

Challenges of starting a success career from the aspect of the Z generation

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Abstract: In this way, it's considerably hard to create a workplace atmosphere and tasks which are optimal, attractive and motivational for all employees having different value systems and social backgrounds. It's no coincidence that in the later decades, more and more research was aimed at understanding how the ranking of tools which can motivate employees changed. In light of how the HR field experienced an increased intensity in change. In this study, we introduce partial results of a research project, which was made with the support of the New National Excellence Programme (code: ÚNKP-17-4) of the Ministry of Human Resources. [1] As part of the two-phase project, we analysed the factors influencing the choice in career and workplace of the Z generation using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The results - in our eyes - can be used well for companies which wish to broaden their horizons in creating new jobs, in order to reach the Z generation, as they can receive information on the important details that make the workplace more interesting and attractive for the younger generation.

Keywords: employer branding, generation marketing, primary research

1. Introduction

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In this study, we introduce partial results of a research project, which was made with the support of the New National Excellence Programme (code: ÚNKP-17-4) of the Ministry of Human Resources.

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Generation marketing might be of assistance in fields where this high level of sophistication is not an option, where large segments and large groups are targeted throughout the elaboration of the marketing strategy. The essence of the concept is to become familiar with the characteristics of each generation's time period, and based on this, their behaviour might be predicted more or less, thus explaining their decisions of today. Generations are bound together by their joint experiences, life sensations, and finally, mutual values. Generation researchers define generations based on the cohort experiences of youth age: the mutual experiences, which could later influence the shaping of the personality and value system of the age group. (Töröcsik, 2003).

Researches claim that the economic-social environment, in which that particular generation was socialized is a rather important aspect. The impulses, influences they have experienced, or the objects characterizing their environment, and the events defining their lives greatly contribute to their performance on the labour market, and attitude towards work and career. Accordingly, professional literature reveals the following generational peculiarities (Tari,2011):

“Veteran generation”

Usually work for one employer, on one field throughout their whole life. It is true that they have built a new world, in which they have gathered valuable knowledge and experience, however many times they stick to solutions which worked for them in the past. Their presence on the labour market is not typical today.

“Baby-boomer generation”

They desire new ways, knowledge, information, action, they build careers. This is what makes them different from their parents. They are the great rebels, the “flower children” of the seventies, who wanted to live in peace and happiness. Then they grew up and started to work. Though they still question the world created by their parents, sometimes the old habits they were taught emerge. Today they are characterized by discipline, respect and persistence. They are attached to their workplace, and their desk. Horizontal career paths have great importance for them.

“Generation X”

The messenger, or transient generation. They have encountered the world of Internet already in their teen and youth age, and their work and life is basically defined by the web. Most of them are typical “salary man”, who let others tell them what to do and how, they follow the company rules to the letter, and become incorporated into the organization. Nevertheless, they are able to renew themselves again and again, and keep up with the fast pace of today’s world. The name X does not only refer to the people, but also to a certain kind of social hierarchy, in which people are prisoners of the sacred triad of status, money and social ladder, with an emotionally and intellectually empty life.

Members of generation X are not those ripped jeans kids who “sleep together out of wedlock, did not learn that in God we trust, and do not respect the Queen and their parents”, as quoted by the Time magazine in 1990. Generation X is at the peak of its performance now. Their knowledge, experience, wisdom, discipline in work and loyalty represents such a value which could make any type and sized company one of the top ones.

This was the generation, who was most affected by the 2008 crisis, most of whom experienced on their own skin that how to worry about their jobs and how to be vulnerable to economic cycles. (Csiszárík-Kocsir – Medve, 2012a; 2012b; 2013a; 2013b, Csiszárík-Kocsir et.al, 2013).

“Generation Y”

They are the first wave of the digital generations, internet is present in their everyday lives. Generation Y brings a serious challenge for the labour market, since they represent a new level of quality compared to their predecessors, the messenger generation. They confront long existing rules with an even greater confidence than that of the previous generation, and they also have different abilities. Esoteric literature says that they are on a mission: their task is to open the spiritual eye of mankind, and to form a critical mass with the duty to initiate changes.

They grew up together with computers, they are quite practical, and know their way well around the internet. Generation Y shapes and forms the workplace

themselves to fit their needs. The millennium generation wants to enjoy their workplace: it should be modern, different from ordinary, with spacious rooms and with a kitchen to spend meals together while chatting. (Ali, Szikora, 2017)

The Y generation is more aware of the financial issues, they are more interested in their finances, and they clearly know, what is the value of the money (Csiszárík-Kocsir et.al, 2016; Csiszárík-Kocsir – Varga, 2017a; 2017b).

“Generation Z”

Members of generation Z – the target group of our primary research project – were entirely born into the world which is more and more defined by the various digital technologies: they are the IT, or Digital X (DY) generation. Generation Z, who entered the labour market in the first years of the 21st century, is characterized by rapid changes. It is not by chance that they got their name from the expression “zappers”, or “switcher, hopper”. They live their lives in a much faster pace than their predecessors, and if there is something they don’t like – such as a job – they are ready to change immediately. Compared to the previous generations they represent an entirely different world: modern technology, IT, the online world reached the adult age at the same time with them, becoming a part of their personalities.

They live their social relations in the real and virtual world at the same time. For them it comes natural that their everyday communication, emotional and social life, creative spirit and playfulness are performed on the internet, with the help of mobile phones and other digital devices, with each other, and shared in front of the greatest audience (Facebook, Twitter, iwiw...). Members of the digital X generation practically never knew a world without internet, telecommunication or television. Maybe this is why they are battling with the lack of interpersonal skills, and the inability for active listening?

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.)

The 18-24 years old age group consists of about 850 thousand youngsters, the majority of who (about three quarters of them) is already, or soon will become an active player on the labour market.

The fact that this age group shall enter the world of work much sooner than the generations ahead of them means that domestic employers will begin to meet more and more gen Z employees.

As a result, it is important to understand how the young people of today choose their workplace. What kind of incentives work for them and how, where would they prefer to work, and what kind of a workplace and career they dream about.

Since there are a number of studies confirming that the attitude and value system of the Z's differ from the previous generations from several aspects, it is worth taking note of their peculiar characteristic as employees. (Profession.hu 2015)

The appearance of generation Z has restructured the domestic labour market as well. (Csehné et al., 2017).

An essential criteria for employers who attempt to reach out to them is to be able to deliver targeted strategic solutions intended for this specific age group.

There are several studies examine the motivation and attitude of youngsters (Lazányi, 2014), generation differences are not the focus points of these.

1.1. How can be characterised the generation “Z” as a potential workforce

Job-hopping is natural for generation Z. They move on without compromises, they are jumping between workplaces just like a monkey jumps from tree to tree, anytime they feel like they need to, they won't get stuck at a company, they will not worry about having a steady income or a fix desk somewhere. They are brave, initiative, they have less doubt regarding their own abilities and limitations. They have a practical mindset, and appreciate the freedom of the individual, and indirect, informal environments. They are building a new world, since they do not represent a traditional office work culture, as they are able to perform their tasks in any part of the world with the help of internet, and they create their own virtual communities. Spiritual literature identifies them as the star or crystal generation. They are characterized by being rather smart than wise, and they feel comfortable in the world of technology. They are not good with words and emotions, and they are able to realize their desires even if the cost is high. They will not implement their revolutionary ideas individually, but they will rather serve the society in collaboration with each other. 97 percent of young people considers the protection of the environment to be important, and 74 percent of them already practices green behaviours such as recycling or selective waste collection, and purchasing energy-saving light bulbs. When having to choose between two workplaces, they rather prefer the one with a conscious CSR strategy and an environment-conscious way of thinking. (Ridderstrale, 2004)

For members of the digital generation, personal relations are decisive, and they use the internet as a tool facilitating the maintenance of existing friendships and relations. The five most attractive occupations according to them are veterinarians, teachers, policemen, doctors, and of course football players, though 64 percent of them aspires to become their own boss as an adult instead of having to work for somebody. This is an important information for companies. They will have to establish such an organizational structure and culture, which supports individual work and has a flat hierarchy. The trend of “flattening” of organizations will continue in the beginning of the 21st century. Compared to the size of the organization, the levels within the hierarchy will decrease. The number of employees reporting to a single leader, and the number of employees supervised by the leader will increase, however hierarchical levels will disappear. The number of positions reporting to the CEO will grow, while the number of hierarchical levels in between will fall. Divisional leaders will get closer and closer to the CEO, they will work under a tougher control, but at the same time for a higher salary, and with an incentive that stimulates their long term interest. (Kissné, 2010; Tari, 2010)

2. Methodology

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?

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 and qualitative phases, focusing on the requirements and ideas concerning to a successful carrier from the aspect of the generation “Z”.

3. Findings

3.1. Opinions about a successful career

We have asked students about what they believe to be necessary for a successful career of a young beginner.

Many of them emphasized knowledge, determination and strong motivation.

They feel that in order to be successful in a particular field, one must be persistent, motivated and determined. However, a number of external factors is also necessary, such as relations. “To be at the right place at the right time”, to be able to exploit opportunities, and also that the workplace should enable appropriate opportunities and a suitable environment for career and development.

According to participants, a beginner can only be successful today, if he is flexible, able to cope with load, up-to-date, well-informed, enthusiastic and motivated, can take up the “constant speed” of work and adapt to the expectations demanded by an ever accelerating world.

In order to obtain these characteristics and competences, and generally for a successful start, mentors play a significant role.

Young people agreed that it would be quite useful to have a supporting person (mentor), who would prepare them to be ready for work.

They feel that the best possible way to implement this is within the frame of education (as an optional course), or to offer it at an affordable price as a training session, where managing directors, HR experts, successful people in particular

fields would present the most important advices based on their personal experiences.

Beginners could receive personalized information and instructions about how they should prepare for an interview as a beginner, and from where they should gather information about job opportunities. What should they take into consideration when having to fit in at a workplace, and what kind of rights and obligations does an employee have, thus receiving practical and useful information and guidance.

With the management of such training sessions, corporations might obtain a high level of awareness and recognition from the young generation – who are otherwise quite difficult to reach and persuade. We believe that sponsoring these professional programs could not only serve as an effective means for building relations for an employer who in many cases face the challenge of skills shortage, but it is also an excellent tool to build commitment towards the brand.

The currently available alternatives, limited to workshop-like open days and a few hours long ad hoc presentations do not offer comprehensive solutions. Though these are refreshing initiatives, a systematically built professional program focusing on the requirements of the target group might operate with a much better efficiency. And based on the findings, it seems that the demand from the future employees exists towards such events.

3.2. Preferencelist in case of selection a worplace

The results of the quantitative research are in accordance with the conclusions of the qualitative research, where during the discussions about how they select their workplace, the first factor respondents mentioned was the payment as well, and the most frequently mentioned drivers also included a good working atmosphere, attractive environment, and a good team, where they feel good while performing their job.

The results of the qualitative analysis show that fringe benefits and more free time also serve as great motivational factors, being on top of the preference list. While these were also important in the quantitative research, they were not perceived as the most important ones. A creative working environment and the opportunity to implement their own ideas seemed to be more important than a good cafeteria system. (Table 1.)

Table 1.
Ranking of proper motivation tools

To what extent do the following factors motivate you for a better performance at work?	average
higher salary	3,64
opportunity for promotion at the workplace	3,46
opportunity for a career abroad	2,60
greater independence in decisions	3,08
more free time, less work	3,21
opportunity to implement own ideas	3,25
to work in a good team	3,47
opportunities to take part in training sessions, professional development courses	2,97
other fringe benefits (cafeteria)	3,22
modern, creative working environment	3,32

The opinion of experts also confirm the conclusions of our research, that even though the salary is important for the younger generations, it is not enough to retain members of this generation at a certain workplace. The employer brand is becoming more and more important for them, and consequently, their desire to be proud of working for that particular company. A pleasant atmosphere, and development and career opportunities are also important, as well as the fact that they should enjoy their job. If they are satisfied with these factors, there is a chance that they might spend longer time at a workplace. (Kissné, 2014)

Respondents explained that in order to achieve their goals and dreams, they are able and willing to work hard, but only if their efforts are recognised and compensated.

Self-fulfilment, self-management and an inspiring working atmosphere are also significant factors. A number of experts have already highlighted that these young people show the greatest level of sensitivity towards receiving not only a salary, but an identity from the company as well.

We have asked participants to describe how they imagine their perfect workplace.

The results revealed that at an ideal workplace, there is a good team, an expert leadership, there is no stress, yet a high-paced and diverse work awaits those who wish to work there.

They also wish to perform their duties within flexible working hours, in order to be able to coordinate their career with their personal hobbies, families, and they desire to spare time for themselves as well.

At the ideal place, a motivated, creative employee is enabled to implement its ideas and plans, and their personal career path is supported, since there are several opportunities for improvement and advancement.

There, a good performance is recognised financially with a proper salary (according to participants, it is around net 300-400 thousand HUF), and other allowances.

The employer has a good reputation, and implements significant developments on its relevant market and industry, therefore the employer might get to know the latest industrial innovations first hand.

3.3. Importance of reference person

From the aspect of marketing, it is an important issue throughout the elaboration of a target-group specific communication strategy, to get to know those who are able to influence our subjects in their decisions, and whose opinion is significant for them, who they consider to be a reference person.

On one hand, it was important for us to know who these surveyed youngsters regard as their role model in terms of a successful career.

On the other hand, it provides a feedback of the value perception of the generation: the fact that who they consider to be successful also reveals what kind of values they attach to the notion of success.

One characteristic of generation Z is the lack of socialization. Though they are active users of social media, where they have many friends, they live their social life day by day mostly on these channels. The classic social network which still existed for the X, has now transformed in case of the Z. It greatly reshapes the process of learning for them, and also it influences who they perceive as a role model, a good advisor, or a competent person worth listening to within their environment.

Bases on the results, we were able to differentiate two entirely different groups.

For one group, the parents of members represented the example of a person with a successful career. These parents are seen by their children as satisfied people, who are successful and recognized in their work. They considered them to be successful, since they managed to establish appropriate living conditions, and also were able to spend quality time with the family – with them, the children. Young people see their own parents to be balanced, happy and satisfied.

They wish to be successful in a similar way, either continuing what they have started (for example a family business), or to pursue another profession, but with similar results and feedback.

Most of the parents considered to be successful run their own business, while those who work as employees represented a smaller proportion.

The most important positive values were the fulfilment of dreams and independency in case of the former, and appreciation and stability for the latter.

The fact that these role model parents keep on improving their skills and find pleasure in doing what they do are also dominant factors for success, irrespective from what position they have.

The other group however did not perceive the career of their parents to be exemplary. They see tired, shattered people, who in many cases cannot or do not want to make a change, and who though work, still fail to receive the well-deserved or expected compensation, neither financially, nor morally.

Therefore in case of these young people, it was much more typical to seek for a role model outside of the family. The majority named well-known public figures, media personalities, or a singer-performer, where the common feature of being perceived as successful was their popularity, because they create, “do something good, unique”, they love what they do, at the same time providing them a proper living.

Those who did not mention actual persons, described the example of a person who is successful in work: “who is able to get into a high position within a relatively short time, with a high salary, but who also has time for other things as well besides work.”

Though respondents named reference persons from two different social groups (parents-family, well-known people-media personalities), there are overlays between the values associated with success: financial and moral recognition, self-fulfilment, development and sufficient time for themselves.

Since the majority are curious and open towards new things, they would prefer a slightly more practical approach in education: to have more opportunities for proving themselves, to be included in actual projects throughout their training. It would give them a certain knowledge which they would be able to make use of effectively in their work as well. (GKI, 2016)

They demand interactivity, diversity, the application of technical devices, and they prefer to manage their own time even during their education.

Education should adapt to these demands, with the application of an entirely different approach, method and structure.

Conclusions

In our study we have focused on generation Z, and throughout our researches, within the frame of qualitative and quantitative surveys, we have attempted to find the answer to the question, what makes a workplace appealing for the Z's, and what they think about the successful carrier path, how can we characterise the ideal workplace for them.

A successful career path, a good working atmosphere and team spirit, and a good salary are the most important drivers during the selection of a workplace.

In case of those who already work there, a high salary and promotional opportunities serve as the best incentive.

A workplace is considered to be ideal if employees are paid well, and if the company has the reputation of a reliable employer.

The results of the research revealed that the major milestones of an employer branding strategy focusing on generation Z are flexible HR, a diverse and interesting scope of duties and tasks, opportunities promising a higher status, greater financial benefits, and a responsible corporate behaviour.

Considering the fact that the opinion of friends and relatives is an important attribute of an ideal workplace, it is also essential to focus on the internal target group of employer branding during the course of communication, since employees will become opinion leaders, ambassadors, those friends and relatives who actively shape the opinion of future, potential employees.

We believe that all of this requires a two-way, active communication from HR, and those who already work for the company must be reassured that they represent an active contribution to the reputation of the company. Results of the research also concluded that for generation Z, the nature of the corporate ownership (multinational, domestic) or the size of the company (a lot of or a few employees) do not matter, they are much more driven by a diverse scope of duties, team spirit and career opportunities. It creates a great opportunity for small and medium enterprises to become an attractive workplace for youngsters, since not only multinational companies, "the big ones" have the opportunity to design individual career paths, mentoring plans or the creation of a good team spirit. In many cases it might be implemented easier at a workplace with a lower number of staff.

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