

GENERATIONAL CHANGE IN THE LITHUANIAN LABOUR MARKET**Rūta Petrauskienė**

*PhD. in Informatics Engineering, Assistant Professor,
Kaunas kolegija, Higher Educational Institution,
Kaunas, Lithuania*

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/my-orcid?orcid=0009-0008-1950-7852>

**Erika Trunina**

*Researcher,
Kaunas kolegija, Higher Educational Institution,
Kaunas, Lithuania*

**Mantas Švažas**

*PhD. in Economics, Associate Professor,
Kaunas kolegija, Higher Educational Institution,
Kaunas, Lithuania*
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1762-9617>

Abstract

The labour market has changed dramatically in recent decades, with four generations now active in the labour market. Generational diversity can have important implications for workplace interactions that affect team and organisational performance and results. On the one hand, intergenerational interactions between generations with different experiences and perspectives can foster creativity and innovation, while on the other hand, generational differences can lead to negative organisational consequences such as conflict, misunderstanding and miscommunication (Woodward, Vongswasdi & More, 2015). Numerous studies show that employees belonging to different generations, shaped by different social, economic and political factors, have different needs and expectations and hold different values. "Younger generations are definitely more open to challenges, willing to take risks in their working lives and focused on continuous professional development. On the other hand, they are less focused on employer loyalty and perceive that their employer will provide less social, financial and employment security compared to older generations. In contrast, older generations are more committed to work and used to hierarchical structures" (Młokosiewicz, 2019, p. 89). All generations working together have the opportunity to make the most of their skills and abilities, as they can learn from each other. Generational differences have an impact on the efficiency and environment of an organisation. It's no wonder that in today's organisational environment, people from different generations work together. While business benefits from diverse experiences and skills, generational differences in the workplace can also lead to conflict. Such disagreements can have a negative impact on the working environment, reduce employee productivity and damage morale. As each generation has its own unique

values, skills and qualities, employees from different generations can pose huge challenges for managers.

Keywords: *different generations, employee adaptation, generational change.*

Introduction

Finding an employee who meets an employer's expectations is difficult, but in many cases the newcomer's adaptation to the new workplace is left to run its course. This can lead to high staff turnover in organisations, which has a particular impact on productivity and performance. In order to avoid negative consequences, every organisation must plan measures to reduce staff turnover. Otherwise, the new employee will only increase the company's turnover rate and will be categorised as a misfit. Unfortunately, resignation is inseparable from inadequate management, inadequate career prospects, lack of personal and work compatibility, lack of work environment, lack of communication with the organisation, inadequate remuneration, lack of flexibility, inadequate work schedule, and insecurity at work (Lengvenienė & Kavaliauskienė, 2014). Integrating a new employee into the organisation in the right way could help to resolve many problems. Integration is also related to the different adaptation of different generations. The object of this paper is the characteristics of intergenerational adaptation of employees. The aim of the paper is to present the directions of intergenerational adaptation of employees.

Literature review. The term "generation" is defined in various ways in the academic literature. Generation is perceived and analysed from different perspectives, so that it is possible to find not just one but several conceptions of it. A generation is a group of individuals born in a specific period of time who share common experiences, values and cultural influences that shape their attitudes and behaviours in the workplace (Collins, 2023, p. 1). According to Woodward, Vongswasdi, and More (2015, p. 7), a generation is defined as a cohort whose duration corresponds to a life stage and the roles typically associated with it. A generation is a group of individuals who have grown up in the same historical and social context and whose shared formative experiences have instilled in them beliefs, values and shared attitudes that are distinct from those of others who were born and raised in different contexts and time periods" (Woodward, Vongswasdi & More, 2015, p. 9). Alternatively, a generation is perceived as a group of people united by a similar date of birth, and by significant historical and political events that took place during that period" (Suomäki, Kianto & Vanhala, 2019, p. 141). Mannheim defined a generation as a group of people of the same age who are united by a powerful historical event (Labanauskas, 2008, p. 64).

In scientific literature, generations are often referred to as an age group consisting of people born at approximately the same time. Thus, generations are formed by people born in the same decade or representatives born in the same year of birth, assuming that successive generations appear on average every 20 years (Smolbik-Jeczmiń & Palen-Tondel, 2022). The period of a generation can be longer or shorter, depending on the experience of age and historical events (Statnickė & Užpalytė, 2018). Belonging to a particular generation depends not only on the year of birth, but also on the total experience shared by a certain part of the population. A generation is a group of people who have similar views because they have experienced the same historical and social life events and therefore cherish similar values, expectations, thinking and behavioral patterns (Młokosiewicz, 2019). There is no consensus in the literature on this topic on the current names and terms of generations. However, most authors distinguish four or five generations. So far, the most common division is by date of birth. The generational division based on birth eras, particularly in Europe, lacks precision due to the unique historical, demographic, and sociocultural influences shaping each country's history. It is difficult to compare even people born at the same time living in different countries. However, due to insufficient systematic research on generations, in individual countries of the world, it is customary to follow the division into generations by the era of birth of the pioneers of generation theory, Americans W. Straus and N. Howe (1991) (Alonderienė, 2017). The generation theory developed by the mentioned scientists can be named as one of the most popular. Therefore, the following work will be guided by the generation division model of these authors. These researchers noticed how generations change according to certain laws. They believe that these generational differences are not related to changing age. Therefore, they conducted an analysis of historical events in the United States and noticed that some groups of people are characterized by similar values, similar worldviews and attitudes. According to N. Howe, W. Strauss (1992), these similarities are determined by the historical,

cultural, and political events that took place in the country during the birth and maturation of the group, related to both the crises and upsurges that accompanied the country (Ruškienė, 2021). The division of generations by various authors into the main currently prevailing Mannheim boomer, X, Y, and Z generations is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Generation classifications in different scientific works

Author Generation Name	Strauss, Howe (1991)	Suomäki et al. (2019)	Targamadžė et al. (2015)
Baby Boomer Generation	1943–1960	1946–1964	1955–1965
Generation X	1961–1981	1965–1976	1966–1976
Generation Y	1982–2005	1977–1997	1977–1994
Generation Z	2005–	1998–	1995–2012

Different researchers provide different boundaries for the birth periods of different generations, i.e. indicate different beginnings and ends of a generation. It is quite difficult to determine when one generation is replaced by others, but common scientific definitions are followed. The classification of generations presented in Table 1 and the generational differences described in various literary sources have encouraged some researchers to study generational differences in the work environment in more detail. In order to highlight generational differences, the authors analyzed the conditions for the formation of generations and their connections with other generations.

The baby boom generation was formed in the post-war years, during the period of creating prosperity, influenced by grand visions of the future, space flights, but also by a revolutionary desire for freedom and peace. In the West, the baby boom generation opposed the war in Vietnam and participated in demonstrations for peace, the hippie movement, and in Lithuania, they opposed the Soviet regime (Stanišauskienė, 2015). In Lithuania, the baby boom generation grew up shaped by Soviet ideology. Although for different reasons, this generation saw very similar phenomena as their peers in the West while growing up: the integration of women into the labor market (determined by state policy), a change in the family model, etc. (Mažeikaitė and Gruževskis, 2018). Ruškienė (2021), like many other authors, claims that the Cold War had the greatest influence on the formation of the characteristics, beliefs, values, motivation, and leadership of the baby boom generation. Systematized characteristics of the baby boom generation are presented in Figure 1.



Fig. 1. Characteristics of the Baby Boomer Generation

As many authors argue, this is a generation of particularly high consumption, having created more material goods than all previous generations. This is a generation of workaholics, characterized by drive, competitiveness and a strong orientation towards profit. Representatives of the baby boom generation value stability and security at work, cherish and protect their workplace, are distinguished by their devotion to one employer and are called the most loyal of all generations. Previously, the tradition prevailed that after graduating from school, they would work in the same workplace for the rest of their lives. Known for their strong work ethic (Suomäki et al., 2019), baby boomers emphasize fairness and equality in leadership. However, they may be hesitant to collaborate with younger generations and are often reluctant to retire or relinquish their roles (Stanišauskienė, 2015). Baby boomers follow a traditional career model, in which they work hard and remain loyal to their company in exchange for salary, status, job security, and promotion opportunities (Ruškienė, 2021).

Generation X grew up during the economic crisis and economic restructuring of the 1960s (Młokosiewicz, 2019). Ruškienė (2021) argues that Generation X was influenced by MTV, AIDS, global competition, the collapse of communism and grew up under the influence of financial, family and societal insecurity, rapid change, great diversity and the absence of strong traditions. According to Stanišauskienė (2015) and Suomäki (2019), Generation X grew up as a generation of “locked children” or children “with a key around their necks” and are very independent, because their parents did not have the opportunity to pay them enough attention and worked hard to have as many material values as possible. Lithuanian Generation X faced the same social uncertainty as their peers in the West during their childhood: both working parents, childhood in a single-parent family, and after Lithuania regained independence, economic uncertainty, especially the sudden emergence of unemployment (Mažeikaitė and Gruževskis, 2018). The systematized characteristics of Generation X are presented in Figure 2.



Fig. 2. Characteristics of Generation X

Generation X representatives are skeptical about loyalty to one organization, attachment to one workplace, therefore they are looking for quick earnings, are ready to take risks and work for themselves (Stanišauskienė, 2015). According to Alonderienė and Juknevičienė (2017), this generation is described as disloyal to one organization, representatives of this generation are more independent and self-confident than the generation before them. Therefore, they tend to change jobs, look for new challenges, higher salaries and benefits for themselves. They are very independent, energetic, dream of a meaningful career, are not afraid of change and learning. Generation X employees are cynics, pessimists and individualists who like change and diversity. Generation X is not against institutions in general, but individuality is a characteristic that determines their decisions. According to Stanišauskienė (2015), Generation X needs choice and flexibility, they do not like strict supervision, they prefer freedom and reward according to work results. Generation X representatives are skeptical about authorities. Their approach to work relationships is best described by one value

– work-life balance. For Generation X employees, personal life values and goals are more important than work-related goals (Alonderienė and Juknevičienė, 2017). Generation X representatives strive for harmony in life areas: they work to live, not live to work (Suomäki et al., 2019). This generation believes that they deserve a meaningful career, freedom of choice. They care more about the present than the future. They are spiritual seekers who believe in the supernatural, are interested in non-traditional cultures and apply the knowledge they have acquired in their environment. Music is very important to this generation, as a “window to their soul” and a means of self-expression (Stanišauskienė, 2015). In order to take advantage of Generation X's advantages, organizations should emphasize a results-oriented approach and provide opportunities for personal and professional development. Flexible work schedules and the freedom to seek innovative solutions can help retain and motivate this generation (Collins, 2023).

Generation Y, also known as the “Millennial”, “Me”, “Why?”, “Boomerang” generation, is described as a generation born at the height of computerization, growing up in the conditions of new globalization, in the era of communication technologies and wireless communication (Stanišauskienė, 2015). Technologies play a very important role in their lives. In scientific literature, they are described as one of the most technologically literate and active (Mažeikaitė & Gruževskis, 2018). They have high qualifications in the field of digital knowledge, so it is not difficult for them to quickly learn to use new information technology tools or devices (Bencsik, Horvath & Juhasz, 2016). Lithuanian Generation Y grew up and formed, like their peers in the West, in better conditions than Generation X. Since 1981, after the birth of a baby, mothers have been granted paid maternity leave, and since 1989 it has been extended to one and a half years. After Lithuania regained its independence and opened its borders to foreign countries, other contextual differences also disappeared (Mažeikaitė and Gruževskis, 2018). The systematized characteristics of Generation Y are presented in Figure 3.



Fig. 3. Characteristics of Generation Y

Stanišauskienė (2015) states that Generation Y was the most protected and pampered because they grew up in the center of their parents' attention, which is why Generation Y representatives are very self-confident, even arrogant. Mažeikaitė and Gruževskis (2018) use other descriptions in addition to the latter description – ambitious, capricious, unable to accept criticism, impatient, demanding of attention, performing several tasks at the same time, most open to change, etc. According to Mlokosiewicz (2019), they have a negative work ethic, are impatient, lack self-discipline, and are demanding. As employees, Generation Y representatives are described by Stanišauskienė (2015) as valuing the opportunity to constantly improve their skills and learn. They are characterized by great flexibility and openness to change. They see new opportunities in challenges and this motivates them. Like the representatives of the baby boom generation, the work environment and optimism are important to them. They especially

value social connections and teamwork. "It is said that Generation Y representatives are excellent at working in groups, they are competent in communication" (Statnickė & Užpalytė, 2018, p. 58). Suomäki (2019) describes them as "team players", with a strong need to belong to a group, and Melarkode & Thakur (2022) claim that Generation Y representatives work well in teams and relationships with colleagues are important to them. According to McCrindle & Hooper (2006), Generation Y employees are motivated by the responsibility and participation in decision-making and the opportunity to influence these processes. They seek respect and want to be recognized for their efforts at work (Cekuls, A., 2019).

Generation Z is the youngest, still forming generation, so its values, career aspirations and behavior can only be predicted. It is also called the digital generation, children of the virtual environment, digital natives (Stankevičienė, Gerikienė and Jurgaitytė, 2016), the "Facebook generation", "digital natives", "iGeneration" (Bencsik et al., 2016), or sometimes the "Google generation", because they are constantly searching for information, are interested in innovations and know where to find them. Generation Z is people born in Lithuania after the restoration of Independence. Generation Z was born in a period when there was an excess of material goods in the world, all areas of which were taken over by technology (Stanišauskienė, 2015). Generation Z has been using technology since birth as a self-evident means of communication, entertainment or facilitating household chores. They are always virtually connected to any technical device and must have the Internet everywhere and always: on smartphones, tablets or laptops (Statnickė and Užpalytė, 2018). According to McCrindle and Wolfinger (2014), Generation Z learns most by watching footage and clear videos, rather than reading literary works or articles. Generation Z representatives are result-oriented, interested in everything, able to plan their time and make decisions very quickly (Statnickė and Užpalytė, 2018). The systematized characteristics of Generation Z are presented in Figure 4.

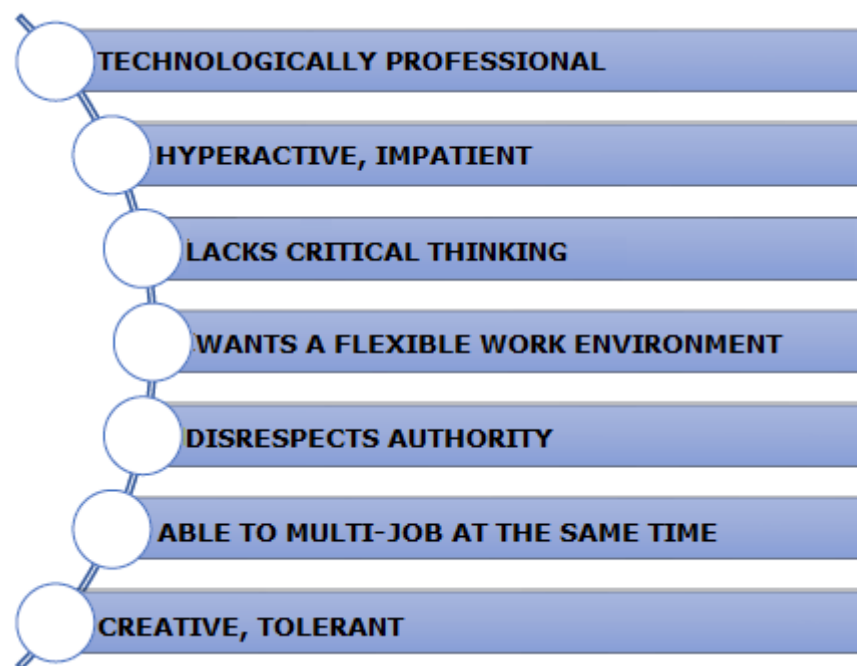


Fig. 4. Characteristics of Generation Z

Generation Z is more impatient and agile than their predecessors, constantly looking for new challenges and impulses. They are not afraid of constant change and, thanks to the online world, they have a lot of information, but only to a certain extent. To solve problems, they try to find solutions online (Bencsik et al., 2016). Generation Z chooses an interesting profession for themselves, not because they want to please someone. The result of this behavior is intrinsic motivation, they have a strong initiative and want to influence the world. At the same time, their most important career goals are work-life balance and workplace stability. Generation Z, from a workplace perspective, is not as optimistic as their predecessors were. Some of them are worried about unemployment or that their careers may get stuck and they will not be able to develop their talent (Bencsik et al., 2016). According to Stankevičienė et al. (2016), researchers have found that Generation Z employees do not want to do manual work. They want less responsibility at work, more praise and a good salary that does not correspond

to the work done. They want the freedom to solve all issues related to their work tasks, to feel independent in the workplace. They also want a flexible work environment and working hours, and do not want to work according to a strict schedule. They also like to work from home for a few days. Employers do not like their passivity at work and low interest in work (Stankevičienė et al., 2016). It is believed that these people lack interpersonal communication skills, especially when communicating face to face, but they actually look forward to feedback from which they learn. In addition, they themselves tend to provide feedback on what they saw as appropriate or inappropriate in other people's behavior and attitudes (Bencsik et al., 2016).

Adaptation of employees of different generations. In recent years, research on generational differences in the workplace has attracted great interest from organizations, practitioners and researchers, resulting in various academic studies and popular literature dedicated to the business environment (Locmele-Lunova & Cirjevskis, 2017). In today's turbulent business environment, for the first time in the history of the labor market, three or even four generations work side by side, which creates not only many interesting opportunities, but also significant challenges.

The workforce in many countries is aging rapidly. This is due to declining birth rates, increasing life expectancy, and the increasing retirement age. "The employment rate of older workers is increasing worldwide, and this trend is likely to continue, as the different pension sizes, for many of which are simply not enough, and the desire to feel secure and needed, are pushing people to retire as late as possible" (Gaurylienė and Korsakienė, 2017, p. 143). In addition to these problems, emigration also has an impact. Most emigrating citizens are young and middle-aged, able-bodied and energetic individuals (Department of Statistics, 2024), which has a significant impact on the age and labor force structure of the remaining population in the country (Gaurylienė and Korsakienė, 2017). As a result, there are still a significant number of baby boomers in the labor market. Generations X and Y have been the main subject of scholarly discussion in the past few years. But at the same time, a completely new generation is entering the labor market with a different approach to labor relations. Young workers have more opportunities to obtain education abroad, are better aware of their alternatives and choices (Alonderienė, 2017). This is Generation Z, which is just starting to form its professional activities. It is very important for organizations to understand generational differences.

The basis of human resources is the person and the ability to direct him in the right direction for the organization to achieve the desired results (Gaurylienė and Korsakienė, 2017). Positive adaptation of an employee in the workplace has a positive relationship with productivity, profitability, employee retention, safety and customer satisfaction. In order for a new employee to integrate into the organization and start creating added value as soon as possible, the process of introducing him to work must be planned and measured. When searching for a suitable adaptation model, organizations should take into account generational differences. The first three months at work are very important, because this is the period when employment relationships can break down most easily (Petkevičiūtė, 2013). In order to use the strengths of the baby boomer generation in the workplace, it is important for organizations to set specific goals with clear deadlines, assign them mentor and educator roles for less experienced colleagues and support them (Collins, 2023). Baby boomers thrive on recognition and praise for their contributions but do not require frequent feedback to stay motivated. They become attached not only to the organization, but also to the manager, so his role becomes especially important. The manager must have a clear vision, purpose, professionalism, charisma and a strong personality image. In order to take advantage of the advantages of Generation X, organizations should emphasize a results-oriented approach and provide opportunities for personal and professional development. It is also important for Generation X to receive feedback from the manager, have flexibility and work-life balance. Flexible work schedules and the freedom to seek innovative solutions can help retain and motivate this generation.

To capitalize on the strengths of Generation Y, organizations should invest in technology, foster a culture of collaboration, and provide opportunities for skill development. Generation Y values open communication and is highly receptive to feedback. Their goal-oriented mindset fosters increased engagement and retention (Collins, 2023). Generation Y needs a manager who knows them as a person, allows them to plan and prioritize work flexibly, provides regular feedback, and evaluates their performance based on results. In this case, the manager should provide more feedback and take on the role of a mentor rather than a "boss." If it is difficult to

communicate freely in a formal office environment, you can organize a team breakfast once a week or month, during which only part of the time is spent discussing work. To maximize the potential of Generation Z, organizations should emphasize technological innovations, offer opportunities for personal growth, and create a diverse and inclusive workplace. They welcome constructive feedback and value a sense of belonging. Generation Z representatives need to be allowed to be as independent as possible and set their own priorities, create conditions for working on different and interesting projects, and it is also important for them to have the opportunity to quickly contact their manager whenever necessary (Collins, 2023). Younger specialists value mentoring more than others as an attractive way to absorb new knowledge, as well as an excellent opportunity for growth. Mentoring can become an excellent tool to satisfy the need for personal development of these employees. Generation Z representatives live fast, they also want a fast career - within 1–2 years. They need to talk about career expectations, show success stories and career prospects, offer more frequent changes (e.g., not only horizontal, but also vertical careers), provide the opportunity to shadow and get to know other positions. For Generation Y, it is appropriate to expect a career change every 2–3 years. Generation X is the generation that can be attracted by offering meaningful work even when the company does not have career opportunities.

Methods and tools selected according to the characteristics of generations can bring more effective results at certain stages. Therefore, it is not enough to know the order of the process alone, you need to be able to see and use the right tools.

Conclusions

After analyzing the theoretical aspects of the adaptation of employees of different generations, it was determined that a generation is a group of people who are connected by their date of birth and different social, economic and political factors that shape them. Different generations can be distinguished according to their characteristic features. The following main generational differences are distinguished in scientific literature: loyalty, individualism, teamwork, flexibility, desire to improve, and knowledge of technologies. The analysis determined that adaptation is an important process that allows new employees to adapt to work functions and the team. Effective employee adaptation is crucial for organizational success, as it positively impacts productivity, profitability, and staff retention. Each generation has different values, expectations, behavior and attitude to life, and therefore adapts differently.

Having examined the attitude of the organization's employees towards the adaptation process of different generations, it was found that employees of different generations believe that each generation is unique and adapts differently, although everyone describes the adaptation process in a similar way. No program is applied in the organization's adaptation process, but the organization uses most of the tools presented in the theoretical stages of adaptation: initial familiarization with procedures only partially helps with adaptation; information dissemination is intensive, the manager is easily accessible, but the information received is not clear; not all employees are introduced to the organization's vision and goals; the manager should primarily take care of introducing employees to the organization and work.

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