

Management of Employees from Different Generations - Challenge for Bulgarian Managers and HR Professionals

Tatyana Kicheva*

Summary:

People from at least three generations, sometimes even four, work in the modern organizations. They have different expectations, ambitions and approach to work and this puts managers and HR professionals in a difficult situation.

The article is divided into two main parts. The first part attempts to characterize the different generations of employees on the basis of literature review and survey results arrived at by US and European researchers. In the second part of the article are presented results from a study conducted by the author on basic characteristics, values, preferences and work habits of Bulgarian officers from three generations - Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. Survey findings cannot be generalized as inherent to all Bulgarian representatives of the three generations, because the study does not claim to be representative.

The purpose of the research carried out by the author is to outline the profile and professional preferences of different generations of surveyed employees and to identify the challenges Bulgarian managers and HR professionals face in managing

and communicating with people of different generations in the workplace.

Key words: generation, management, HR professionals, professional preferences

JEL classification: M12

1. Introduction

The generation to which a person belongs, is one of many factors that can help us better understand the particular person (or even a whole group of people belonging to a generation). The faster the world develops, the sharper become the differences between generations. The working environment is already failing to change a par with those it "harbors". In today's workplace there is a big generation gap between the oldest and the youngest employees.

Every generation has its own attitudes, behaviors, expectations, habits and motivational levers. The differences between generations are related to the way people communicate. This can lead to misunderstandings, employee turnover, difficulty in attracting workers and influence their long-term commitment.

It is mostly American scientists and practitioners who have conducted surveys on generation differences in the workplace. There are not comprehensive scientific

* Chief Assistant Professor, PhD, Department of Management, Faculty Management and Administration, UNWE, e-mail: tania_kicheva@unwe.bg

studies on this topic in Bulgaria. One of the largest studies on the engagement of different generations of employees from Central and Eastern Europe (including Bulgaria) was conducted in 2013 by AON Hewitt consulting company. The results of this study are discussed further in the article.

2. The concept of "Generations"

The term generation has been defined in a number of ways. Age boundaries between different generations are not clearly and accurately identified by scientists and researchers. There are two main factors that characterize a generation: birth and events at the time. With regard to birth a generation begins when the birth rate increases, continues as long as the birth rate grows or remains stable and ends when the birth rate begins to decline.

Karl Mannheim (Mannheim, 1952) defines generation as a group of individuals born within the same historical and socio-cultural context, who experience the same formative experiences and develop unifying commonalities as a result. One of the most accepted definitions refers to a generation as "a group of people or cohorts who share birth years and experiences as they move through time together" (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p.66). This definition, as well as many others, indicates that generational units or cohorts tend to share a common outlook (e.g., views, values, and attitudes) on the basis of possessing a set of common life experiences (Edmunds & Turner, 2005).

Generally the limits of one generation vary over the period of about 15-20 years. Depending on which author you read, the precise age ranges and names for each generation can vary. Table 1 presents starting and ending dates of generations followed in the author's research based on McCrindle (2006).

Table 1: Starting and ending dates of generations

Generation	Year of birth
Veterans/Traditionalists	1925 – 1945 г.
Baby Boomers	1946 – 1964 г.
Generation X	1965 – 1979 г.
Generation Y	1980 – 1994 г.
Generation Z	1995 – 2009 г.
Generation "α"	2010 -

Source: McCrindle (2006).

3. Relevance and importance of the problem

The workplace has changed considerably over the past 40 years. Competitive pressures combined with technological improvements, downsizing initiatives, declining union membership and job insecurity have been identified as major causes of work intensification. Organizations that intensify work attempt to achieve higher levels of productivity from an existing workforce. Understanding reactions to work intensification is important as it represents a fundamentally different approach to work. Work is no longer characterized by peaks and troughs: the pressure to work for longer hours is constant (Brown, 2012). Work intensification also suggests a change in the nature of the employment relation, to one where the employer places a greater emphasis on the economic contribution of the employee to the benefit of the organization. (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005).

As already mentioned officers from three, sometimes even four generation can work in today's organizations, as those born at the end of the last century (after 1995), i.e. Generation Z have already begun to participate more actively in the labor market. This is a complex challenge for all HR professionals, as representatives of

different generations are inherently different and are driven by different impulses related to age and career development.

However, the largest group of employees in modern organizations are representatives of the three generations - Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. This is the reason why the study of the author includes only representatives of these three generations.

The generation is only one factor among many that make us what we are. Human development, thinking and method of decision-making are extremely complex and unique to each person. But the workplace definitely does not belong only to one generation. And while the working environment faced "minds" of different times, there will always be disagreements and contradictions. Only their awareness and understanding can reduce stress and most importantly – can teach all how to effectively work together to become a diverse, but productive team.

The professional literature suggests that generational differences in work values influence the requirements for all aspects of people management: recruitment, training and development (Berl 2006); career development (Ansoorian et al. 2003), rewards and working arrangements (Carlson 2004) . As Lyons et al. (2007) explained, "values are enduring but not immutable. They are learned during an individual's formative years and remain fairly consistent over the life course" (p. 340). Dose (1997) defined work values as "evaluative standards relating to work or the work environment by which individuals discern what is right or assess the importance of preferences".

According to Collier (Collier, 2012) with an age gap of nearly 50 years between the oldest and youngest employees in some organizations, there is a broad range of perspectives, needs and attitudes floating around the office. Today's workplace is

most definitely a multi-generational one – and each generation has its own set of expectations, needs, values and working styles.

While generational diversity in the workforce promotes a broader range of talent, it can often mean conflicting ideas and creating stereotypes. Many organizations are not equipped to deal with the generational conflicts that may arise, and most managers are struggling with how to work constructively with individuals from each generation. In addition to dealing with generational differences, organizations are facing a looming surge of Baby Boomer retirement. The standard one-size-fits-all employee benefits, packages, and work requirements no longer serve the needs of people in a market-driven, fiercely competitive economy. As more and more organizations compete to find and hire top talent in a tight job market, they realize that leading and managing an intergenerational workforce is becoming a business imperative that cannot be ignored (Guthrie, 2009).

The multiple generations represented within today's workforce necessitate HR's having a basic awareness and understanding of age-based values and work attitudes. Such awareness will improve HR's ability to anticipate and account for generational stereotypes when working with management to establish and implement succession planning initiatives geared towards cultivating and sustaining a preferred organizational culture.

Research compiled and prepared by The Ken Blanchard Companies (Guthrie, 2009) shows that identifying generational distinctions can provide a useful framework for building awareness and understanding of the different viewpoints, attitudes, needs, and expectations among generations as well as the implications for future changes in the workplace. Understanding these unique generational differences can become a

competitive advantage for organizations in terms of higher productivity and human performance. Also, the long-term costs related to loss of talent, higher labour costs, poor customer service, derailed careers, knowledge transfer, and stress-related issues are enormous.

So far, the studies that we have discussed have been conducted in Western (mostly US) contexts. There has been a tendency in practitioner circles to discuss the American definitions of generations as though they are globally appropriate, or at least appropriate for use across Westernized countries such as the UK and Australia. This is probably because the majority of consultancy-led or practitioner work to date has been conducted within the US.

Furthermore, it has been proposed in the academic literature that generational characteristics in Eastern countries are not the same as in the West. Indeed, most of the non-Western research on generational differences has been conducted in countries in the Orient such as China, Japan and Taiwan. Murphy et al. (2004) examined cross-cultural age and generational differences in values in the US and Japan by conducting a survey including 1283 US and 209 Japanese respondents. They found cross-cultural differences, cross-cultural age differences and cross-cultural generation differences.

Undoubtedly, (according to the author of this article) the national culture significantly affects the generation gap. Different regions of the world have different cultures, different backgrounds and political differences that affect the preferences and values of different generations of employees. Therefore the characteristics of the different generations of employees in the US, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia etc. cannot be the same.

4. Basic characteristics and values of different generations of employees in the modern workplace

As mentioned above there is no agreement on exactly where to draw the line that divides one generation from the next. Obviously, there are exceptions to generalizations about any group. There are also overlapping characteristics within each of the generations.

• Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964)

The so-called post-war generation, encompasses the years from 1946 to 1964. Children of the 60s are ambitious goal-oriented who sets out to change the world and to "withdraw" it from the battlefield. Boomers are passionate about their work. They have been characterized as "workaholics" who "live to work". Balance is a quaint idea but not really a possibility. As such, they see the workday at least from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is significant tension between them and the younger generations, as they expect others to have the same work ethic and work the same hours.

This generation want to contribute to the success of the business, to fit in the company and to feel as part of the team. Therefore it is difficult for them to strike balance between work and personal life. The representatives of this generation fear that they could lose their position if they are absent from work, too. These are people who expect to be active even after 60 years of age. Boomers believe strongly in lifetime employment, company loyalty and paying one's dues to gain respect and seniority (Elsdon and Lyer 1999) . Boomers value teamwork and group discussions, view work from a process-oriented perspective, believe that achievement comes after 'paying dues', value company commitment and loyalty, believe in sacrifice in order to achieve success and seek long-term employment (Jorgensen 2003).

They are motivated by money and believe that "the longer the day, the higher the pay." (Hatfield, 2002). While highly competitive, when it comes to working with others in the workplace, Baby Boomers excel in teams and they prefer to make decisions based on consensus.

When Baby Boomers were in their teens they were individualistic and idealistic. They felt they could change the world and in many ways they did. They wanted meaningful work, embraced socially and environmentally conscious companies and were driven more by their values than by money. By the time mid-generation Boomers started to have families unemployment had risen. With mounting responsibility and fewer job opportunities they became less idealistic and more motivated by money, perks and prestige. Today they hold positions of authority and define themselves by the prestige of the company they work for and their own professional accomplishments (Maynew, 2011).

According to practitioners at Jobtiger (Bulgarian HR company and career site) Bulgarian representatives of this generation do not fit the image outlined by the American sociologists and anthropologists, but they have characteristics generally inherent in most of them. These are usually people who began their career during the years of socialism. Many of them have kept working habits and attitudes built in other socioeconomic period. These people often have a negative attitude towards management. They find it difficult to understand business techniques and values characteristic of capitalism. However, they are experienced and often the main pillar in the structures of many companies (Markov, 2015).

According to the study of Aon Hewitt this generation are employees who have the highest level of commitment to their employer - 68%. The company's reputation

as an employer is also a highly valuable factor. About 76% of employees surveyed in this age group work for a company with good reputation in the market. This is the generation that appreciates strict observance of working time and flexibility is not among the areas that would motivate them. They are loyal to their employer and therefore only 8% of them consider replacing him if the opportunity arises in the labor market (Gancheva, 2013).

• **Generation X (born between 1965-1979)**

The representative of generation X comes from two-income and/or divorced families and have grown up with the idea about corporate downsizing, massive layoffs and government scandal. X-ers are more comfortable with technology, diversity, travel and global awareness than Boomers. They are the first generation to grow up with CDs, remote controls, computers and with friends from other cultures. Gen X-ers place a premium on family time, they are ambitious and hardworking and value work-life balance (Maynew, 2011).

Most of them are very different compared to the earlier generation. They have been characterized as "slackers" who "work to live" (Chao, 2005). Usually researchers describe them as self-contained, adaptable and independent. They are interested in the high quality of the work done, high productivity and are well oriented in the labor market. Gen X-ers appreciate the balance between personal and professional life and are not afraid to fight for it. They make up the largest part of the employee structure of most organizations and companies, especially in the private sector.

Generation X value family, quality of life, and are fiscally conservative. This generation tends to be pessimistic, pragmatic, and self-reliant (Patterson, 2007). They are able to readily adapt to change and would prefer to find their own way of doing things. X-ers

would rather invest in personal development than in company development (Hatfield, 2002). Because of this, they work for a paycheck, and display very low level of company loyalty.

They perceive the work not like working *for* someone but working *with* someone. That's why they take most responsibility from all others and many of them can be relied upon. Thanks to their education, Bulgarian representatives of this generation have very good specialists and general talent which companies can rely on. They can easily leave work and seek for another one after that. Sometimes their requirements are not always realistic in terms of pay. The problem results from the labor market itself and the widespread imbalance of supply and demand, because this generation has higher demands and knows the price (Markov, 2015).

Generation X have an entrepreneurial spirit and unlike the previous generation are ready to "embrace" the change in the workplace. They are oriented towards career growth, but the stronger emphasis is on family. They strive to achieve a balance between personal life and work. Therefore flexible working time is appropriate for this generation.

According to the study of Aon Hewitt Bulgarian employees from this generation are satisfied with the feedback they receive from their supervisors, and the fact that they encourage them to give ideas and suggestions related to work – a total of 66% of employees surveyed (Gancheva, 2013).

• **Generation Y (born between 1980-1994)**

The most significant characteristic of Generation Y employees is that they do not consider computers or other electronics to be "technology." Their world has always included computers, cell phones, instant messaging, the Internet, etc. (Oblinger, 2003). This generation was the first to

have computers in the classroom from the beginning of their education. They were also subjected to structured lives with little free time and surrounded by technology (Johnson & Lopes, 2008).

They are children of high-tech environment in which they communicate face to face less and less. Generation Y prefers to write, instead pick up the phone and call. They always rely on the Internet and social media, and thus became a "technological challenge" for employers. Generation Y desire "frequent, positive, and open communication in the workplace" (Chou, 2012, p. 75). The "opening" to the world enables them to engage with more and more absorbed. Therefore, Generation Y has a rich portfolio of skills and can be oriented towards different professions. Generation Y employees typically enter the workplace well educated in terms of quality and quantity of schooling but have substandard communication and problem-solving skills.

The typical Gen Y is smart, creative, productive and achievement-oriented. They seek personal growth, meaningful careers, and mentors or supervisors to encourage and facilitate their professional development. They have been constantly surrounded by choice and therefore don't tend to stay in one job for very long. They require constant stimulation and the opportunity to develop their skills – if they don't get it, they will walk out the door and find another company (Collier, 2012).

Generation Y members possess high levels of confidence and optimism, coupled with expectations for immediate feedback and almost continuous recognition. They maintain very close relationships with their parents, family and friends and are in constant communication with them (Tyler, 2007).

According to the study of Aon Hewitt engagement of this group of employees is the lowest compared to the other - 51%. It is not

surprising that satisfaction in most areas of the work environment is also among the lowest, if we compare their results with other generations. Only 38% of those surveyed are absolutely agree with the statement that "top management treats employees as the most valuable asset of the company" (Gancheva, 2013).

• **Comparison between generation's characteristics**

Understanding differences between the generations is fundamental in building successful multigenerational workplace. For each generation there are particular experiences that shape specific preferences, expectations, beliefs and work style.

The characteristics of the different generations of employees represented in the preceding paragraph show that nowadays the HR department has a really challenging task - to take care of motivation, commitment and well-being of many different individuals who have a different idea of work, values, business and behavior. Modern HR specialists must operate in an environment and conditions they have never been familiar with and respectively to adapt quickly to compensate for the speed of generational changes observed over the last decades.

Table 2 summarizes the general and specific characteristics of different generations of employees, their idea of work, management and leadership, their strengths and weaknesses, etc.

5. Methodology

This study was conducted among 247 employees from three different generations: Baby Boomers, Gen.X and Gen.Y. 76% of respondents were female and 24% - male. Most of the participants in the study belong to Generation Y (169 people), Generation X is represented by 54 people, and the Baby Boomers generation - just 24. The survey was conducted using a questionnaire

with closed questions, which corresponds to the preferences of the surveyed on their workplace and work style, the main motivational factors and ways to job search, the preferred communication channels and proficiency in foreign languages.

All surveyed employees are from the capital of Bulgaria - Sofia and have higher education. Although the study cannot claim for representativeness it represents the views of different generations of employees and could draw the attention of employers to a certain type of behavior and expect them to comply with their generational characteristics and preferences of labor.

The results were generalized using Excel and SPSS.

6. Results from the research

The business faces considerable challenges in managing the three generations who represent the labor markets of the 21st century and which have such different attitudes. This situation creates very serious challenges, but also opportunities for organizations and it is important how they deal with issues related to employee commitment, retention of talent, leadership development and management of people.

The results of the research of preferences, values and work habits of the surveyed Bulgarian employees of different generations are presented below:

• **Preferred type of organization**

The first issue of this study refers to the preferences of the respondents related to the type and size of the company for which they work or could work (see Figure 1).

It is noteworthy that older workers prefer working in a big and famous company, while most of the respondents from Generation Y are not tempted by the thought of working for famous brands. They prefer smaller companies (32%) or creating their own business (46%).

Table 2. Performance and preferences of different generations of employees

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
Motto	"Work, and then you die"	"Life first, work second"	"Work as part of lifestyle"
General characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive • High stress • Hard working • Action orientated • Impatient • Personal growth • Personal gratification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pragmatic • Self sufficient • Seek work-life balance (work to live) • Impatient • Think globally • Self-reliant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident • Sociable • Collective action • Multitasking • Need Flexibility • Fun seeking • Education orientated
Dominant Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance • Authority • Achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulation • Self-direction • Achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulation • Self-direction
Work Environment	• Office only – long hours	• Office, home- desires flexible schedule	• Office, home- desires flexible schedule
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loyal • Hard working • Will to remain for a long time on one position • Good communicators. Deal well with body language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly adapt and learn • Direct communicators • Always want feedback • Great global awareness • Feel comfortable with technology, diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused • Tenacious • Always willing to cooperate • They are open to innovation and different cultures • Easily adapt to changes in the environment
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not like changes • Refuse to learn new skills • Tend to "judge" others if they disagree with them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't like the rigid, strict work requirements • No long-term perspective – anytime can change their job • Usually impatient • Skeptical • Reject the rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of discipline • Need supervision • Impatient • They want their work to be not only smooth, but also quick.
Work Ethic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical • Do what it takes • Efficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reliant • Independent • Task-oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multitasking • Explain why • Group-oriented
Retention factors	• Salary	• Salary/security	• Personal relationship
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person • Face time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As needed • Direct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instant messages • E-mail
Family and work	Work takes priority over all else	Work-life balance	If must choose, will select family and friends
Motivators	Salary	Security	Maintain personal life
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-mail primarily in the office • Web use to "google" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses mobile and laptop • Uses web to research, review etc. • E-mail/mobile 24/7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses web to research and network; • Use of e-mail/instant messages/mobile 24/7
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion/title • "Show me the money" 	• Direct – "Tell me how I am doing"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek approval/praise • Instantaneous
Authority	• Question authority	• Skeptical of authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lines are blurred • Why must I follow?

Learning styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional classroom learning extended to learning through participation, critical reflection and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it easy to access the information and industry procedures • Highly receptive to e-learning series of structured lectures • Requires integration of technology and media in learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalized learning through customized environment • Requires integration of technology and media in learning (webinars, social networking sites) • Informal, incidental learning
Career goals	Build a perfect career	Build a transferable career, variety of skills and experiences	Build several parallel careers, have several jobs simultaneously
Employment expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe in hierarchy and work their way up the ladder • They value face time in the office and many of them don't welcome work flexibility or other work/life balance trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent, resourceful people, who value freedom and responsibility • Used to be cutting edge • Entrepreneurial, ambitious and eager to learn new skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They expect their opinions to be heard • They want to know their work is valuable to the company • They want to be able to complete tasks using their own methods • Learning- oriented • They like working in teams and being coached, need lots of praise

Source: Author's table

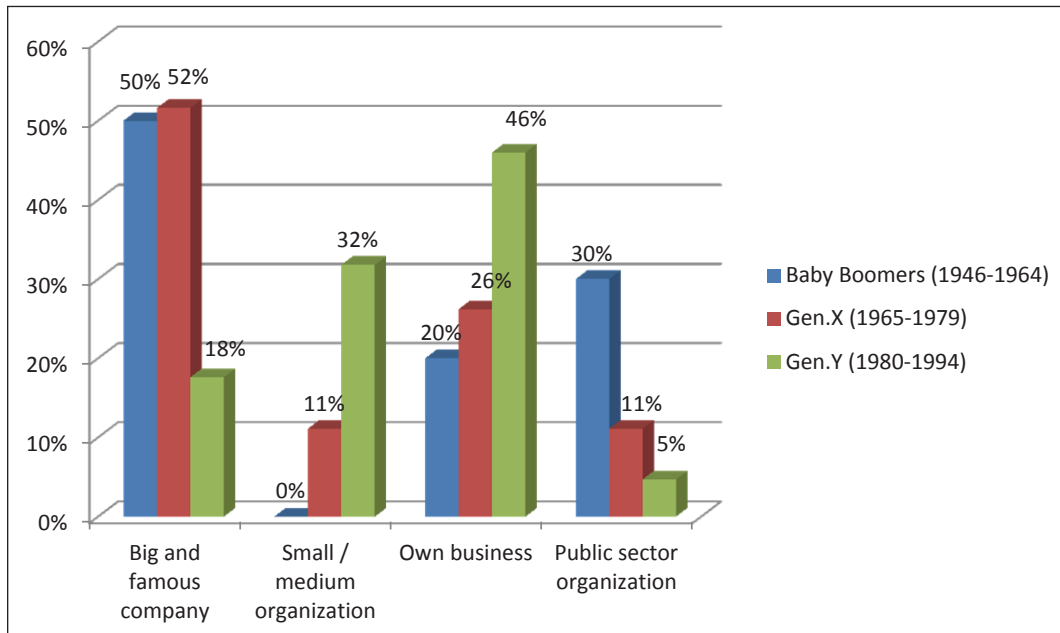


Fig. 1. Preferred type of organization by the representatives of different generations

Source: Author's findings

The tendency for each generation to become more entrepreneurial makes sense. Access to information is unlimited, young people are becoming more active and inquisitive, and their entrepreneurial

spirit does not allow them to get bored. Only 5% of Generation Y would work for a public sector organization (against 30% of the oldest employees). The reason for this is that young employees expect recognition

and are not afraid to change their jobs frequently. In contrast, older employees are more loyal and job security in the public sector organizations is attractive to them.

• Loyalty

The surveyed employees from Generation Y are more loyal than those from Generation X - 72 percent of them have no intention to change more than 4 organizations during their working life, against 67% of Generation X (see Figure 2). This are good news for small and medium-sized organizations, which often have problems with demand and attract new employees. But employers should not abuse this loyalty because Generation Y seek recognition and adequate compensation and if their loyalty is not appreciated, they are ready to leave the organization.

up the ladder (see figure3) - 75% of them are motivated by the opportunity for career development, and 71 percent expect from their employers recognition of the efforts they put into their work and the results.

They value their time in the office and do not welcome many ideas for flexibility in the workplace or trends of balancing personal and professional life - only 25% of respondents indicated balance work - life as a factor that motivates them to work harder.

It is well known that the European workforce is increasingly aging. The participation of older workers in the process of lifelong learning is one of constant targets in Europe. Although employees from the Baby Boomers generation are approaching retirement, still a large part of the surveyed respondents (71%) confirm that the opportunity for training

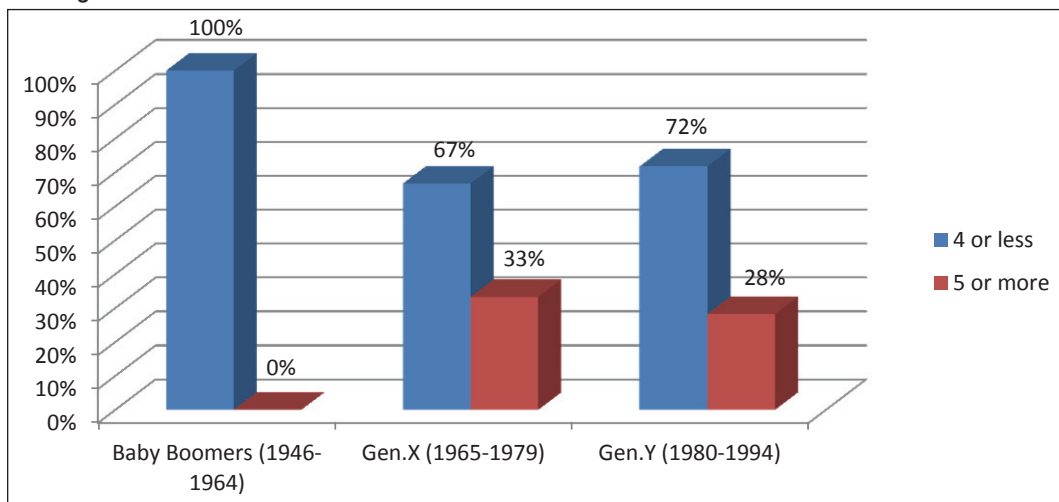


Fig. 2. Number of organizations where the employees from different generations would work

Source: Author's findings

• Factors that motivate generations for hard work

The third question in the survey aims to clarify the factors that motivate or would motivate respondents to work hard. The surveyed Bulgarian officials just like their peers from USA and Western Europe believe in hierarchy and work their way

and development motivate them for better performance in the workplace. This indicates that employers should not neglect their older employees when organizing training courses for their employees.

The experience of older workers can be used to train the younger. The transfer of expertise does not necessarily take place

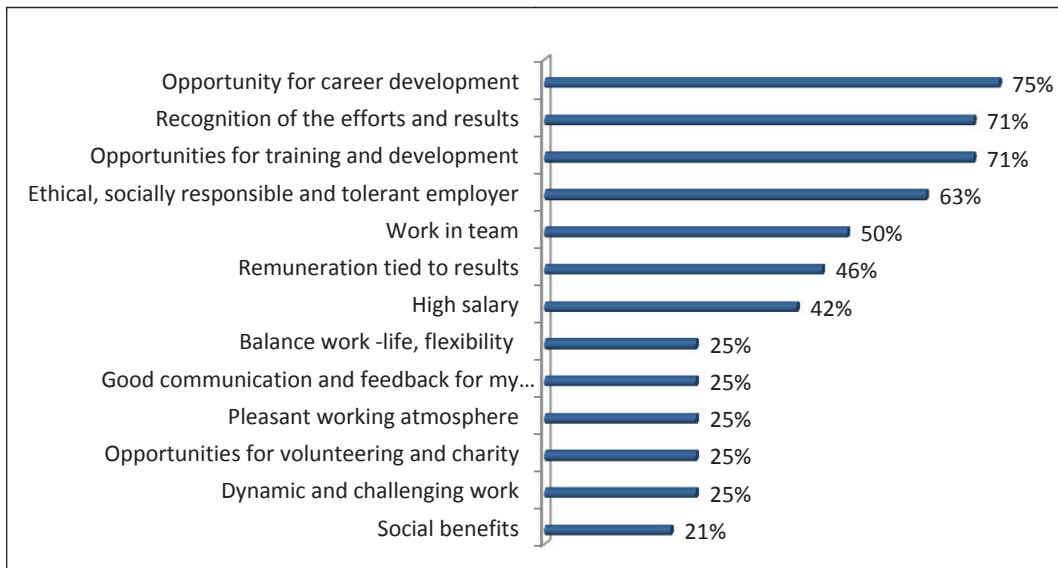


Fig. 2. Motivators for better performance for Baby Boomers

Source: Author's findings

only in this direction, because the new generations also have much to teach their older colleagues, especially in the field of new technologies. Surveyed Bulgarian employers should encourage intergenerational training in the organization including mentoring and coaching and provide an opportunity to exchange knowledge within the organization.

The survey results show that older workers prefer ethical, socially responsible and tolerant employers (63%). This is probably due to the fact that the socially responsible employer cares about their employees and older workers need more perks such as reduced working hours, the possibility of having longer holidays etc. An interesting fact is that respondents representing the Baby Boomers rank higher wages at a lower position as a motivating factor - only 25% of them have indicated that higher wage motivates them to work harder. This is contrary to the characteristics of the people of their generation, summarized and studied by American and Western European scientists and researchers which

were outlined in paragraph 4 . According to the author of the article the difference may be due to the fact that in the Bulgarian economic environment older employees are afraid of losing their jobs since then many of them would hardly find a job. Therefore, it is more important for them to stay with the organization than to receive higher remuneration.

Unlike their predecessors respondents from Generation X attach great importance to work-life balance - 67% of them indicated that this balance is a factor that motivates them to work hard. (See Figure 4).

The representatives of this generation have grown up with both parents at work or as children are often left alone at home and therefore have become independent and confident individuals. They value the time spent with the family and their friends and that is why they are motivated by the possibility of striking the balance between work and private life more than their parents. About 44% of the researched people are motivated by a pleasant working atmosphere.



Fig. 2. Motivators for better performance of Generation X

Source: Author's findings

The respondents from this generation are independent, with great potential who value the freedom to set their own working hours and opportunities to work from home. Often they prefer to work alone rather than in a team - only 11% of those surveyed indicate teamwork as a factor that motivates them to work harder.

The representatives of Generation X are much more familiar with the new technologies than their parents, welcome diversity and sense of cosmopolitanism. They want meaningful work. It is important for them, and for their predecessors to have an ethical employer who is socially responsible towards its employees and the environment - 78% of the respondents indicated this factor as a strong incentive for better performance in the workplace. Considering that those who were born in the early period began working at the time of socialism in Bulgaria, where such values as ethics and social responsibility did not come to the fore, these results are not surprising.

Representatives of this generation, grew up in the years of financial boom. They are accustomed to receiving instant recognition and remuneration. They grew up in culturally diverse environment, and are technically proficient and confident. They have high requirements to and expectations from your employers. More than half of the participants in this study who belong to Generation Y, are motivated by opportunities for career development (60%) and expected remuneration matching the results achieved by them (52%). (see figure.5). They consider important their achievements and the work recognition they receive from their employer (52%).

The representatives of this generation insist on the pleasant working atmosphere (48%) and good communication with the employer (44%). They want to be able to share openly their opinions and to feel valued by employers. If not, they are quite willing to change their jobs. In this group of employees for the first time appears



Fig. 5. Motivators for better performance of Generation Y

Source: Author's findings

the desire to have a mentor (27%), as opposed to representatives of the other two generations. Those born after 1980 do not like direct control, but do not mind to be guided at work.

For the present it seems that Generation Y is focused on the remuneration - almost half of those surveyed (47%) indicated that higher wages motivate them to perform better at work. According to the author some of those born between 1980 and 1994 have very unrealistic expectations about the possible reward and when they do not receive it they tend to leave work and are not afraid to change jobs frequently, sometimes more than once a year.

According to survey data Generation Y, like their parents, attach importance to family and friends and for 48% of respondents balance between work and private life is a particularly important motivating factor for a better job.

The opportunity for training and development is important to 40% of the

surveyed young people, especially when they are related to new technologies. Those born after 1980 are the best educated generation in history because their parents enroll them constantly in educational activities. They are oriented towards learning and if they do something wrong, they want to know about it immediately so that they can learn from it.

• Determinants in job search

Personal observations of the author show that classical education no longer attracts young people because they can find all necessary information on the Internet. They expect work to be entertaining and are not ready to work at any cost. All these factors contribute to the high youth unemployment rate in Bulgaria and in Europe in general. Changing work for younger and older people is different. Depending on the different generations prevailing in the working world, the manner of career decision-making is different.

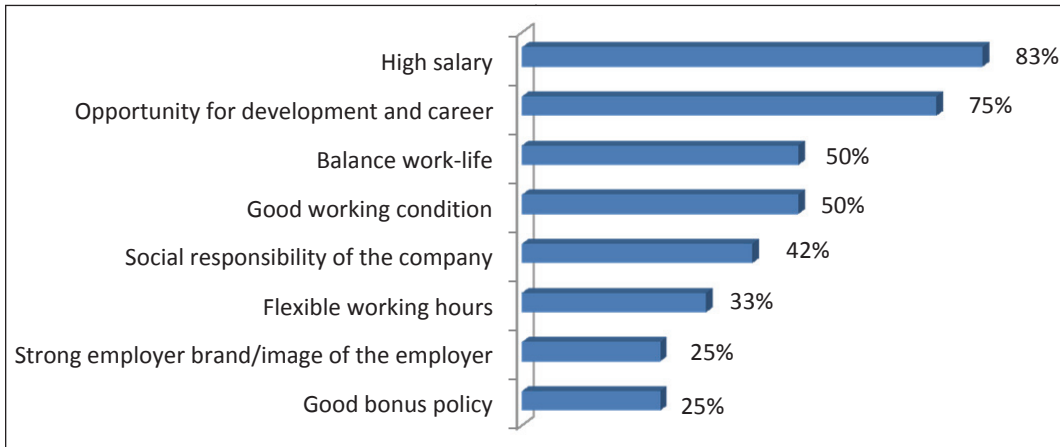


Fig. 6. Determinants of job search for Baby Boomer generation

Source: Author's chart

As mentioned earlier in the article the representatives of the Baby Boomer generation are exclusively workaholic and many of them would carefully consider the options before going for a job change. However, if they decide to do so they study the new employer's security, stability, higher incomes (see figure 7) - 83% of respondents indicated that the most important factor for them when looking for a new job is the high salary and 75% expect from the new organization opportunities for development and career growth. Around 33% of

respondents are interested in the possibility of flexible working hours and only for 25% of them the strong employer brand and image of the new organization are important.

In contrast, surveyed representatives of the next generation prefer more flexible working hours (44%) and good working conditions (67%) (see figure 8). People from this generation want to have a clear idea of what is expected of them. For the majority of respondents (89%) it is important to have a balance between work and private life. They pay relatively less attention to

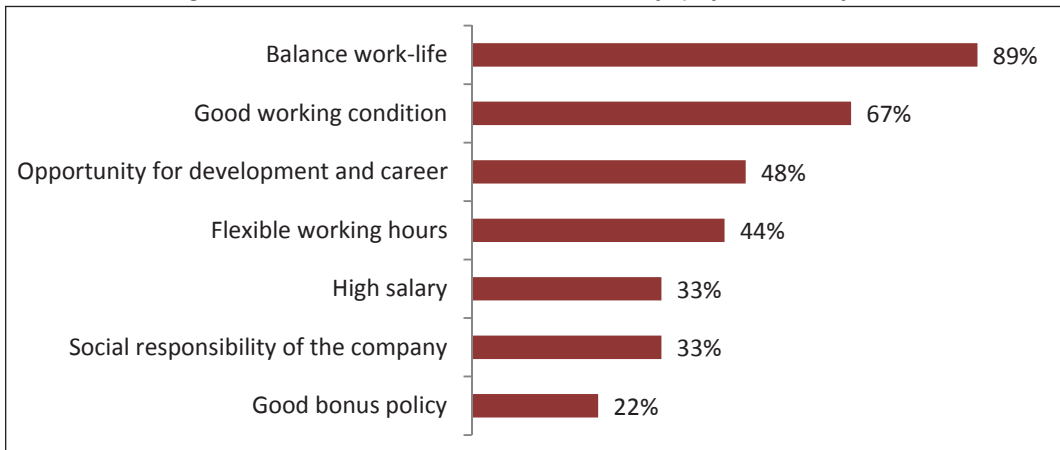


Fig. 7. Determinants of job search for Generation X

Source: Author's chart

high salary as a factor for starting a new job (33%), but at the same time they are ready and would take greater responsibilities in the workplace.

People born after 1980, involved in the study, are good at performing multiple tasks simultaneously and have well-defined technical abilities. They choose the company they want to work for on the basis of determinants such as growth opportunities and career development (71%), high salary (50%), good image of the employer (43%). (see figure 9). Therefore, their demands are very high and they are difficult to manage.

direct conversation on the phone. Email and short text messages are rarely used, and Internet communication in social networks or chat rooms are the exception rather than the typical means of communication for them.

The representatives of Generation X who took part in the survey also prefer communication via phone (52%), but since they are in the middle of their working life they have been forced to use more modern methods of communication such as e-mail (33%) and chat rooms (15%). Predictably,

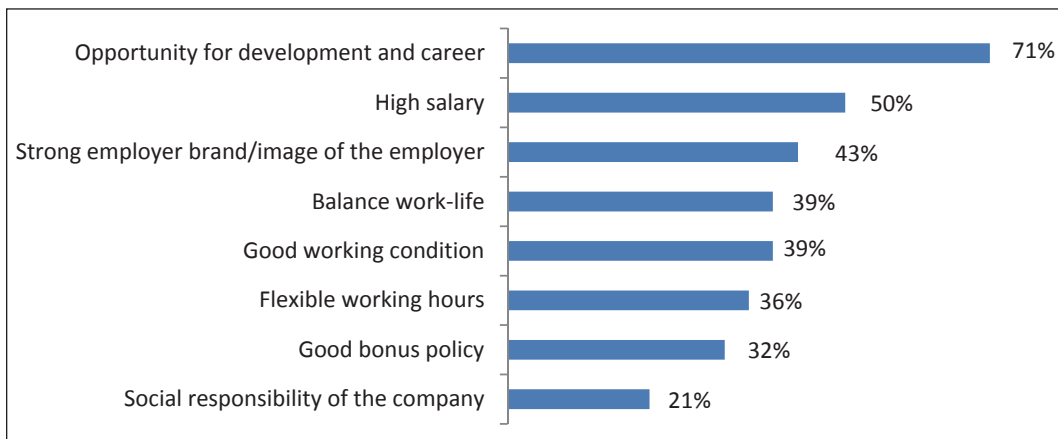


Fig. 8. Determinants of job search for Generation Y

Source: Author's chart

• Preferred communication channels

Communication gaps between generations due to life in different socio-political and technological conditions. Indisputably computer literacy, receptivity and degree of handling information technology continuously exacerbate communication problems between generations.

Most of the participants in this study, belonging to the Baby Boomer generation, prefer communication via phone (85%). (See Figure 10). The representatives of this generation used mainly face to face communication and therefore they prefer mainly traditional communication channels -

for generation Y, the most preferred way to communicate is the chat room, and the least used method - direct conversation on the phone (21%). These results are not surprising since this is the first generation, which we can call "digital natives", whose mother tongue is technology. Its representative are growing up along with new technologies. For this generation the new technologies are not something strange, but are part of everyday life. Generation Y grew up with video games and social networks - a platform through which they can get to every corner of

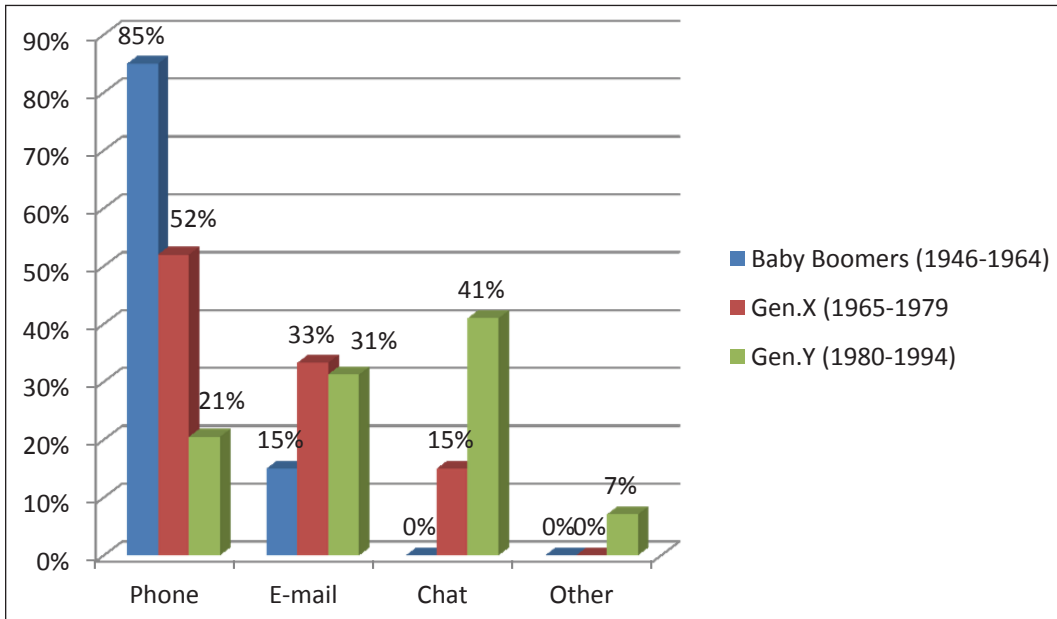


Fig. 9. Preferred communication channels of different generations of employees

Source: Author's findings

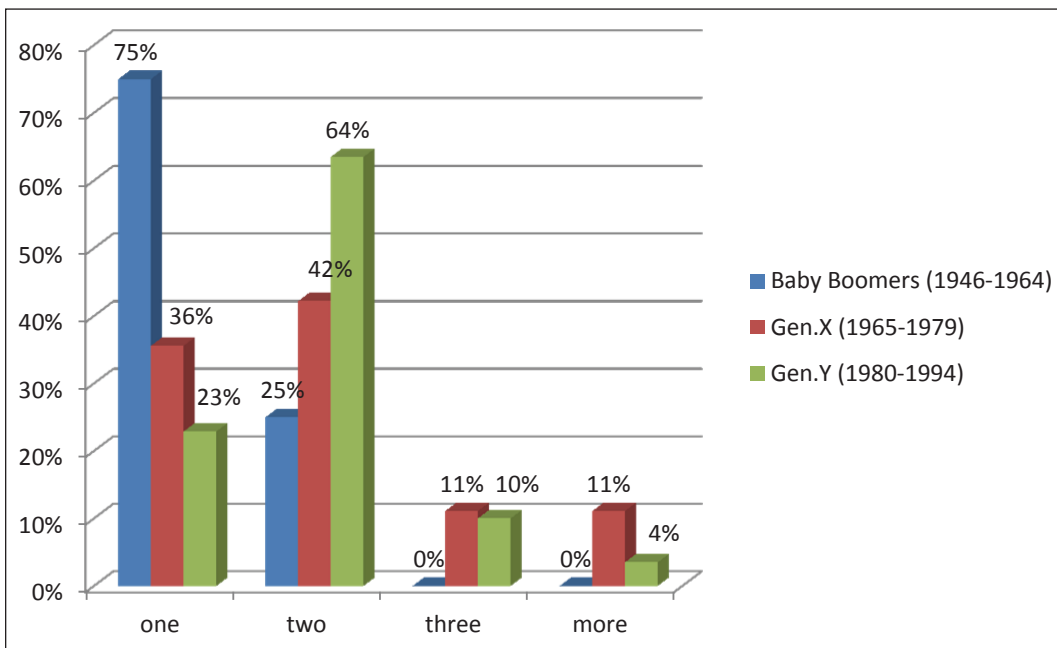


Fig. 10. Number of foreign languages different generations speak

Source: Author's findings

the world. For these reasons it is entirely natural that this generation prefer online communication. An interesting fact is that 7% of them indicated that they prefer personal communication.

The author believes that these results indicate that employers must more closely select the methods of communication and the accurate communication channels. A combination of various communication channels would be most effective and easily accessible for employees. For example, except e-mail managers may use channels such as intranet pages, dedicated pages of the company in social media, in combination with face to face communication.

• **Foreign language training**

The survey results show that the younger generation of employees appreciate the importance and need for best foreign language training. Over half (64%) of the respondents from Generation Y indicate that they speak two foreign languages at a good level, relative to only 25% of the Baby Boomers generation(see figure 11).

This is due to the realization that foreign language training is one of the greatest strengths in the CV of the contemporary employee and an important competitive advantage in the labor market. Good foreign language skills are especially important in today's global society, when many of the young people from Bulgaria prefer to live and work abroad. Furthermore, some Bulgarian organizations have business relations with organizations from other countries and their employees have to speak their languages. The fact is that in recent years dozens of international companies set up their offices in the Bulgarian market. No matter which business sector they operate in one of

the most highly appreciated skills in job applicants is having good skills in one, two or more foreign languages which is a serious advantage for the job applicant.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that the workplace is where different generational values coexist and preferences influence the working atmosphere and success of the organization. The following conclusions and recommendations to managers and HR professionals can be drawn from the research:

- The values and characteristics of different studied generations of workers in Bulgaria do not differ significantly from those of their peers around the world.
- Different preferences and the performance of people from different generations have an impact on the workflow within the organization.
- Knowledge of generational characteristics will help employers and HR experts to better manage their employees.
- The management of human resources must constantly be changed in accordance with the requirements of different generations of employees to meet their expectations.
- Modern HR professionals must adapt quickly to the values and behavior of incumbent and new entrees in the organization in order to attract and retain the best talent from the labor market.
- Managers should realize that training is needed for staff of all ages. Training modules must meet the different needs and expectations. Furthermore, employees with long experience have accumulated a lot of knowledge about the work and organization which should be retained upon their retirement.

- Good communication with employees from different generations play a major role in solving the problem of coexistence of different generational groups in one workplace. The employer must use appropriate language, together with appropriate means of communication, ranging from old-fashioned business letters and phone calls to more contemporary emails, short texting and social media channels. Only in this way, managers will be able to attract and retain talent from every generation and to engage them within the organization.
- Recognizing and understanding generational differences can help everyone learn to work together more effectively and transform the workplace from a generation war zone to an age-diverse and productive team.

Understanding work ethics in the workplace is important to being an effective manager, a business owner. By understanding the values and attitudes of workers and how they relate to organizational norms and culture, HR department can improve their ability to add value strategically by sustaining the current organization or driving change to achieve the desired organization.

References:

- Ansoorian, A., Good, P., Samuelson, D. 2003, Managing generational differences. *Leadership*, May/June, pp. 34–35.
- Berl, P. 2006, Crossing the generational divide. *Exchange*, March/April, pp. 73–76.
- Brown, Michelle 2012, Responses to work intensification: does generation matter? *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 23, No. 17, October 2012, pp. 3578–3595

Carlson, H., 2004, Changing of the guard. *The School Administrator*, August, pp. 36–39.

Chao, L., 2005, For Gen Xers, it's Work to Live: Allowing Employees to Strike a Balance Between Job and Life can Lead to Better Retention Rates, *Wall Street Journal*, 29 November, p. B6.

Chou, S. Y., 2012, Millennials in the workplace: A conceptual analysis of millennials' leadership and followership styles. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 2(2), 71-83.

Cropanzano, R., M.S. Mitchell, 2005, 'Social Exchange Theory: An Interdisciplinary Review,' *Journal of Management*, Vol. 31, 6, pp. 874–900.

Dose, J., 1997, Work values: an integrative framework and illustrative application to organizational socialization. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 70, pp. 219–241.

Edmunds, J., B. Turner, 2005, Global generations: Social change in the twentieth century. *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 56, pp. 559-577.

Eldson, R., S. Lyer, 1999, Creating Value and Enhancing Retention through Employee

Development: the Sun Microsystems Experience,' *Human Resource Planning*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 39–48.

Hatfield, S.L., 2002, Understanding the four generations to enhance workplace management. *AFP Exchange*, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 72-74.

Johnson, J., J. Lopes, 2008, The intergenerational workforce, *Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 1, p. 33

Articles

- Jorgensen, B., 2003, 'Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y: Policy Implications for Defence Forces in the Modern Era,' *Foresight*, 5, 4, 41–49.
- Kupperschmidt, B., 2000, Multigenerational employees: strategies for effective management. *Health Care Manager*, 19, pp. 65–76.
- Lyons, S., Duxbury, L. and Higgins, C., 2007, An empirical assessment of generational differences in basic human values. *Psychological Reports*, 101, pp. 339–352.
- Mannheim, K., 1952, *Essays on the sociology of knowledge*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- McCrinkle, M., 2006, *Word Up: A lexicon of Generations Y & Z: A guide to communicating with them*. Australia: The ABC of XYZ
- Murphy, E.F., Gordon, J.D. and Anderson, T.L., 2004, Cross-cultural, cross-cultural age and cross-cultural generational differences in values between the United States and Japan. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 9, pp. 21–47.
- Oblinger, D., 2003, Boomers, Gen Xers, and millennials: understanding the new students. *Educause Review*, 38, 37-47.
- Patterson, C., 2007, The Impact of Generational Diversity in the Workplace, *The Diversity Factor*, 15(3): 17-22.
- Internet resources:**
- Collier, E., 2012, *Workplace Warfare: Baby Boomers, Gen X And Gen Y, Career Faqs* [Online], Available: <http://www.careerfaqs.com.au/news/news-and-views/workplace-warfare-baby-boomers-gen-x-and-gen-y/>, [Accessed 11 November 2015]
- Gancheva, G., 2013, How to engage employees according to their age [Online], Available: http://www.capital.bg/biznes/kompanii/2014/03/25/2268532_kak_da_angajirame_slujitelite_spered_vuzrastta_im/, [Accessed 28 May 2016]
- Guthrie, L., 2009, *The Next Generation of Workers*, The Ken Blanchard Companies [Online], Available: http://www.kenblanchard.com/img/pub/blanchard_next_generation_of_workers.pdf, [Accessed 27 April 2014]
- Markov, S., 2015, Managing different generations - the challenge for HR professionals, *JobTiger* [Online], Available: <http://jobtiger.tv/hr-industriya/upravlenieto-na-razlichni-pokoleniya-predizvikatelstvoto-pred-hr-profesionalistite>, [Accessed 15 June 2016]
- Maynew, B., 2011, *Work Ethics In The Workplace: Generation Differences*, Bruce Mayhew Blog [Online], Available: <https://brucemayhew.wordpress.com/2011/06/27/work-ethics-in-the-workplace-generation-differences/>, [Accessed 10 March 2016]
- Tyler, K., 2007, The tethered generation. *HR Magazine*, Vol. 52, No. 5. [Online], Available: <http://www.shrm.org/hrmagazine/articles/0507/0507cover.asp>, [Accessed 18 April 2016]