generations (Boomers, Xers and Millennials) as well as different levels within the company. While the researcher would have preferred a slightly larger sample size it is notable that the sample represents approximately 10% of the workforce of the company. This not only ensured that the views of the various generations are captured, but also the difference in requirements as individuals moves up through the organisation – with regard to their managers.

A communication (e-mail) was sent to a larger pool of targeted participants (approximately 50), outlining the research objectives and inviting them to participate. This invitation clarified that the interviews will remain confidential. With the help of the Human Resources (HR) division and with permission from the Director, this pool was a cross-sectional selection based on age and level. The final sample was selected from the respondents. Below is a tabular representation of the generational profile of respondents according to their respondent code or number.

Table 5: Profile of Respondents

Respondent No.	Generation
1	Generation X
2	Generation Y
3	Generation X
4	Generation Y
5	Generation X
6	Generation Y
7	Generation Y
8	Generation X
9	Baby Boomer
10	Baby Boomer
11	Baby Boomer
12	Baby Boomer

3.4 The research instrument

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), semi-structured interviews revolve around a few central themes. On the premise and aim that honest and reliable information is gathered through the responses of the participants, a semi-structured interview will be used to gather data.

The interviews will revolve around three central themes or sections as outlined hereunder. The interview agenda to be used is found in Appendix C.

The first section is to obtain demographic details of the participant in order to determine the generation they belong to, as well as to understand their level within the organisation. The aim of this being the first section is to be less intrusive from the respondent's career perspective, and is appropriate for understanding the individual as well as allowing the interview to gradually move into a deeper discussion and theme in the second section. A key aspect in this section is for the participant to select one of three definitions provided to them. The definitions characterising a typical Baby Boomer, Xer and Millennial will be provided, and the participant will be asked to select the one they believe they belong to. This will serve to confirm whether the participant is from the generation they were born in.

The second section will contain questions to determine the participant's views on the various managers' management style they have experienced. Being in a consulting environment, employees seldom work for the same manager throughout their careers or level in the company. Rather, they are managed by various managers depending on the project or engagement they are assigned to. This section will aim to understand what the participants regard as good managers and bad managers in terms of work style, work ethic, empathy, motivation, career opportunities and learning.

The final theme of the interview will be around impact that good or bad managers have had on the respondent and how this will affect the participant's decision to remain with the company or not. Aspects to be discussed here are around rapport, respect for the individual, mentoring and career aspirations imbibed by the participant as a result of interaction with their manager.

According to Kalof et al. (2008) the main advantage of in-person interviews is the ability of the interviewer to probe, clarify and ask follow-up questions. The authors go on to note that the main disadvantage of in-person interviews is that they are very time consuming and could be expensive, based on the required logistics to meet interviewees if they are geographically dispersed. This may be applicable to this research if participants are based at various client sites.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

Potential respondents were approached via e-mail by the HR Department of the company, to explain the purpose of the research (see Appendix B for the e-mail). Since the company had just completed their performance reviews, the Business Unit Managers were asked to provide the names of their top performers. The HR representative then filtered these top performers by their dates of birth in order to ensure each generation was represented in the respondent list. It was specified that the interviews will at most, take an hour to complete. After the respondents accepted the invitations, a formal communication was sent as confirmation of the interviews.

An audio recorder was taken into the interviews and permission for the use of the recorder was sought prior to the interview commencing. Respondents were informed that the purpose of the recording was for data analysis as a word for word transcript was to be used as a basis of data analysis. The respondents were also assured that all information provided would remain confidential and reporting around their feedback will be aggregated and kept anonymous. Finally, each respondent was provided with background to the research as well as the definitions of each generation prior to the formal interview commencing.

The following protocols were adhered to in conducting the interviews (Kalof et al. 2008):

- The researcher ensured that he carried positive University identification during the interview should the respondent request to see it.
- The researcher attempted to start the interview with a positive tone in order to set the respondent at ease.
- Initial questions were designed to elicit the respondent's attention.
- Each interview was conducted in the same manner to ensure consistency.
- Follow-up questions were used to clarify points made by the respondent.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis followed the generic five steps of a qualitative case study analysis (Creswell 1998; Stake 1995 cited in Leedy and Ormrod 2005:136).

1. Organisation of details about the case: where the logical or chronological order of the facts of the case are arranged.
2. Categorisation of data: where data is clustered into meaningful groups.
3. Interpretation of single instances: where data is examined for the specific meanings they might have regarding the case.
4. Identification of patterns: where the data and interpretations are scrutinised for patterns and underlying themes in a holistic manner.

5. Synthesis and generalisation: where the case is tied together and conclusions are drawn that may have relevance further than the scope of the case.

3.7 Limitations of the study

The results obtained will be limited to the population for the research as per section 3.3 above. Different definitions of the term talent could yield different results in different industries. In addition, the research limited the population to the Consulting Industry. There are a number of other industries with talented workers who could fall under this area of research.

Furthermore, the research is only directed at a South African organisation. As such, conducting this research on a global scale may yield different results.

The purposeful sampling method also limits the generalisation of the results due to possible bias in the data and the relatively small sample size. While the sample size is representative of the population as per the cross-section it would be drawn from within the Consulting business, it is difficult to establish to what extent it is representative of the wider population of talented workers, since the size of the population is not quantified as part of this research.

3.8 Validity and reliability

A key concern with research is the confidence we have in the findings, as the researcher must use the correct measures as well as measure accurately (Kalof et al. 2008). This is where the aspects of (external and internal) validity and reliability must be appropriately covered.

3.8.1 *External validity*

External validity is about the ability to generalise findings to the larger population (Kalof et al. 2008). As discussed in section 3.7, this case study focuses on a South African business consulting company. As such, one could not generalise findings within the business consulting industry but could probably apply the principles of the findings as the required nature / characteristics of business management consultants are similar, as discussed in section 3.3.1. While an element of sampling bias may be evident in the purposeful population and sample selection, the cross-sectional selection of participants across generations and levels within the company aims to mitigate a skewed view from the responses, thus allowing the research to be applicable in a broader context. It should be borne in mind that this research aims to close a gap in the literature and potentially be a platform from which further research may be conducted.

3.8.2 *Internal validity*

Internal validity refers to whether the correct conclusions are being drawn from the data (Kalof et al. 2008). This implies that the data should be uniformly gathered and each interview analysed in the same way. In this research, each participant was approached and asked the same set of questions as found in Appendix C. This ensured congruency in the approach used as well as the themes to be covered. Furthermore, follow-up or probing questions were posed in order to ensure that the participants fully understood the questions and provided the level of detail to answer each question or theme.

To mitigate researcher bias, the interviews followed a semi-structured form without leading the participants to any specific view through biased framing or phrasing of questions.

3.8.3 *Reliability*

Reliability is concerned with the consistency of the research (Kalof et al. 2008). To this end, the researcher interviewed respondents from amongst all applicable generations and levels within the company. In this manner, the respondents' honest and open responses showed clear themes that emerged across generations and across levels. This is where the aspect of follow-up or probing questions ensured that the themes in the interview are collectively consistent and reliable. Finally, all interviews were personally conducted by the researcher to ensure that a consistent approach was followed throughout all interview processes.

4 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The aspect of talent (acquisition and) retention, specifically in the consulting industry is a real challenge as discussed previously. While there are various techniques that may be employed in retaining staff and tailoring the HR strategy around the talent in a company, this research focuses on the role or characteristics of the manager. Specifically, what traits are sought after by talented individuals of each generation (Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) from their managers in order to remain with the company?

Following Goleman's model of emotional intelligence with four elements (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skill) that he asserts as necessary for managers and leaders to be effective, candidates' responses have been analysed below.

In total 12 respondents were interviewed – four from each generation (Baby Boomers, Xers and Millennials). All respondents' identities were coded to maintain confidentiality where a specific quote was used in elaborating or confirming a view.

The interview schedule that was used for each interview is found in Appendix C. Respondents were asked questions in three distinct areas, namely, demographic and context within the company; views on what makes a good and bad manager;

and finally the impact of good or bad managers on decisions to remain with the company or leave. The analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions has been incorporated into the discussion of the results. Important themes that emerged from these interviews are also discussed. Respondents' views on desirable management characteristics were compared to the synthesis results of the literature.

4.2 Results of the interviews

A view of the respondents general responses around good and bad managers / characteristics are discussed first. Thereafter, each of the four characteristics, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skill are discussed as separate sections below and each generation's views on these characteristics are discussed and contrasted. Each sub-section provides an overall representation of the responses, i.e. how many of the respondents, in total, ascribed to each characteristic; and then the generational responses are presented and discussed.

4.2.1 *Overall Responses*

1. ***Good Managers vs. Bad Managers***

According to Longenecker (2011), bad managers show the following characteristics in descending order of the percentage of respondents agreeing each characteristic as being the worst:

- Arrogant, prideful, inflexible and always right

- Unprincipled, untrustworthy, misrepresent the truth and lie
- Fail to create clear direction and performance expectations
- Feedback and recognition issues
- Bad communication skills and practices
- Erratic and unpredictable behaviour and moods
- Take all credit and avoid blame
- Do not plan effectively, crisis-driven
- Fail to develop their people or help them get ahead
- Do not solve problems or improve processes
- Technically incompetent and lack talent
- Lack wisdom and decision-making skill

These bosses or managers not only make life miserable for your employees, but hamper organisational performance (Longenecker 2011).

Furthermore, according to the Corporate Leadership Council (2004), while engagement is critical to performance and retention, commitment to the manager is often pointed out as the key driver of engagement and as such employees are more likely to leave due to bad managers.

When respondents were asked about characteristics they consider of a “good” manager, not necessarily those characteristics that will impact retention directly, all generations mentioned the following characteristics. Managers must:

- know what makes their subordinates ‘tick’,
- take the time to consider the opinions of staff,
- be clear in their communication with staff,

- support their staff. As more than one respondent put it:

  "He must have your back",

- be consistent in temperament and reactions,
- be willing to join the team in delivering the work if needed,
- lead by example, from being punctual to mannerism and having leadership qualities.

Most of these characteristics (aside from joining in and delivering the work) talk to respecting the individual and treating people well as human beings. They directly address the relationship with subordinates and refer to the emotional intelligence of the manager.

When respondents were asked about general characteristics of a "bad" manager they responded that those management characteristics which would lead to them considering one to be a bad manager would be when the manager:

- micromanages,
- is disrespectful,
- is autocratic,
- is inconsistent in approach and temperament,
- is arrogant,
- does not give credit when and where due,
- is inconsiderate of peoples' views, opinions and styles of working.

Once again, the general characteristics of a bad manager, according to the respondents, talk to those sub-characteristics of emotional intelligence, e.g. disrespect, lack of empathy and understanding, and behaviour on the part of the manager.

Interestingly, almost all respondents could remember specific incidents or examples of situations where their managers behaved in a way which either left a good or bad impression on the respondents.

When it came to situations whereby the managers left a good impression there was very little overlap in terms of the characteristic or behaviour of the managers that left a good impression. However, these ranged from “showing maturity”, being consistent in temperament, and trusting the individual, to being a mentor, “genuinely caring” and “always being on top of work matters”.

When it came to the situations where the behaviour of the manager left a bad impression with the respondents, poor communication, inconsistent behaviour, distrust, irresponsibility and arrogance were common in most of the situations narrated.

2. *How much is enough?*

Respondents were asked whether they considered leaving the company as a result of an incident with their respective manager. Nine out of 12 (75%) responded in the affirmative.

Out of the nine who responded in the affirmative, only one person chose to “stick it out” due to a promise of a promotion. All the other respondents were more proactive in their resolution of the issues – some escalated their problem to higher management, while others worked out the issues with their manager/s directly. More than one respondent though is either still in the conflict situation with their manager, or has decided to leave.

Of the four Boomers interviewed, the three that confirmed that they considered leaving as a result of an incident with their manager, Respondent 10 described when the manager did not communicate to him a key decision that the company had taken which affected him personally. Respondent 9 cited a time when he had to report to a manager that was generally rude and abrupt to everyone. Respondent 9 considered leaving, but the manager was instead asked to leave. Respondent 11 related two instances when he considered leaving. The first was when he worked for an autocratic manager, who despite setting goals would change the goals and still hold Respondent 11 accountable for the new goals. The second incident described was when Respondent 11 requested a work enabler (software) for the work to be done more efficiently. The manager refused, to which Respondent 11 decided to leave the company. Although this matter was then resolved, the unwillingness of the manager to provide the necessary support / investment to allow Respondent 11 to do his work, caused him to consider leaving.

And finally, three respondents chose to or were convinced to by people outside of the company to take some time before making their decision. This has definitely allowed the relevant respondents to gain a broader perspective and to move past the issue with their managers. As a result these respondents realised that the issue was not overwhelming enough to leave the company.

3. *Relationship with Manager and the decision to remain*

When the respondents commented on whether they would remain with the company based on their relationship with their manager, or conversely, leave the company due to a manager leaving, eight out of 12 (67%) answered in the affirmative. Their managers offered them mentorship, development, motivation, guidance and showed them the bigger picture and how these individuals can add value to the company.

Of those who responded in the negative, one respondent "loved the job" more than any relationship and another respondent said that although they will not necessarily follow their manager out of the company if the manger had to leave, they will, however, definitely feel the gap left by their manager. One respondent did not elaborate while the fourth said she would remain with the company and resolve any issues that may come their way.

4. *Circumstances or Generations*

Understanding that each generation has specific requirements of their managers, above the characteristics that are universally required by talented individuals of their managers, and further, that the way a manager treats his subordinates, affects and influences these employees' decisions to remain with or leave a company. For example, there are some Baby Boomers who were found to place a higher weighting on their manager's flexibility around working hours due to family commitments. Yet another Millennial respondent mentioned that remuneration was his key focus and the relationship with his manager came secondary in a decision to remain or leave the company when compared to an opportunity with higher remuneration.

Depending on the personal circumstance of each respondent the relationship with one's manager is superseded by the situational or circumstantial need of the employee. This understanding must be internalised and purposefully executed to increase the retention of talented individuals, or reduce the risk of having talented individuals leave due to a negative experience with their manager.

Moving from these general responses to specifically asking the respondents about those characteristics or capabilities they would look for in their managers when deciding whether to remain with the company, the next sections deal specifically with the four capabilities model around self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skill (Goleman 2000). The table below provides the descriptions or sub-characteristics of the four capabilities model developed by Goleman (2000).

Table 6: Updated model by Goleman (2000) of Emotional Intelligence Capabilities

Self-Awareness • Emotional self-awareness: the ability to read and understand your emotions as well as recognise their impact on work performance, relationships, and the like. • Accurate self-assessment: a realistic evaluation of your strengths and limitations. • Self-confidence: a strong and positive sense of self-worth.
Self-Management • Self-control: the ability to keep disruptive emotions and impulses under control. • Trustworthiness: a consistent display of honesty and integrity. • Conscientiousness: the ability to manage yourself and your responsibilities. • Adaptability: skill at adjusting to changing situations and overcoming obstacles. • Achievement orientation: the drive to meet an internal standard of excellence. • Initiative: a readiness to seize opportunities.
Social Awareness • Empathy: skill at sensing other people's emotions, understanding their perspective, and taking an active interest in their concerns. • Organisational awareness: the ability to read the currents of organisational life, build decision networks, and navigate politics. • Service orientation: the ability to recognise and meet customers' needs.
Social Skill • Visionary leadership: the ability to take charge and inspire with a compelling vision. • Influence: the ability to wield a range of persuasive tactics. • Developing others: the propensity to bolster the abilities of others through feedback and guidance. • Communication: skill at listening and at sending clear, convincing, and well-tuned messages. • Change catalyst: proficiency in initiating new ideas and leading people in a new direction. • Conflict management: the ability to de-escalate disagreements and orchestrate resolutions. • Building bonds: proficiency at cultivating and maintaining a web of relationships. • Teamwork and collaboration: competence at promoting cooperation and building teams.

4.2.2 *Self-Awareness*

The literature (as per Table 1) defines self-awareness as per the following sub-characteristics:

- *Emotional self-awareness*: the ability to read and understand your emotions as well as recognise their impact on work performance, relationships, and the like.
- *Accurate self-assessment*: a realistic evaluation of your strengths and limitations.
- *Self-confidence*: a strong and positive sense of self-worth.

The number of respondents that mentioned this aspect is tabulated below.

Table 7: Responses around Self-Awareness

SELF-AWARENESS	Count	Percentage (%)
Overall (out of 12):	3	25%
Baby Boomers:	3	75%
Generation X:	0	0%
Generation Y:	0	0%

The results show that a quarter of the sample (which was exclusively from the Baby Boomer generation) raised ‘self-awareness’ as an important characteristic for managers to display in order to impact their employees’ decisions to remain with the company or not.

The majority of Baby Boomers rated this characteristic of a manager highly. Some of the aspects mentioned by the Boomers included that the managers should be relaxed, not so formal all the time and accessible. Comments around the manager's own understanding and technical knowledge being in place were also made and these relate to the sub-characteristic of self-confidence. These responses around self-awareness, although noted as important to the respondents, did not impact these three respondents' decisions to remain or leave the company.

In line with the literature, Xers were expected to not rate this aspect as a key requirement of their managers. Xers are independent in the workplace as a result of having both parents working while growing up, and by nature they are distrusting of others and generally ignore authority anyway (Simoneaux and Stroud 2010).

Interestingly though, Generation Y's did not raise self-awareness as a characteristic in their retention decision at all. This is contrary to the findings from the literature which indicates that Generation Y's do look for self-awareness characteristics in their managers. Millennials expect more coaching than any other generation – they want structure, guidance and extensive orientation. They want to challenge and change things, but also require personal feedback. They seek out internships, self-improvement opportunities, formalised coaching and mentoring programs, and work flexibility (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2005). If their needs are not met, they will leave for a new opportunity somewhere else (Zaporzan 2010). As such, there is a deduction from the literature that Millennials want their managers to be very aware of the impact the manager's behaviour has on their work and productivity. However, as stated above, none of the respondents from Generation Y strongly mentioned the aspects or sub-characteristics of self-awareness as important characteristics that impact their decision to remain or leave a company.

4.2.3 *Self-Management*

The literature (refer to Table 1) defines self-management as per the following sub-characteristics:

- *Self-control:* the ability to keep disruptive emotions and impulses under control.
- *Trustworthiness:* a consistent display of honesty and integrity.
- *Conscientiousness:* the ability to manage yourself and your responsibilities.
- *Adaptability:* skill at adjusting to changing situations and overcoming obstacles.
- *Achievement orientation:* the drive to meet an internal standard of excellence.
- *Initiative:* a readiness to seize opportunities.

The number of respondents that mentioned this aspect is tabulated below.

Table 8: Responses around Self-Management

SELF-MANAGEMENT	Count	Percentage (%)
Overall (out of 12):	8	66.6%
Baby Boomers:	2	50%
Generation X:	4	100%
Generation Y:	2	50%

Two-thirds of the respondents mentioned self-management as a characteristic required of their managers that impact the respondents' decision to remain with the company.

The literature was supported in that half the Baby Boomers and all the Xers who were interviewed confirmed this as a requirement. Some of the characteristics specifically mentioned by the Boomers included "integrity" and "adaptability in reducing workload of staff as necessary".

One respondent specifically pointed out that their manager "never raised his voice" when asked about "a time your manager made you feel that this is the company you would want to remain with throughout your career? If so, what happened in this instance?" (Refer to Question 13 of the research instrument in Appendix C). Respondent 9 pointed out that a good manager *"Keeps calm and focussed under pressure"*.

Regarding the Xers, all the respondents mentioned self-management as a required characteristic of their managers. Aspects like integrity, truthfulness and consistency were mentioned by all respondents.

The interesting result in this area came from the Generation Y's. While the literature suggests that this is not a strong requirement for the Y's, half the respondents raised self-management as an important characteristic. Although one of the respondents, who considered self-management a required trait in the managers, mentioned honesty and trustworthiness, both respondents who answered in the affirmative around this trait mentioned consistency in behaviour or reaction as the sub-characteristic of self-management that is important. Respondent 2 mentioned:

"Don't tell people what you think they want to hear to make the problem go away, as people know you are lying from experience and this destroys TRUST further."

4.2.4 *Social Awareness*

The literature (refer to Table 1) defines social awareness as per the following sub-characteristics:

- *Empathy:* skill at sensing other people's emotions, understanding their perspective and taking an active interest in their concerns.
- *Organisational awareness:* the ability to read the currents of organisational life, build decision networks and navigate politics.
- *Service orientation:* the ability to recognise and meet customers' needs.

The number of respondents that mentioned this aspect is tabulated below.

Table 9: Responses around Social Awareness

SOCIAL AWARENESS	Count	Percentage (%)
Overall (out of 12):	8	66.6%
Baby Boomers:	4	100%
Generation X:	2	50%
Generation Y:	2	50%

Two-thirds of the sample mentioned social awareness as a characteristic required of their managers that impact the respondents' decision to remain with the company.

The literature was not supported in this research around the responses of the Baby Boomers. Based on Table 2 and Table 3, Boomers are known to not have work/life balance, but rather be workaholics who do not mind being contacted at any time. This generation is also known for being good at networking. Therefore, a result where all the Boomers mentioned social awareness as a key trait required in their managers is interesting as it seems to contradict the literature. In support of their identification of social awareness as a key trait, "respect", and "empathy" were mentioned. Baby Boomers want their managers to understand their perspectives, to be allowed flexibility around place of work (working from home) and to be able to attend to family responsibilities, e.g. as a single parent

Respondent 12 has to ensure that responsibilities like taking an ill child to the doctor can be accommodated.

The literature was partially supported in that half of both the Xers and Generation Y respondents pointed to social awareness as a required characteristic in their managers. Respect, understanding and empathy were raised equally by both these generations as sub-characteristics they look for in their managers.

4.2.5 *Social Skill*

The literature (refer to Table 1) defines social skill as per the following sub-characteristics:

- *Visionary leadership:* the ability to take charge and inspire with a compelling vision.
- *Influence:* the ability to wield a range of persuasive tactics.
- *Developing others:* the propensity to bolster the abilities of others through feedback and guidance.
- *Communication:* skill at listening and at sending clear, convincing, and well-tuned messages.
- *Change catalyst:* proficiency in initiating new ideas and leading people in a new direction.
- *Conflict management:* the ability to de-escalate disagreements and orchestrate resolutions.
- *Building bonds:* proficiency at cultivating and maintaining a web of relationships.

- *Teamwork and collaboration:* competence at promoting cooperation and building teams.

The number of respondents that mentioned this aspect is tabulated below.

Table 10: Responses around Social Skill

SOCIAL SKILL	Count	Percentage (%)
Overall (out of 12):	12	100%
Baby Boomers:	4	100%
Generation X:	4	100%
Generation Y:	4	100%

All respondents mentioned social skill as a characteristics required of their managers that impact the respondents' decision to remain with the company. This could be to the all-encompassing sub-characteristics that the social skill category covers.

The literature was fully supported in this research by the responses of the Baby Boomers and the Generation Y's. The Baby Boomers mentioned aspects such as motivation (stimulating people with exciting or innovative work to do), inclusivity, trust and leadership by example when discussing the social skill characteristics that they look for in their managers.

Generation Y respondents also totally from a sample perspective supported social skill as a necessary characteristic their managers should have. Common aspects between the Generation Y's and the Baby Boomers were around (team) motivation and allowing staff to get on with their work (without micromanagement). Other aspects as sub-characteristics of social skill that were mentioned included mentorship, personal and career development, and acknowledgement (of good work/performance). One respondent went as far as pointing out that managers should "Say thank you" in recognition of work (well) done.

The interesting finding was around Generation Xers. The literature indicates that due to their dual working parents, they had to learn quickly to survive, become independent and not trust nor expect anyone to do it for them. However, all the Xers indicated social skill as a required characteristic that their managers should display.

Sub-characteristics like communication, innovation, having or building good relationships, motivation, development, leadership and conflict management abilities were mentioned by the respondents. On a deeper level, the research found that Xers were the generation that seemed to indicate social skill characteristics more than the other generations.

4.3 Conclusion

Various findings were made through this research. Firstly, the similarities in responses amongst the generations were noted, not only in terms of the characteristics each generation looked for in deciding whether to stay or not, but also in terms of the general perception of what made a good or bad manager. All generations mentioned that a good manager must:

- know what makes their subordinates ‘tick’,
- take the time to consider the opinions of staff,
- be clear in their communication with staff,
- support their staff,
- be consistent in temperament and reactions,
- be willing to join the team in delivering the work if needed; and
- lead by example, from being punctual to mannerism and having leadership qualities.

Similarly all generations seemed to agree that a bad manager is one who:

- micromanages,
- is disrespectful,
- is autocratic,
- is inconsistent in approach and temperament,
- is arrogant,
- does not give credit when and where due; and
- is inconsiderate of peoples’ views, opinions and styles of working.

Secondly, an important finding showed that the majority of the respondents would remain or leave depending on whether their manager was remaining or leaving the company, i.e. if the manager was leaving the staff member would consider leaving as well. Therefore the relationship with the manager was confirmed to be a determining characteristic in most cases on an employee's decision to remain or leave based on their relationship with and treatment from their managers.

Thirdly, the study finds that the different generations place a higher relative value on the aspects of Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness and Social Skill as per Table 11.

Table 11: Characteristics desired by the different generations from their managers

Generation	Baby Boomer	Generation X	Generation Y
Self-Awareness	✓		
Self-Management	✓	✓	✓
Social Awareness	✓	✓	✓
Social Skill	✓	✓	✓

There were three areas where this study seemed to differ from the literature regarding the four characteristics model above as developed by Goleman (2000).

Firstly, the literature suggested that Baby Boomers do not place a relatively high weighting on social-awareness. However, all the Baby Boomers mentioned social-awareness as important and in support of their identification of social-awareness as a key trait, "respect", and "empathy" were mentioned. Baby Boomers want their managers to understand their perspectives, to be allowed flexibility around place of work (working from home) and to be able to attend to family responsibilities as was the case cited where the respondent required taking an ill child to a doctor.

The second area of divergence of the findings from the literature was around Generation Xers and the importance of social skill in their managers. All the Xers indicated social skill as a required characteristic that their managers should display. Sub-characteristics like communication, innovation, having or building good relationships, stimulating people with exciting or innovative work, development, leadership and conflict management abilities were mentioned by the respondents. On a deeper level, the research found that Xers were the generation who seemed to indicate social skill characteristics more than the other generations.

The third area where the literature was not supported by the research was around the characteristic of self-management being important to Generation Y's, to be found in their managers. Half the respondents raised self-management as an important characteristic. Although one of the respondents who considered self-management a required trait in the managers mentioned honesty and trustworthiness, both respondents who answered in the affirmative around this trait mentioned consistency in behaviour or reaction as the sub-characteristic of self-management that is important.

As a summary conclusion, the preferred characteristics of each generation as per the literature are compared to the actual findings through this research as per the table below.

Table 12: Comparison between management characteristics desired by the different generations from the literature and this research

Generation	Baby Boomer		Generation X		Generation Y	
	Literature	Actual	Literature	Actual	Literature	Actual
Self-Awareness	✓	✓			✓	
Self-Management	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Social Awareness		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social Skill	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

This study found that talented employees place a relatively high weighting on their managers in terms of whether their tenure with the company is influenced positively or negatively to remain therewith. All generations have their key areas or manager characteristics that they look for. However, there is overlap amongst the generations regarding the manager characteristics required. While there may be differences in the importance of the sub-characteristics, it is noted that not only does the generation play a part in what is important to the employee, but also the personal circumstances. As such, some Xers or even Millennials who have started families and Boomers who are putting their children through tertiary education may find themselves viewing monetary reward in similar light. However, there have also been clear distinctions noted in what the different generations look for in the managers.

The question this research aimed to answer is:

What are the characteristics that talented employees from the Baby Boomer Generation, Generation X and Generation Y look for in their managers and the impact of such on their decision to leave or remain with a company?

In conclusion of this chapter, an answer to the research question is provided.
Baby Boomers looked for all four characteristics, i.e. Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness and Social Skill (refer to Table 12). Specifically though, Baby Boomers want to see strong leadership in their managers. Empathy, trust, respect, integrity and humility are all characteristics noted by this generation as important in their managers. When it came to the impact on the Baby Boomers' decision to remain with the company from a relationship with one's manager, the social awareness and social skill characteristics were the most important, followed by self-awareness and self-management.

Turning to the Generation Xers, Self-Management, Social Awareness and Social Skill were the three characteristics they looked for (refer to Table 12). Specifically, the characteristics that were mentioned were inclusivity of employees, trust, integrity, communication of management decisions, empathy, and consistency. However, from a perspective of the characteristics of a manager that impact retention, good mannerisms, ownership, innovation, integrity, honesty and consistency were specifically mentioned as traits or characteristics that Xers look for in their managers.

Finally, regarding the Millennials, trust, empathy, acknowledgement (with monetary and non-monetary rewards), being supportive and clear communication were characteristics that Millennials regard as those that make good managers. With regard to those characteristics that impact the Millennials' decisions to remain with the company, ability to energise and mentor, acknowledgement and reward, trust, empathy and support were the key characteristics noted by the Millennials.

As mentioned previously, although these are the key characteristics that the generations look for in their managers and in instances the lack of these would impact negatively on the decision of an employee to remain with the company, there are also circumstantial reasons, namely Boomers who require the money to put their children through university or single parents who require flexibility within work hours to attend to the important needs (e.g. medical appointments) of their children, that would impact an employee's decision to remain with or leave the company.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The findings of the research have been summarised and recommendations will be provided around such. Suggestions for further research will also be provided.

5.2 Conclusions of the research

The question this research aimed to answer is:

What are the characteristics that talented employees from the Baby Boomer Generation, Generation X and Generation Y look for in their managers and the impact of such on their decision to leave or remain with a company?

Various findings were made through this research. Firstly, the similarities in responses amongst the generations were noted, not only in terms of the characteristics each generation looked for in deciding whether to stay or not, but also in terms of the general perception of what made a good or bad manager.

Secondly an important finding showed that majority of the respondents would remain or leave depending on whether their manager was remaining or leaving the company, i.e. if the manager was leaving the staff member would consider leaving as well. Therefore the relationship with the manager was confirmed to be a determining characteristic in most cases on an employee's decision to remain or leave based on their relationship with and treatment from their managers.

Thirdly, the study finds that the different generations place a higher relative value on the aspects of Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness and Social Skill. These were three areas where this study seemed to differ from the literature regarding the four characteristics model above as developed by Goleman (2000).

As a summary conclusion, the preferred characteristics of each generation as per the literature are compared to the actual findings through this research as per the table below.

Table 13: Comparison between management characteristics desired by the different generations from the literature and this research

Generation	Baby Boomer		Generation X		Generation Y	
	Literature	Actual	Literature	Actual	Literature	Actual
Self-Awareness	✓	✓			✓	
Self-Management	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Social Awareness		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social Skill	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

Baby Boomers looked for all four characteristics, i.e. Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness and Social Skill (refer to Table 12). Specifically though, Baby Boomers want to see strong leadership in their managers. Empathy, trust, respect, integrity and humility are all characteristics noted by this generation as important in their managers. When it came to the impact on the Baby Boomers' decision to remain with the company from a relationship with one's manager, the social awareness and social skill characteristics were the most important, followed by self-awareness and self-management.

Turning to the Generation Xers, Self-Management, Social Awareness and Social Skill were the three characteristics they looked for (refer to Table 12). Specifically, the characteristics that were mentioned were inclusivity or employees', trust, integrity, communication of management decisions, empathy, and consistency. However, from a perspective of the characteristics of a manager that impact retention, good mannerisms, ownership, innovation, integrity, honesty and consistency were specifically mentioned as traits or characteristics that Xers look for in their managers.

Finally, regarding the Millennials, trust, empathy, acknowledgement (with monetary and non-monetary rewards), supportive and clear communication were characteristics that Millennials regard as those that make good managers. With regard to those characteristics that impact the Millennials' decision to remain with the company, ability to energise and mentor, acknowledgement and reward, trust, empathy and support were the key characteristics noted by the Millennials.

5.3 Recommendations

In line with the findings of the research the following recommendations are made to managers around each generation:

5.3.1 *Baby Boomers*

Managers should be more inclusive when it comes to Baby Boomers – both from a decision making perspective as well as the manager being part of the team. Managers should also realise that Baby Boomers expect their tenure and experience to be recognised and as such, the appropriate level of trust should be extended by their manager for the Baby Boomers to lead others or run with their area of work.

Baby Boomers also expect their managers to take the time to understand what is important to them above remuneration, e.g. recognition, support and respect. Managers should therefore make it a point to interact with Baby Boomers in a social setting to understand what makes the Baby Boomers tick in order to ensure that Boomers feel engaged to work optimally.

5.3.2 *Generation Xers*

Managers should be aware of the generational basis of this generation as discussed previously. Based on this, Xers should be afforded flexibility to get their work done.

Managers should also leverage Xers (who are good at running with work) through their strengths. This means that, as with Boomers, managers should take the time to understand the person behind the employee (Xer).

Managers should also be aware that while Xers are good with taking on and driving activities, Xers must be treated with respect. Managers must “ask” them to complete an activity as opposed to “order” or “tell” them what to do. Being treated with respect is important to Xers, and to this end, managers should be mindful about the words they use when communicating with Xers. The wrong choice of words will be misconstrued as being rude or insulting to Xers.

5.3.3 *Generation Y or Millennials*

Millennials, by their nature enjoy collaborating. As such, managers should adopt a relaxed approach to them – not from a perspective of work delivery but from a personal style perspective. Managers should emphasise the open door policy with Millennials as they like to discuss and have their ideas heard and discussed.

Following from the approach that managers should adopt with Millennials, managers of employees from this generation must allow the innovative aspect of Millennials to thrive. Managers should have the appetite and trust in Millennials to develop their ideas as opposed to dismissing them upfront. Harnessing this aspect of the Millennials will allow managers to develop more robust solutions, while keeping the Millennials engaged.

Millennials also want their managers to get to know them. The level of familiarity or the extent or way in which the managers of Millennials get to know them differs from that of Baby Boomers or Xers in that, firstly, Millennials would tell their managers what was on their mind and what mattered to them without much probing needed. Secondly, the need for Millennials to be understood is more from the perspective of how the Millennials like to engage or around their working style as opposed to wanting their managers to know their personal circumstances in great detail.

Finally, managers should ensure that what they communicate to Millennials is accurate. Millennials do not like what they perceive to be half-truths. For example if the manager cannot assist a Millennial with a problem, rather than saying “I am working on it” or “I will see what I can do”, Millennials rather have the manager tell them “there is nothing I can do about this”. Managers should therefore not set false expectations for Millennials, as failure to deliver on these expectations destroys the trust of the Millennials.

5.4 Further Research

A number of questions have been raised through this research which presents opportunities for further research.

- Firstly, this research focussed on a case site within the consulting industry. The scope of future research should be broader in terms of sample and industry type to determine whether talented individuals across the generations have distinctly different requirements of their managers in different industries.

- Another area of further research is around the definition of talent within the consulting industry and other industries. One of the questions raised as a result of this research was the definition of talent. While this paper defined talent for the purposes of this research, further research is required to determine exactly what is meant by talent, and thereafter the potential role of the manager in customising retention strategies for talented individuals.

- Research is also needed around the area of how circumstances of individuals affect the generational requirements in the workplace, aside from the theoretical requirements of each generation.

- Another question that was raised through this research was whether talent retention in South Africa is actually a problem for companies. Based on what is talent or how it is defined, research is required to examine whether companies are looking at a far smaller pool of defined talent as part of retention plans, as opposed to seriously mitigating poor company performance through an exodus of talented employees, in a more general definition of talent or performers.

- Another potential area of research is around whether managers are groomed or trained sufficiently to handle the multi-generational workforce, where the norms of the workforce and the circumstantial requirements make the transition from worker to manager a much bigger step in terms of promotions and how staff is empowered to handle this change.

- Finally, while there is a plethora of literature around the various generations, and the generations in the workplace, further research will go some way in determining the future of retention strategies in South African companies, with specific focus on how senior management enforces talent retention as a key strategic driver.

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APPENDIX A

Table 14: Consistency matrix

Research Problem: What are the characteristics that talented employees from the Baby Boomer Generation, Generation X and Generation Y look for in their managers?					
Sub-problem	**Literature Review**	**Proposition**	**Source of data**	**Type of data**	**Analysis**
Identify the characteristics that talented employees from the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y look for in managers in order to remain with a company.	Drucker (1994) Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2005) Davenport (2005) Frank and Taylor (2004) Longenecker (2011) Zarporzan (2010)	No proposition stated. Research question was used as the basis for research analysis.	Respondents in interviews	Qualitative data	1. Organise case details 2. Categorise data 3. Interpret of single instances 4. Identification of patterns 5. Synthesis and generalisation

APPENDIX B

Letter to Respondents

Dear Respondent,

I am completing an MBA at Wits Business School (WBS). My MBA thesis is on how talented individuals would like to be managed in order to remain with the company. The matter of talent retention is also an issue that the executives at the company are dealing with currently.

I would be grateful if I could arrange an interview with you, of one hour maximum duration, to understand your views on the role of managers in retaining talented individuals. I understand that you are busy, and your agreement to contribute to this research is greatly appreciated.

The interview will not involve questions about specific managers, but more around how you, as a talented individual see management and would like to be managed so that you remain with the company. Confidentiality will be observed throughout the process.

I look forward to your feedback as to when would be a suitable time and venue for us to meet.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

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APPENDIX C

Actual Research Instrument: Interview Questions

Respondents will be given the definitions of generations (Baby Boomers, Xers and Millennials) and asked to identify the definition that describes them best.

Baby Boomers: Born between 1940 and 1960

Generation X: Born between 1960 and 1980

Generation Y/Millennials: Born between 1980 and 2000

	Section 1: Demographics and context
1.	What year were you born in?
2.	When did you commence working?
3.	How long are you with the current company?
4.	How long have you been in your current role?
5.	What is your job description and designation and what does it entail?

	Section 2: What respondents are looking for in their managers
6.	How many managers have you worked for or under since joining this company?
7.	What characteristics would you consider to make one a good managers?
8.	What characteristics would you consider to make one a bad managers?

9.	Can you relate an example or situation where you thought of your manager as being a good manager?
10.	Can you relate an example or situation where you thought of your manager as being a bad manager?

	Section 3: What would cause respondents to leave or remain with the company
11.	Did you ever consider leaving the company as a result of your interaction with your manager? What triggered this feeling or thought for you?
12.	Since you are still with the company, what made you change your mind, and remain?
13.	Was there ever a time your manager made you feel that this is the company you would want to remain with throughout your career? If so, what happened in this instance?
14.	Finally, what would you consider the three main characteristics a manager should display to his team/subordinates to ensure they remain with the company?
15.	If I was your manager, what would you tell me to do (or rectify) to ensure that my staff remain with the company?