

Cognizant's Millennial Council Increases Engagement through Social Learning

Cognizant Technology Solutions

Best Use of Social Collaborative Learning

November 2020



Company Background

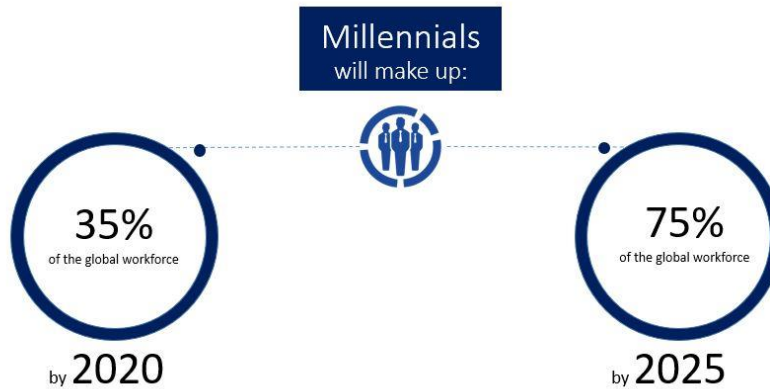
Cognizant

Company-at-a-Glance	Cognizant Technology Solutions
Headquarters	Teaneck, New Jersey
Year Founded	1994
Revenue	\$16.8 billion
Employees	281,600
Global Scale	Cognizant utilizes a global delivery model, with delivery centers worldwide, to provide our customers with a full range of services. Specific regions include NA, LATAM, EMEA, APAC and the UK.
Customers/Output, etc.	Cognizant services include digital services and solutions, consulting, application development, systems integration, application testing, application maintenance, infrastructure services and business process services delivered through Cognizant Digital Business; Cognizant Digital Operations; and Digital Systems and Technology. Business segments Cognizant services include Financial Services, Healthcare, Products and Resources, Communications, Media and Technology.
Industry	IT services, IT consulting
Stock Symbol	NASDAQ: CTSH
Website	www.cognizant.com

Business Conditions and Business Needs

According to recent research, by 2020, Millennials (those born between 1980 and 2000 approximately) will make up 35% of the global workforce; and by 2025, 75% of the global workforce.

Figure 1: Millennials in the Workforce



Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

Educated, conscious and progressive — these high-energy individuals want to break away from conventional norms and seek changes in the non-functional process frameworks and structures through questions and reasoning. They also strongly believe in transformations through unique ideas and want to be intrinsic to the change process.

Business Conditions

Considering their powerful effects on trends, tech innovation, workplace culture and even communication, businesses are adapting to be relevant to the Millennial perspective. Engaging with them is a necessity for any organization to adapt, evolve and remain abreast with the constant change in the business landscape.

Figure 2: Motivators for Millennials



Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

In fact, organizations are rethinking the traditional motivators at the workplace. With new expectations and values placed on career development, Millennials are expecting far more from a job than just remuneration. Therefore, organizations aiming to retain and attract Millennial talent need to offer more than just money to increase retention and happiness.

As Millennials are quickly advancing in the leadership ranks, organizations are introducing learning programs, interactive forums, knowledge-sharing sessions or even assigning mentors to help hone their leadership skills and create a ready pool of talented leaders.

Business Needs

In 2018, Cognizant realized a new generation of Millennials were becoming a significant portion of their work population and assuming the position of key audience and influencers. So, coming up with a new set of engagement tools and policies was the next step for Cognizant to be relevant to the Millennial mindset.

The need of the hour was to nurture a dynamic and innovative platform to support employees' career development goals while achieving the organization's business objectives. It was key to retain and attract Millennial talent.

It would provide them an opportunity to interact with the leadership in the organization and participate in the decision-making process at the grass-roots level. They could then put their learnings into practice in their respective fields within the organization.

As a result, Cognizant formed the Millennial Council — a brewing pot of new ideas, concepts and methodologies derived from the inputs provided by the Millennials working in the organization to aid transformation, modernization and simplification.

Figure 3: Millennial Council Snapshot 1



WELCOME ONBOARD MILLENNIALS!

Cognizant's Millennial Council is a great platform for you to work closely with the leaders and shape the future strategy.

The millennial voice is the key influence for bringing transformation in the organization.

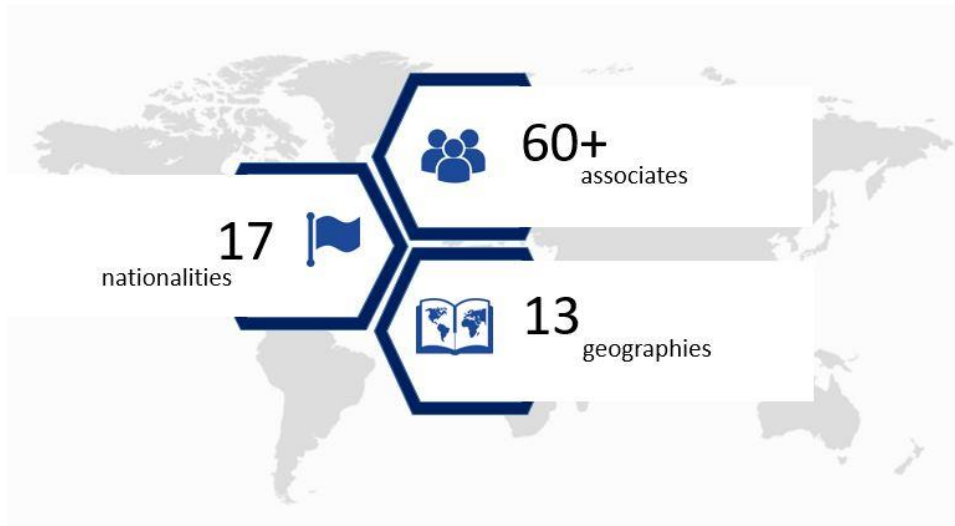
Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

Overview

About the Millennial Council

The Millennial Council, or MC, is a group formed in 2018 for Millennial employees between 23 to 35 years of age. The first batch of the Millennial Council (2018-19) comprised more than 60 employees, representing 17 nationalities and 13 geographies.

Figure 4: Millennial Council First Batch Statistics







Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

Millennial Council membership changes over each year. MC alumni are available to guide and support the new class through a mentorship program.

The council meets on a monthly basis and invites senior leaders to discuss and provide learning on relevant topics. The idea of the council is to turn opportunities for improvement into tangible change. The goal is to identify challenges and opportunities for improvement, as well as designate points of contact for driving plans forward.

Figure 5: The Millennial Council Benefits Members by Helping Them:

-  Get a front-row seat to the inner workings of the company at a critical time, as it evolves and returns to high-growth
-  Contribute to decision-making processes and help drive organizational changes
-  Make Cognizant's culture millennial-friendly and improve daily life at Cognizant for all associates
-  Connect to mentors through the MC Alumni network and enhance leadership qualities

Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

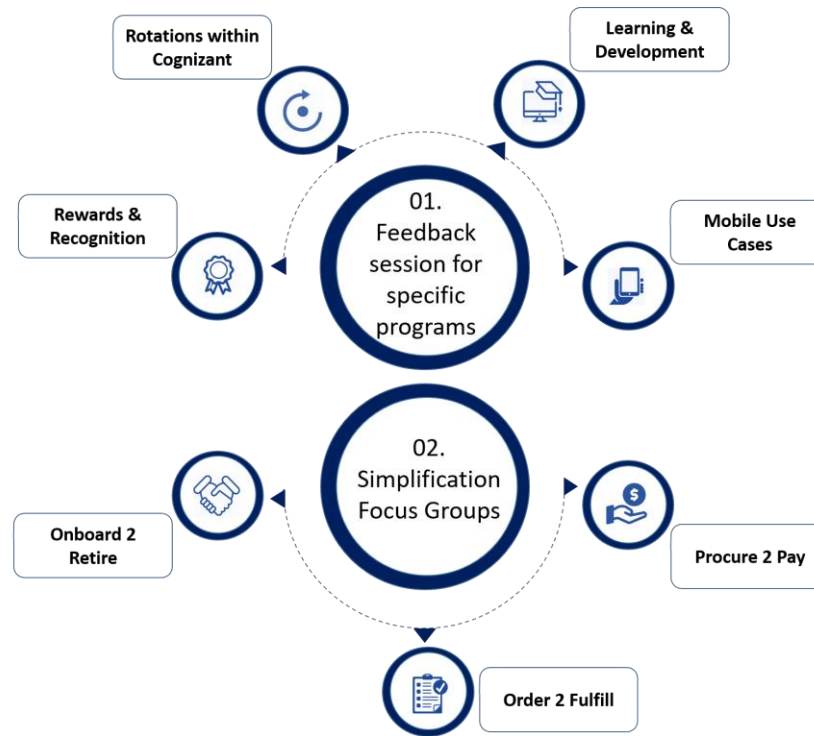
In turn, council members take the learnings and implement them in their respective fields, help create positive impacts, and pass it on to the larger Millennial group.

Goals and Organizational Impact

The MC provides an opportunity for members to create a robust network across the organization comprising the leadership, themselves, their respective domains and geographies and the larger Millennial workforce.

Members function as brand ambassadors for Cognizant and communicate not only the ways in which Cognizant invests in its employees, but also how the company and leadership operate.

Over the last year, the Millennial Council has made multiple recommendations for improving processes across Cognizant, notably in onboarding, performance management and recruiting.

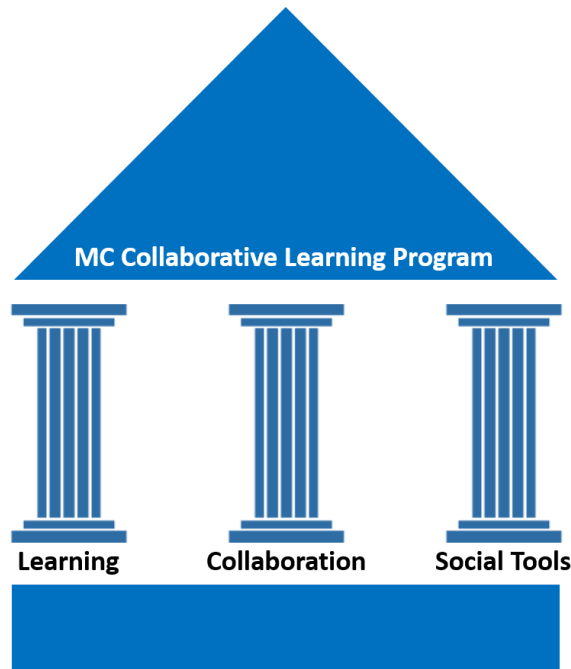
Figure 6: First Batch of Work Done by Millennial Council


Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

The council believes that the Millennial voice is the key influence for bringing transformation in the organization. Therefore, it takes an interest in the training and development plans and achievement goals of the Millennials.

Design of the Program

The Millennial Council formulated a unique, collaborative learning program to engage both internal and external audiences. While the program positions Cognizant as a Millennial-friendly company to attract a larger, external Millennial talent pool, internally, the program involves members of the current Millennial workforce into the decision-making and policy-making processes and makes them feel empowered.

Figure 7: Pillars of the MC Collaborative Learning Program

Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

Pillar 1: Learning — Monthly Learning Sessions/Global Connects

Every month, the council conducts polls and surveys and zeroes-in on one key learning topic on which members can contribute their ideas to aid their career development goals.

The MC program team finalizes the topic before scheduling the Learning Sessions/Global Connects, where relevant senior leaders discuss the topic in detail and hear the council members' thoughts through a virtual webinar or discussion forum. These sessions employ an easy-to-use interactive presentation software, the "Mentimeter," which allows real-time feedback and collaborative learning. In addition, participants are also encouraged to use in-webinar chat options to make the session and, in turn, the learning, participative and wholesome. Presenters also make use of the webinar whiteboard to share important notes, links, and additional reading and reference materials.

After the session, the MC shares the consolidated ideas with the relevant departments or functions, who evaluate them and re-connect with the MC for further action.

Figure 8: Learning Elements of Pillar 1



Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions 2020

Pillar 2: Collaboration — Devising Actionable Outcomes

The members of the council discuss the current problems/pain-points in Cognizant (Global or Regional), select the most pertinent area of improvement (through Focus Group discussions) and arrive at the best possible methods to attain the solution.

Connecting and collaborating with the leadership team (through multi-channel global interactions) helps to get more inputs and guidance on the problem statement discussed. This ensures an active learning curve.

Next, they create the workflow and execute the steps discussed to attain the final solution and resolve the problem statement.

The next step is deploying the final solution within a controlled space (limited pilot group, focus groups) to test (through surveys and workshops) if the solution statement creates the desired impact.

The last step is to deliver the finalized solution as an organizational update or tool (based on the problem statement) with leadership approval.

Figure 9: Learning Elements of Pillar 2

Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

A Real Case In Point

The Manager of Corporate Communications, part of the first MC batch, raised objections to the non-competitive Rewards & Recognition (R&R) program at Cognizant. The existing shortcomings and opportunities were discussed with the MC team. In the process, the manager understood the dynamics of the R&R program on a global scale. The next stage was preparing a proposal for a new R&R program and presenting it to the executive leadership, for feedback. It ended on a happy note, as the new R&R program was rolled out across Cognizant.

Pillar 3 — Social Tools

The program leverages Cognizant's internal communication channel to publish and share content, learn and collaborate.

The Millennial Council has its own dedicated page on Be.Cognizant, Cognizant's internal microsite for communicating with employees across the organization, comprising the following social communication tools such as articles, videos, survey and polls, and a ready repository of documents.

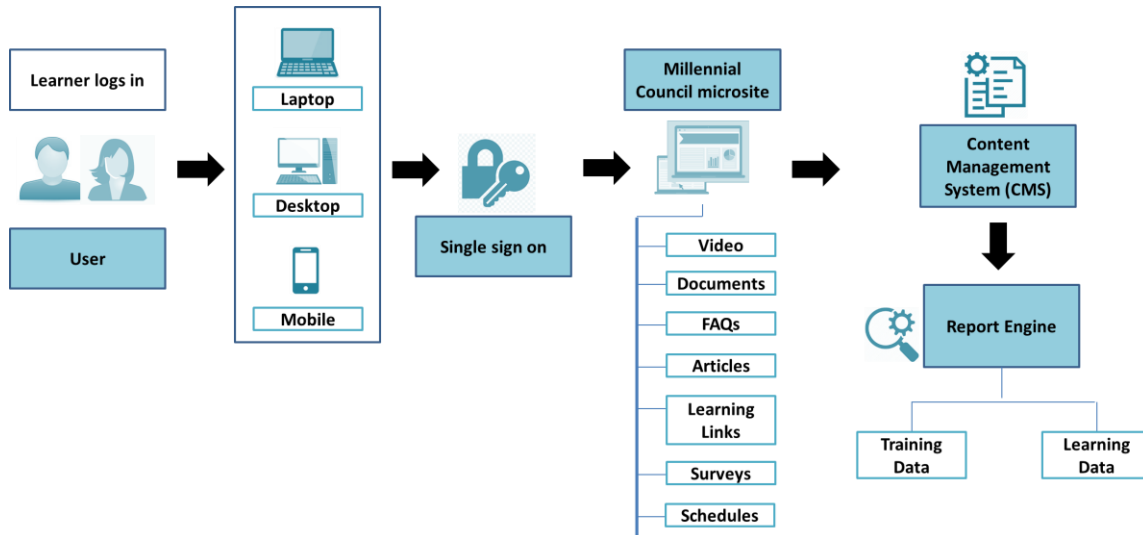
Delivery of the Program

The new generation of learners value personalization and different learning styles.

To tackle this changing learning behavior, the Cognizant Digital Learning team needed to ensure that the learning programs are innovative and flexible enough for the Millennials to be able to learn on their own terms.

The following diagram displays the technical architecture of how the MC Collaborative Learning program was deployed.

Figure 10: Architecture of the MC Collaborative Learning Program



Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

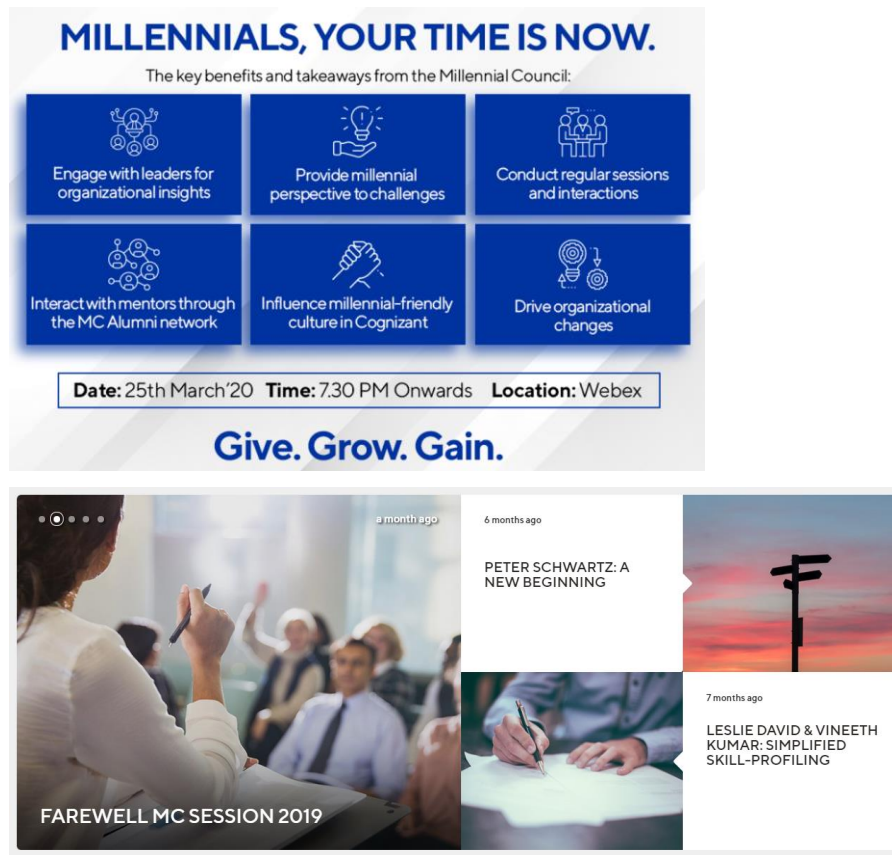
As established in the diagram, the program incorporated the following learning interventions to accentuate the overall learning solution.

Learning

Webinars were used to ensure that the learners stay focused on the content. The in-webinar chat feature provided enough opportunity for interactions between the senior leaders and the learners.

Learners were also able to create presentations and receive real-time feedback through Mentimeter, an interactive presentation software.

The participants used whiteboard to share important notes, links, etc. Post-webinar session recordings were circulated with the learners as reference materials.

Figure 11: Snapshots from the Millennial Council Microsite


Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

Collaboration

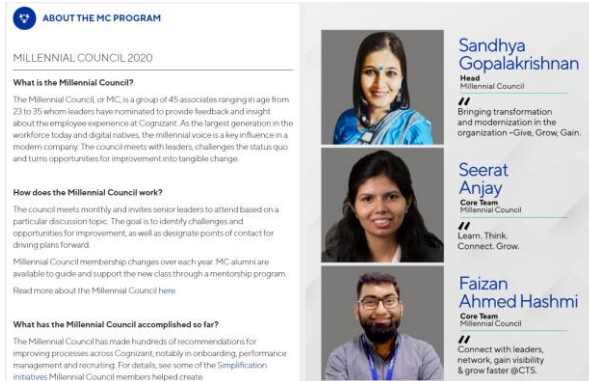
In keeping with the learning requirements of the Millennials, the program was deployed through a Cognizant Management System (CMS), Unily. The CMS, a Millennial Council microsite, had content embedded across and familiar social features that drove high levels of engagement, thereby, helping keep the platform alive and abuzz with valuable conversations and knowledge and idea-sharing.

The microsite also empowered social interactions with @mentions, #hashtags and bespoke reactions that made participation in the conversation instinctive.

The microsite aided connectivity and collaboration between Millennials by allowing them to build a valuable professional network and keeping them up-to-date on their connections' content.

The microsite refreshes itself with new content uploaded by MC every 15 days to continue generating the interest of the dynamic group of learners.

Figure 12: Snapshots from the Millennial Council Microsite



Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

Social Tools

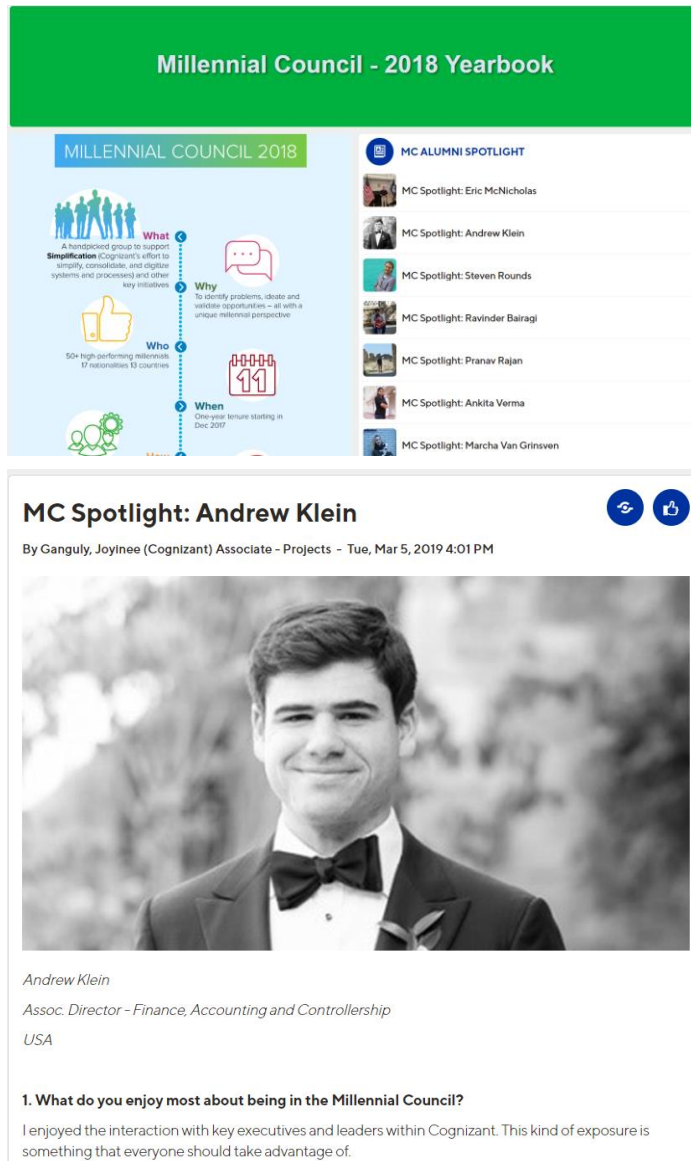
The Millennial Council leveraged the usage of different types of widgets to create the different social communication tools (articles, videos, surveys and polls, etc.) available on their dedicated microsite on Be.Cognizant.

Figure 13: Widgets Used to Create the Social Tools



Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

Figure 13: Snapshots from the Millennial Council Microsite



Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

Having such an elaborate and dynamic training program in place, with relevant interventions, feedback sessions and interactive elements across the microsite, ensured the Millennial learners did not get distracted easily and maintained focus on attaining the required knowledge.

Change Management Efforts

The following lists the main challenges Cognizant faced when developing this solution and how it overcame them.

Learning

Figure 14: Challenges and Solutions

Challenges/Obstacles	Process for Addressing Change Management	Solution
<p>Managing time of the participants, for the webinars, who are spread across geographies (separated by time zones)</p>	<p>Identify a standard time for the webinars right from the start of the initiative.</p>	<p>The microsite displayed the schedule (date and time) of the webinars in the microsite. This helped the participants plan for the session before they nominated themselves.</p> <p>The schedule of the webinars were fixed. For example, it occurred on Thursdays of every third week of a month at 8.30 p.m.</p> <p>The participants would receive reminders before the sessions began.</p> <p>The sessions saw a massive participation of 75% and above, with a minimal drop in participation.</p>
<p>Coordinating with the executive leadership to create materials for their 'Leader Speak' sessions</p> <p>Receiving consensus from the key stakeholders on the topic/article to be presented in the webinars or microsite</p> <p>Addressing general and last moment iterations</p>	<p>Identify a point of contact (POC) from the office of the executive leaders' right at the start of the initiative.</p>	<p>The POC worked very closely with the Cognizant Digital Learning team to ensure all necessary articles, approvals, updates, etc. are received on time.</p> <p>This helped in a seamless flow of information between the executive leadership and the Cognizant Digital Learning team.</p>

Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

Figure 15: Collaboration and Social Tools

Challenges/Obstacles	Process for Addressing Change Management	Solution
Hosting multiple items on the microsite seamlessly	Identify the streaming platform for hosting.	The Cognizant Digital Learning team identified kPoint as the streaming platform for hosting the microsite.
Facing downtime of the kPoint at a time when the microsite is ready to be published	Stay prepared with the creation of every other elements of the microsite	The Cognizant Digital Learning team created all the other elements of the microsite and uploaded the page as soon as the kPoint server was active. At the same time, the team notified the stakeholders about the downtime of the server.

Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

Measurable Benefits

The MC Collaborative Learning Program was launched for more than 60 council members and made available to all associates in the organization. A survey was rolled out to determine the effectiveness of the program:

Figure 16: Learner's Feedback

Q. What is the Millennial Council?

I would call Millennial Council as a "Team For Organizational Betterment".

Millennial Council is a platform for millennials to voice their opinions and suggestions directly to the leadership team to bring about effective change.



Q. What did the Millennial Council mean to you?

This engagement of 1 year with millennial council helped me strive towards achieving bigger and better things for Cognizant.

MC provided me with an excellent opportunity to implement my thoughts that would improve associate's experience.



Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

Figure 17: Learners' Feedback

Q. Why do we need the council?



Millennial Council is a program made up of multi-channel interactions and discussions.

Our sessions with leadership team were extremely helpful in understanding the organization goals and aligning our own aspirations with the same.

Q. How does MC benefit us?

Millennial Council made me feel more responsible and has changed my vision of seeing organizational changes for better future state.

Here the millennials find an effective medium that help them map their future steps in line with the organization.

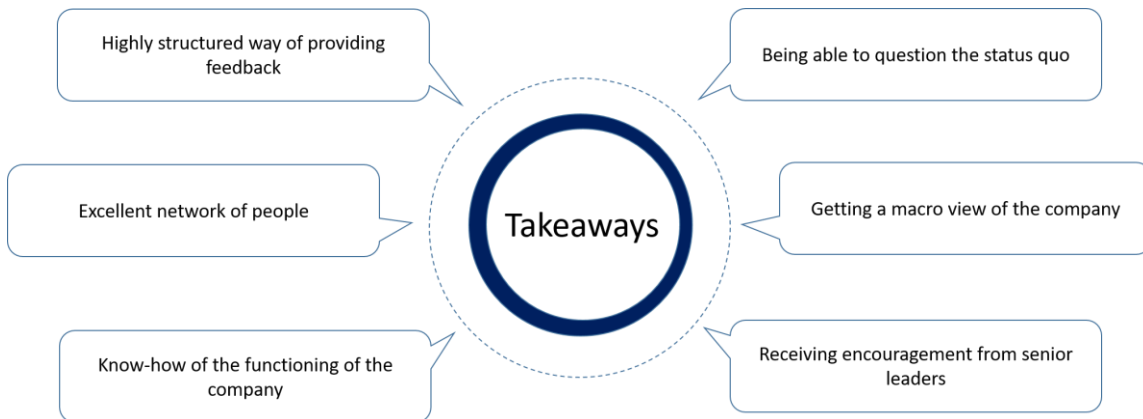


Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

Leaders' Feedback

A few more takeaways from the MC, as per the members:

Figure 24: Member Takeaways



Source: Cognizant Technology Solutions

So, far Cognizant has tracked the results in the areas listed below:

- The webinars saw an increased participation of 75% and above.
- 12% drop-offs for the webinars.
- 85% participants agreed that the deliverables met their expectations
- Leadership recorded 1,000-plus hits for the microsite.

Overall

Summary of Key Findings

- Participants appreciated the usage of the content and believed that the learning interventions provided a boost to the overall learning solution.
- The webinars allowed the leadership to reach out and engage the participants. The sessions provided an opportunity to utilize polls, chats, whiteboards or create and show presentations to make it more interactive. They felt that the webinars made an impact on the participants even when the broadcast was over, as the recording of the sessions were made available to the group.
- Leadership felt that the microsite, with focused content and social tools, provided an opportunity to the employees to stay connected with each other, who are otherwise separated by physical boundaries. It allowed them to collaborate with each other on a daily basis.
 - Areas of the learning program that were appreciated included:
 - Design of the microsite
 - Relevant topics discussed in the webinars
 - Leadership-participant interaction
 - Interactive social tools (polls, videos)
 - Ready repository of documents

Lessons Learned

- The key stakeholders felt that the content should be more innovative and interactive so that the Millennials always feel motivated enough to continue learning.
- Other stakeholders felt that the microsite should provide insights on organization best practices, process improvements and business visions to generate more interest amongst the Millennials and help them feel more involved with the organization.
- Some leaders felt that intuitive blogging should be included in the microsite to ensure more collaboration between the Millennials. The site should also optimize all the social tools of the organization to engage the Millennials.

- The participants realized that if they challenge the status quo to bring certain reforms in the existing policies, then there is a platform where their opinions will be heard. For example, right now there is a discussion going on to improve certain policies (dress code, rewards and recognition).

Future Outlook

The Cognizant Digital Learning team is planning to utilize the primary social media handles (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube) to reach out to a wider audience outside the organization.

As the Head of MC puts it, the MC plans to move forward with its mantra: "Give, Grow, Gain."

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