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## **SOLUTIONS WHICH COULD SUPPORT GENERATION OF Z IN CASE OF CHOOSING THE PROPER CAREER PATH**

### **Abstract:**

The difference between generations can be observed in multiple perspectives of value system, lifestyle and consumer behaviour. This is similar in terms of preferences for choosing workplaces. In our research, we focus on the Z generation, which is garnering more and more importance from the perspective of recruitment, in order to understand the factors they take into consideration when choosing among career paths, the solutions they think are successful for them when planning their career path, and the supporting of their personal development. In the qualitative phase of the research, we conducted mini focus groups (30 group interviews), while our quantitative phase encompassed standardised questionnaires (filled out by 1200 participants). This study introduces the partial results of these project phases.

### **Keywords:**

Z generation, primary research, career paths

**JEL Classification:** J24, I29

## 1 Introduction

The phenomenon that the members of the older generation don't understand their juniors is nothing new. Similarly, we know that often times - either within a family, or at work - there are conflicts resulting from the meeting of people with different generation values, or when they work together. This phenomenon can be traced way back, and yet, only from the start of the XX. Century can we talk about generation research.

Nowadays, there are multiple approaches to generation research, and we can even see different definitions of the same generations.

The most widespread is the categorisation by *year of birth*. The generation groups by age don't show a consistent image, however, as there are differences in the names of the generations as well. Though the differentiation by age is preferred by many a researcher, it's easy to admit that there are other important attributes of the generations, which could serve as a basis for grouping them (Pál, Töröcsik, 2013).

**Table 1: The different generations**

<b>Howe - Strauss (2000)</b>	<b>Martin - Tulgan (2002)</b>	<b>Oblinger - Oblinger (2005)</b>	<b>Reeves - Oh (2007)</b>	<b>Mccrindle Research (2012)</b>
Quiet generation (1925-1943)	Quiet generation (1925-1942)	Matures (<1946)	Mature generation (1924-1945)	Builders (1925-1945)
Boom generation (1943-1961)	Baby boomers (1946-1964)	Baby boomers (1946-1964)	Boom generation (1946-1964)	Baby boomers (1946-1964)
13. generation (1961-1981)	X generation (1965-1977)	Gen-Xers (1965-1980)	X generation (1965-1980)	X generation (1965-79)
Millennium generation (1982-2000)	Millennium generation (1978-2000)	Gen-Y, NetGen, Millennium generation, Millenarists (1981-1995)	Millennium generation, Millenarists (1981-2000)	Y generation (1980-1994)
-	-	Post-Millenarists, Those after the millenium (1995- )	Z generation (2001-)	Z generation (1995-2010)

Source: Own editing based on Pál, Töröcsik, 2013

For example, Strauss and Howe listed three possible methods for grouping the generations together. One is perceived membership, by which members perceive who have the same perspective as they do, and have the same value systems. The second one - closely related to this - is common beliefs and behaviours, for example their attitude towards religion, politics or family. The third method is the place within history, that means the sum of effects which cause long-term changes, and leave marks in the current and future lives of the given generation group (Strauss, Howe, 1991).

McCrinkle and Wolfinger state that a generation is the group of people who were born in the same age or cycle, therefore, they are affected by the same technological solutions and experiences. According to Strauss and Howe, a generation is a group of people who share the same historical age and area, which offer them a chance at a collective personality (McCrinkle, Wolfinger, 2009).

There were always differences between the different generations. This is the result of various generations having different value orientations compared to the others. Researchers also quickly understood that there's merit in identifying effects that make generations so vastly different from each other (Pál, Törőcsik, 2013).

New generations are also a challenge for the labour market. The development of information technology fundamentally rearranged the World, communication and social connections, cultural values caused new, unknown roads to open for younger generations by changing. According to our beliefs, we conclude that there's a practical advantage to studies which help us get familiar with a generation's consumer behaviour. More precisely, we focused on choice of workplace and employer brand choice. We wanted to understand what preference system the Z generation has for choosing a career and a workplace, when determining the usefulness of HR and motivating tools.

### **1.1. About the generation of Z**

The so-called baby boom age group was born between 1945 and 60, and it was followed by generation X (1960-80) and Y (1980-2000). Generation Z are the children of the "digital age" (born in 1995-2010).

Generation Z consists of those who were born between 1995 and 2010. They are the so-called digital natives, and for them, internet, mobil phones and web 2.0 are all natural phenomenon.

On account of this, their value system, learning habits, consumer behaviour and media usage have changed to a great extent compared to previous generations.

Instead of knowledge, experience has value for them. This also determines their behaviour: they always have to be there, they must see everything, and finally they must share everything.

It is not by accident that Mrs. Mária Törőcsik, a leading figure in domestic trend analysis, named them the "give it all you got" age group (Törőcsik, 2003).

While in the life of previous generations, actual and online presence existed separately, it goes hand in hand harmonically in case of generation Z, for whom technology has become one of the most important tool of expressing their identity.

Fast access to information is vital for this generation, and they are typically characterized by multitasking.

The qualitative research conducted by Hotwire amongst 400 communication experts from 22 countries on 5 continents reveals that it has become outdated to deliver messages to a great mass of people, and personalized messages have become much more important; the new communication channels and new tools (engagement tools) have transformed communication habits (Molnár, 2016).

This attitude is specifically true for generation Z. Those who were born in the end of the 1990-ies, prefer multimedia contents instead of written texts, which means that their processing methods are basically non-linear. They want to see the result of their work immediately, and expect instant feedback. They are able to manage several things at the same time, and they reach the information they are interested in rapidly, through a variety of channels. Regarding the self-development of generation Z, their internal motivation to learn and consciousness are the most significant traits. Their interest is diverse, they gather an increasing proportion of their knowledge from outside of school, and though it is important for them to obtain information in an entertaining way, at the same time they are critical and reflexive media users. Throughout their information gathering mechanisms, they prefer simultaneous interaction, and knowledge of practical use. (Rumpf, 2014.)

Experts also highlight that in case of young people born after 1995, there is a much thinner line between childhood and youth age, and also between youth age and adult age. It is explained by the fact that these children who explore the internet in an increasingly conscious manner are practically operate in the very same environment as adults, therefore the boundaries of entertainment and work blend in: the range of skills and competences considered to be valuable has also transformed: in the society of the 21st century, working in a rapid, precise and productive manner is in the focus. The increasing complexity of tasks demand creativity, advanced communication skills, flexible attitude and an ability to work in groups from young people who are becoming experts around the millennia. This new expectation of the labour market naturally affects education as well: members of generation Z require completely different methods and syllabuses, providing a constant challenge for those who intend to modernize formal education. (Pintér, 2015)

## **2 Method**

In this present study, we demonstrate the partial results of the second phase of a research project. Within the frame of this two-phased project, we analyse the factors influencing the career and workplace selection of generation Z, via qualitative and quantitative techniques. Our objective is to be able to provide a certain guideline for employers focusing (also) on generation Z, which will contribute to the definition of the milestones of a target group oriented employer branding strategy. In the first phase of the research project we have conducted a qualitative analyses via thirty mini focus-interviews with a semi-structured interview guide. Respondents were recruited with the snowball sampling method, using one filter criteria: based on their age, respondents must belong to generation Z. The maximum number of respondents in one focus group was 6, in all cases we have arranged heterogeneous groups based on gender, to be able to confront and compare opinions. Interviews were audio recorded. The results were processed with the help of regular content analysis methods.

The goal of the qualitative phase was the exploration and the definition of hypotheses, and to prepare for the second phase, the qualitative research. The main questions of the first phase of the research focused on the followings:

What is the opinion of this age group on career, success, and preferred and undesirable workplaces?

What is the importance of a career and success in work, and what are the factors that help them most in the realization of their individual goals?

What do they expect from a good workplace? What kind of activities, programs offered by the employer would suit this target group best?

What kind of generational problems does this age group see, perceive? How open are they towards working together with other generations, what are the advantages, disadvantages they feel and experience?

The partial results of the first phase of the research project are introduced in previous studies. (Fodor et al. 2017)

In the second phase, the qualitative survey has been implemented. Again, the non-representative snowball method was applied during the sampling process, and we have recruited respondents with the same filter criteria regarding their age. Throughout the conduction of the survey, we have used a standardized questionnaire designed by the results of the qualitative results. With the application of the CAPI method, we have received 1178 valid questionnaires as a result of the survey. In this phase we attempted to find answers to the following research questions:

What are the preferences set by respondents when selecting their place of work?

How efficient are the motivational factors we analysed in case of this generation, in order to stimulate them for a more efficient performance at work?

What are the information channels this generation prefers when gathering information about workplaces and careers?

How and with what conditions would they use the “assistance of a career-supporting mentor” defined as a result of this research, or what are the services they consider to be really useful?

In this present study we aspire to demonstrate the partial results of the quantitative phase, focusing on the description of motivational tools specific for this generation.

### 3 Findings

In our analysis, we evaluated the opinions of participants about when people from different generations work together at the same place.

We were interested in how participants see the role of older generations in the world of labour, and how they evaluate tasks and younger generations.

The Z generation basically gave positive reviews about their older co-workers, and fundamentally disagreed with the negative comments and critiques about them. They think that the theory older people work slower is incorrect, and that they don't make more mistakes. Neither do younger people feel that older employees would be bossy with the younger ones, or that they would feel that they have the qualification to correct them. The younger generation doesn't consider the members of the older generation their competition, and they don't feel that a youth has a harder time finding a good job today, compared to an older employee. This result is a happy occasion for places employing multiple generations, as it makes the fact that younger people don't feel that they are disadvantaged due to their age obvious.

Furthermore, younger people look positively on professional assistance and perspectives: according to the youths we asked, older employees can mentor younger ones. In light of this, there's no surprise that most of the younger participants would be happy to work in a team which also employs older colleagues, as they can teach them a lot, they're more adept in multiple situations due to their experience, and can therefore offer advice to their younger colleagues.

All this validates that the younger generation has a demand for professional experience, and the perspective of experts, they consider the amassed knowledge valuable, and are happy when they're given a share. They don't think that older people are less useful at all, when compared to them, in a workplace.

However, they consider the faster and easier adaptability to changes the edge of their own generation in the competition. The absolute advantage of their generation is that they adapt to changes more quickly, and easier.

**Table 2: Different generations in a workplace - opinions, perspectives**

Older colleagues work slower	2,24
Older colleagues make more mistakes while working	1,95
Older colleagues have a harder time with electronic appliances and communications	2,80
Workplaces where I can work with younger people are better	2,10
Older colleagues adapt to changes slower and with more difficulties	2,69
I'd like to have older colleagues in my team, as I can learn a lot from them	3,09
I'd like to work in a place where I'm among those of my generation	2,71
A younger person has a harder time finding a job than an older, more experienced one	2,52
Younger people adapt to changes faster, and with less difficulty	3,14
Older colleagues think they're qualified to correct younger ones	2,62
Older colleagues are often bossy with the younger ones	2,61
Older colleagues can mentor younger ones	3,13

Source: Own research, 2017. N=1177

### 3.1. Opinion on the Mentor-program, and the role of an expert aiding career

The demand for a mentor helping with choosing a career and starting work already appeared in our qualitative research. Our participants spontaneously mentioned that a mentor program

would help them start their career a lot. We asked the younger generation about this during a quantitative research. According to the quantitative results, 66% of the participants think it important to have a mentor at the start of their career.

The advice about the profession, and career, personalised help and experiences related to the work tasks were evaluated as the most important information by young participants related to this mentor program.

A part of the participants (30%) would even be willing to pay for such a program, 17.080 HUF each month on average.

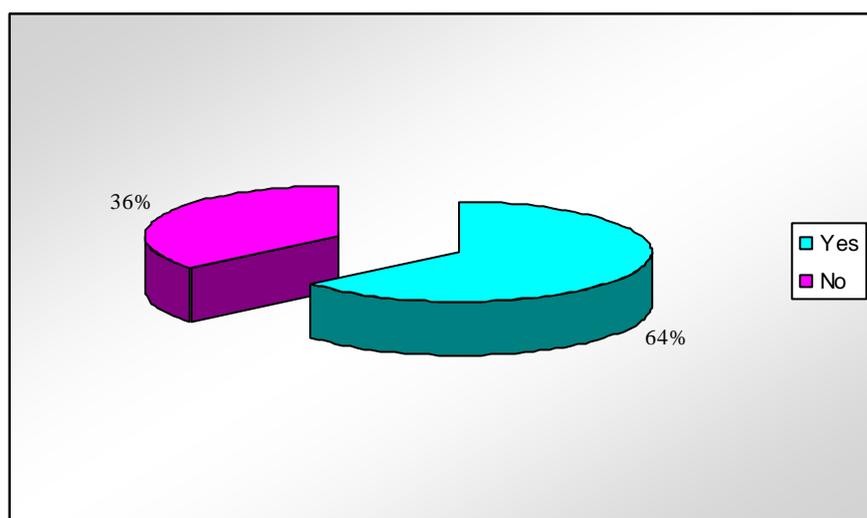
### 3.2. Labour mobility: within and beyond the borders

In our questionnaire, we dedicated a separate part for the young participants' affinity for working abroad. The reason for this is that many experts state youngsters are completely open to working abroad. They migrate in large numbers, which often results in undermanned professions in Hungary. Labour migration has been increasing for eight years now, most notably among the younger age groups.

Changes in the trends of migration can only be observed in the last few years in Hungary. According to a Hungarian labour research, the number of those migrating abroad, and those working abroad started to increase around 2007. The reason for this trend is that our economy and labour market processes were deteriorating even before the Economic Depression, the increasing demand for Central-European labour, the lack of economic growth, the decrease of real wages, the hardships younger people have entering the domestic labour market, the high unemployment rate among younger age groups, the reforms in the higher education system, and the serious financial deprivation characteristic of youngsters (Rigó, 2015).

The results of our research mainly show the same trends expert analyses do: most of our participants (64%) are willing to work abroad.

**Figure 1: Willingness to work abroad (in percentage)**



Source: Own research, 2017. N=1177

The most notable motivating factors behind this are saving money (financial reasons), learning languages and gaining experience in a profession.

Young participants we asked feel that they have less chances to promote abroad, but the work climate is better, though it's obvious some are only attracted due to wanderlust.

**Table 3: Most notable motivation factors for working abroad (average, on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 = does not motivate at all)**

Knowing the culture	2,92
Gaining experience	3,53
Learning the language	3,56
Saving money	3,63
Wanderlust	3,08
Better work climate	3,00
More promotion chance	3,21

Source: Own research, 2017. N=1177

While most of the younger people are willing to go abroad to work, the same mobility within our borders is much less relevant.

We asked our participants to decide about a work offer that require them to move to a different city or region, but within the country's borders. Half of the participants would only be willing to do this, if there's no other way of getting by. 31% stated that they would be able to accept this without a hitch.

**Table 4. Opinion about migrating to other city for work**

Only as the last option	51%
Completely unacceptable	10%
Completely acceptable	31%
I don't know	8%

Source: Own research, 2017. N=1177

We also asked how far they'd be willing to move for the job. Most people would go abroad, if we consider migration within borders, they'd mostly be willing to go within the same region, and very few would be willing to go outside their region, or anywhere within the country.

**Table 5: How far from your home would you go to work (%)**

At most within the same region	24%
To the neighbouring regions, but no farther	13%
I'd go farther, if I can still work in Budapest	10%
I'd go anywhere within the country	8%
I'd be willing to go abroad	35%
I don't know	10%

Source: Own research, 2017. N=1177

#### 4 Conclusion

We analysed the Z-generation's job choice preferences in our research, taking a look at what they think about competences required for a successful career, and the mentor system aiding it, and finally, about multiple generations working together at the same workplace. According to the younger generation, successful career needs not only necessary professional knowledge, motivation, endurance and the capability for renewal. One also has to see that sometimes, there are factors beyond the employee - luck, good connections - which have a role in successful careers.

However, we also have to stress that most of the younger generation are willing to go abroad to work, for a more successful career and better wages. Apart from saving money, learning the language, and gaining professional experience are the main motivating factors urging them to work abroad. We believe that multiple motivation factors could be employed to keep them in Hungary. Even today, there are many options for learning language, and improving language competences at various enterprises, which could be highlighted in recruitment messages. By developing the personalised career path planning within the enterprise - f. e.: organised and planned opportunity for expanding professional competencies - which would make remaining in Hungary more desirable for many youngsters.

Based on the results, we can clearly see that the younger generation would prefer a mentor program where they could get personalised advice, and practical aid for choosing a career path. They would even pay for this service.

We believe that starting such a program - be that a school system program, or an option offered by enterprises - would have a positive welcome by all means, and young people would like it. Not to mention, it would offer an exceptional chance for companies to expand their recruitment by offering more personal meetings, and a valid workplace brand improvement.

Results clearly illustrated that the Z-generation doesn't consider older generations their opponents. They are thankful for the opportunity to learn from their experiences, and are happy to work in a team where there are members not from their generation.

This is a wonderful result, as it reflects that there are no bad or good generations, simply different employees.

We believe that there's a need for HR-communication and toolsets for strengthening the advantages and effects different generations have on each other, and employer branding activities that aid and strategically plan these.

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