

# Bridging The Generational Divide: Soft Skills And Value Perceptions Of Gen Z In The Workforce

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\***Original Research Papers** are papers that report on original empirical research with a focus on teaching and learning. Papers may be qualitative or quantitative and include an Abstract, Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion, and Reference section, as well as any tables and/or figures.

## Abstract

This research paper examines the growing disparity in value perceptions between Generation Z (Gen Z) and downstream companies that are set to integrate this new cohort of professionals. Gen Z, sometimes referred to as “Zoomers,” includes those born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, predominantly the children of Generation X. Characterized by their digital fluency, entrepreneurial mindset, and desire for purpose-driven work, Gen Z presents both opportunities and challenges to traditional corporate structures. This study explores the underlying causes of the value perception gap between Gen Z and downstream companies, analyzing its impact on workplace productivity, collaboration, and employee retention.

Focusing on the technology and service sectors, which frequently recruit graduates from business and technology disciplines, this study employs a multi-method approach. It integrates quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews with downstream company representatives, and an in-depth case study of a large corporation. These methods provide a thorough analysis of the generational dynamics shaping workplace interactions. Furthermore, the research draws on international insights to present targeted recommendations for three key stakeholders: Companies, Gen Z professionals, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The findings reveal significant misalignments in expectations around workplace flexibility, leadership opportunities, and career progression. While Gen Z’s adaptability and digital proficiency are assets, their expectations for rapid advancement and autonomy often clash with the structured, performance-focused frameworks of many organizations. The study underscores the need for tailored talent management strategies, including flexible work arrangements, mentorship programs, and continuous learning opportunities that align with Gen Z’s unique needs.

*Abstract continued to next page...*

By investigating collaboration among companies, Gen Z, and HEIs, this research provides a roadmap for creating a more inclusive, adaptive workplace culture. It emphasizes the importance of addressing generational differences to enhance productivity, retain talent, and ensure a smoother integration of Gen Z into the evolving professional landscape.

## Introduction

As Gen Z enters the workforce, unique dynamics of expectations, skills, and workplace interactions become evident. This generation's strong determination, high expectations, and preference for purpose-driven work distinguish it from previous cohorts. However, these traits can clash with established workplace norms, leading to integration challenges. Such dissonance often results in higher rates of early resignations and decreased engagement within organizations, highlighting a need for a deeper understanding of these generational differences.

The generational divide between Gen Z and downstream companies, those seeking to employ new professionals, has gained significant attention in contemporary workplace studies. Although many organizations actively adapt their recruitment strategies to attract Gen Z, persistent disparities in values and expectations continue to affect productivity and cohesion. Bridging these gaps is essential for aligning Gen Z's perspectives with the realities of modern workplaces.

This study explores these dynamics using a multi-method research approach, with data collected from Denmark and Western contexts such as North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. While this focus may not capture regional variations in Gen Z values, it provides a broad understanding of the generational transition. The research combines quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and detailed case studies to analyze these complexities. The objective is to develop evidence-based strategies that promote workplace harmony and productivity, benefiting both employers and young professionals.

## Research Questions

How do differences in soft skills and value perceptions between Gen Z and downstream companies impact workplace productivity and collaboration?

and

What strategies should companies adopt to mitigate these disparities, and how can higher educational institutions contribute to promoting the harmonious integration of Gen Z into the labour market?

## Rationale

The authors, with over 25 years of experience in the technology sectors, have held key roles in talent management and recruitment, including at Microsoft. Now serving as educators in Business Economics and Information Technology, they have observed a widening gap between Gen Z's expectations and those of downstream companies. Despite efforts to attract young talent, these disparities remain a challenge to effective workplace dynamics.

Gen Z's digital fluency, purpose-driven goals, and strong determination can make it difficult for them to adapt to traditional norms. This study seeks to understand the root causes of these challenges through a rigorous analysis of empirical data and industry insights. By doing so, it aims to provide actionable strategies that enhance the integration of Gen Z into the workforce.

Ultimately, this research contributes to both corporate practice and academic discourse, offering insights into generational transitions within the labour market. By investigating a more cohesive relationship between Gen Z professionals and their employers, the study aspires to support innovation and sustainable growth across various sectors.

## Literature Review

This chapter synthesizes existing literature on generational dynamics within the workplace, focusing on Gen Z and their integration into professional settings. The aim is to build a foundation for the analysis by contextualizing the evolving relationship between Gen Z and the workforce while identifying critical knowledge gaps that this research seeks to address.

The contemporary workplace is characterized by constant change, driven by technological advances, digitalization, shifting organizational structures, and evolving employee expectations. Within this context, generational differences have emerged as pivotal influences on workplace dynamics.

Gen Z's entry into the labour market has attracted significant scholarly attention, as this generation is defined by technological fluency and an entrepreneurial mindset. While their digital competence and innovative approach offer opportunities to reshape traditional work paradigms, concerns about their communication skills, work ethic, and adaptation to existing norms persist. Understanding these contrasting traits is crucial to examining how Gen Z engages with workplace expectations and structures.

### **Industry Insights**

The integration of Gen Z into the workforce has prompted various industry responses, reflecting this generation's unique characteristics. Gen Z is highly comfortable with technology, a proficiency that makes them valuable in tech-centric roles and aligns with the digital transformation occurring in many modern workplaces (Deloitte, 2017). Their ease with digital tools and platforms enables them to adapt quickly to new technologies, making them critical assets for organizations undergoing digital shifts.

In addition to technological proficiency, many members of this generation exhibit a strong entrepreneurial spirit, often exploring new ventures and seeking opportunities to innovate and improve processes both within and outside traditional employment structures (Forbes, 2024). This inclination towards entrepreneurship is part of a broader trend where Gen Z favours flexibility and self-direction, showing a preference for roles that offer autonomy and opportunities for remote work (Forbes, 2024). Unlike previous generations, Gen Z is less motivated by traditional hierarchical structures, instead focusing on tangible results and the impact of their work.

Gen Z's values are deeply influenced by social and environmental concerns, shaping their expectations of employers. They prefer to work for companies that align with their values of sustainability and social justice, often prioritizing organizations that demonstrate a genuine commitment to corporate social responsibility (Deloitte, 2017). This focus extends to the emphasis they place on diversity and inclusion within the workplace, expecting employers to foster environments where all employees feel respected and valued (Forbes, 2024).

However, the integration of Gen Z into professional environments is not without challenges. Mental health

remains a critical concern as a substantial portion of Gen Z has reported experiencing anxiety and depression at higher rates than older cohorts. A survey by McKinsey (2022) highlighted that 55% of Gen Z respondents have sought mental health support, reflecting the significant pressure they feel in navigating modern work-life demands. These mental health challenges underscore the need for workplaces to offer robust support systems, contributing to their overall well-being and retention.

Together, these insights provide a comprehensive understanding of the generational dynamics that inform the present research, emphasizing the importance of aligning organizational strategies with the distinct expectations and challenges faced by Gen Z.

### **Theories Applied**

To understand the complexities of integrating Gen Z into the workforce, this study draws on theories from organizational behaviour, talent management, generational studies, and education. These frameworks help clarify the disparities between Gen Z's values and the expectations of downstream companies. Organizational behaviour theories (Vroom et al., 2005) explore how individuals are motivated by anticipated rewards, offering insights into Gen Z's engagement when their contributions are valued. Homans's Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1974) further emphasizes the reciprocal nature of workplace relationships, highlighting how these dynamics can influence collaboration and trust between Gen Z employees and employers.

The study also draws from talent management frameworks. Becker's Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1994) underscores the importance of investing in skills and education to enhance employability, which is particularly relevant for assessing how well Gen Z's capabilities align with labour market demands. Berger's Talent Pipeline Model (Berger, 2017) emphasizes strategic development and retention of talent, offering a perspective on the recruitment, onboarding, and retention strategies tailored for Gen Z professionals.

In terms of understanding generational differences, the Strauss-Howe Generational Theory (Howe, 1992) posits that generational attitudes follow cyclical patterns, providing a lens through which to analyze Gen Z's workplace behaviours and expectations. This is complemented by Elder's Life Course Perspective (Elder, 1998), which examines how

individuals navigate key life transitions, such as moving from education to employment, offering insights into how to support Gen Z's integration into the professional landscape.

The educational theories of Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1968) and Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984) are also crucial in this analysis. Constructivism emphasizes the importance of learning through social interaction, which is relevant for designing educational strategies that prepare Gen Z for collaborative work environments. Meanwhile, Experiential Learning Theory advocates learning through direct experience, underscoring the value of internships and project-based learning in equipping Gen Z with the skills needed for professional success. Together, these theories provide a robust framework for interpreting research findings, illustrating how Gen Z's expectations challenge traditional workplace models and offering pathways for organizations to address these challenges.

### **Empirical Research**

This study employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of Gen Z's integration into the workforce. Quantitative surveys, as described by (Balnaves, 2001), use structured questions to collect data on attitudes and behaviours, allowing for statistical analysis of trends and relationships. This approach provides valuable insights into the generational differences in workplace expectations. To complement these surveys, qualitative interviews capture in-depth perspectives from Gen Z and employer representatives, offering a nuanced understanding of motivations, beliefs, and experiences (Nathan et al., 2019). These interviews help contextualize the quantitative data by revealing the underlying reasons for observed trends.

Case studies, such as those outlined by Hassan (2024), provide a detailed examination of how organizations manage organizational transitions in practice. These studies are particularly useful for illustrating real-world examples of how companies address challenges related to integrating Gen Z into their workforce, offering a holistic perspective that combines theoretical insights with practical observations.

Additionally, the study includes an international research review that synthesizes findings from various Western countries, identifying common trends and best practices in company cultures, policies, and generational attributes.

This review allows for a broader understanding of how Gen Z's workplace integration plays out across different contexts, providing guidance for companies seeking to align their strategies with the values of this new generation.

## **Methodology**

This chapter details the methodological framework employed in this research, focusing on the generational dynamics between Gen Z and downstream companies. By outlining the research design, data collection, and analysis methods, this chapter explains the rationale behind the chosen approach and demonstrates its relevance to the research questions.

The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, an in-depth case study, and a review of existing literature. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the perspectives of both Gen Z individuals and downstream companies, providing a robust foundation for analysis. Quantitative surveys gathered data on workplace values and expectations from both groups, offering insights that informed subsequent qualitative interviews. Interviews with representatives from six downstream companies allowed for a deeper understanding of the challenges and strategies related to integrating Gen Z talent. An in-depth case study of a large corporation provided practical insights, while a review of international research contextualized the findings within a broader scope.

### **Methodologies Applied**

The research design ensured a thorough understanding of the study's focus by sequentially integrating quantitative and qualitative methods. This layered approach enabled the mapping of key findings, the identification of effective strategies, and a clearer understanding of areas where generational alignment could be improved. The initial quantitative survey provided a foundation of data that informed the focus areas of the qualitative interviews, while the case study and literature review helped to ground the findings in practical and theoretical contexts. While the phases were interrelated, respondents were segmented across phases to prevent bias from influencing subsequent stages. Key findings from each phase were, however, evaluated and validated with respondents in the following phases to ensure accuracy and consistency. (See [Figure 1](#)).

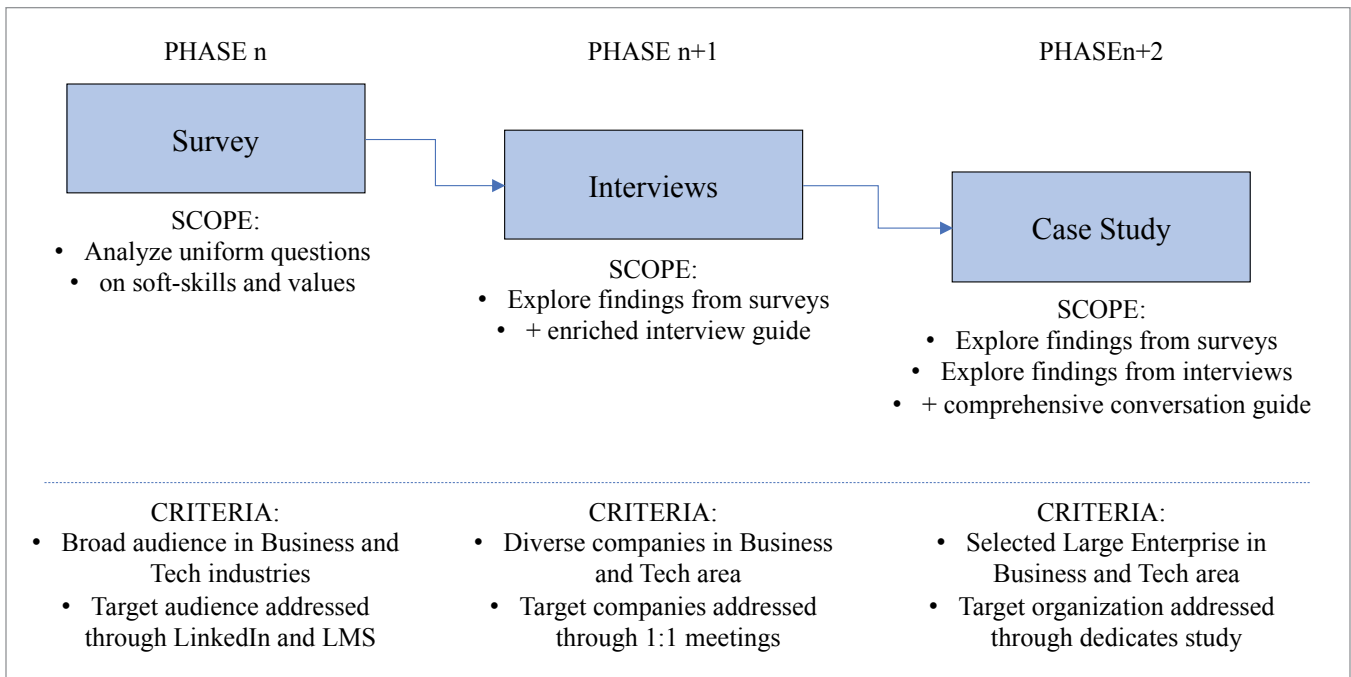


Figure 1. Sequential Research Method

### Quantitative Survey Design

The quantitative survey targeted both Gen Z individuals and downstream companies, addressing workplace competencies and values. The survey included questions on essential skills and values such as adaptability, communication, collaboration, diversity, problem-solving, and leadership. This design facilitated a comparative analysis, allowing for the identification of differences in how each group rated these aspects. By analyzing these distinctions, the research sought to uncover alignment or misalignment between employer expectations and the competencies valued by Gen Z.

Although the survey sample size was modest, it provided a clear picture of the general trends in perceptions and expectations among the respondents. The results offered a basis for the deeper exploration of themes in the qualitative interviews. The survey data is included in [Appendix A](#), detailing the survey questions and the demographic breakdown of respondents. The insights gained from this survey were instrumental in identifying key areas of focus for the subsequent qualitative phase. (See [Figure 2](#)).

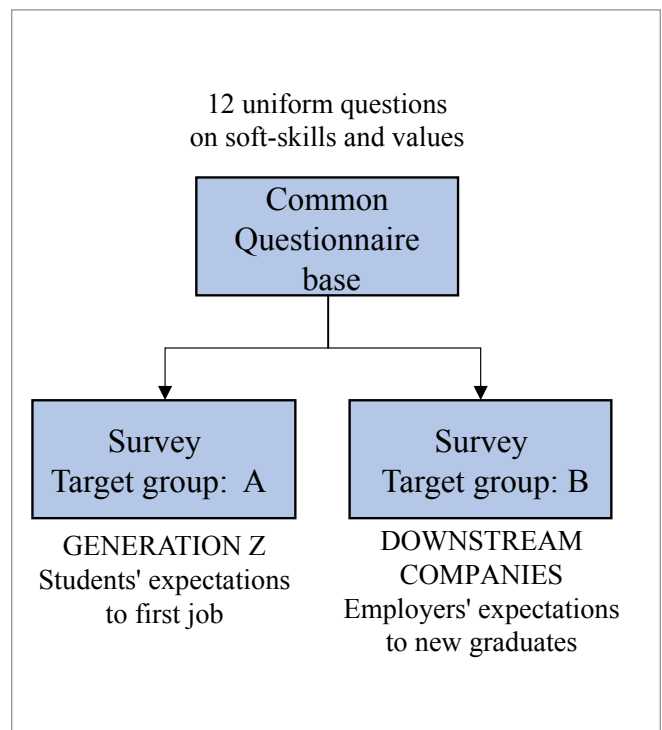


Figure 2. Questionnaire Structure and Distribution

## Qualitative Interviews with Companies

In-depth interviews were conducted with representatives from six downstream companies to complement the quantitative findings. The interviews aimed to explore their approaches to talent management and generational integration, providing nuanced perspectives that could not be captured through survey data alone. The interview guide, available in [Appendix B](#), structured discussions around four main themes: recruitment strategies, flexible work arrangements, professional development, and inclusive organizational culture.

The recruitment strategies theme investigated how companies attract and retain Gen Z talent, focusing on the use of digital platforms and the alignment of recruitment messages with Gen Z values. This theme provided insight into the effectiveness of these strategies in engaging younger demographics. The second theme explored flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options and flexible scheduling, and assessed how well these practices met the preferences of Gen Z employees, contributing to retention efforts.

Professional development emerged as a critical area, with companies highlighting various initiatives aimed at supporting the growth of young employees through training and mentorship programs. The theme of inclusive organizational culture focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, examining the extent to which these initiatives create a supportive environment for Gen Z employees. The interviews offered rich qualitative data, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges companies face in integrating new talent while maintaining a cohesive workplace culture. (See [Table 1](#)).

## In-Depth Case Study

An in-depth case study of a large corporation provided additional practical insights into managing generational transitions. This corporation was selected for its active efforts in adapting workplace practices to better accommodate Gen Z employees. The case study focused on the same four themes as the interviews: 1) recruitment, 2) work flexibility, 3) professional development, and 4) inclusion—allowing for a detailed examination of how strategic adjustments can facilitate smoother integration of Gen Z employees into the workforce.

The case study approach enabled a close examination of real-world applications of the strategies discussed. For example, the company's use of targeted social media campaigns to attract Gen Z talent, along with its emphasis on flexible work policies, served as concrete examples of practices that could be adapted by other organizations. By documenting these efforts, the case study provided valuable insights into how organizations can align their talent management strategies with the values and expectations of Gen Z.

## Profile of Case Company

HOFOR is responsible for the water supply and wastewater disposal in eight municipalities in the Copenhagen metropolitan area: Albertslund, Brøndby, Dragør, Herlev, Hvidovre, Copenhagen, Rødovre and Vallensbæk. In addition, HOFOR supply Copenhagen with district heating, town gas and district cooling – and we erect wind turbines, both in and outside Copenhagen. HOFOR owns the Amagerværket power station, which produces electricity and district heating, and we are a co-owner of BIOFOS, which operates wastewater treatment plants in Greater Copenhagen.

## Review of International Research

The final component of the methodology involved a review of international studies, providing context for the study's findings and recommendations. This review synthesized insights from research conducted in various Western contexts, including North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. It highlighted common challenges and successful strategies for integrating Gen Z into professional environments, offering a wide perspective on the issues explored in this study.

The international research review focused on identifying trends in company cultures, generational attitudes, and best practices that could be applied across different regions. For example, studies consistently indicated that flexibility in work arrangements and a commitment to diversity are critical factors in retaining Gen Z employees. By comparing these studies, the review provided a broader understanding of how cultural factors influence the integration of Gen Z, even while the primary focus of this study remained on Western corporate environments.

This synthesis of international research informed us on the recommendations presented in the subsequent chapters, ensuring that the strategies proposed are both practical and adaptable. It allowed for a deeper understanding of the

**Table 1. Profile of Interviewed Companies**

<b>COMPANY</b>	<b>BUSINESS AREA</b>	<b>REMARKS</b>	<b>INTERVIEW</b>
Anonymized_01	Technology driven company developing and selling devices and solutions to remotely connect media devices. (ex. PC cast to screen)	The company is located in Copenhagen with an organization size of approx. 75 employees. The Managing Director was interviewed	In-person meeting using questionnaire framework
Anonymized_02	High tech company with global presence providing large scale solution to enterprises on server virtualization and hosting solutions	The company is global, and we consulted the branch in Denmark that covers the Nordic area. The organization have approx. xx employees. The country manager was interviewed.	In-person meeting using questionnaire framework
Anonymized_03	A new scale-up system integrator that develop digital front stage solution like advanced web sites and provide services to interconnect with back-end services	The company is in scale-up stage and attain a good group on young graduates to innovate and grow market impact. The Managing Director was interviewed	On-line meeting using questionnaire framework
Anonymized_04	An established company providing end-to-end payment and salary solution to medium and large enterprises. Recently merged into a global consortium and have global reach	The company is in growth and have a strong need of attracting more capacity and young talent. Input was retrieved from multiple sources within the company	Multiple contacts and touchpoints questionnaire framework applied
Anonymized_05	A world leading software company providing high-end solution to the financial sector. In rapid growth mode and expanding to new markets	Undergoing major transformation in technology backend and deployment methods Input was retrieved from multiple sources within the company	Multiple contacts and touchpoints questionnaire framework applied
Anonymized_06	A global leading software and service company providing Productivity, AI and cloud services cross industry to world-wide markets	Undergoing major transformation in Business Models and technology deliverables and striving for top position on AI adoption	Multiple contacts and touchpoints questionnaire framework applied

generational dynamics that extend beyond local contexts, providing a basis for developing relevant approaches to the integration of Gen Z into the workforce.

## Finding & Results

This chapter presents the key findings derived from the research, focusing on data collected through surveys, interviews, and case studies. It provides an analysis of these findings and their implications concerning the research questions, highlighting trends, disparities, and areas of alignment or misalignment between Gen Z and downstream companies. The analysis also aims to identify actionable insights for addressing gaps and challenges uncovered during the study.

The initial phase of the research revealed a limitation related to the small survey sample size, which reinforced the importance of our sequential methodological approach. By integrating survey insights with qualitative interviews, we further validated and expanded upon emerging trends. This approach allowed us to identify correlations that mitigated the impact of the limited survey data, ensuring a robust analysis.

## Data & Analysis

### Survey Analysis

The survey targeted both Gen Z individuals and downstream companies, with responses collected through LinkedIn and a local Learning Management System, encompassing Danish and international participants. Despite the relatively small sample sizes, Gen Z: N=30, Downstream Companies: N=9, the data offered meaningful insights into the perceptions of both groups. The survey highlighted differences in professional value perceptions, providing a foundation for comparison between these groups.

The analysis revealed distinct perceptions between Gen Z and downstream companies regarding workplace values and expectations. Companies expressed concerns about the potential for generational conflict, particularly how differences in values might impact cohesion and productivity. While they acknowledge Gen Z's digital proficiency, companies noted challenges in aligning this generation's expectations with existing workplace structures. Gen Z, on the other hand, sees limited opportunities for rapid advancement as a barrier to their engagement and career development, underscoring the need for organizations to adapt their retention strategies. (See [Figure 3](#)).

### Analysis of Value Themes

The survey and interviews explored twelve value-driven themes, categorized into two clusters: individual and social dimensions. These clusters highlighted significant differences between Gen Z and companies:

**Individual Dimension:** This dimension examines personal traits like self-awareness and autonomy. Companies observed that Gen Z's strong sense of autonomy could clash with traditional norms, creating challenges in adapting to established structures. This clash often arises as Gen Z transitions from a digital-native perspective to navigating more structured office environments.

**Social Dimension:** Gen Z prioritizes a workplace environment that emphasizes mentorship, innovation, and a sense of community. They value opportunities for collaboration and growth within a supportive work culture. However, companies perceive challenges in balancing these expectations with the realities of hierarchical structures and performance metrics.

COMPANIES	SCORE	GENZ	SCORE
Expectations around work-life balance and flexibility may clash with traditional workplace norms	6,3	Gen Z's tech-savvy nature can be a valuable asset to companies as they navigate digital transformation.	7,5
Companies may need to invest more in training and development to meet Gen Z's expectations for growth and development.	5,4	Gen Z's entrepreneurial spirit and desire for leadership opportunities can benefit companies that provide opportunities for growth and advancement.	6,8
Gen Z's desire for social responsibility and diversity may conflict with some company priorities.	4,7	Companies that prioritize social responsibility, diversity, and inclusivity may be more attractive to Gen Z employees	6,7
	9		9,00

Figure 3. Top 3 Top-of-mind of the two target groups.



Figure 4 illustrates the twelve value-driven questions, categorized into two clusters. The bars represent the degree of alignment between downstream companies and Gen Z. When the bars are centred, it indicates close alignment between the two groups.

**Critical Areas of Focus**

Four key themes emerged as areas of concern and perception deviance:

**1. Flexibility:** Flexibility is a high priority for downstream companies. Companies generally emphasize structured flexibility, where changeability is managed within set work hours to support collaboration and meet organizational goals. For Gen Z, however, flexibility often extends beyond work constraints to include the freedom to prioritize personal interests and spontaneous activities. Interviews highlighted how these divergent views can create misunderstandings, particularly around time management and work-life integration, as each group holds distinct expectations of what flexibility entails in the workplace.

*Exemplification:* For instance, a downstream company might view flexibility as the willingness to adjust work schedules to meet client demands, such as asking an employee, “We need you to work extended hours next week to complete a whitepaper for an important customer.” In contrast, a Gen Z employee might interpret flexibility as personal autonomy,

responding with, “I’ve spontaneously enrolled in a four-week surf academy in Portugal, starting Monday.” These examples illustrate the fundamental differences in understanding: while companies see flexibility as adaptability within work requirements, Gen Z associates it with individual freedom, underscoring the challenges of aligning these expectations.

**2. Adaptability:** Adaptability is viewed as essential by downstream companies, which expect employees to adjust quickly to new roles and responsibilities. For companies, adaptability means role flexibility to address short-term needs or cover for team members. Gen Z, however, places a strong emphasis on autonomy and personal choice, which can sometimes limit their ability to adapt promptly to changing demands. Rather than immediate shifts in responsibility, Gen Z prefers opportunities for skill development across diverse projects, seeking broader, role-expanding experiences rather than short-term adjustments.

*Exemplification:* For instance, a downstream company might define adaptability as stepping into a different role temporarily to meet immediate needs, such as a manager requesting, “We need you to step in for our customer service team during a colleague’s two-week sick leave.” On the other hand, a Gen Z employee might view adaptability as the chance to explore new skills, responding with, “I’ve been in my engineering role for eight months and would like to participate in the upcoming marketing project kicking off next Monday.”

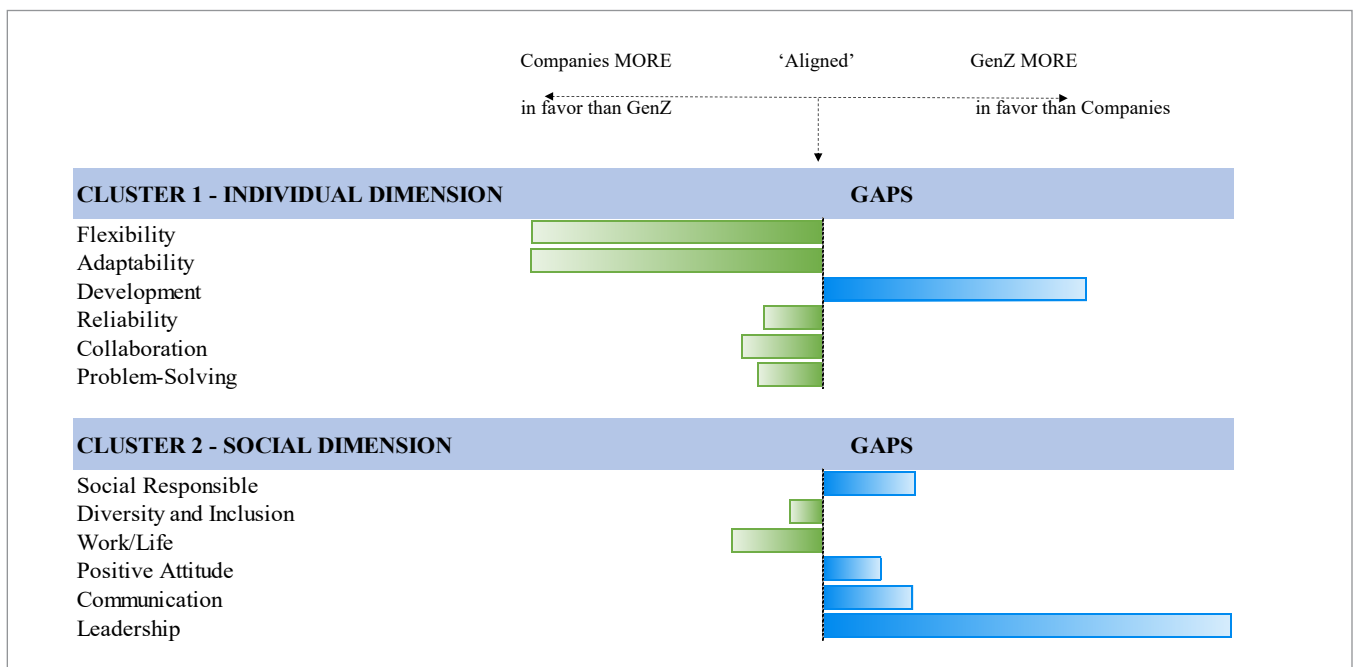


Figure 4. Gaps across Individual and Social soft skills/values

These examples underscore the differing expectations: companies prioritize role flexibility to meet immediate needs, while Gen Z seeks adaptability in the form of opportunities for broader, developmental engagement.

**3. Professional Development:** Gen Z places a high value on rapid advancement and exploring diverse roles, often seeking movements across functions to build a broad skill set. In contrast, companies typically favour structured career progression, focusing on gradual skill-building within defined roles and responsibilities. This divergence highlights the need for development programs that accommodate Gen Z's preference for varied experiences while maintaining a framework for steady career growth. Tailoring these programs to balance immediate opportunities with long-term advancement could help bridge the gap in expectations.

*Exemplification:* For example, a Gen Z employee might express a desire for immediate change, saying, "I'm tired of working in testing; I want to transition into a sales executive role." Meanwhile, a downstream company representative might emphasize a more structured approach, responding, "We have a structured framework to guide your next career move; let's stick with it and reassess in 6 months." These examples highlight the differing expectations: companies prioritize a steady, skill-building progression within established pathways, while Gen Z seeks dynamic, cross-functional career advancement.

**4. Leadership:** For Gen Z, leadership is seen as a platform for driving meaningful change and promoting an inclusive, purpose-driven culture. They aspire to roles where they can influence organizational values and contribute to social impact. In contrast, companies tend to view leadership through a lens of performance metrics, accountability, and business outcomes. This difference highlights the challenge of aligning Gen Z's mission-driven leadership ambitions with traditional leadership pathways focused on measurable results and structured progression.

*Exemplification:* For instance, a Gen Z employee might express a desire to lead with a value-driven focus, saying, "I am passionate about making our ESG processes meaningful; let me take the job and expand my team." Conversely, a downstream company representative might emphasize business results, responding, "Your team is underperforming, both in financial metrics and customer impact; you need

to address this." These examples reveal the differing expectations: while companies prioritize leadership grounded in performance and accountability, Gen Z seeks leadership roles that emphasize purpose and broader, mission-aligned impact.

### **Quotes compiled in questionnaire**

#### **Anonymized GenZ:**

“Opportunity: gaining valuable experience and impact—  
Challenge: getting to fit in the company.”

#### **Anonymized Company:**

“I think that GenZ want to make a difference and do a job for the common good. And balance things themselves as long as they have freedom.”

### **Insights from Interviews**

The qualitative interviews provided deeper insights into how companies are adjusting their practices to meet the expectations of Gen Z. The discussions were structured around recruitment strategies, work flexibility, professional development, and organizational culture.

**Recruitment and Retention:** Companies reported a shift in recruitment priorities, noting that Gen Z candidates often prioritize personal benefits and alignment with organizational values over traditional job incentives. Effective recruitment now involves emphasizing flexibility, growth opportunities, and the organization's commitment to social responsibility. One company demonstrated this approach by integrating Gen Z recruits through a centralized process that balanced cultural alignment with skill assessment, illustrating a more strategic engagement with young talent.

**Flexibility in Work Arrangements:** Flexible work policies have become a critical concern for both companies and Gen Z, especially following the global pandemic. Companies aim to balance remote work options with in-office collaboration to maintain productivity. However, Gen Z's interpretation of flexibility often includes a preference for balancing work commitments with personal pursuits, leading to tensions over time management. The interviews underscored the importance of clear communication to bridge these expectations.

**Professional Development and Mentorship:** Gen Z’s focus is on rapid progression and challenges established development frameworks. Interviewees emphasized the need for structured yet adaptable career paths that allow Gen Z to explore different roles while developing core competencies. Mentorship programs emerged as a key strategy, with companies recognizing the value of bi-directional mentorship, where both younger and more experienced employees learn from each other.

**Inclusive Culture:** Companies emphasized efforts to foster inclusivity, addressing issues like gender bias and promoting diverse leadership. For Gen Z, an inclusive workplace is essential for long-term engagement, with many expecting a culture that values open dialogue and representation. The alignment between these values is crucial for building a supportive work environment that enhances retention.

**Quote compiled in questionnaire:**

“Finding an employer that practices what they preach in their mission statement, e.g. saying their core principle is ‘respect’ and the vast majority don’t even bother to respond to applications with a rejection email (that could be automated). Working from home is mandatory, not optional. I will never work for a business that insists on an enforced office ‘culture,’ which is purely there for surveillance, not the benefit of the employee.”

—Anonymized GenZ

**Case Study: HOFOR**

The in-depth case study of HOFOR, a large corporation, highlighted practical applications of strategies aimed at integrating Gen Z into the workforce. Faced with a high turnover rate among new hires, particularly Gen Z, the company implemented the “HOFOR YOUNG” initiative, designed to address the specific needs of young employees. This program focused on creating a knowledge-sharing

community and providing opportunities for direct engagement with leadership.

Through surveys and interviews conducted internally, HOFOR identified that many young employees left due to misaligned expectations about work roles and growth opportunities. The program emphasized a tailored approach, recognizing the diverse aspirations of Gen Z and fostering a sense of community. By actively involving Gen Z employees in shaping their career paths, HOFOR succeeded in reducing early resignations and building a more engaged workforce. This case study underscored the importance of tailored development programs and open communication channels for successful generational integration. (See [Table 2](#)).

**Quote compiled in questionnaire:**

“Most companies believe that structures and programs will fit employees—but for us (GenZ) ONE SIZE FITS NONE.” —Anonymized Case Company employee

**Key Findings**

The findings from this research illustrate the nuanced dynamics between Gen Z and downstream companies, emphasizing the need for strategic adjustments to bridge generational gaps. Key insights include:

**Workplace Flexibility and Adaptability:** There is a notable divergence in how flexibility is interpreted by Gen Z and companies. While companies value structured flexibility that aligns with organizational goals, Gen Z prioritizes personal freedom. Similarly, adaptability is a shared priority, but the focus differs—companies emphasize role flexibility, while Gen Z seeks diverse opportunities for growth.

**Professional Growth and Development:** Gen Z desires rapid career progression and role diversity, often challenging traditional, structured career pathways. Companies must

**Table 2—Overview of misalignment**

HOFOR Did Meet Genz Expectations	HOFOR Did Not Meet Genz Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nice office facilities</li> <li>• Good colleagues and friendly tone</li> <li>• High level of expertise</li> <li>• Flexibility in work hours</li> <li>• Flat organizational structure</li> <li>• Fair Salary and compensation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal and slow decision making</li> <li>• Process and policy conformity</li> <li>• Not delivering on purpose</li> <li>• Rigid rules around scope of work</li> <li>• Not future oriented</li> <li>• Not as green as expected</li> </ul>

balance structured development programs with opportunities for lateral movements to engage this generation effectively.

**Leadership Aspirations:** There is a mismatch between Gen Z's view of leadership as a means to drive purpose-driven initiatives and companies' emphasis on accountability and performance metrics. Addressing this gap requires creating leadership roles that blend strategic objectives with opportunities for broader organizational impact.

**Inclusive Organizational Culture:** Both Gen Z and companies recognize the value of inclusivity. However, the emphasis on open dialogue and a sense of belonging is more pronounced among Gen Z. Companies that prioritize these elements are more likely to foster a supportive environment that aligns with the values of younger employees, enhancing retention.

Through a combination of surveys, interviews, and case study analysis, this chapter highlights the critical areas that require attention for organizations aiming to engage and retain Gen Z talent. These findings offer a foundation for developing strategies that balance the needs of both groups, ensuring a productive and cohesive workplace.

## Discussion

This chapter examines the findings in relation to the research questions, industry insights, and theoretical frameworks, focusing on strategies for bridging Gen Z's values and corporate practices. It explores how to bridge identified gaps while fostering mutual adaptation and promoting organizational growth.

The research highlights the challenge of aligning Gen Z's expectations with established practices in downstream companies. To address this, organizations should adopt comprehensive talent management strategies, including targeted recruitment, personalized onboarding, and professional development tailored to Gen Z's aspirations. Flexible work policies, digital collaboration tools, and mentorship programs are also critical to ensuring Gen Z's engagement and retention.

Gen Z must also develop essential workplace skills—such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability, through internships, experiential learning, and continuous professional development. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a key role in this, emphasizing practical

experiences and industry collaboration to prepare students for today's complex professional environment. Gen Z's upbringing in environments valuing inclusivity and democracy has shaped their desire for participatory decision-making, which can sometimes clash with traditional organizational structures.

## Convergence with Industry Insights

Our research reveals both alignment and divergence with industry insights on Gen Z's workforce integration. Studies like those by Deloitte (2017) and Forbes (2024) recognize Gen Z's technological fluency, entrepreneurial mindset, and preference for autonomy, which our data supports. Gen Z participants highlighted the importance of flexibility and autonomy in their work.

However, deeper nuances emerged regarding flexibility and leadership. While external sources emphasize flexibility as a means to balance work and personal life, our research found that companies view flexibility as task-focused, whereas Gen Z emphasizes freedom in managing personal time. This suggests that while companies are adapting, further adjustments are needed to align flexibility expectations with Gen Z's desires.

The importance of social and environmental values is a consistent theme in both our study and existing research. Gen Z prioritizes working for organizations aligned with their values, especially in terms of corporate social responsibility (McKinsey, 2022). However, our findings reveal that companies often struggle to balance these values with operational needs, highlighting a gap in effectively meeting Gen Z's expectations.

In terms of professional development, both our study and external research point to Gen Z's desire for rapid advancement and meaningful leadership roles (Forbes, 2024). However, companies often prioritize structured, performance-driven progress. This mismatch highlights the need for companies to create leadership roles that offer Gen Z opportunities for impact while maintaining accountability.

In terms of recruitment, our findings echo industry literature on the need for tailored approaches (Deloitte, 2017). Gen Z values meaningful work and alignment with organizational values over traditional job incentives, urging companies to rethink their strategies. Mentorship, particularly bi-directional

programs, is crucial for engaging Gen Z, allowing them to contribute fresh perspectives while learning from senior colleagues.

Overall, our findings align with industry insights on issues like technological fluency and value alignment but reveal more complex differences in expectations around flexibility, leadership, and personal development. Bridging these gaps will require further adaptation by companies to foster environments that embrace Gen Z's entrepreneurial drive alongside their desire for autonomy and impact.

### **Convergence with Theoretical Frameworks *Organizational Behavior and Dynamics***

Our findings align with the Expectancy Theory (Vroom et al., 2005), which suggests that individuals are motivated by anticipated rewards. Gen Z, however, places greater emphasis on purpose and impact than on financial incentives. This aligns with Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1974), which emphasizes the importance of relationships and social recognition. Downstream companies recognize the need for new engagement models that resonate with Gen Z's values.

The shift toward more cognitive, data-driven roles, as noted by Deloitte (2017), underscores the need for adaptability in the workforce. While Gen Z is technically adept, they often face challenges in developing cognitive social skills essential for collaboration and knowledge transfer. Generational communication barriers can hinder the exchange of tacit knowledge, which is deeply embedded in context and experience. Cross-generational mentorship can help bridge these gaps. Our case study of HOFOR showed the success of peer-to-peer mentorship in improving knowledge transfer and collaboration between different generations. While companies appreciate Gen Z's digital expertise, they also need to address gaps in communication and soft skills through targeted support.

### **Talent Management and Growth**

The study highlights the relevance of Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1994), which emphasizes the importance of investing in employee skills and education. Companies recognize the need to support Gen Z beyond technical training, addressing the development of soft skills and resilience. Despite Gen Z's digital fluency, they often struggle with mental well-being and resilience, particularly in high-stress environments.

To address these challenges, companies need holistic talent management programs that go beyond technical training to include the development of social and emotional competencies. McKinsey (2022) identified factors like hostile work environments and mental health challenges that disproportionately affect Gen Z. Addressing these through inclusive and supportive policies can enhance engagement and retention. (See [Figure 5](#)).

### **Generational Divide and Gaps**

Strauss-Howe Generational Theory (Howe, 1992) suggests that each generation is shaped by distinct experiences. Our study highlights a generational divide in soft skills and values, which seems to be influenced by the impact of technology and social media. While Gen Z's strong sense of autonomy is beneficial, it can also hinder adaptation to traditional workplace norms, particularly where hierarchical structures are more rigid.

Downstream companies are working to address these challenges but have yet to fully bridge the generational divide. Our research suggests that fostering resilience and emotional intelligence is key to supporting Gen Z's integration into the workforce, ensuring they are prepared for both the technical and social demands of modern professional life.

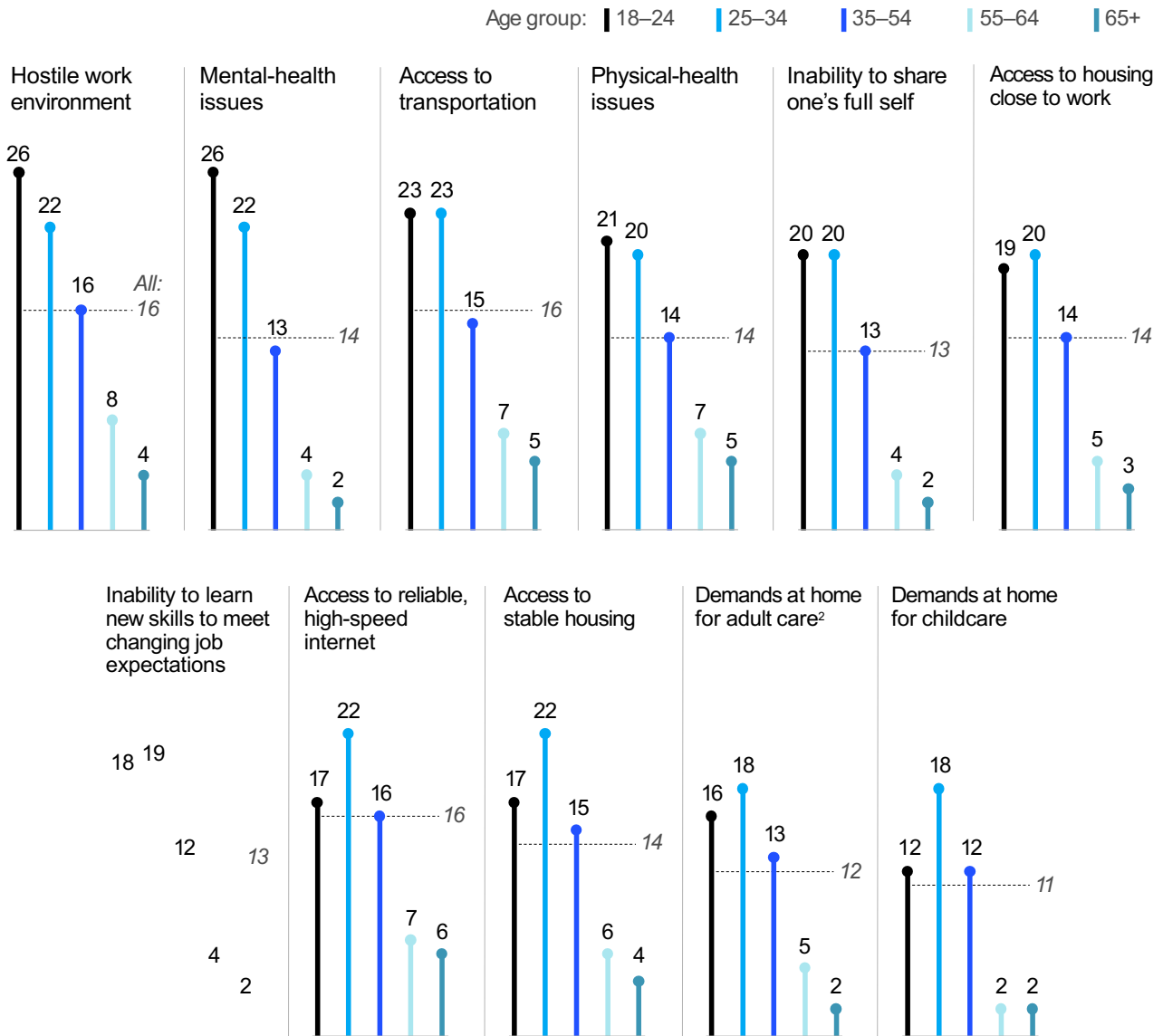
### **Educational Frameworks and Practices**

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have a critical role in preparing Gen Z for the workforce, aligning education with employer needs through experiential and task-oriented learning. Constructivism Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1968) and Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984) emphasize learning through experience and interaction. By incorporating internships, project-based learning, and real-world problem-solving into their curricula, HEIs can better equip students with the skills needed for professional success.

Lifelong learning is also essential for adapting to the fast-paced changes in technology and industry. HEIs should foster a culture of continuous learning to keep students adaptable and prepared for evolving workplace demands. Balancing technical skills with interpersonal competencies is crucial for a smooth transition into the job market, as highlighted by both our findings and industry research from Deloitte (2022). A recent study conducted at KEA, in comparison with findings from Deloitte (2022), revealed a compelling dynamic: although young women excel academically, their transition

## Younger workers are more likely to report that various factors have a major impact on their ability to work effectively.

Share of employed respondents by age group who said a particular factor had a major impact on their ability to effectively perform their work,<sup>1</sup> % (n = 13,896)



<sup>1</sup>Question asked of full-time, part-time, and self-employed individuals: If you think about your job today, or your most recent job, to what extent are/were any of the following impacting your ability to effectively perform your work?

<sup>2</sup>Adult family members or other adult dependents.

Source: McKinsey American Opportunity Survey, Spring 2022

Figure 5. McKinsey: How does Gen Z see its place in the working world? (2022)

into the workforce can be stressful. This highlights the importance of employability, which encompasses a balance of soft skills and subject competence, in ensuring a smooth and successful entry into the job market. (See [Figure 6](#)).

“Average grade achievements for Gen Z women is 1,6 points higher than Gen Z men. In general, young women have a higher level of subject competence when graduating from the Business Economics and IT program at KEA.” –KEA 5th semester mini-survey

**“Stress and anxiety levels are highest in Gen Zs and women**

While the survey finds that stress and anxiety are significant in both generations, they are higher among Gen Zs than millennials. 46% of Gen Zs say they are stressed or anxious all or most of the time, with women more severely affected than men (53% vs 39%).” (Deloitte, 2022). (See [Figure 7](#)).

Adaptability, honed through fast-paced digital environments, is also a valuable asset in today’s dynamic workplaces. However, challenges include potential distractions that can reduce focus and productivity. A preference for digital communication may lead to misunderstandings and superficial relationships, and blending personal and professional lives on social platforms complicates work-life balance and raises cybersecurity risks. To succeed, Gen Z needs to leverage their digital skills while refining interpersonal skills. Companies can support this through training in digital etiquette and encouraging direct interactions, fostering a balance between digital proficiency and traditional skills.

**Reflection and Perspectives**

**Gen Z: Social Media Influence**

Social media’s impact on Gen Z’s workplace integration brings both benefits and challenges. Their digital fluency enhances networking, collaboration, and creativity, making them effective advocates for their organization’s mission.

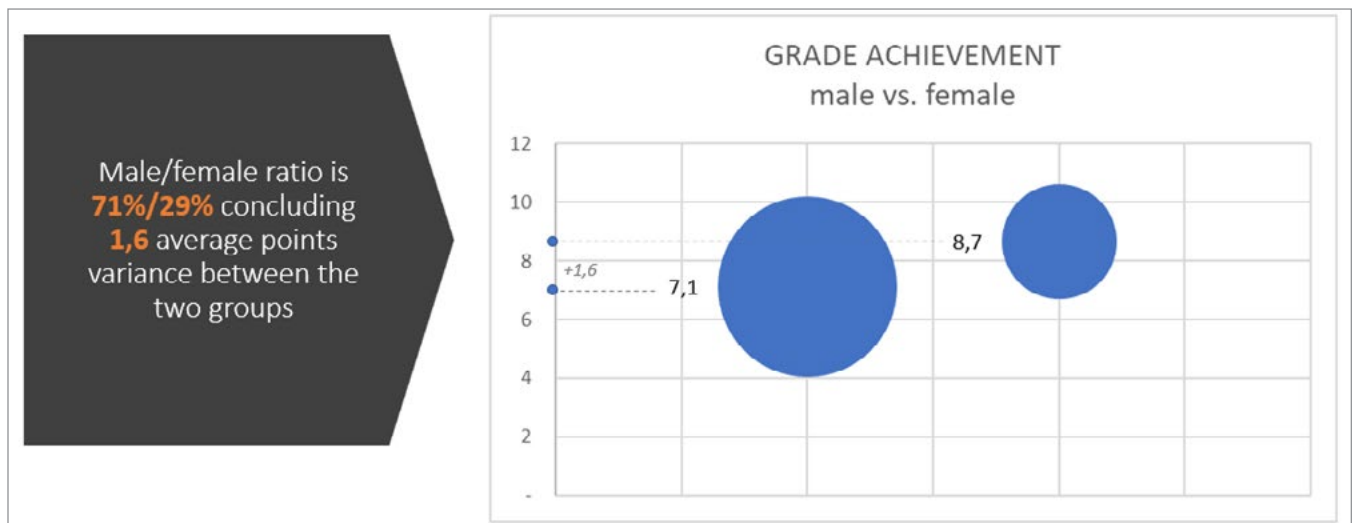


Figure 6. KEA survey: Gen Z women vs Gen Z men: Grade achievement.

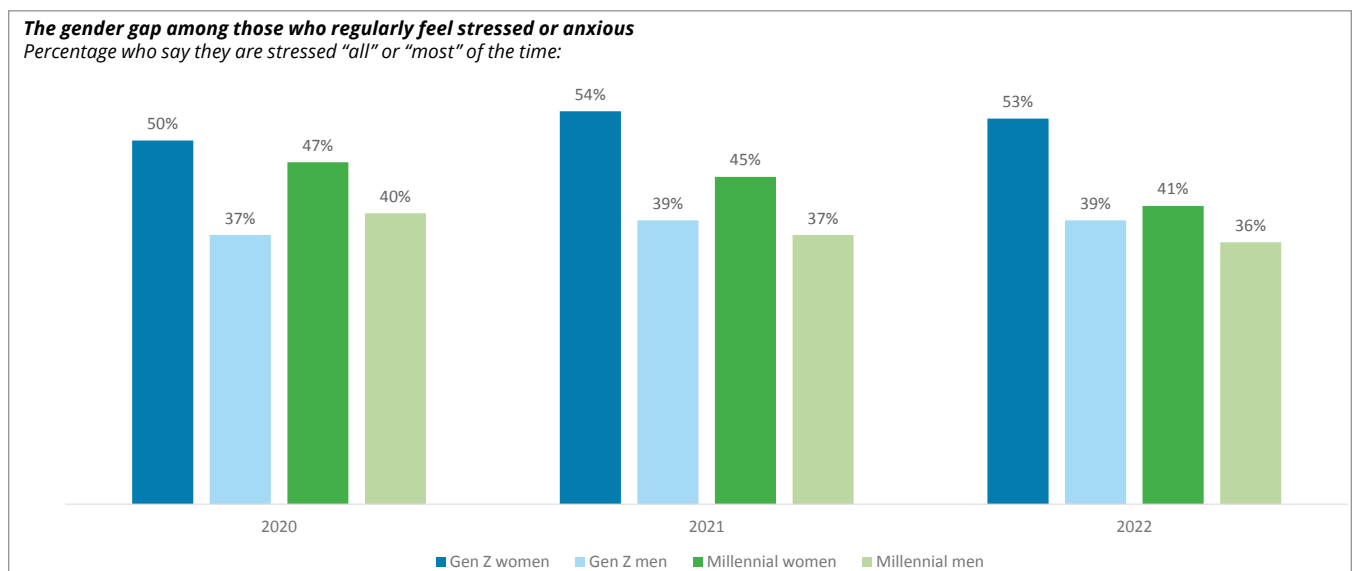


Figure 7. Deloitte: Mental health of Gen Zs and Millennials in the new world of work (2022).

### **Gen Z: Pandemic Impact**

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted Gen Z's educational and career experiences. Remote learning disrupted education, affecting their adaptability and resilience as they entered the workforce (UNICEF, 2020). Starting careers in a remote-work norm has introduced new stresses and uncertainties, compounding mental health issues, with many Gen Z members reporting increased anxiety and depression. Despite digital skills, the isolation of remote work heightened feelings of loneliness. Financial instability, job losses, and reduced income further impacted their mental well-being. As Gen Z navigates these challenges, employers and educators must provide tailored support to facilitate their transition into the workforce and ensure their well-being.

### **Gen Z: Mental Health Challenges**

Gen Z's entry into the workforce coincides with economic instability and rapid technological change, increasing stress and anxiety levels (Deloitte, 2022). About half of Gen Z respondents report frequent anxiety, with mental health concerns ranking high alongside family and social relationships. Gen Z values work-life balance and mental well-being, prompting organizations to adapt through flexible work models and mental health support. While remote work has reduced some stresses, the stigma around mental health issues remains a barrier to seeking help. To address this, organizations must foster open dialogue and create supportive, inclusive environments. Prioritizing mental well-being will enable Gen Z to thrive and contribute effectively.

### **Gen Z: AI—Admiration and Apprehension**

Raised in the digital age, Gen Z is adept with technology but faces mixed feelings about Artificial Intelligence (AI). They embrace AI for everyday convenience but worry about its impact on job security and the relevance of their skills (Forbes, 2023). Concerns extend to ethical issues and equitable access to AI, with fears that its benefits may favour privileged groups. Despite these concerns, Gen Z's creativity and curiosity position them to lead in an AI-driven future. To support them, organizations and educational institutions should provide inclusive AI education, enabling Gen Z to navigate the evolving landscape confidently and with a focus on innovation.

## **Conclusion & Recommendations**

This chapter consolidates the research findings and provides actionable recommendations to bridge the gaps between

Gen Z and downstream companies. By offering practical strategies for organizations, Gen Z professionals, and HEIs, the study aims to enhance integration, workplace dynamics, and sustainable growth. The recommendations align stakeholders' efforts to meet the evolving demands of the modern workforce.

Bridging the gap in soft skills and value perceptions between Gen Z and downstream companies requires a coordinated approach. Drawing from surveys, interviews, case studies, and literature, this study outlines strategies for effective integration, creating a pathway for harmonious workplace collaboration.

### **Collaborative Strategies**

- **Collaboration:** Companies, Gen Z, and HEIs must work together to address challenges and leverage opportunities.
- **Holistic Approach:** Integration should consider soft skills, cultural nuances, communication styles, and shared values.
- **Proactive Engagement:** Companies should involve Gen Z in decision-making, while Gen Z should participate actively in organizational initiatives.
- **Continuous Learning:** A culture of lifelong learning encourages Gen Z to adapt to changing workplace demands.
- **Innovation Mindset:** Embracing Gen Z's digital skills and fresh perspectives can drive organizational growth.

These strategies unlock the potential of a new generation poised to shape the future of work and productivity.

### **Directional Tactics**

#### **Downstream Companies**

- **Adapt Recruitment:** Use digital platforms to attract Gen Z, highlighting career growth and meaningful contributions.
- **Flexible Work:** Offer remote options and flexible hours to accommodate diverse work styles.
- **Invest in Development:** Create tailored mentorship and training programs to support Gen Z's growth.
- **Inclusive Culture:** Promote diversity and provide platforms for feedback and collaboration.



### Gen Z (Students/Graduates)

- **Develop Workplace Skills:** Seek opportunities to enhance communication, teamwork, and adaptability through internships and extracurricular activities.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Embrace continuous learning through online courses and industry-specific training.
- **Seek Mentorship:** Build mentor relationships for guidance and professional networking.
- **Enhance Digital Literacy:** Focus on proficiency with digital tools and stay updated on emerging trends.

### Higher Education Institutions

- **Workplace Readiness:** Integrate internships and real-world learning into curricula to build practical skills.
- **Industry Partnerships:** Collaborate with businesses for insights and networking.
- **Career Support:** Focus on essential skills and interdisciplinary learning for diverse career paths.
- **Alumni Networks:** Support post-graduate connections and continuous learning.

### Action Summary

A collaborative approach between downstream companies, Gen Z, and HEIs is essential for shaping the future of the workforce:

- **Companies:** Adapt recruitment, embrace flexible work, invest in development, and foster diversity.
- **Gen Z:** Focus on skill-building, lifelong learning, mentorship, and digital proficiency.
- **HEIs:** Emphasize practical learning, career readiness, and industry engagement.

### Gen Z Entry and Journey to Workforce

To attract and retain Gen Z, companies need to align their practices with this generation's values. Providing time for adjustment and clear career development paths helps reduce turnover and fosters engagement. A five-step employee journey can guide this process shown in [Figure 8](#).

1. **Recruitment:** Move beyond skill-based hiring to consider competencies and values. Use video applications and gamification in recruitment.
2. **Assignment:** Offer opportunities for both vertical and horizontal growth and prioritize instant feedback over scheduled meetings.
3. **Development:** Focus on soft skills and use cases or simulations for training. Create flexible job scopes and career paths.
4. **Knowledge Sharing:** Establish structured mentorship and informal knowledge exchange.
5. **Culture:** Promote openness, transparency and involve Gen Z in shaping the organization's values.

These phases help companies create an engaging, rewarding environment that aligns with Gen Z's needs and values. (See [Table 3](#)).

### Evolving Workplace Dynamics

Gen Z's unique perspectives are reshaping workplace practices. Companies must adjust their strategies to attract and retain this new generation. [Table 4](#) below highlights shifts needed to engage Gen Z.

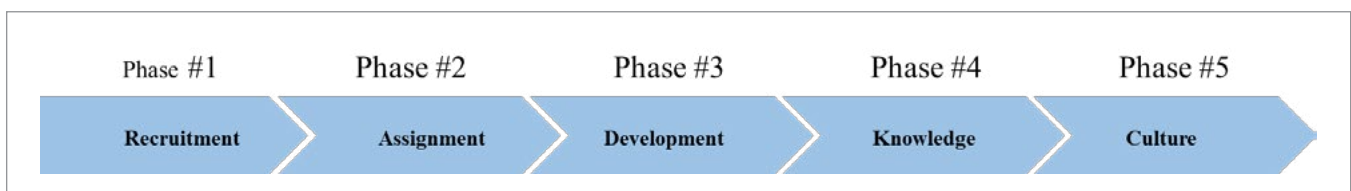


Figure 8. Gen Z Entrance and Journey to Workforce.

**Table 3 Inspirational framework to attract Gen Z**

<b>Journey Stage</b>	<b>Traditional Implementation</b>	<b>Future Considerations</b>	<b>Inspiration</b>
<b>Recruitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Companies traditionally hired based on skills and achievements</li> <li>• Hire into specific job roles and key responsibilities</li> <li>• Job postings often overloaded with requirements and buzz words</li> <li>• Predefined onboarding programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look beyond skills to wider competencies and values.</li> <li>• Experiment with new evaluation and screening processes.</li> <li>• Facilitate job charters and accept non-perfect CVs. (video reels)</li> <li>• Introduce flexible onboarding processes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly communicate the company's purpose.</li> <li>• Use gamification and experiments during recruitment.</li> <li>• Screen for cognitive capability and broaden perspectives.</li> <li>• Leverage video applications and embrace onboarding projects.</li> </ul>
<b>Assignment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program oriented career progression</li> <li>• Highly focused on vertical advancements</li> <li>• Default task distribution by role/tenure</li> <li>• Planned monthly 1:1 meeting to follow-up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen Z desires mobility, diverse experiences, and global perspectives.</li> <li>• Foster both vertical and horizontal advancements.</li> <li>• Be open to new job charter suggestions</li> <li>• Provide continuous feedback and acknowledgements</li> <li>• Skip frequent 1:1 – make it instant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create internal communication networks for new employees.</li> <li>• Assign smaller projects to encourage incubation and cross-functional work.</li> <li>• Allow to work cross functional and go across functional boundaries</li> </ul>
<b>Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on technical skills for entry employees</li> <li>• Offer a mix of self-study wikis, e-learning and classroom</li> <li>• Quarterly and programmed career discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce experimental formats like cases and simulations.</li> <li>• Prioritize tacit knowledge flow and soft skills.</li> <li>• Allow room for fast changes in job scope – use job charters</li> <li>• Skip planned career discussions – make it instant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reengineer career programs and emphasize soft skills during onboarding.</li> <li>• Focus on soft skills during onboarding activities</li> <li>• Implement methods for micro-knowledge and nano learning.</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented and non managed mentorship structures</li> <li>• Only occasionally on-the-job training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create methods to transfer tacit knowledge and experiences</li> <li>• Facilitate informal gatherings</li> <li>• Connect entry level employees with senior experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on pairing employees across generations</li> <li>• Bidirectional mentorship (knowledge exchange)</li> <li>• Combine Social interconnections with informal knowledge sharing</li> </ul>

*Table continued to next page...*

Table 3 continued...

Journey Stage	Traditional Implementation	Future Considerations	Inspiration
<b>Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scheduled 1:1 meetings and feed-back sessions</li> <li>Wellbeing programs positioned as nice-to-have'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Openness and transparency</li> <li>Ad hoc/open door feedback and support</li> <li>High visibility of leadership</li> <li>Walk-the-talk leadership</li> <li>Proactively engage GenZ in forming the culture and values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster open and transparent communication styles.</li> <li>Provide communication platforms for entry-level employee</li> </ul>

**Table 4 Transition workforce dynamics to engage Gen Z**

Traditional approach	Future approach
Documented job roles	Co-created job charters
Formalized Applications and CV's	Informal video and chats
Frequent 1:1 review meetings	Ad hoc/instant connection touchpoints
Fixed programmatic career plans	Framework for experimentations
Predefined onboarding process	Individualized onboarding projects and networks
Career programs focused on vertical advancement	Career journeys allowing both vertical and horizontal growth
Focus on employee satisfaction and retention	Focus on employee happiness and belonging
Conformity in leadership style	Coaching and mentorship-based leadership
Creating comfortable workplaces	Fostering a culture of belonging
Treat mental health as a private issue	Being open and offering mental health support
Incentives based on internal KPI metrics	Recognition and rewards based on impact and purpose

## Note on Contributors

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## Appendix

### A. Survey Themes: Questionnaire structure & results.

Note to survey takers: This survey is part of a research project that aim to uncover challenges and opportunities when new graduates meet the job market and how the Gen Z values align with company values and cultures.

#### **How will you rate the importance of the following attributes when applying for a new job?**

*This survey is anonymous, and data will ONLY be used to map the Challenges and Opportunities. All data will be deleted latest 31-October-2023. If you would like to be informed about the results of this survey, look out for the URL to request the results in the 'Thank You' message when completing this survey.*

1. Flexibility; Desire to self-manage time  
Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
2. Adaptability; Capable of adapting to new situations  
Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
3. Development: Ability to advance in the organization  
Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
4. Reliability; Being punctual and targeted  
a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)

5. Social Responsibility: Care for People and environment
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
6. Communication: Communicate clearly with others
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
7. Diversity and Inclusion: Acceptance and tolerance of others
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
8. Collaboration: Good in Teamwork
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
9. Work/Life: Balance both equally
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
10. Problem-Solving: Effective and focused to solve problems
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
11. Positive Attitude: 'can-do' mindset and supportive of others
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
12. Leadership: Potential and desire to lead
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)

**How will you assess the likelihood of the following situations when you get a new job?**

13. Gen Z's tech-savvy nature can be a valuable asset to companies as they navigate digital transformation.
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not likely; 9=very likely)
14. Companies that prioritize social responsibility, diversity, and inclusivity may be more attractive to Gen Z employees.
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not likely; 9=very likely)
15. Gen Z's entrepreneurial spirit and desire for leadership opportunities can benefit companies that provide opportunities for growth and advancement.
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not likely; 9=very likely)
16. What are the key opportunities and/or challenges you

see in getting your next employment? (optional)

17. What organizational function would you like to work in?
  - a. Product development
  - b. Marketing
  - c. Sales
  - d. HR
  - e. IT and Service
  - f. Manufacturing
  - g. Finance
  - h. Administration
  - i. Other
18. What country are you from?
19. What size of organization are you aiming for?
  - a. Small
  - b. Medium
  - c. Large

**Questionnaire to downstream companies**

Note to survey takers: This survey is part of a research project that aim to uncover challenges and opportunities when Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) meet the job market and how Company values and cultures align with Gen Z values.

**How will you rate the importance of the following attributes when hiring new Graduates?**

*This survey is anonymous, and data will ONLY be used to map the Challenges and Opportunities. All data will be deleted latest 31-October-2023. If you would like to be informed about the results of this survey, look out for the URL to request the results in the 'Thank You' message when completing this survey.*

1. Flexibility: Desire to self-manage time
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
2. Adaptability; Capable of adapting to new situations
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
3. Development: Ability to advance in the organization
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)

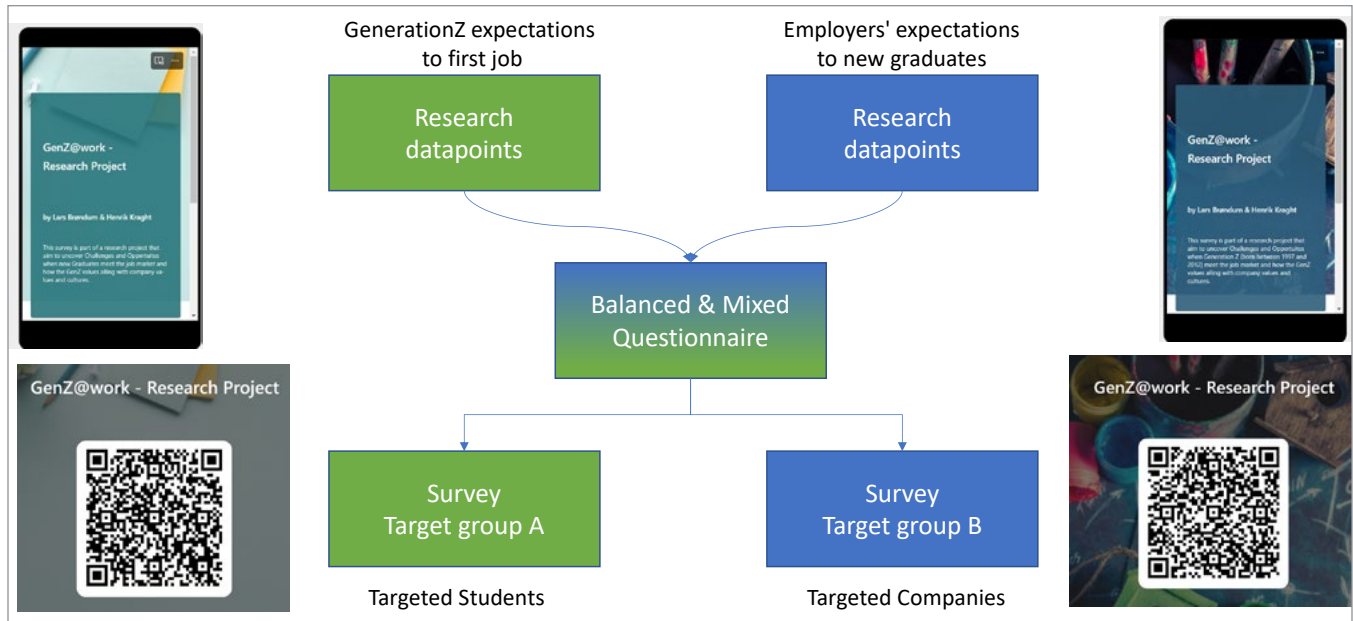
4. Reliability; Being punctual and targeted
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
5. Social Responsibility: Care for People and environment
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
6. Communication: Communicate clearly with others
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
7. Diversity and Inclusion: Acceptance and tolerance of others
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
8. Collaboration: Good in Teamwork
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
9. Work/Life: Balance both equally
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10. Problem-Solving: Effective and focused to solve problems
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
11. Positive Attitude: 'can-do' mindset and supportive of others
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)
12. Leadership: Potential and desire to lead
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not important; 9=very important)

***How will you assess the likelihood of the following situations when Gen Z gets employed?***

13. Expectations around work-life balance and flexibility may clash with traditional workplace norms
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not likely; 9=very likely)
14. Gen Z's desire for social responsibility and diversity may conflict with some company priorities
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not likely; 9=very likely)
15. Companies may need to invest more in training and development to meet Gen Z's expectations for growth and development.
  - a. Rate on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=not likely; 9=very likely)
16. What are the Key Opportunities and/or challenges you see in getting Gen Z in your organizations? (optional)
17. What organizational function are you in?
  - a. Product development
  - b. Marketing
  - c. Sales
  - d. HR
  - e. IT and Service
  - f. Manufacturing
  - g. Finance
  - h. Administration
  - i. Other
18. What country are you from?
19. What is the size of your organization?
  - a. 1-9
  - b. 10-24
  - c. 25-149
  - d. 150-499
  - e. 500+

## Questionnaire summary

### The Research approach



### Teaser to the two target groups

**FRONTER**

Help @Lars Brøndum and @Henrik Kraght to research and outline the Opportunities and Challenges as you as new graduate are approaching your first job and how that align to company values and cultures

Spend 3-5 min to respond to the survey

**GenZ@work** Opportunity or Challenge ?

Go to survey

**LINKEDIN**

Help @Lars Brøndum and @Henrik Kraght to research and outline the Opportunities and Challenges as the GenerationZ (born 1997-2012) are entering the job market and being part of the future organizational workforce.

Spend 3-5 min to respond to the survey

Opportunity or Challenge ? **GenZ@work**

Go to survey

## Demography

COMPANIES			
What organizational function are you in ?			
Marketing;	Sales	PD	IT
17%	25%	17%	42%
What country are you from ?			
DK	INT		
67%	33%		
What is the size of your organization ?			
Small	Medium	Large	
11%	44%	44%	

GENZ			
What organizational function would you like to work in ?			
Marketing;	Sales	PD	IT
11%	15%	38%	36%
What country are you from ?			
DK	INT		
59%	41%		
What size of Organization are you aiming for ?			
Small	Medium	Large	
18%	41%	41%	

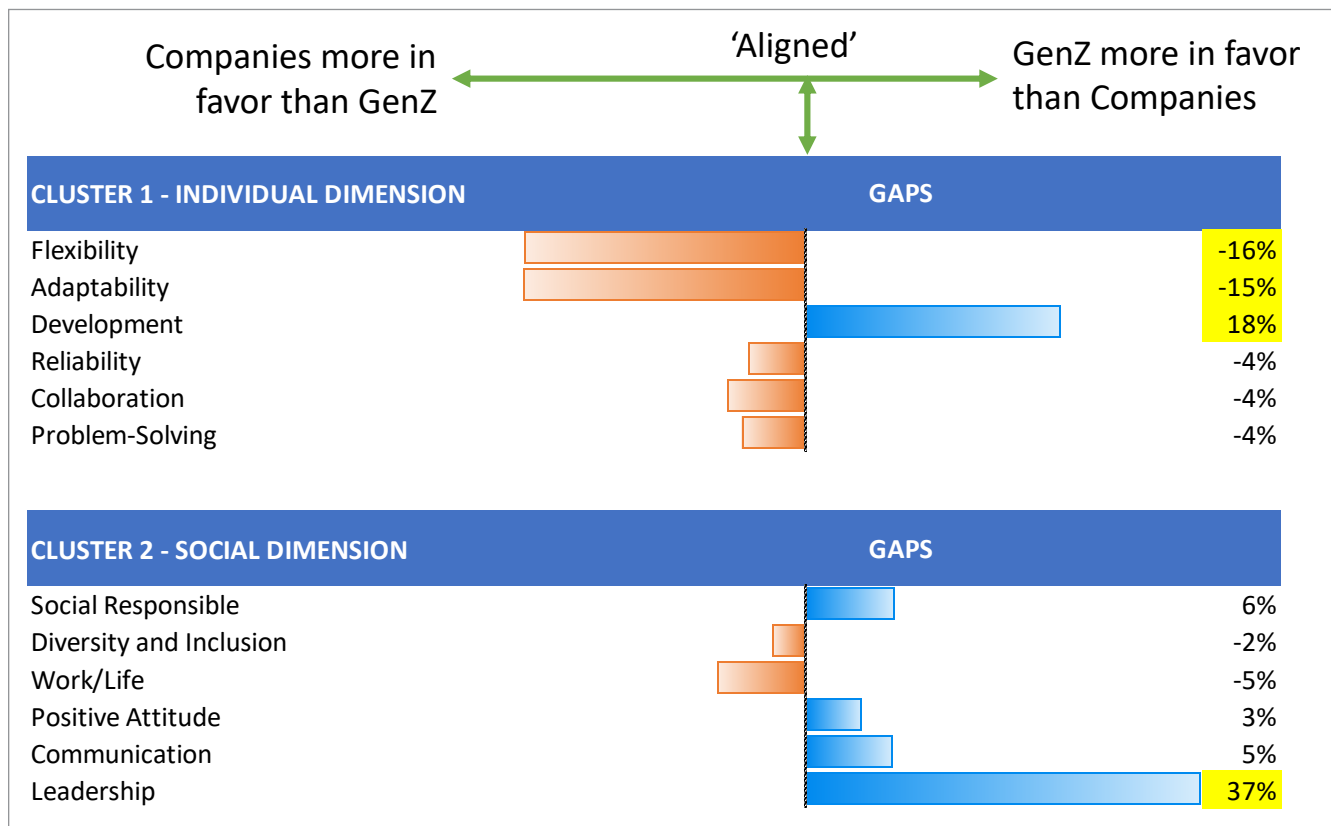
## The Top of mind

COMPANIES	SCORE	IMPORTANCE
Expectations around work-life balance and flexibility may clash with traditional workplace norms	6,33	HIGH
Companies may need to invest more in training and development to meet Gen Z's expectations for growth and development.	5,44	MEDIUM
Gen Z's desire for social responsibility and diversity may conflict with some company priorities.	4,67	LOW

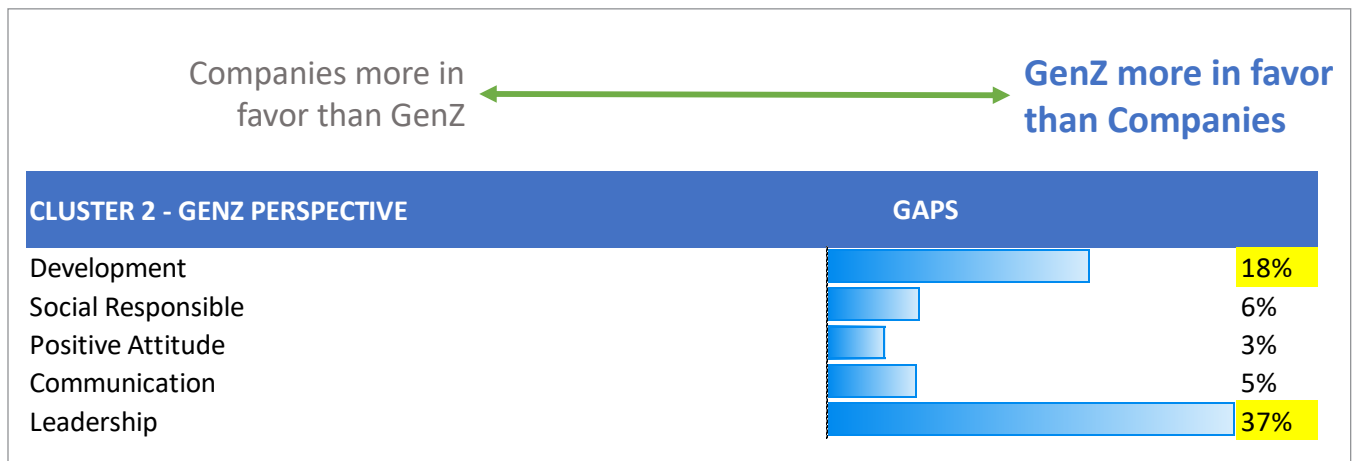
GENZ	SCORE	IMPORTANCE
Gen Z's tech-savvy nature can be a valuable asset to companies as they navigate digital transformation.	7,48	HIGH
Gen Z's entrepreneurial spirit and desire for leadership opportunities can benefit companies that provide opportunities for growth and advancement.	6,83	MEDIUM
Companies that prioritize social responsibility, diversity, and inclusivity may be more attractive to Gen Z employees	6,66	LOW



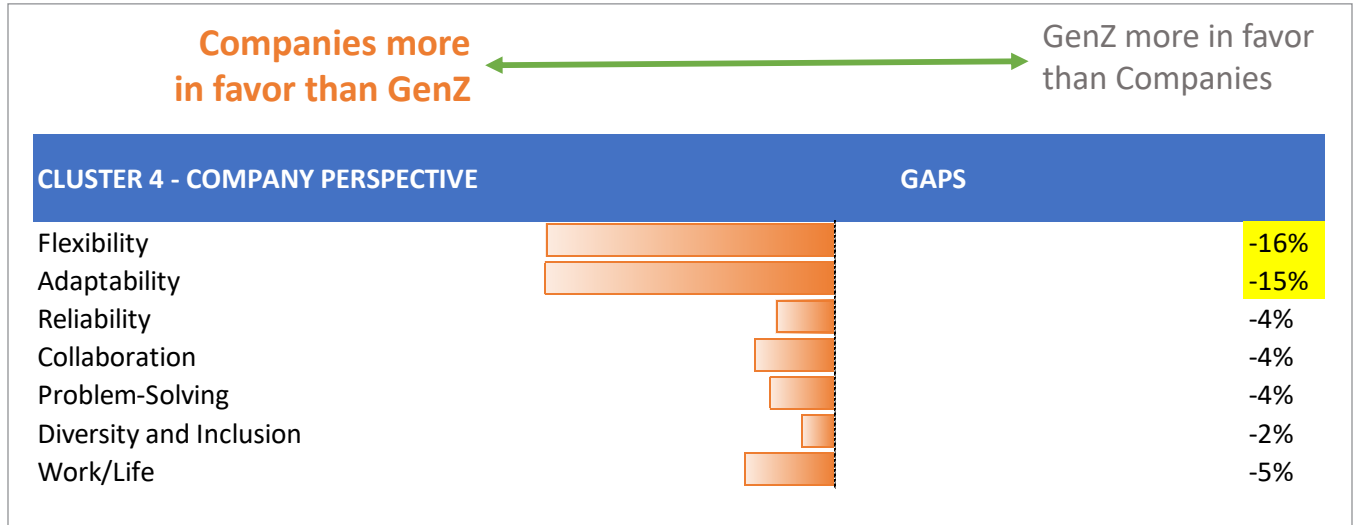
**Gaps by Individual and Social cluster**



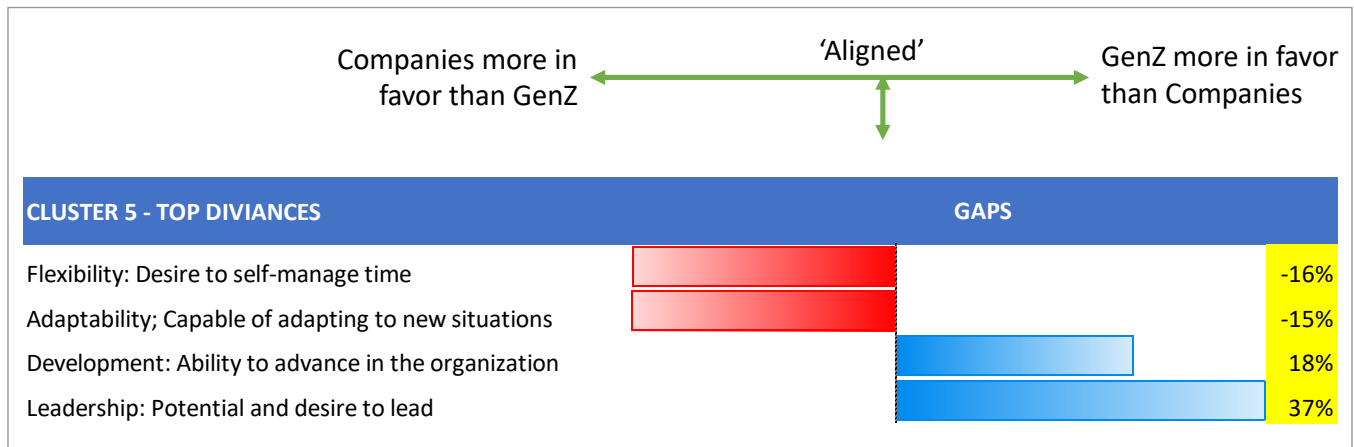
**Gaps by Gen Z perspective**



**Gaps by company perspective**



**Top 4 gaps and risk for mis-alignments**



## B. Interview Themes: Guide & Structure

### *Interview Guide to Downstream Companies.*

Interview Guide and Structure (90 min timebox)

#### GenZ@work - Research Project

<b>INTRODUCTION (5 min)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Presentation, setting the scene and reasoning</li></ul>
<b>THEME 1: RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES (20min)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How does your organization currently attract and recruit Gen Z talent? Are there specific platforms or channels that have been particularly effective in reaching this demographic?</li><li>2. In what ways has your recruitment strategy evolved to align with the preferences and expectations of Gen Z individuals, particularly in terms of communication styles, technological integration, and employer branding?</li></ol> <p>&lt;discuss/validate findings from survey&gt;</p>
<b>THEME 2: FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS (20min)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. How does your organization accommodate the preference for work-life balance among Gen Z employees? Are flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options or flexible hours, part of your company culture?</li><li>4. What strategies or initiatives has your organization implemented to promote work-life balance and enhance employee well-being, especially considering the diverse needs and preferences of Gen Z employees?</li></ol> <p>&lt;discuss/validate findings from survey&gt;</p>
<b>THEME 3: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (20min)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. How does your organization invest in the professional development of Gen Z employees? Are there specific training programs or initiatives tailored to address the skills and competencies valued by this demographic?</li><li>6. How do you assess the effectiveness of professional development programs in meeting the needs and expectations of Gen Z employees? What metrics or indicators are used to evaluate their impact on employee engagement and performance?</li></ol> <p>&lt;discuss/validate findings from survey&gt;</p>
<b>THEME 4: INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE (20 min)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>7. How does your organization promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, particularly in relation to Gen Z employees? Are there specific initiatives or policies aimed at fostering a sense of belonging and representation among diverse demographic groups?</li><li>8. How do you address potential challenges or barriers to inclusivity and diversity within your organization, especially considering the generational differences and cultural nuances that may influence workplace dynamics?</li></ol> <p>&lt;discuss/validate findings from survey&gt;</p>
<b>WRAP-UP (5min)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thanks for the insight and we will keep you informed</li></ul>

### C. Case Study Themes & Insights

To effectively conduct our case study, we employed a conversational framework designed to address the intricate dynamics of large corporations. These organizations function as complex ecosystems consisting of diverse teams, functions, and strategic goals. To navigate this multifaceted environment, our approach centred on four key themes, each providing critical insight into organizational practices. By structuring our case study conversations around these themes, we aimed to uncover valuable insights that could inform talent management strategies, improve workplace dynamics, and contribute to overall organizational success. This framework enabled us to engage meaningfully with corporate representatives, facilitating discussions that bridge gaps and promote collaborative progress.

GenZ@work -  
Research Project

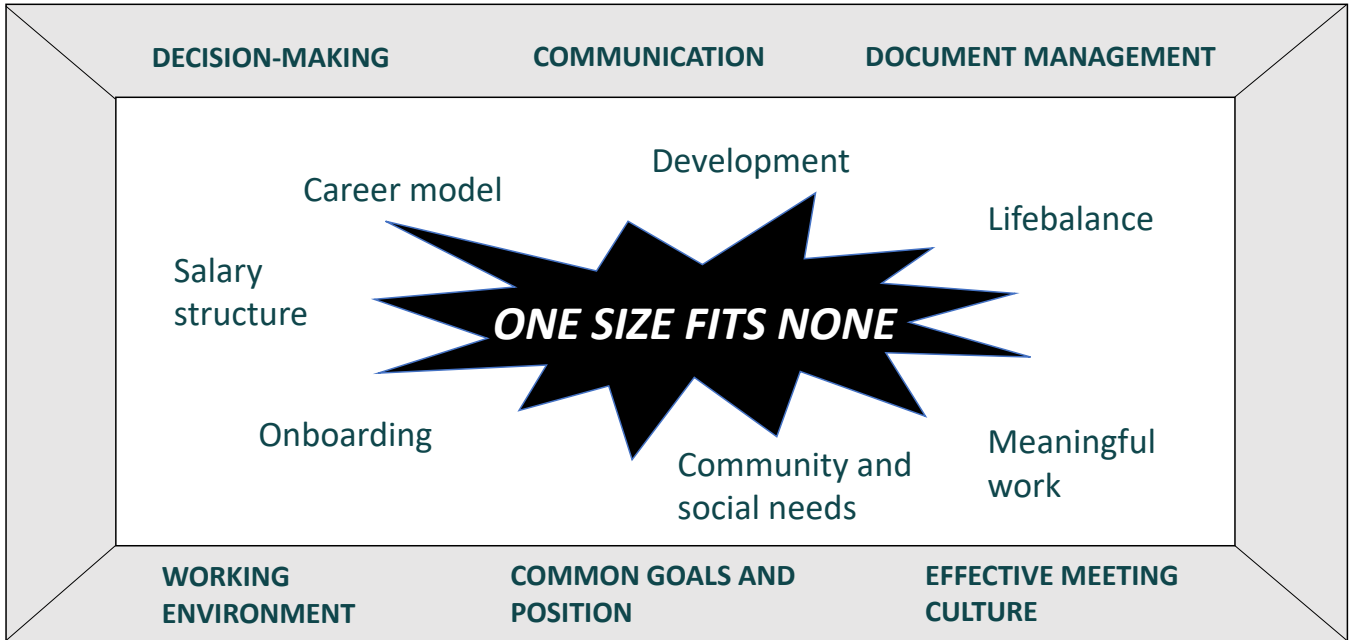
#### **Approach and conversational framework for the case company.**

<b>Approach and Conversational Framework to Case Study</b>
<b>THEME 1: RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES (20min)</b>
Investigating the company's methods for attracting top-tier talent
<b>THEME 2: FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS (20min)</b>
Examining the company's position on and implementation of flexible work policies.
<b>THEME 3: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (20min)</b>
Exploring how the organization fosters employee growth and skill development
<b>THEME 4: INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE (20 min)</b>
Assessing the company's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and fostering a sense of belonging

#### **Why Did You Apply For A Job At HOFOR?**



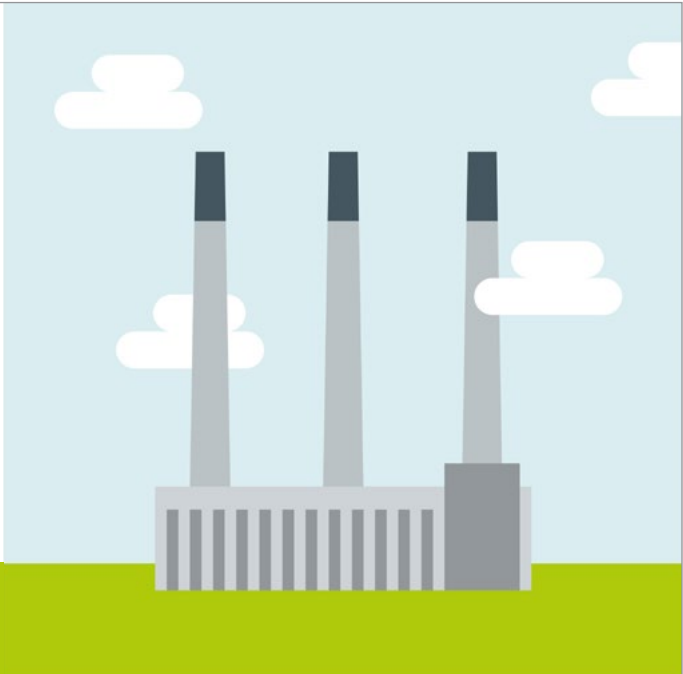
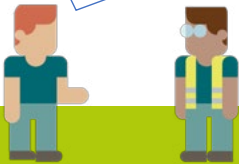
**TO SUM UP...**



**Take Aways**

1. Stable framework with room for diversity
2. Sustainability – all talk, no action
3. Ask your new graduates

*What makes a workplace attractive to you?*



## SWOT

### STRENGTHS

- Good working environment and good conditions for the employees
- High professionalism/decency
- Opportunities for professional development and further education
- Life balance and freedom
- Meaningful work - It gives pride to solve socially critical tasks
- Cross-disciplinary knowledge sharing
- Flat organizational structure

### WEAKNESSES

- Outdated and inefficient (decision-making) processes, workflows and systems
- Silo thinking and lack of a unified HOFOR Non-wage leader
- Document management
- Lack of employee benefits
- High average age
- Lack of resources
- Flexitime - missing the possibility of payment for overtime

SWOT  
analysis

### OPPERTUNITIES

- Improve the "relationship" between HOFOR and the students/potential new employees
- Greater cohesion in the organization of young people, both academically and socially
- Improve communication, both internally and externally
- More efficient working methods/processes
- Better recruitment and onboarding process
- Do more in internal training

### THREATS

- HOFOR is reactive and "behind"
- Poor communication (internally and externally) and knowledge sharing
- Retention and attachment
- High average age and seniority