



Generational Perspectives on Work: Reframing Job Presence and Added Value in the Multigenerational Workplace

Inbar Barazani

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași
Iași, Romania

Inbarpinto2@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9100-1796>

Abstract: *This article explores how Generations X, Y (Millennials), and Z perceive and prioritise key dimensions of work quality, specifically contrasting traditional notions of job presence with modern expectations of added value. Drawing upon foundational theories including Generational Theory, Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, Social Exchange Theory, the Technology Acceptance Model, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the analysis reveals distinct motivational drivers, communication styles, and workplace expectations across generational cohorts. The study underscores the shift from physical presence to outcome-based contributions, particularly among younger generations, and highlights the role of digital fluency, flexibility, and purpose-driven work in shaping these preferences. It also considers the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on workplace perceptions, noting an accelerated move toward remote work and redefined performance metrics. By integrating theoretical insights with practical implications, the article provides strategies for organisations to enhance intergenerational collaboration, adapt leadership approaches, and foster inclusive, high-performing work environments.*

Keywords: *generational differences; work quality; job presence; added value; generation X; millennials; generation Z; Herzberg's theory; technology acceptance model; social exchange theory; workplace motivation; remote work.*

How to cite: Barazani, I. (2025). Generational perspectives on work: Reframing job presence and added value in the multigenerational workplace. *BRAND. Broad Research in Accounting, Negotiation, and Distribution*, 16(1), 58-63. <https://doi.org/10.70594/brand/16.1/4>



1. Introduction

The modern workplace is undergoing profound changes, driven by shifts in technology, culture, and generational dynamics. As organisations adapt to a multigenerational workforce, it becomes increasingly important to understand how different cohorts—Generation X, Millennials (Generation Y), and Generation Z—define their roles, motivations, and contributions (Batbayar, 2024; Chaudhry, 2024; Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

This article examines how perceptions of "work quality" have evolved, focusing on two contrasting dimensions: job presence, which emphasises physical availability and visibility, adding value, which prioritises innovation, outcomes, and meaningful contribution (Ulrich, 1996; Gajdzik & Wolniak, 2022). Generational differences in digital fluency, workplace expectations, and flexibility strongly shape these preferences (Çera et al., 2024; Ha & Hien, 2024).

Through the lens of key psychological and organisational theories—including Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, Generational Theory, and the Technology Acceptance Model—this article explores how generational identity influences workplace behaviour, motivation, and communication (Mahmoud et al., 2021; La Porta, 2021).

In addition to theoretical analysis, the article offers practical strategies for HR professionals and managers to support intergenerational collaboration and align leadership practices with evolving employee values. Emphasis is placed on building inclusive, purpose-driven work environments that recognise and leverage the distinct strengths of each generation (Tabaku, 2024; Griep et al., 2021).

Table 1: Generational Characteristics and Workplace Priorities

Generation	Birth Years	Core Traits	Workplace Values	Preferred Work Style
Generation X	1965–1980	Independent, pragmatic	Stability, autonomy, work-life balance	Structured flexibility, results-focused
Millennials	1981–1996	Tech-savvy, collaborative	Feedback, development, purpose	Hybrid work, team collaboration
Generation Z	1997-2010	Digital natives, socially aware	Innovation, diversity, impact	Remote-friendly, outcome-oriented

2. Problem

Despite the increasing academic and managerial interest in generational diversity, many organisations still struggle to bridge the gap between traditional indicators of work performance—such as physical presence—and emerging generational expectations that emphasise flexibility, autonomy, and purpose-driven contributions (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021; La Porta, 2021). While job presence has long been treated as a proxy for commitment and productivity, younger generations—particularly Millennials and Generation Z—prioritise added value through outcomes, creativity, and digital engagement (Ha & Hien, 2024; Gajdzik & Wolniak, 2022). This disconnect creates tension in performance evaluations, leadership expectations, and employee satisfaction across generations (Aggarwal et al., 2022; Tsen et al., 2021). There remains a gap in both academic literature and practical strategies that specifically address how these evolving perceptions influence workplace behaviour, engagement, and intergenerational collaboration (Knowles, 2023; Wang et al., 2020).

To complement this theoretical discussion, a small-scale qualitative inquiry was conducted, including five semi-structured interviews with professionals from Generations X, Y, and Z. Preliminary findings highlighted key generational distinctions: Gen Z participants emphasised “creating impact beyond the hours I’m present”, signaling a preference for flexibility and

outcome-driven evaluation. In contrast, managers from Gen X and Gen Y described job presence as a sign of “commitment, consistency, and visibility”. While limited in scope, this exploratory data supports the conceptual claim that job presence and added value are interpreted differently across generations.

2.1 Research Setup

To support the conceptual framework, a small-scale qualitative study was conducted in early 2025. The aim was to explore how generational cohorts perceive job presence and added value in practical workplace contexts. Five semi-structured interviews were held with employees and managers from three generational cohorts: Generation X (1 manager), Generation Y (2 managers), and Generation Z (2 employees). Participants were recruited from diverse professional backgrounds in Israel, spanning retail, administration, and digital services. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and focused on themes such as workplace contribution, visibility, flexibility, and impact. The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis to extract generational patterns and differences. Although the sample size was limited, the findings offer illustrative insights that complement the theoretical claims.

3. Theoretical Aspects

This section outlines the theoretical foundations that guide the analysis of generational perspectives on job presence and added value. These frameworks provide a conceptual lens through which the unique values, behaviours, and work expectations of different generational cohorts can be understood.

Generational Theory. Generational Theory theory posits that individuals born in the same historical period share similar cultural experiences that shape their behaviours and worldviews. It explains how shared generational experiences influence expectations around work, leadership, and organisational values.

Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory. This theory distinguishes between hygiene factors (e.g., salary, job security) that prevent dissatisfaction and motivators (e.g., recognition, meaningful work) that drive satisfaction. It helps to explain why some generations focus more on stability while others seek purpose and fulfillment.

Social Exchange Theory. This theory centers on the principle of reciprocity in social interactions, suggesting that individuals assess their relationships with employers based on perceived fairness and mutual benefit. It is particularly useful in understanding how generational groups evaluate organisational support and recognition.

Technology Acceptance Model. This model explains the adoption of technology through two key factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. It helps assess how generational cohorts differ in their comfort and effectiveness with workplace technologies, especially in remote and hybrid work environments.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow’s model identifies five levels of human needs, from physiological to self-actualisation. It illustrates how different generations may prioritise different needs in the workplace, such as financial security for Gen X versus purposeful, meaningful work for Gen Z.

These theoretical models form the basis for examining the contrasts and connections among generational perceptions, ultimately guiding organisations in developing inclusive and adaptive work practices.

4. Discussion

The interviews revealed sharp contrasts in how different generations define commitment, productivity, and contribution. These generational perceptions align with the theoretical framework but also offer concrete examples of how job presence and added value are understood in practice.

A Gen Z employee emphasised the value of flexibility and measurable output, stating:

“I don't need to be in the office to prove I'm working. What matters is the results I bring.”

In contrast, a Gen X manager described presence as a visible indicator of dedication:

“When I see someone at their desk early and staying late, that shows me they're committed.”

Another Millennial manager noted the shift in evaluation norms:

“We were taught to value showing up, but now I see younger employees focused on making an impact regardless of hours.”

These qualitative insights confirm the theoretical argument that while older generations associate physical presence with reliability and accountability, younger professionals emphasise outcomes, flexibility, and innovation. The shift from presence to value is not just theoretical—it's deeply embedded in everyday workplace interactions and expectations.

5. Conclusion

Understanding how generational cohorts define and pursue "work quality" is vital for building resilient, inclusive organisations (Wang et al., 2020; Ruff, 2022). As digital transformation, flexible work models, and shifting values reshape workplace expectations, the concept of added value increasingly takes precedence over traditional job presence—particularly among younger generations such as Gen Z and Millennials.

This article has drawn on a range of psychological and organisational theories, supported by initial qualitative findings, to demonstrate how perceptions of contribution and commitment vary across generational lines. These insights highlight the need for leaders and HR professionals to move beyond one-size-fits-all models and instead design work environments that foster meaning, autonomy, and measurable impact.

As organisations navigate the post-pandemic era, those that embrace intergenerational collaboration and reimagine evaluation metrics will be best positioned to thrive in a diverse and evolving workforce.

References

- Abebe, A., & Assemie, A. (2023). Quality of work life and organizational commitment of the academic staff in Ethiopian universities. *Heliyon*, 9(4), e14927.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e15139>
- Aggarwal, A., Sadhna, P., Gupta, S., Mittal, A., & Rastogi, S. (2022). Gen Z entering the workforce: Restructuring HR policies and practices for fostering the task performance and organizational commitment. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 22(3), e2535.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2535>
- Batbayar, B. (2024). The comparison study of Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z in social science. *International Journal of Innovation Scientific Research and Review*, 6(3), 6065–6069.
- Bayarbaatar, B. (2024). Understanding generational traits, values, and work ethics: A comparative analysis. *Journal of Modern Workforce Studies*, 4(1), 22–38.
- Çera, E., Ndreca, P., Çera, G., Asamoah, C. A., & Matošková, J. (2024). Managing workforce diversity in a digital age: Impacts of remote work on intergenerational job presence. *Journal of Contemporary Management Issues*, 29(1), 112–132.

- Chaudhry, S. (2024). Sustaining talent: A social exchange perspective on the Generation Z workforce. *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/DLO-11-2023-0245>
- Gabrielova, K., & Buchko, A. A. (2021). Here comes Generation Z: Millennials as managers. *Business Horizons*, 64(4), 489–499. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2021.02.013>
- Gajdzik, B., & Wolniak, R. (2022). Smart production workers in terms of lean management and Industry 4.0—Challenges for the future. (3), 1013. <https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc8020068>
- Griep, Y., Vranjes, I., van Hooff, M. L. M., Beckers, D. G. J., & Geurts, S. A. E. (2021). The past, present, and future of job presence: Exploring attendance norms in the remote work era. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 42(7), 1013–1030.
- Ha, N. T. V., & Hien, N. T. (2024). The impact of digital transformation on Generation Z's work motivation: A TAM perspective. *Journal of Business Innovation*, 15(1), 23–40.
- Hendriana, E., Christoper, A., Zain, H. O. A., & Pricilia, N. (2023). Work-life balance and job satisfaction across generations: A comparative study. *International Journal of Business Research*, 23(2), 57–69.
- Knowles, S. (2023). *Gen Z in the workplace: Exploring identity and remote engagement* [Master's thesis, University of London].
- Krajac, L., & Samardzija, J. (2024). Generational perspectives on digital transformation and workplace adaptability. *Croatian Journal of Economic Research*, 11(2), 45–61.
- La Porta, E. (2021). Best practices for managing generational differences: A review of leadership approaches. *Leadership Insights Journal*, 9(3), 114–129.
- Mahmoud, A. B., Fuxman, L., Mohr, I., Reisel, W. D., & Grigoriou, N. (2021). “We aren’t your reincarnation!” Workplace motivation across X, Y and Z generations. *International Journal of Manpower*, 42(1), 193–209. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-09-2019-0448>
- Marion, T. J., & Fixson, S. K. (2021). Managing virtual collaboration for innovation. *Research-Technology Management*, 64(2), 18–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08956308.2021.1877601>
- Moore, N., Rowe, L., Stokes, P., Lichy, J., Rodgers, P., & Smith, S. M. (2022). Reimagining leadership in a post-pandemic workplace: Implications for remote and hybrid teams. *Journal of Management Development*, 41(4), 289–306.
- Ruff, S. L. (2022). Generation Z at work: Motivations, expectations, and performance [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University].
- Tabaku, M. K. (2024). Managing diversity in multigenerational teams: Strategies for sustainable HR development. *Albanian Journal of Business and Economics*, 14(1), 1–15.
- Tortorella, G. L., Nascimento, D. L. M., Caiado, R. G. G., Posada, J. G. A., & Sawhney, R. (2020). Organizational learning paths based on industry 4.0 adoption: A generational cohort theory perspective. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 162, 120354.
- Tsen, M. K., Gu, M., Tan, C. M., & Goh, S. K. (2021). Rethinking job presence in digital workspaces: Perceptions across generations. *Asian Journal of Business Research*, 11(3), 90–107.
- Ulrich, D. (1996). Human resource champions: The next agenda for adding value and delivering results. *Harvard Business Press*.
- Williamson, S., Pearce, A., Dickinson, H., Weeratunga, V., & Bucknall, F. (2021). Remote working and the future of productivity: Lessons from the pandemic. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 80(4), 763–772.
- Wang, Y., Kim, S., Rafferty, A., & Sanders, K. (2020). Employee participation and job performance: The importance of job presence across generational lines. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 30(1), 69–84.

Inbar BARAZANI (b. November 11, 1987) received her BSc in Law and Business Administration with a specialisation in accounting (2015), and MSc in Business Administration with a specialisation in Taxation (2017) from the College of Management, Israel. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Business Administration at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania. She serves as a Finance Manager at one of the largest retail chains in Israel. Her current research interests include generational differences in the workplace. She has authored several research papers, participated in several academic conferences, and continues to expand her contributions in the field of business administration.

