THE GENERATION MIX IN ORGANISATIONS, CHALLENGE AND INSPIRATION FOR MANAGERS OF ORGANISATIONS +2023

Ph.D. Student, Monica COJOCARU

Valahia University of Targoviste, Romania
Email: monica.cojocaru@comoconsulting.ro

Abstract: The present times, subject to a complex of crises: health, economic and political, are subtly changing the optimal management approach. At the same time, the employer-employee relationship based on the principle of reciprocity, rewarding employee loyalty through career development opportunities, continuous training and job stability, is no longer relevant. Rapid economic and technological change, questionable political ethics at European level, structural changes in the EU, the consequences of the war in Ukraine, etc. are all sources of insecurity felt by the current generation. They are forced to adopt new career concepts that make it easier to adapt to jobs characterised by reduced stability and security. In this context, employees are forced to "reset their skills to suit the changing work environment in order to remain profitable", says Hall D.T. They value freedom, and the tendency to continuous learning and flexibility are their hallmarks. Given the current social, economic and political context, the paper explores what the values and characteristics of each generation active in the labour market are, and what the business environment needs to adapt to them.

Keywords: ethical, moral, change, responsibility, adaptability, sustainability.

JEL Classification: Q56, M14.

1. Introduction

"The greatest danger in troubled times is not the trouble, but continuing to act according to the logic of the past." Peter Drucker

The world is in a continuous process of change, and the dynamics of change over the last 50 years are overwhelming.

The third industrial revolution, centred on digital technology, has changed the relationship with knowledge and, with it, paradigms, understandings and behaviours.

Today's Boomers (1943-1960) work alongside Generations X (1960-1980), Y (1980-2000) and Z (1995-2010), people "immersed in digital practice since childhood, accustomed to converse and exchange through digital networks," "eager for autonomy and freedom, for whom the power of expertise no longer justifies a position of authority, but rather the ability to disclose, challenge and encourage personal and professional growth."

On the horizon are the young employees of tomorrow, born after 2000, i.e. Generation Z. So, in the context of the shift from imposed to elected authority, it is in the interest of companies to understand the real changes in people, the main resource involved in the development of any business.

Today's world is different from yesterday's, and in order to have well-prepared companies that can cope with economic fluctuations, technological change and social conflict, their managers need to understand how they can act constructively.

This paper seeks to identify the new approach that competitive and sustainable companies should take to the challenges of today and tomorrow, from the perspective of the business ethic of +2023 applied to the complex of generations: Boomers, X and Y that now form the most important resource, the human resource.

The topic is important because the lack of managerial knowledge needed to adapt to the new paradigms of the business world drastically reduces the chance for companies to resist the pressure of change and, therefore, to keep their position in the market or even not to leave it.

3. Problem Statement

Morality is a social code, a set of rules, laws, norms with an imperative role, accepted in a society, ethics refers to behaviours and habits.

"The moral code seems to perform two vital functions: to temper internal conflicts that could destroy the group and to protect the long-term interests of the group against the short-term impulses of individuals."

Ethics, on the other hand, is truly activated after an act of renunciation occurs that certifies that the will of the other is respected and their freedom is similar to one's own. Thus, it manifests itself when the being and self-esteem are affirmed, but without governing the relationship to the detriment of the other but, on the contrary, mediating the two freedoms.

"Mediation allows coexistence: your freedom to be as good as mine.
Values are thus protected from the arbitrariness of each individual. Hence Ricoeur's trilogy: <<my freedom, your freedom, the rule>>.

The relationship between ethics and morality, as Ricoeur defines it, seems perfectly applicable to business. The employee is autonomous (the "I" pole), but must ensure the trust of other employees (the "You" pole) by adapting his project to that of the institution that employs him."

By making known the ethics of actions taken, as well as key words downstream or upstream of ethics such as: exemplarity, respect for others, mutual trust, social responsibility, justice, companies no longer have to define the actions to be taken.

Whether they will appeal to informal ethics (corporate culture, ethical climate, ethical spirit, shared values) or formal ethics (set of value judgments and rules of conduct, codes, social works), or both, the business environment thus ensures its medium- to long-term sustainability.

Of major importance, however, and by no means negligible, are their consistency and employee participation.

However, as we pointed out at the beginning of the article, change has affected everything in its path: people - through the industrial revolution centred on digital technology, but also through increased education and international mobility, economies - through the restriction or suspension of some economic activities during the SARS pandemic - CoV2, - through the uncontrolled rise in utility prices after the outbreak of war in Ukraine and other imbalances unfolding around the world.

In this context, the research focuses on determining the new paradigms that govern the people of the present and the future, and how business ethics can align with them in a healthy way.

"Unlike their Generation X parents, who were born into a fast-paced world and needed to reassure themselves through possession, and unlike Generation Y young adults, who advocate hyper-individualism and therefore access to possession, Generation Z relies on collaboration, places sharing at the forefront of its values, and prefers experiences over ownership."

In this context, faced with real human resource management problems, more and more managers have realised that the solution lies in the specific analysis of each generation group, i.e. focusing on the psychological traits and global behaviours attributed to each generation in the workplace, as well as the potential conflicts between these generations.

"Research on intergenerational differences in work attitudes falls into three major categories: (1) work centrality and work ethic; (2) workplace characteristics and work preferences; and (3) perceived changes in work attributes."

According to Twenge, J.M., Campbell, S.M. (2012), in the Twenge study conducted in 2010, the preferred characteristics of the workplace were analysed and the conclusion was that the main change in the new generations is that of leisure-related values.

Employer availability for more holidays, an easier pace of work and less supervision have become important criteria in the choice of workplace.

Other changes included:

- intrinsic(1) and extrinsic(2) values, respectively:

(1) an attractive job where you can see results - is of less importance to millennials (generations Y and Z)

(2) "status and prestige, salary, respect and opportunity for advancement and promotion" scores lowest for Boomers, moderate for Millennials and highest for GenX.

-                        - social rewards, such as having contact with many people and making friends, which have declined, with millennials scoring at the low end of this value

- altruistic rewards, such as helping others and being of value to society, saw a slight decrease

- interest in entrepreneurial careers has seen the biggest change among women, especially

"interest in realistic (mechanical and outdoor activities) and investigative (problem solving or research) careers declined among men"

- interest in social careers, often described as helping others, increased.

"The appropriation of mobile phones by Generation Y has led to practices whose effects have shaped their social lives. The main features are autonomy, group and immediacy."

The same authors consider that the autonomy generated by mobile telephony has made a strong contribution to the development of an intense friendly sociability which, however, has taken a special form, that of immediacy.

The experience, whatever its importance, must be transmitted live, and what matters is being able to talk to a chosen interlocutor about your immediate situation.

On the other hand, argue Morley, V., Figueiredo, M.B., Baudoin, E., Salierno, A. H. (2012), digital games, having a stimulating effect, have developed three characteristics of practice: "a search for performance, a community dimension and an interweaving of temporalities."

At the same time, they say, accustomed to networked games where they are encouraged to progress and their efforts are rewarded, Generation Y employees have the same expectations in their professional lives.

Other changes highlighted by Morley, V., Figueiredo, M.B., Baudoin, E., Salierno, A. H. (2012) are "distancing from the enterprise, assertion of individuality, demand for recognition of one's own skills, dream of quick success, etc". but also "a common attachment to collective forms of work (teamwork, project work, mutual adaptation between colleagues, etc.)".

As far as Generation Z is concerned, what characterises it, according to Gentina, E., Delécluse, M.-E., (2018), is the search for authenticity, the need to co-create, a new relationship with knowledge.

Soussin F., APM expert, appreciates that this generation is self-taught, completely autonomous, knows how to search and obtain knowledge, is able to find people to learn from, knows how to look for information where it is. "Z has the intuition that collaboration is the way out."

These people "seek to discover the world around them by exploring new experiences, which usually leads to unpredictability and uncontrollability, and therefore to risky behavior."

Recent studies, with 409 French teenagers aged 13 to 18 as respondents, indicate that "digital social networks seem to help young people expand their circle of friends, and the use of Facebook contributes to the development of teenagers' social and cognitive skills."

The added value of the article lies in identifying the values that motivate Romanian employees today and the specificity of each of the Boomers, X, Y and Z generations.

The role of this knowledge is to help companies to become aware of what employees' expectations are and the mechanisms that drive their behaviour.

By overcoming stereotypes, managers can better accept and anticipate the new challenges they will face, and companies can indicate what the code of conduct is, tailored to their own team.

By moving away from current management models and towards those of the future, companies can remain competitive in a market under pressure from competition, pandemics and war.

3. Research Questions/Aims of the research

Studies highlight the concern of young Y and Z people to maintain a work-life balance.

They are extroverted, they want to develop relationships where they are valued, they seek experiences that satisfy their need to combine work with pleasure, training and of course autonomy.

They are naturally mobile, like to combine several activities, familiar with moving quickly from one social network to another or from one video game to a new one, and prefer 'self-employed' status, which in their view is equated with a significant, fast-paced income.

Given the complexity of the context in which the business environment is developing, the research problem is to identify the particularities of the new generations of employees.

The research objectives are:

1. Recognition of the main values of the active generations +2023

2. Distinguishing the characteristics of these generations

The research question is:

What are the current particularities and expectations of employees from the world of work forcibly shaped by the socio-political-economic reality of the present?

The hypotheses of the paper, drawn from the literature presented, are:

1. Generation X emphasizes the desire for property, an attractive job, status, prestige, salary, respect, opportunity for advancement, contact with many people, desire to make friends

2. Generation Y wants access to possessions, hyper-individualism, autonomy, immediacy, performance, access to the group, rewards, recognition of own skills, distance from enterprise, quick success, attachment to collective forms of work (team/project work)

3. Generation Z values: experiences instead of ownership, more holidays, easier pace of work, less supervision, autonomy, authenticity, need to co-create, easy access to knowledge, self-learning, social and cognitive skills, collaboration.

4. All generations aim for altruistic rewards (helping others, being valuable to society, etc.) and interest in social careers (those that help others).

In order to check the validity of the research questions, the following questions were structured:

*The job must be attractive, *In choosing a job, the number of vacations is a deciding criterion, *The easier the pace of work, the better, *Work is just for living, *Quick success is best, *Success belongs only to genuine people, *Supervision is not necessary, *Status is important, *Prestige is important, *Autonomy is important, *Performance on the job is important, *Opportunity for promotion is important, *It's best to be individualistic, *I offer respect (greet people, volunteer to help them, use nice vocabulary, don't beard...), *I like to get in touch with lots of people, *I like to make friends at work, *When I initiate a conversation or an action, I want a response as quickly as possible, *I think collective forms of work (teamwork/project work) are best, *I like to be rewarded as often as possible, *Al altruistic rewards (helping others, being valuable to society, etc.) are more important than material ones, *I like to be recognised for my skills as often as possible, *I am very creative, *I am self-taught, *I find it very easy to access the information I need in my profession, *I am interested in an entrepreneurial career, *I am interested in a social career (helping others).

4. Research Methods

Research methods are quantitative and comparative.

The quantitative method consisted of a survey carried out in 2022 on 41 people, all of whom were employees.

Of these, 20 people work in the private sector and 21 in the public sector.

The means used were electronic (questionnaires and responses were sent) and paper (questionnaires were printed and given to respondents).

The answer variants: - not true at all (low level), - true (medium level), - very true (high level) were marked with points from 1 (not true at all) to 5 (very true).

The weight of each answer was calculated by relating the score obtained/generation to the total score per question asked.

To simplify access to the conclusions, answers with one point were considered to correspond to 'not true at all' while answers with two and three points corresponded to 'true'.

'Very true' was awarded to answers with four and five points.

Answers were awarded two and three points.

The answers were processed in Excel.

6. Discussions

This chapter discusses the issue of validity, credibility, study limitations, data generalizability, etc.

The credibility of the data is given by the human and professional quality of the respondents. 68.29% of them have higher education and 31.71% have secondary education.

The limitations of the study are generated by the number of respondents, which could be significantly increased to improve the accuracy of the conclusions.

The research has several areas of interest that examine the perception of the employee belonging to the target group respectively:

	1943 - 1960	1961 - 1980	1981 - 2000
The job must be attractive			
- not at all true (low level)			
- true (medium level)		*12%*	
- very true (high level)	*100%*	*88%*	*100%*
In choosing a job, the number of vacancies is a deciding factor			
- not true at all (low level)		*9%*	*4%*
- true (medium level)	*100%*	*53%*	*53%*
- very true (high level)		*38%*	*43%*
The easier the pace of work, the better			
- not true at all (low level)	*25%*	*3%*	*1%*
- true (medium level)	*75%*	*61%*	*69%*
- very true (high level)	*0%*	*37%*	*30%*
Work is just for living			
- not at all true (low level)		*11%*	*6%*
- tr)ue (medium level)	*43%*	*74%*	*57%*
- very true (high level)	*57%*	*15%*	*37%*
Supervision is not necessary			
- not at all true (low level)		*3%*	*4%*
- true (medium level)		*38%*	*61%*
- very true (high level)	*100%*	*59%*	*35%*
Job performance is important			
- not at all true (low level)		*6%*	*5%*
- true (medium level)	*100%*	*94%*	*95%*
- very true (high)			
Opportunity for promotion is important			
- not at all true (low)		*38%*	*8%*
- true (medium level)	*100%*	*62%*	*92%*
- very true (high)			
I think collective forms of work (team/project work) are the best			
- not at all true (low)		*32%*	*21%*
- true (medium level)	*100%*	*68%*	*79%*
- very true (high)			

Table 1 - employee's relationship with work

	1943 - 1960	1961 - 1980	1981 - 2000
I am interested in an entrepreneurial career			
- not true at all (low level)	*0%*	*12%*	*4%*
- true (medium level)	*100%*	*73%*	*40%*
- very true (high level)	*0%*	*15%*	*57%*
I am interested in a social career (helping others)			
- not at all true (low level)		*2%*	*3%*
- true (medium level)	*100%*	*41%*	*31%*
- very true (high level)		*56%*	*66%*

Table 2 - employee interest in an independent career

Quick success is best

- *not true at all (low level)*		4%	11%
- *true (medium level)*	100%	96%	68%
- *very true (high level)*			21%

Success belongs only to genuine people

- *not true at all (low level)*		15%	9%
- *true (medium level)*		41%	43%
- *very true (high level)*	100%	44%	49%

Status is important

- *not true at all (low level)*		6%	4%
- *true (medium level)*		66%	49%
- *very true (high level)*	100%	29%	48%

Prestige is important

- *not at all true (low level)*		7%	
- *true (medium level)*		76%	40%
- *very true (high level)*	100%	17%	60%

Autonomy is important

- *not at all true (low level)*			
- *true (medium level)*		39%	33%
- *very true (high)*	100%	61%	67%

It is best to be individualistic

- *not at all true (low level)*	100%	25%	16%
- *true (medium level)*		57%	59%
- *very true (high level)*		18%	25%

I give respect (greet people, volunteer to help them, use nice vocabulary, don't beard...)

- *not true at all (low level)*			1%
- *true (medium level)*			5%
- *very true (high level)*	100%	100%	94%

I am very creative

- *not at all true (low level)*			
- *true (medium level)*		27%	40%
- *very true (high level)*	100%	73%	60%

I am self-taught

- *not at all true (low level)*			
- *true (medium level)*		17%	43%
- *very true (high level)*	100%	83%	57%

I find it very easy to access the information I need in my profession

- *not at all true (low level)*			
- *true (medium level)*		18%	12%
- *very true (high level)*	100%	82%	88%

Table 3 - perspectives from which the employee acts

I like to get in touch with a lot of people

- *not true at all (low level)*			
- *true (medium level)*		12%	16%
- *very true (high level)*	100%	88%	84%

I like to make friends at work

- *not at all true (low)*			
- *true (medium level)*		30%	5%
- *very true (high)*	100%	70%	95%

When I initiate a conversation or action, I want a response as quickly as possible

- *not at all true (low)*			
- *true (medium level)*		41%	34%
- *very true (high)*	100%	59%	66%

Table 4 - employee social behaviour +2023

I like to be rewarded as often as possible

- *not true at all (low level)*			*3%*
- *true (medium level)*		*63%*	*19%*
- *very true (high)*	*100%*	*34%*	*81%*

Altruistic rewards (helping others, being valuable to society, etc.) are more important than material rewards

- *not true at all (low level)*			*1%*
- *true (medium level)*		*32%*	*22%*
- *very true (high)*	*100%*	*68%*	*77%*

I like to have my skills recognised as often as possible

- *not at all true (low)*			*2%*
- *true (medium level)*		*38%*	*34%*	*29%*
- *very true (high level)*		*63%*	*63%*	*71%*

Table 5 - employee expectations regarding rewards

It is important to have properties

- *not true at all (low level)*			
- *true (medium level)*	*100%*	*66%*	*40%*
- *very true (high level)*		*34%*	*60%*

Table 6 - employee relationship with stability vs. flexibility and adaptability

6. Conclusions

After centralising the answers given by employees from the 1943 - 2000 generations, we obtained the following results, some of which confirm and others refute the hypotheses from which the research started:

Hypotheses	Study confirmation	Study infirmation
Boomers get the lowest scores for: - status - prestige - respect - opportunity for advancement and promotion		

Table 7 - Boomers

Hypotheses	Study confirmation	Study infirmation
Generation X gets average scores for: - status - prestige - respect - opportunity for advancement and promotion		

Table 8 – Generation X

Hypotheses	Study confirmation	Study infirmation

Generation Y adults:
 - advocates hyper-individualism
 - have as criteria in their choice of job:
    *more holidays
    *an easier pace of work
    *less supervision
An attractive job is of less importance to Generation Y		

Generation Y gets minimum score for:

 - Social rewards (altruistic, such as helping others and being valuable to society, they say)
 - contact with many people
 - making friends

Table 9 – Generation Y

For generations Y and Z have grown up:
 - the need for autonomy
 - the quest for performance
 - community dimension
 - the need to be rewarded for efforts
 - the demand for recognition of one's skills
 - the dream of rapid success
 - interest in social careers
 - sense of immediacy
 - openness to teamwork
 - ability to be self-taught
 - ability to access information needed for the profession

Table 10 – Generations Y și Z

The responses also indicate that younger generations:
- have a different relationship with work, which becomes much more than a means of livelihood; it is intertwined with private life, including through social networks,
- are more interested in entrepreneurship,
- they consider it important to own property.

In this context, business ethics require adaptation. Adaptation to work environments that have different expectations but, like their predecessors, want status, prestige and the opportunity for advancement and promotion.

Thus, it remains for managers to understand the ethical constants and variables that apply in their own organisation.

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