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### ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ФОРМУВАННЯ СТИЛЮ ЛІДЕРСТВА У ПОКОЛІННЯ Z PROSPECTS OF LEADERSHIP STYLE FORMATION REGARDING GENERATION Z

Ареф'єв С. О., Немашкало К. Р. Перспективи формування стилю лідерства у покоління Z. Український журнал прикладної економіки та техніки. 2023. Том 8. № 3. С. 131 – 136. Arefiev S., Nemashkalo K. Prospects of leadership style formation regarding Generation Z. *Ukrainian Journal of Applied Economics and Technology*. 2023. Volume 8. № 3, pp. 131 – 136.

Обґрунтовано вибір найважливіших критеріїв для потенційних комерційних працівників покоління Z під час першого працевлаштування. Встановлено, що трьома найголовнішими критеріями під час вибору першого роботодавия є соціальні аспекти: командний дух, робоче середовище та баланс роботи та особистого життя. Визначено відмінності критеріїв за статтю покоління Z. Встановлено, що перші шість характеристик для жінокреспондентів пов'язані з соціальними аспектами та аспектами безпеки, тоді як для респондентів-чоловіків зарплата, кар'єра та гнучкість належать до перших шести. Встановлено, що системи мотивації для представників покоління Z є не лише зовнішніми, а й більш пов'язаними із соціальними проблемами та безпекою. Це більше стосується жінок, ніж чоловіків. Проведено аналіз відмінностей критеріїв за віковими групами покоління Z. Встановлено тенденцію, що чим молодші респонденти, тим більше вони дбають про стосунки та безпеку, на відміну від «старшого» покоління Z, яке має більш довгострокове та менш індивідуалістичне ставлення. Встановлено, що для покоління Z є відповідними характеристики різних стилів лідерства і що єдиний підхід до лідерства може бути занадто вузьким. Визначено, що елементи транзакційного лідерства, такі як чітка та швидка комунікація, чіткі очікування та прозорі правила, допомагають поколінню Z почуватися в безпеці. Встановлено, що покоління Z звикло до швидких змін, де домінують ЗМІ. Роботи, які є міжфункціональними, включають ротацію, міждисциплінарні завдання, завдання в групах зі зміною членів команди тощо, є захопливими для покоління Z. Гнучкість у процедурах лідерства буде позитивно визнана поколінням Z, а не стиль, який дуже орієнтований на структури та процеси. Результати дослідження показують, що представники покоління Z мотивовані та готові працювати, однак соціальні та зручні фактори відіграють важливу роль.

Ключові слова: управління, теорія поколінь, покоління Z, формування покоління Z, мотивація, лідерство.

The choice of the most essential criteria for potential commercial employees of Generation Z during their first employment is substantiated. It has been found that the three most essential criteria when choosing a first employer are social aspects: team spirit, work environment, and work-life balance. Differences in the criteria by gender of Generation Z were identified. The first six characteristics for female respondents were found to be related to social and safety aspects, while for male respondents, salary, career, and flexibility were among the first six. It has been established that motivational systems for representatives of Generation Z are not only external but also more related to social issues and security. This applies more to women than to men. An analysis of the differences in criteria by age group of Generation Z was conducted. A tendency was established that the younger the respondents, the more they care about relationships and security, in contrast to the «older» Generation Z, which has a more longterm and less individualistic attitude. It has been established that there are appropriate characteristics of different leadership styles for Generation Z and that a single approach to leadership may be too narrow. Elements of transactional leadership, such as clear and prompt communication, clear expectations, and transparent rules, have been found to help Generation Z feel safe. Generation Z is accustomed to rapid changes dominated by mass media. Jobs that are cross-functional, including rotations, crossdisciplinary assignments, group assignments with changing team members, etc., are exciting for Generation Z. Flexibility in leadership procedures will be positively recognized by Generation Z, rather than a style that is very structure- and processoriented. The study results show that Generation Z members are motivated and ready to work, but social and convenience factors play an essential role.

Keywords: management, theory of generations, Generation Z, formation of Generation Z, motivation, leadership.

# Statement of the problem

Effective employees lead to effective productivity. Thus, the most excellent resource available to companies is their human capital [3]. Individuals undergo a generational change. Every generation has its unique story, be it Generation X, Generation Y, or Generation Z. «No generation is a monolith, but there are growing trends of expectations and preferences that change as culture and worker demands change» [10].

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Generally, «generation» can be defined as a group of people born simultaneously and consequently presumed to have similar aging experiences and life trajectories, with belonging group members showing identifiable characteristics [9]. Generations are a dynamic social foundation as their transition from one generation to the next is a continuous process with constant interaction with previous generations. There is no consensus about clear thresholds for when one generation ends, and another starts. Based on recent sources [5, 7, 16], in this contribution, Gen Z consists of members of the society born in 1996 and onwards. This means that Gen Z is currently making its way into the workforce. While most research continues to shed light on Generation Y, HR managers, and leaders already have the first Gen Z'ers in their teams.

Generations and their distinct characteristics are often described as an organizational phenomenon strongly related to generational identity. This term defines the individual's knowledge of belonging to a generational group and feeling emotionally attached as a member. Due to the shared events in their formative years, generational identities emerge in the workplace based on collective memories rather than being strictly tied to birth membership. Shared identities result in common work-related expectations, whereas violating these contracts may lead to dissatisfaction, increasing lack of commitment, or leaving the company [11].

Generation Z, sometimes called the «iGeneration», presents unique challenges and opportunities that irretrievably change the way of working [10]. Gen Z differs in characteristics, mindsets, and expectations from previous generations. Already in the early stages of their development, Gen Z is encouraged to participate in discussions and debates, which provides them with opportunities to present their opinions. They continue to do so when entering the corporate world, thereby questioning other perspectives, and arguing for their way of accomplishing tasks. Further, this generation is very ambitious in achieving their set goals and believes that education is the key to reaching them. Gen Z is a cohort that can multitask and prefers to work on more than a single task. Hence, their supervisor must identify their strengths, follow them closely, and keep them motivated and energized at work [6]. They are adapted to team spirit and greatly value the social environment of an organization, which forms the company culture for the community.

Additionally, they expect job security, high independence, and an aversion to authority [10]. Gen Z prefers to be loyal to their profession rather than an organization. They are quick, efficient, and can quickly adapt to various assignments. Growing up with continuous technological advancements, they expect work-life to be fast and instant [6].

As Gen Z enters the workforce, companies need to be ready to address new issues and expectations that could arise. Managers need to redesign their strategies and policies to sustain and be competitive in the upcoming war for talent [6]. It is becoming increasingly important for companies to acknowledge the impact of generational demographics on the way an organization is managed. A successful company must establish an employee value proposition that offers a concrete answer to why talented people want to work for their company. Therefore, the prospects and their drivers of what makes a great company, jobs, compensation, and lifestyle must be fully understood [4]. Older generations have created HR policies and practices that may need to reflect contemporary requirements. The result can be a need for more skilled workers. Therefore, employers must find the right combination of HR tools and strategies to simultaneously attract young talents and retain the older workforce [13].

#### The purpose of the research

The purpose of the article is to determine the prospects for the formation of a leadership style, considering the characteristics of generation Z.

#### Presentation of the main research material

Pupils from commercial schools and students from Austrian Universities focusing on sales and marketing formed the population of this study. In total, 555 pupils and students participated in the survey, 62% female and 38% male. 23% were younger than 18 years, 62% were aged between 18 and 22 years, and 15% were between 23 and 27 years old. 72% of the sample attended commercial secondary schools, and 28% were university students.

To ensure a high response rate, researchers visited classrooms, preceded by a participation request email explaining the purpose of the study. A process description was prepared to brief the teaching staff. The questionnaires were printed with 36 characteristics labeled «How important are the following criteria for your future job decision». Criteria were ranked on a ten-point Likert scale ranging from «not important» to «very important». Demographic questions (gender, age, educational institution) completed the questionnaire. Pupils and students completed the questionnaire in class (paper and pencil). The average time needed to answer the survey was between 10 and 15 minutes.

Table 1. Gen Z: Ranked criteria of
attractiveness

attractiveness			
Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Good team spirit	8.92	1.336	
Pleasant working environment	8.88	1.314	
Secured work-life balance	8.36	1.856	
High salary	8.35	1.469	
Financially stable company	8.27	1.601	
Job security	8.22	1.833	
Good career opportunities	8.06	1.560	
Flexible Working hours	7.97	1.791	
Continuing training offerings	7.90	1.603	
Job-Family compatibility	7.88	2.432	
Collecting experience for the future	7.75	1.742	
International career opportunities	7.27	2.377	
Challenging Tasks	7.26	1.759	
High degree of responsibility	6.75	2.038	
Flexible work conditions (home office, desk sharing,)	6.62	2.445	
Contribute to the company's future	6.31	2.011	
Flat hierarchies	6.12	2.058	
Mentoring offerings	5.87	2.098	
Room for Creativity	5.74	2.609	
Source: Study results (N=	-555)		

Source: Study results (N=555)

#### Analysis.

This project aimed to identify the most critical criteria for potential commercial Gen Z employees when engaging in their first employment. All criteria were checked for completeness and data input errors, where no errors were detected.

Individual characteristics ranking

In the first analysis step, all criteria were mean-ranked according to their perceived importance by the respondents. Table 1 shows – in descending order – Gen Z's expectations from future employers and leaders.

The top three criteria when heading for their first employer are covering social aspects. Team spirit, working environment, and work-life balance were most important. The second set of criteria relates to incentives and security, like salary, career, issues. and iob security Flexibility-related characteristics, including «flexible working hours» or «job is compatible with family,» form a third set of criteria. A fourth set of characteristics relates to learning and growth: collecting experience, international career, challenging tasks, and responsibility.

#### Gender differences.

Next, group differences were analyzed for gender and age groups. Independent sample t-tests revealed significant group differences (table 2).

There are similarities as well as differences between female and male respondents in the ranking of the criteria. The top six characteristics for female respondents are related to social and security aspects, while, for male respondents, salary, career, and flexibility

are among the top 6. Statistically, female respondents reacted significantly stronger to socially attributed criteria 'secured like work-life balance' (t=6.57, p=.000) or ʻiob security (t=6.34, p=.000), but also 'pleasant work environment (t=5.95, p=.000). Naturally, 'jobfamily compatibility (t=7.21, =.000) ranked significantly higher for women than men. For leadership, female Gen Z

	neren	ices in criteria by genuer		
Female	Mean	Male	Mean	
Pleasant working enveroment*	9,14	Good team spirit*	8,64	
Good team spirit*	9,10	) Pleasant working enveroment* 8		
Secured work-life balance*	8,78	High salary	salary 8,32	
Job-security*	8,62	Goog career opportunites	8,00	
Financially stable company*	8,49	Financially stable company*	7,90	
Job-famyli compatibility*	8,46	Flaxible Working hours*	7,75	
High salary	8,36	Secured work-life balance*	7,69	
Continuing training offerings*	8,13	Job-security*	7,58	
Flaxible Working hours*	8,10	Continuing training offerings*	7,52	
Goog career opportunites	8,10	Collecting experience for the future*	7,45	
Collecting experience for the future*	7,93	International career opportunites	7,31	
Chellenging Tasks	7,29	Chellenging Tasks	7,21	
International career opportunites	7,25	Job-famyli compatibility*	6,93	
Flaxible work location (home office, desk shering)	6,77	High degree ofresponsibilyty	6,79	
High degree ofresponsibilyty	6,73	Contribute to the companys future*	6,54	
Contribute to the companys future*	6,17	Flaxible work location (home office, desk shering)	6,38	
Flat hierarachies	6,09	Flat hierarachies	6,18	
Mentoring offerings	5,97	Mentoring offerings	5,71	
Room for Creativity	5,87	Room for Creativity	5,53	

Table 2. Gen Z: Differences in criteria by gender

\*Indicates significant differences at the .005 level Source: Study results (N=555)

employees do not significantly deviate from social attitudes and behavior compared to previous generations. Traditional role models seem to withstand the time and generational change. Females pay more attention to social criteria than male candidates.

Age group differences.

Analyzing age groups allows us to understand better Gen Z's expectations towards their future leaders within the generational cohort. Respondents younger than 18 will enter the job market within

the next 3-5 years, allowing a medium-term perspective on relevant criteria. Table 4 shows significant differences between the age groups of < 18, 18-22, and 23-27 years. A one-way ANOVA with Tukey HSD

Tukey HSD							
		Mean			Interval		
		Difference	Error	Sig.	Lower	Upper	
		(I-J)			Bound	Bound	
	< 18 y.	18 to 22 y.	0,245	0,136	0,170	-0,07	0,56
am		23 to 27 y.	,471*	0,184	0,029	0,04	0,90
Good team spirit	18 to 22 y.	< 18 y.	-0,245	0,136	0,170	-0,56	0,07
bo		23 to 27 y.	0,227	0,159	0,330	-0,15	0,60
Go	23 to 27 y.	< 18 y.	-,471*	0,184	0,029	-0,90	-0,04
		18 to 22 y.	-0,227	0,159	0,330	-0,60	0,15
	< 18 y.	18 to 22 y.	0,101	0,164	0,810	-0,28	0,49
yllı v		23 to 27 y.	,893*	0,222	0,000	0,37	1,41
lcia ble par	18 to 22 y.	< 18 y.	-0,101	0,164	0,810	-0,49	0,28
Financially stable company		23 to 27 y.	,792*	0,192	0,000	0,34	1,24
Fir	23 to 27 y.	< 18 y.	-,893*	0,222	0,000	-1,41	-0,37
		18 to 22 y.	-,792*	0,192	0,000	-1,24	-0,34
0	< 18 y.	18 to 22 y.	-0,049	0,206	0,969	-0,53	0,44
Contribute to the company's future		23 to 27 y.	-,961*	0,279	0,002	-1,62	-0,30
ntribute the mpany future	18 to 22 y.	< 18 y.	0,049	0,206	0,969	-0,44	0,53
tri fut		23 to 27 y.	-,912*	0,242	0,001	-1,48	-0,34
co	23 to 27 y.	< 18 y.	,961*	0,279	0,002	0,30	1,62
0		18 to 22 y.	,912	0,242	0,001	0,34	1,48
a k	< 18 y.	18 to 22 y.	-0,378	0,208	0,165	-0,87	0,11
High degree of responsibility		23 to 27 y.	-1,272*	0,282	0,000	-1,93	-0,61
deg of nsib	18 to 22 y.	< 18 y.	0,378	0,208	0,165	-0,11	0,87
gh c c		23 to 27 y.	-,895*	0,244	0,001	-1,47	-0,32
Hig esp	23 to 27 y.	< 18 y.	1,272*	0,282	0,000	0,61	1,93
ч		18 to 22 y.	,895*	0,244	0,001	0,32	1,47
1	< 18 y.	18 to 22 y.	0,146	0,185	0,711	-0,29	0,58
Job security		23 to 27 y.	1,333*	0,251	0,000	0,74	1,92
cui	18 to 22 y.	< 18 y.	-0,146	0,185	0,711	-0,58	0,29
se		23 to 27 y.	1,188*	0,217	0,000	0,68	1,70
lob	23 to 27 y.	< 18 y.	-1,333*	0,251	0,000	-1,92	-0,74
		18 to 22 y.	-1,188*	0,217	0,000	-1,70	-0,68
* 11	ho moan di				-		

Table 3. Gen Z: Differences in criteria by age group (only criteria with significant differences are displayed). Multiple Comparisons

post-hoc tests (Abdi & Williams, 2010) was calculated to reveal significant differences between age groups (table 3).

In several characteristics respondents younger than 18 years reported significantly higher importance than the oldest group of respondents: «Good team spirit» (M=0.471, p=.029), «financially stable company» (M=0.893, p=.000) and «job security» (M=1.333, p=.000). In contrast. the criteria «contribute to company's future» (M=-.961, p=.002) «high degree and of responsibility» (M=-1.272, p=.000) were significantly more critical to the oldest age group. There is a tendency that, within Gen Z, the younger the respondents are, the more they care for relationships and security, in contrast to «older» Gen Z, who have a more long-term individualistic and less attitude and are willing to engage and take care for their company's wellbeing.

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level Source: Study results (N <18=127; N 18-22=344; N 23-27=84)

## Conclusions and prospects for further research

A significant challenge for European companies will be to provide their future employees with a fitting employer value proposition:

«Generation Z looks for meaningful and exciting work but also seeks meaning and excitement in private lives. In particular, they demand a clear separation of their private lives from their job. All this stands in contrast to the ambitions of the industrial sector in Germany promoting a more Generation Y-type environment with flexibility, agility, and work-life blending» [14].

The central question of this study was: «What does Generation Z expect from its future leaders, and which leadership style fits best to these requirements in order to unfold the full potential of this generation?» The results show that Gen Z representatives are motivated and willing to perform. However, social and convenience factors play an essential role.

In Table 4, the authors attempt to deduct consequences from the findings for leadership and appropriate leadership styles.

The data gives arguments for the relationship between Gen Z'ers and their leaders. Good team spirit or a pleasant working atmosphere indicates that Gen Z'ers feel well in flat hierarchy working conditions. These can be best provided by transformational, servant, or coaching leadership styles, where caring, coaching, supporting, motivating, and nurturing are the main elements. Other elements of servant leadership, such as a «parent style», emotional support, and care, might be seen positively by Gen Z. This aligns with Anderson's [1] discussion of generational changes in the leader-member exchange.

Gen Z members' motivation systems are extrinsic and more social and security-related. This holds more for females than for male individuals. Work and life are separated, and room for «living» at

work provides motivation. Concerning leadership styles, supportive and coaching leadership are appropriate. Gen Z members are motivated if individual and practical support is provided, but at the same time, individual space for acting is guaranteed. Also, presenting the leader as a role model, as seen in transformational leadership styles, could help Gen Z members unfold intrinsic motivation.

## Table 4. Study findings' consequences for leadership

Indicators	Implications for Leadership
Leader-member exchange	Good team spirit, pleasant working atmosphere, flat hierarchy working conditions are expected.
Motivation	Secured work-life balance, job security, and good team spirit, but extrinsic motivation (salary) the drivers, extrinsic (salary, career) more for males. Job security and team spirit are more important for younger Gen Z'ers. They also are less interested in higher degrees of responsibility and contribution to the company's future.
Interaction and communication	Expected direct and fast communication and flat hierarchies call for leader-member interaction on an even level and communication through advanced technologies.
Reward systems	Males more frequently expect salary and career. An excellent working atmosphere, teamwork, flexibility, and job security complement them. Career opportunities are of medium importance.
Work-life relationship	Social life is also happening at work; a pleasant atmosphere or «family-like» teams are appreciated.
Gender roles	Aspects of traditional role models were found, but social aspects like team spirit, pleasant working atmosphere, and stability are essential for both genders.

## Source: [14].

Gen Z grew up using direct communication tools, responding fast, including social (not only taskrelated) messages. For leaders, communicating on even levels and using advanced technology allows easy interaction with Gen Z individuals. However, the results show that Gen Z highly appreciates security and stability. Consequently, elements of transactional leadership, such as clear and fast communication, clarified expectations, and transparent rules, help Gen Z to feel safe.

Female Gen Z members respond less to extrinsic motivation like salary and career. Providing security, stability, a good team, and a pleasant atmosphere is more important. Salary and career, however, are hygiene factors that play even more roles for male Gen Z'ers. A transformational leadership style fits very well with the expectations of Gen Z with intrinsic rewards such as showing appreciation, potential for growth, job safety, etc. However, elements of transactional leadership, such as payment for performance, might play a role, depending on situational variables.

Gen Z sees social life also happening at work, and the atmosphere is essential. Characteristics of servant leadership, such as caring for good working conditions and encouraging personal growth, would help Gen Z'ers to balance work and life accordingly and show more engagement, vigor, and dedication [8]. Also, a coaching leadership style could be appropriate because of the flexibility and individuality granted to employees. Especially for female Gen Z'ers, job-family compatibility ranks high in importance, and leading by coaching can take care of those individual needs.

In the study, aspects of social life are at least equally important to task and career-related aspects. The «How is it there?» questions are more important than the «What do they offer here?» With Gen Z, a paradigm shift might occur: In most current job descriptions, «what' statements prevail: «What will be your tasks?» «What are your career paths?» or, more generally, 'What is expected from you?» [2]. Gen Z'ers are more interested in «How does it feel to work here?», «How does my team look like?», «How will my working day in this company look?» or «How varied and exciting is my job?». This paradigm shift has consequences for leadership styles as well. As Seemiller and Grace [15] state, the motivation of Gen Z lies in keeping up with others and sharing personal information and expertise or opinion. Gen Z representatives want to dive deep into the environment they will be part of after their job decision. They are used to sharing and forwarding «stories» rather than facts and may expect the same from the communication with their employers. Also, convenience is essential in Gen Z's decision-making. According to Seemiller and Grace [15], 88% of Gen Z feel they have tight bonds with their parents and see them as sources of emotional support. A «family-like leadership» and familiarity with the employment surroundings also play a role in maintaining the comfort zone of job applications. Of the leadership styles discussed, the servant and the coaching most likely would meet the needs of Gen Z'ers in this dimension.

Also, according to the data, diversity, variety, and flexibility in the job are essential to Gen Z. Gen Z is accustomed to fast changes because that also determines their media-dominated private lives. Cross-functional jobs are exciting for Gen Z, including job rotation, interdisciplinary tasks, group tasks with changing team members, etc. Flexibility in leadership procedures will be positively acknowledged by Gen Z'ers rather than a style that is very much oriented on structures and processes.

The study results indicate that for Gen Z'ers, characteristics of various leadership styles are appropriate and that a singular leadership approach might be too narrow-sighted.

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