# The Current Generations: The Baby Boomers, X, Y and Z in the Context of Human Capital Management of the 21st Century in Selected Corporations in the Czech Republic

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on the current generations: the Baby Boomers, X, Y and Z in the context of human capital management of the 21st century in selected corporations in the Czech Republic. The turbulent developments as a result of industrialization, modernization and globalization has created differences between generations. The aim of this article is to compare the selected characteristics of each generation of employees in Czech corporate practice and to reflect on whether there are more efficient means for personnel managers to handle them accordingly. This article presents some of the results of quantitative and qualitative research conducted in selected companies in the Czech Republic. The research group that took part in the questionnaire survey included 182 human resources professionals from selected Czech companies with responsibility for 3,182 employees. The research results reflect the differences in the perceptions of HR professionals and the employees themselves with regards to the selected characteristics attributed to each generation. As a result, key motivational factors could be identified and prioritized for each generation. The HR professionals perceived Generation Z to be employees that are not very loyal and lack emotional intelligence. However, they are perceived to possess high levels of Internet literacy and the ability to adapt quickly to new technologies, which enables them to operate more efficiently.

**Keywords:** age groups, baby-boomers, employees, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z, generational differences

## Introduction

It is probably axiomatic to state that the greatest resource available to companies is human capital. Effective employees make for effective productivity. Poor work on the part of the employees can have disastrous consequences for companies (Tziner and

Birati 2015). The world of the 21st century is experiencing an unprecedented rate of change. The ability to anticipate and adapt to these changes is the only way for companies to guarantee their continued success and to remain competitive. To enable management to predict market developments, increase productivity, work with both traditional and new tools for human resources, retain employees when searching for new ones is difficult, it is necessary to know and understand the needs and goals of employees and work with them accordingly. In addition, it is necessary to put aside the myths and prejudices linked to human resources and to actively promote diversity.

In recent years, a range of human resource management concepts have emerged. These concepts include human resources management ethics (Winstanley, Woodall and Heery 1996; Greenwood 2002), human resources diversity management (Shen et al. 2009), high involvement human resources management (Guthrie 2001), flexible employment (Guest 2004), family-friendly human resources management (Bagraim and Sader 2007) and work–life balance (Bardoel, De Cieri and Mayson 2008). These concepts address the wishes, needs and interests of employees from different perspectives (Shen and Zhu 2011).

According to Hansen and Leuty (2012), the term generation typically refers to a group of individuals (employees) who share common work experiences or life experiences. The unique life experiences introduced during formative years inevitably contribute to the values of the individuals of each generational cohort. Current discussions point to the presence of four distinct generations that are working (living) today: Baby-boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z.

Every employee is not only unique in terms of their skills, education, needs, values and expectations, but also in terms of their age and personal know-how. These differences deepen all the more even within generations. Today's labour market is made up of employees that belong to the generation of baby-boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z, and in the future, Generation Alpha.

Evidence suggests that there are marked differences in the expectations and motivators across these generational cohorts. For example, Glass (2007), found that Generation X and Generation Y have an entirely different view on the world of work than baby-boomers and traditionalists. Not only do members of Generation Y look different with their body piercings, tattoos and electronic gadgets, but they also behave and think differently too (Crumpacker and Crumpacker 2007).

A longitudinal study of job mobility revealed that during the first ten years in the labour market, a typical young worker will be employed by seven companies. Others have found that young workers change careers three or four times in that same period (Morrison, Erickson and Dychtwald 2006).

According to Messarra, Karkoulian and El-Kassar (2016), the differences between the four generations are likely to have arisen between individuals or groups because of differences in values, expectations, needs, workplace practices, and personalities, which, in turn, could produce conflicting actions and preferences. The poor management of such

differences or conflicts in the workplace can have adverse effects on the level and frequency of future conflicts and can therefore negatively affect productivity, job performance, and organizational commitment.

While having a diversity of ages in the workplace can be beneficial, companies and employees alike have observed differences in the way in which these four generations function in the workplace. Companies are now faced with the challenges of integrating different generations in the workplace, as well as with the complexity of creating environments to attract and satisfy these workers (Hansen and Leuty 2012).

How can these generations understand what unites them, why they differ, in what possible ways personnel can work with them, as well as learn lessons for the future?

The aim of this article is to compare the selected characteristics of each generation in Czech corporate practice through a content analysis of domestic and foreign secondary sources, with a subsequent reflection on how personnel managers can work more effectively with these different generations of employees.

## The Silent Generation (Traditionalists)

The silent generation refers to those people who were born between 1925 and 1946. These individuals are described as being very loyal (loyal and patriotic employees), with a lot of faith in institutions, and often with the plan of working for one organization for a long time. Most value earning money and saving money and as a result, they have become a wealthy generation. They view work as a duty and an obligation (Adams 1998; Eisner 2005; Hansenand Leuty 2012; Knight 2014; Zemke, Raines and Filipczak 2000).

## Baby-boomers (Boomers)

The term baby-boomers is derived from pop culture and refers to the American generation. In the past, sociologists were not preoccupied with research into this generation in Czechoslovakia. Baby-boomers are those people born between 1946 and 1960 (Gardiner, Grace and King 2015; Knight 2014; McNeese-Smith and Crook 2003; Stuenkel, de la Cuesta and Cohen 2005; Zemke, Raines and Filipczak 2000). They are characterized as loyal to their employers, dedicated and workaholics, who accept direction (Kupperschmidt 2000; Wieck 2005; Apostolidis and Polifroni 2006). Boomers tend to be individualistic, self-absorbed, cynical, and focused on social causes; they have strong social skills, are excellent networkers, but lack technical skills (Adams 1998; Eisner 2005; Beutell and Wittig-Berman 2008). In Czechoslovakia at the time, this generation experienced the following historical events and milestones: 1945 – liberation; 1946 – post-war elections; 1948 – nationalization and educational reform; 1953 – monetary reform.

**Generation X (Xers)**

Generation X (Xers) is a designation for a generation of people in Western Europe or the USA. The term, "Husak's children" (in Czech: Husákovy děti), is more typical for Czechoslovakia/the Czech Republic. However, these terms are not exactly the same. The advent of single-parent homes and dual-income families is considered to be the most influential factor on the development of Generation X (Knight 2014; Leiter, Jackson and Shaughnessy 2009). They are the original latchkey generation. Born between 1960 and 1980 (Gardiner, Grace and King 2015; McNeese-Smith and Crook 2003; Stuenkel, de la Cuesta and Cohen 2005; Zemke, Raines and Filipczak 2000), children from this generation were sent to participate in after-school programmes or returned home to an empty house (Lancaster and Stillman 2005; Wieck 2005). Xers became resourceful and independent. They tend to seek balance between their work and personal lives and are motivated by consistent work values (Lancaster and Stillman 2005; Stuenkel, de la Cuesta and Cohen 2005). Having grown up in the presence of computers, Xers are adept with technology, synthesizing diverse information to gain knowledge and understanding (Stuenkel, de la Cuesta and Cohen 2005). Xers are characterized as being independent, seeking emotional security, preferring informality, and having more entrepreneurial skills than baby-boomers (Howe and Strauss 2007). Xers appear to value their work-life balance, growth opportunities, and positive work relationships more highly than boomers or Generation Y; they love freedom and room to grow (Eisner 2005; Beutell and Wittig-Berman 2008; Shen Kian, Wan Yusoff and Rajah 2013; Wan Yusoff and Shen Kian 2013). In Czechoslovakia at the time, this generation experienced the following historical events and milestones: 1968 – Prague Spring; between 1969 and 1985 – normalization; 1977 – Charter 77; 1980 – Solidarity movement.

**Generation Y (also often referred to as Millemnials or as the Next Generation)**

Generation Y is the first "global" generation. The people from Generation Y have similar characteristics and attributes irrespective of their country of origin. Generation Y refers to people who were born between 1980 and 1995 (Horváthová, Bláha and Čopíková 2016; Knight 2014; Zemke, Raines and Filipczak 2000). Martin (2005) suggests that Generation Y employees may be prepared to make long-term commitments to companies, however, that can mean one year. In a cross-cultural study, Murphy, Gordon and Anderson (2004), found similarities across generations, but noted that members of Generation Y are not prepared to work as many hours as baby-boomers or traditionalists do, irrespective of their cultural origin. The following is said of Generation Y (Smola and Sutton 2002; Eisner 2005; Morrison, Erickson and Dychtwald 2006; Shaw and Fairhurst 2008; Cogin 2012; Shen Kian, Wan Yusoff and Rajah 2013; Wan Yusoff and Shen Kian 2013): (1) 'connected' 24 hours a day; (2) work is just one priority in life, not the priority; (3) want minimal rules and bureaucracy; (4) prefer openness and transparency; (5) favours an inclusive style of management, team orientation; (6) expect to be empowered; (7) want daily feedback and thrive on a rush of new challenges, opportunities and being pushed to the limits; (8) seek a portable career and greater

degrees of personal flexibility; (9) want education and development, but it needs to be relevant, interactive, personalized and entertaining; (10) want a positive work climate; (11) positive, polite and energetic. In Czechoslovakia/the Czech Republic at the time, this generation experienced the following historical events and milestones: 1986 – Chernobyl, Challenger; between 1987 and 1991 – Perestroika; 1989 – the Velvet Revolution, collapse of the Eastern Bloc, start of the Internet; 1992 – privatization programme; 1993 – the breakup of Czechoslovakia.

**Generation Z (also often referred to as Generation M or as Post-Millennials)**

The people who form Generation Z do a lot of things differently to the baby-boomers, Generation X or Generation Y. Generation Z are those people born between 1995 and 2010, roughly. The following ideas have been put forward to attract and retain this next generation of employees. They include: (1) having advanced manufacturing technology in the company that is less than five years old, leveraging big data, having older workers with experience, and digitizing everything; (2) installing the latest versions and subscribing to interim maintenance updates of all software packages; (3) being socially responsible – culturally, philanthropically and environmentally; (4) refreshing the company brand and marketing techniques (Knight 2014; West 2014; Zemke, Raines and Filipczak 2000). Those members of Generation Z, who are about to join the workforce, mostly born after 2000, are also referred to in literature as the mobile generation. They have grown up with technology, the world-wide web, mp3 players, short messages, mobile phones, PDAs, YouTube, IPads, and other media technologies (Kapil and Roy 2014). Generation Z are self-confident, happy, fit into the team spirit and are more interested in social activities than the previous generations (Ozkan and Solmaz 2015). Generation Z are also (West 2014): (1) well-integrated with technology; they are often referred to as "digital natives"; (2) social media savvy; (3) multitaskers; (4) concerned about the environment; (5) influenced by their friends about products and brands; (6) smart, with the ability to process a lot of information quickly.

Within the next five years, Generation Z will constitute a fifth of the workforce. This is a group of people that grew up with wireless technology. Workers from this generation of young adults tend to be innovative and creative, wanting to make an impact on society. They want to advance and grow professionally, and are willing to use internships and learning experiences to do this. Generation Z are also more interested in working for a cause or company that they are passionate about, and may be willing to be paid less to do so. If a company has the intention of attracting a young, talented workforce, it must therefore offer competitive salaries and benefits; otherwise they will find an employer who does meet their demands. They also have higher expectations of their relationship with their bosses. Even though they are fluent in a world of social media, text messages and email, they would much rather have genuine conversations and connections with those higher up. Additionally, this generation is very project-oriented, ready to run with whatever is given to them. However, they prefer extensive feedback and input from those higher than them. Generation Z has a great amount of drive, talent, and ambition to bring

to the table. They are not above working hard for their paycheque. They are loyal and are able to drive through innovations to match the changing times. They are willing to grow and progress quickly and do so with the intention of making an impact on the company they work for from the beginning. This means that these companies must be willing to work hard for their attention, offering adequate salaries and benefits in order to attract talented young adults to their doorstep (McGraw 2014). In the Czech Republic at the time, this generation experienced the following historical events and milestones: 2001 – terrorist attacks in New York; 2004 – the Czech Republic joined the European Union; 2008 – global financial crisis; 2013 – Islamic State; 2014 – migration wave; 2016 – Brexit.

**Generation Alpha**

The dates of birth range between 2010 and 2025. Their formative years will take at least 30 years. They are or will be the children of Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z. Five predictions have been made for Generation Alpha (Schawbel 2014): (1) they will be the most entrepreneurial generation so far; (2) they will be the most tech savvy generation ever and will never have known a world without social networking; (3) they will primarily shop online and have less human contact than previous generations; (4) they will be extremely coddled and influenced by their Generation X and Generation Y parents; (5) they will be more self-sufficient, better educated and prepared for big challenges.

The upper and lower age thresholds for sorting individuals into generations are not a convention or a fixed parameter. Some authors even set the thresholds in such a way that the age cohorts overlap. It is therefore up to the individual researcher to devise their own system of thresholds. It is, however, important that the categories within the research do not overlap.

On the grounds of an analysis of domestic and foreign expert resources, one hypothesis (H1) and two research assumptions/questions (RQ1 and RQ2) were formulated.

H1: The perception of the selected characteristics of each generation of employees is the same in employees as it is in HR professionals in selected Czech companies.
RQ1: Which factors are considered by each generation of employees as significant and important for their motivation?
RQ2: Which challenges, positive or negative, do HR professionals see emerging for Generation Z in the labour market?

## Materials and Methods

The conceptual framework presented in this paper is based on literature from the fields of strategic management, human resource management – diversity management, age management and knowledge management. The data for this paper were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The data were processed using commonly used scientific methods e.g. analysis, synthesis, comparing and others. The research was conducted in 2015. The aim of this article is to compare the selected characteristics of each generation in Czech corporate practice through a content analysis of domestic and

foreign secondary sources, with a subsequent reflection on how personnel managers can work more effectively with these different generations of employees. The partial objectives of this article include answering the research hypothesis and the research questions/assumptions (H1, RQ1 and RQ2) relating to the strategic management of human resources in selected Czech companies. This article presents some of the results of quantitative and qualitative research conducted in selected companies in the Czech Republic. The aim of the research included: (1) determining whether generational diversity is a feature of today's modern workplace; (2) identifying the basic characteristics of each generation with regards to the management of selected Czech companies and the employees themselves; (3) identifying what motivates each generation of employees to perform work; (4) pondering the challenges faced by HR managers and the management of companies with regards to working with the individual generations.

The HR managers, professionals, specialists or leaders of selected Czech companies, as well as employees, were presented with the research hypothesis and assumptions/questions. The research techniques used included a questionnaire survey, observation and semi-structured interviews.

In total, 182 selected Czech companies participated in the quantitative and qualitative research. The basic research dataset was drawn from the list of the 100 most admired companies in the Czech Republic, as compiled by Czech Top 100. This list was subsequently merged with the list of the largest Czech companies by sales volume and the database of Business for Society, the sponsor of the TOP Responsible Company award. The structure of the companies in the dataset is given in Table 1.

The companies which participated in the questionnaire survey represented a wide range of industries and sectors, namely: construction, educational services, engineering, finance and insurance, food, healthcare, chemical, ICT, telecommunications, tourism, trade, transportation, and others.

Table 1: Structure of the companies in the dataset

| Company category | Staff headcount | Turnover or Balance sheet total | Absolute frequency | Relative frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Large** | ≥ 250 | ≥ € 50 million or ≥ € 43 million | 62 | 34.06 % |
| **Medium-sized** | < 250 | ≤ € 50 million or ≤ € 43 million | 88 | 48.35 % |
| **Small** | < 50 | ≤ € 10 million or ≤ € 10 million | 24 | 13.19 % |
| **Micro** | < 10 | ≤ € 2 million or ≤ € 2 million | 8 | 4.40 % |
| **Total** | **X** | **X** | **182.00** | **100.00 %** |

*Source: Author*

The research group, which consisted of 182 employees responsible for the human resources management of 3,182 employees in the selected Czech companies, agreed to complete an anonymous questionnaire survey. The questionnaires were distributed in paper form, in five versions. The questionnaire results served to test the research hypothesis and assumptions/questions. The selection of this form of research tool made it possible to include a wide range of respondents. The first version of the questionnaire survey was targeted at the HR managers, professionals, specialists or leaders in the selected Czech companies. The second, third, fourth, and fifth versions of the questionnaire survey were targeted at their employees (Baby-boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z respectively). In total, the questionnaires contained twenty questions: closed format questions (closed-ended bipolar questions, closed-ended dichotomous questions, closed-ended importance questions, closed-ended Likert questions – with the 5-point Likert scale, closed-ended leading questions, closed-ended rating scale questions); and open format questions.

Where circumstances permitted, twenty employees (five employees from each generation) in each company were asked to complete the questionnaire survey. The employees were selected on the basis of a proportional subset, with the same percentage share of employees chosen to represent each generation, which is a form of probability-based random selection. The generational structure of the respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Generational structure of the respondents

| Generation | Years | Gender | | Absolute frequency | Relative frequency |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| | | Female | Male | | |
| **Boomers** | 1946 – 1960 | 426 | 482 | 908 | 28.54 % |
| **Generation X** | 1961 – 1980 | 441 | 461 | 902 | 28.35 % |
| **Generation Y** | 1981 – 1994 | 410 | 481 | 891 | 28.00 % |
| **Generation Z** | 1995 – 2001 | 183 | 298 | 481 | 15.11 % |
| **Total** | **X** | **1,460** | **1,722** | **3,182** | **100.00 %** |

*Source: Author*

The methods for evaluating the data were based on the research objective and the type of investigated data. The validity of the research hypothesis was verified by utilizing McNemar´s test of symmetry. The null research hypothesis was determined as follows: "H1-0: the responses to the selected characteristics of employees from respondents are symmetrical". The alternative research hypothesis was determined as follows: "H1-A: the responses to the selected characteristics of employees from respondents are unsymmetrical". The calculation was made using the following equation:

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i<j}\sum \frac{(n_{ij} - n_{ji})^2}{n_{ij} + n_{ji}} \text{ , (1)}$$

Categorical data were obtained during the analysis of the questionnaire survey. The acquired data were evaluated using the statistical computer program R. The computer program R is a programming language and software environment for statistical analysis, graphical representation and reporting. If the p-value is $< \alpha$, the H1-0 research hypothesis is rejected in favour of the H1-A research hypothesis, whereby, on these grounds, the H1 research hypothesis would be rejected. Value $\alpha$ = 0.05. The results of the McNemar symmetry tests for the selected characteristics of the employees in the selected Czech companies are presented in Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7.

The research group for the semi-structured interviews included 48 employees responsible for human resources management (HR managers, professionals, specialists or leaders) in the selected Czech companies (see Table 3). The managers were chosen using a combination of several types of intentional selection; in particular, judgment-based selection supplemented with chain and quota selection.

Table 3: Structure of HR managers, professionals, specialists or leaders

| Company category | Absolute frequency | Relative frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Large | 10 | 20.84 % |
| Medium-sized | 22 | 45.83 % |
| Small | 12 | 25.00 % |
| Micro | 4 | 8.33 % |
| Total | 48.00 | 100.00 % |

*Source: Author*

On the basis of the semi-structured interviews, more general categories were defined with which to cover statements made by the research group, including the elimination of repeated claims in their responses. The findings were subsequently summarized and interpreted.

## Results

The results of the statistical processing of the data collated through the conducted research are presented in this section.

**Research hypothesis – H1: The perception of the selected characteristics of each generation of employees is the same in employees as it is in HR professionals in selected Czech companies.**

Eight characteristics were defined in connection with the perception of each generation of employees in the selected Czech companies, whereby the level of consistency of the responses of the HR managers, professionals, specialists or leaders and employees was investigated. The responses of the employees were assumed to be the same as those of their HR managers. The validity of the H1 research hypothesis was subsequently verified by utilizing McNemar´s symmetry test.

The results of the McNemar symmetry tests for the selected characteristics of the employees in the selected Czech companies are presented in Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Table 4: Verification of the H1 research hypothesis by means of McNemar´s symmetry test for baby-boomers

| Baby-boomers (Boomers) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Characteristics** | **Number of respondents (N)** | **McNemar's chi-squared** | **p-value** |
| Experience | 3364 | 28.6317 | 4.031e-03 |
| **Loyalty** | **3364** | **8.9029** | **6.028e-02** |
| Reliability | 3364 | 38.4628 | 3.907e-04 |
| Willingness to continue education | 3364 | 25.0698 | 6.522e-05 |
| Adaptability to technological changes | 3364 | 71.9502 | 3.018e-08 |
| Lower self-confidence | 3364 | 22.5432 | 2.299e-02 |
| Slower pace of work | 3364 | 44.7136 | 2.543e-06 |
| Tendency to stereotype | 3364 | 28.0793 | 6.602e-03 |

*Source: Author*

Table 4 contains data generated on the basis of McNemar´s symmetry test, which characterizes and verifies the H1 research hypothesis for baby-boomers. On a 5 % significance level, the H1-0 research hypothesis was rejected in favour of the H1-A research hypothesis. The responses of the employees were the same as those of their HR managers, with the only characteristic not to be rejected being loyalty. All the other characteristics of the baby-boomer generation were rejected. This is sufficient evidence with which to reject the H1-0 research hypothesis accordingly. It can be stated that the data obtained from the respondents were unsymmetrical.

Table 5: Verification of the H1 research hypothesis by means of McNemar´s symmetry test for Generation X

| Generation X (Xers) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Characteristics** | **Number of respondents (N)** | **McNemar's chi-squared** | **p-value** |
| Ability to work faster and more efficiently | 3364 | 38.4456 | 3.066e-04 |
| **Ability to work under minimal supervision** | **3364** | **8.1136** | **5.812e-02** |
| Flexibility and adaptability | 3364 | 26.0974 | 2.019e-03 |
| Willingness to take risks | 3364 | 40.5973 | 8.049e-06 |
| Egotism (self-interest) | 3364 | 35.0147 | 4.182e-04 |
| More loyal to their profession than to their employer | 3364 | 24.8557 | 4.098e-03 |
| Do not recognize traditional values, lack ethics | 3364 | 23.6428 | 5.541e-05 |
| Scepticism | 3364 | 25.5912 | 6.933e-03 |

*Source: Author*

Table 5 contains data generated on the basis of McNemar´s symmetry test, which characterizes and verifies the H1 research hypothesis for Generation X. On a 5 % significance level, the H1-0 research hypothesis was rejected in favour of the H1-A research hypothesis. The responses of the employees were the same as those of their HR managers, with the only characteristic not to be rejected being the ability to work under minimal supervision. All the other characteristics of Generation X were rejected. This is sufficient evidence with which to reject research hypothesis H1-0 for Generation X accordingly. It can be stated that the data obtained from the respondents were unsymmetrical.

Table 6: Verification of the H1 research hypothesis by means of McNemar´s symmetry test for Generation Y

| Generation Y | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Characteristics** | **Number of respondents (N)** | **McNemar's chi-squared** | **p-value** |
| Flexibility and speed | 3364 | 24.7351 | 2.038e-03 |
| Language skills required to perform a job | 3364 | 8.6151 | 4.243e-02 |
| **Online skills** | **3364** | **6.4423** | **8.182e-01** |
| Work-life balance | 3364 | 8.1772 | 4.238e-02 |
| Ambitious | 3364 | 20.9981 | 3.099e-03 |
| Expect to be paid for what they do, not how much time spent | 3364 | 25.3007 | 5.818e-05 |
| Low level of loyalty | 3364 | 28.9675 | 6.512e-05 |
| Require frequent feedback and training | 3364 | 26.4873 | 5.036e-05 |

*Source: Author*

Table 6 contains data generated on the basis of McNemar´s symmetry test, which characterizes and verifies the H1 research hypothesis for Generation Y. On a 5 % significance level, the H1-0 research hypothesis was rejected in favour of the H1-A research hypothesis. The responses of the employees were the same as those of their HR managers, with the only characteristic not to be rejected being online skills. All the other characteristics of Generation Y were rejected. This is sufficient evidence with which to reject research hypothesis H1-0 for Generation Y accordingly. It can be stated that the data obtained from the respondents were unsymmetrical.

Table 7: Verification of the H1 research hypothesis by means of McNemar´s symmetry test for Generation Z

| Generation Z | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Characteristics** | **Number of respondents (N)** | **McNemar's chi-squared** | **p-value** |
| A detailed career plan | 3364 | 32.1679 | 5.934e-04 |
| Language skills required to perform a job | 3364 | 9.0911 | 4.551e-02 |
| Multiculturalism | 3364 | 18.7802 | 3.482e-03 |
| **Online skills** | **3364** | **5.2864** | **8.128e-01** |
| Lack of emotional intelligence | 3364 | 23.1117 | 4.077e-03 |
| Low level of loyalty | 3364 | 34.5203 | 2.048e-04 |
| **Need for freedom, independence and strong individuality** | **3364** | **4.983** | **6.218e-01** |
| Want some fun in the workplace | 3364 | 15.7935 | 3.092e-03 |

*Source: Author*

Table 7 contains data generated on the basis of McNemar´s symmetry test, which characterizes and verifies the H1 research hypothesis for Generation Z. On a 5 % significance level, the H1-0 research hypothesis was rejected in favour of the H1-A research hypothesis. The responses of the employees were the same as those of their HR managers, with the only characteristics not to be rejected being online skills and the need for freedom, independence and strong individuality. All the other characteristics of Generation Z were rejected. This is sufficient evidence with which to reject research hypothesis H1-0 for Generation Z accordingly. It can be stated that the data obtained from the respondents were unsymmetrical.

For the selected characteristics of employees (Baby-boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z), the level of consistency of the answers of the HR managers and of the employees differed. The H1 research hypothesis was therefore rejected on the grounds of the evidence obtained. It can be stated that the data obtained from the respondents were unsymmetrical.

**Research question – RQ1: Which factors are considered by each generation of employees as significant and important for their motivation?**

The employees from across the generations in the selected Czech companies identified the following factors as being significant and important for their work motivation: (1) interesting basic wage or salary; (2) good relationships in the workplace; (3) financial

bonuses for the work done; (4) company car or mobile phone for private purposes; (5) flexible modes of work; (6) job security; (7) corporate actions and events; (8) degree of decision making; (9) possibility of career advancement; (10) possibility to design and implement own ideas; (11) possibility of self-realization; (12) new work challenges; (13) continuous growth in their financial evaluation; (14) pleasant working environment; (15) sick days or personal days; (16) fair system of remuneration; (17) technical equipment and facilities in the workplace; (18) public praise for good performance; (19) educational courses, training and workshops; (20) foreign internships; (21) feedback on work performance; (22) life insurance, pension insurance, or other insurance. Of these factors, the five most important for each generation are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: The five most important factors of job stimulation of each generation of employees in the selected Czech corporations according to their intrinsic motivation

| Generation | Factors of job stimulation | Generation | Factors of job stimulation |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Baby-boomers (Boomers)** | Job security | **Generation X (Xers)** | Fair system of remuneration |
| | Good relationships in the workplace | | Possibility of career advancement |
| | Pleasant working environment | | Flexible modes of work |
| | Fair system of remuneration | | Educational courses, training and workshops |
| | Sick days or personal days | | Good relationships in the workplace |
| **Generation Y** | Fair system of remuneration | **Generation Z** | New work challenges |
| | Educational courses, training and workshops | | Financial bonuses for the work done |
| | Flexible modes of work | | Possibility to design and implement own ideas |
| | Financial bonuses for the work done | | Flexible modes of work |
| | Possibility of career advancement | | Foreign internships |

*Source: Author*

**Research question – RQ2: Which challenges, positive or negative, do HR professionals see emerging for Generation Z in the labour market?**

The addressed HR professionals consistently indicated that in practice it was necessary to have a differentiated approach to each of the generations of employees. It was accepted that each generation honours different principles and values, which is reflected in their expectations and attitudes to work, behaviour, performance and career-building. They defined Generation Z as individuals characterized by information technologies and multiculturalism.

It should be noted that the current experience of the addressed HR professionals with regards to Generation Z is not very rich yet. This is mainly due to the fact that the individuals were only born between 1995 and 2010. In their search for answers to the research question RQ2, HR professionals therefore had to draw on their companies' limited experience with employing this generation in the form of temporary jobs, various local types of short-term employment contracts, internships, part-time employment contracts, and, in rare cases, full-time employment contracts. The facts about Generation Z presented below were obtained from semi-structured interviews with HR professionals. The questions posed were: closed-ended bipolar questions, closed-ended dichotomous questions, closed-ended Likert questions and open format questions, the absolute frequency of specific variables/characteristics and the relative frequency of specific variables/characteristics. So far, employees of Generation Z are considered to: (1) not be very loyal; (2) lack emotional intelligence; (3) want to enjoy their freedom and be their own bosses; (4) not be able to concentrate for a long time. On the positive side they are considered to have: (1) high levels of Internet literacy; (2) broad work experience – a large number of Generation Z were studying/had studied at school whilst holding down part-time jobs or internships; (3) the ability to adapt quickly to new technologies, and therefore operate more efficiently. Another characteristic feature noted by the HR professionals was the fairly high degree of self-confidence compared to other generations. This finding may be both challenging and disappointing for the HR professionals. With regards to employee motivation, HR professionals advocate the fact that each employee is unique and that it is necessary to get to know every single one in order to positively affect their motivation. They also fully understand that in order for their companies to maintain their competitive advantage they must employ the correct human resources strategy to reach out to, acquire, stabilize and minimise the departure of employees, in particular those of Generation Z. The issue for HR professionals is therefore how to effectively deal with these issues and the characteristics they consistently attribute to employees of Generation Z, of whom they say they are more realistic than optimistic, more environmentally focused, more sensitive to being rewarded or receiving appreciation for the slightest success, more communicative, more cooperative, and who expect more support and guidance from staff of other generations. On this basis, and in order to define more general categories of responses, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The findings were subsequently summarized and interpreted.

**Discussion**

According to Oh and Reeves (2011), generational differences are widely discussed in the popular press, business-oriented books, conferences, workshops and so on. However, the nomenclature used to label the generations is not standardized. There is also significant disagreement among various authors about the year spans for each generation. It is also important to acknowledge that there is a great deal of variance among the distinguishing characteristics within any given generation. It is therefore unjustified to assume that if a person was born in 1985, they will possess most of the characteristics of Generation Y, or that someone born in 1960, and who is therefore categorized as a late baby-boomer, is not as technologically aware as a person born into Generation X or Generation Y.

The age structure of the respondents in this research was determined by comparing the work of several authors, such as Horváthová, Bláha and Čopíková (2016), Gardiner, Grace and King (2015), McNeese-Smith and Crook (2003), Stuenkel, de la Cuesta and Cohen (2005), West (2014), and Zemke, Raines and Filipczak (2000).

According to the results of the research conducted for this paper, it can be stated that the perceptions of the selected characteristics of employees of each generation is not the same among the employees and HR managers of the selected Czech companies. Indeed, the HR professionals tend to perceive the employees in terms of their: (1) work performance; (2) productivity; (3) preconceptions and prejudices of the characteristics of every generation or those of the external labour market. Despite these differences in perceptions, the results of the research also show that there is conformity among the two groups in their perceptions that: Baby-boomers are loyal; Generation X are able to work under minimal supervision; Generation Y possess high levels of online skills; and Generation Z, in addition to possessing high levels of online skills, have a need for freedom, independence and strong individuality.

Moore, Grunberg and Krause (2015) describe Generation Z employees as being willing to challenge authority and having the desire for autonomous and independent work. They value achievement and success, as well as challenges, personal improvement, innovation, and creativity in their work. They also prefer collaborative work more than Generation X employees, as well as favour a more formalized work culture than Generation X and Y employees. This thesis is confirmed by the results of the research presented in this paper.

According to the Deloitte Millennial Survey (2016), two-thirds of Millennials (Generation Y) expressed a desire to leave their organizations by 2020. This confirms the opinions of the HR professionals who took part in this research. They consistently pointed to the low level of loyalty of Generation Y. This evidence shows that companies must therefore adjust how they nurture loyalty among Generation Y or risk losing a large percentage of their workforces.

The perception of selected characteristics of each generation of employees is also tackled by Kupperschmidt (2000), Howe and Strauss (2007), Beutell and Wittig-Berman (2008), Cogin (2012), West (2014), Gardiner, Grace and King (2015), and others. In these studies the focus is more on the evaluation of the complex characteristics of the individuals belonging to the generation in question, rather than an evaluation by a superior or self-

evaluation, as presented in this paper. In this lies the novelty and uniqueness of the contribution this paper makes.

The extent to which the selected characteristics are present in the employees in the selected Czech companies remains a question. The only (correct) approach is for the HR professionals to view and treat each employee as an individual. This implies that HR professionals, should, in particular, discard their preconceptions and prejudices, which is also confirmed by Chum (2012). Within this context, the companies would be well advised to actively implement the concept of Age Management. The aim of this philosophy/concept is to encourage efficient and targeted work with all age groups of employees in order for a company to generate profits, maintain its competitiveness and prosper (Bejtkovský 2015; Bejtkovský 2013). An example of the importance of this can be found in a study conducted by Mohani, Hashanah and Noor (2010). Their study of Japanese electrical and electronics manufacturing companies revealed that older executives with more work experience showed higher levels of motivation than younger executives.

## Conclusion

Today's workforce includes at least four generations spanning more than 60 years: The Baby-boom generation, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z (Cogin 2012).

Companies are now faced with the challenges of integrating different generations in the workplace, as well as the complexity of creating environments to attract, stimulate, motivate and satisfy these employees accordingly. Understanding the generational differences may be a tool that managers can use to generate more employee productivity, loyalty, innovation and corporate citizenship.

The aim of this article is to compare the selected characteristics of each generation in Czech corporate practice through a content analysis of domestic and foreign secondary sources, with a subsequent reflection on how personnel managers can work more effectively with these different generations of employees. The results of the research presented in this paper shows that the level of consistency of the answers of the HR professionals and of the employees involved in the study differed for the selected generational characteristics. Despite these differences in perceptions, the results of the research also show that there is conformity among the two groups in their perceptions that: Baby-boomers are loyal; Generation X are able to work under minimal supervision; Generation Y possess high levels of online skills; and Generation Z, in addition to possessing high levels of online skills, have a need for freedom, independence and strong individuality.

The presented results also show that there has been a shift away from job security towards a rewards based system and new professional challenges. This is a reflection of the characteristics that the HR professionals consistently attribute to employees of Generation Z, of whom they say they are more realistic than optimistic, more environmentally focused, more sensitive to being rewarded or receiving appreciation for

the slightest success, more communicative, more cooperative, and who expect more support and guidance from staff of other generations.

The main research weakness is that the terminology used to label the generations is not standardized; the range of labels used by authors to identify the various generations is very wide.

The main contribution this paper makes is to identify what differences there are, if any, in how HR professionals and employees themselves view selected characteristics attributed to various generations of employees. In so doing, this paper has helped to define the key factors that motivate different generations of company employees (the employees in the selected companies in the Czech Republic). The results presented can be said to be in line with the current state of knowledge and research in the field.

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