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1. Introduction

1.1 Generation Z and Proactivity

One of an organisation's most valuable assets is its employees, often perceived as a strategic resource providing a competitive edge in the labour market. This is achieved through their skills, willingness to pursue professional development, acquisition of knowledge, enhancement of qualifications, and professional activity and dynamism. A company has the potential to become a market leader when it places its people at the forefront of its priorities (Warwas and Wiktorowicz, 2018).

Generation Z represents the youngest age group currently participating in the workforce. As the youngest current and future employees, they pose increasingly complex challenges for organisations and the business world. Attempts to identify and characterise Generation Z raise new questions (Świerkosz-Hołysz, 2016). Also known as Generation C (from "connected"), this cohort consists of individuals born after 1995 (Paszkiewicz and Wasiluk, 2022).

This generation, emerging from the latter half of the 1990s, centres its attention largely on new technologies. Devices such as smartphones, iPods, and tablets were the "toys" of their childhood. They cannot envision life without access to high-speed internet. Facebook serves as their primary tool for interpersonal communication, Twitter as an alternative to traditional press media, and email is reduced to a formal communication requirement (Rogozińska-Pawełczyk, 2019).

Key trends influencing Generation Z include extended periods of formal education, entrepreneurial spirit, labour market evolution, the proliferation of virtual social communication forms, and unrestricted competition. Notably, the extended duration of education stems from the instability of the labour market, which limits the financial resources necessary for independent living. Consequently, many members of Generation Z are reluctant to leave their family homes, remaining dependent on parental support (Messyarz, 2021).

This group is often characterised by a lack of loyalty to employers. It is common for them to express a willingness to leave organisations that fail to meet their ambitions or provide opportunities for growth (Rogozińska-Pawełczyk, 2019). Hallmarks of this generation include aspirations for rapid career advancement and high earnings.

A positive work atmosphere and professional success are important, with salary levels being a critical factor in job selection. They also value opportunities to develop their competencies and acquire new professional qualifications. Work that aligns with their passions is highly appreciated. Dynamic career progression and a focus on rapid advancement are equally significant.

However, a particularly high priority is maintaining a balance between personal life and work, broadly understood within the concept of work-life balance. Young people believe that a permanent job does not guarantee the desired personal growth. As a result, they often lack attachment to stable positions, typically seeking jobs that meet their professional expectations. They adhere to the principle of lifelong learning (Paszkiewicz and Wasiluk, 2022).

In characterising Generation Z, it is essential to discuss both their strengths and weaknesses. Their strengths include creativity, unconventional thinking, innovation, multitasking abilities, ease of establishing connections, ambition, quick learning capabilities, and self-confidence. Conversely, their weaknesses include over-reliance on new technologies, impaired verbal communication skills, issues with concentration, distraction, and superficial information analysis (Chomątkowska and Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, 2016). These deficits can, in the long term, lead to misunderstandings and conflicts in professional settings.

Another challenge for the youngest employees is the high level of professional competitiveness, as the workforce includes a large proportion of individuals with higher education, often holding multiple degrees. Careers today are no longer reserved for select individuals or confined within rigid hierarchical frameworks. Instead, new career paths demand broader perspectives and the ability to recognise emerging opportunities. As Blachnicka (2022) highlights, *"The subjective nature of a career places the individual's interests, development, and overall well-being at the centre."*

This focus emphasises the importance of a proactive attitude, which is highly desirable among employees. A. Bańka (2016) describes proactivity as a specific type of behaviour that indirectly influences the professional environment. Proactivity also reflects the human ability to shape the environment to a degree greater than the environment's ability to shape individual behaviour. In other words, solution-oriented activity goes beyond mere responses to environmental demands.

Proactive individuals surpass established conservative frameworks, enabling them to transform their environments. They do not wait for stimuli but instead take the initiative, acting in anticipation of employer expectations. Their initiative adds value beyond standard job responsibilities.

Proactivity involves initiating changes, staying engaged throughout their implementation, and seeing them through to completion. Proactive individuals are positively received and perceived by society, as their behaviours have a beneficial impact on other employees within the organisation. According to T. Bateman and J. Michael Crant (1993), proactive individuals exhibit seven interrelated traits (Bańka, 2016):

➢ They independently initiate changes and actively seek opportunities for transformation.

➢ They focus on setting effective and meaningful goals.
➢ They search for solutions instead of magnifying existing problems.
➢ They are intrigued by performing tasks in ways that differ from the conventional approaches of the group.
➢ They are action-oriented individuals for whom nothing seems impossible; they constantly explore new possibilities.
➢ They are characterised by persistence in pursuing their goals and a tendency to stand firm in defending their viewpoints.

By comparing the characteristics of Generation Z with the attributes of proactive attitudes, it can be observed that there is a notable alignment between them. Generation Z is distinguished by its independence in decision-making, an active approach to change, and the ability to recognise the future needs of organisations.

They focus on building interpersonal relationships and exhibit determination, transforming the "impossible" into the "possible." This generation is characterised by an entrepreneurial mindset, evident in their ability to shape their actions independently. They are open to innovation and proficient in organising their activities. They are capable of effectively dealing with challenges, responding flexibly to changing market conditions

Generation Z regularly evaluates their achievements, striving to create a positive impact on their surroundings. Their activity centres around seeking solutions, which contributes to their success in implementing changes effectively. Their motivation stems from dynamic professional development, ensuring high income, a supportive work environment, and continuous acquisition of new professional skills.

Positive team relationships, innovative technologies, combining work with passion, and recognition for their contributions are important to them. They value mutual respect, support, and opportunities for ongoing personal growth through competency development.

Generation Z is inspired by an organisational culture based on positive values and diverse creative professional challenges that provide opportunities to showcase their abilities. All these factors influence their motivation, professional development, and loyalty to their employer.

For Generation Z, priorities include family closeness, emotional well-being, and relationships built on understanding and acceptance. They also value health as the foundation of a good life. They uphold values such as honesty in relationships, friendships fostered through mutual support, and a constant pursuit of knowledge. They consciously balance professional life by engaging in passions and interests as an essential part of their existence.

Living life to the fullest and embracing every moment is of great importance to them. They appreciate integrity in actions, honour, and effective financial management in the context of achieving a balance between professional and personal life. As K. Ślebarska (2017) notes, individuals are motivated to take initiative—or not—when they perceive opportunities to exercise control over a given situation.

A proactive person is an initiator of change in their environment. Similarly, the values embraced by Generation Z drive transformations in the labour market and within the organisations where they are employed. Their proactive tendencies and generational values make them catalysts for change in the workplace.

1.2 Proactivity – A Review of Research

The concept of proactivity is gaining increasing popularity across various scientific disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and management, as well as among business practitioners. Its interdisciplinary nature presents it as a multidimensional concept encompassing various aspects such as foresight, planning, initiative, and responsibility. Proactivity is often contrasted with reactivity, where actions are taken only in response to existing events or problems. Proactivity, in contrast to reactivity, is grounded in anticipation and prevention, allowing organisations to better prepare for future challenges (Piórkowska, 2015).

Experts in the field of proactivity in management emphasise the concurrent importance of analytical skills, such as identifying trends, opportunities, and threats, and developing strategies, as well as suitable attitudes, including risk readiness, flexibility, and initiative. Proactivity also requires openness to change, the ability to learn, and adaptability. The literature includes a variety of models and theoretical frameworks that enable the understanding and application of proactivity in management practice, often emphasising the role of organisational culture and leadership in shaping it (Pratama, Sridadi, Eliyana, Anggraini, and Kamil, 2023).

This broad approach reveals that research on proactivity indicates connections between various theories, including proactive coping theories and action theories, resulting in the integration of proactivity theories into broader action theories (Ratajczak, 2012). Such an approach necessitates methodological changes, suggesting that research on proactivity and self-efficacy should adopt a behavioural approach. It is recommended that studies on proactivity focus on specific behaviours and recognise them within their context (Betz and Hackett, 2006).

Thus, specific behaviours identify a proactive attitude. Numerous studies on proactivity focus on shaping one's professional career. Moreover, a proactive attitude is of significant importance in the context of career development. Research on proactive attitudes typically concentrates on job seeking or the entry of young individuals into the labour market, often examining the opposing traits of proactivity and reactivity (Dweck, 2017).

The findings indicate that by cultivating proactive attitudes, individuals are better equipped to function effectively in professional environments. Proactive individuals do not encounter difficulties with situations that prove challenging for others. Additionally, a proactive approach is associated with a greater tendency to "change employment," as proactive individuals are continuously seeking favourable opportunities for personal growth. They are also eager for new challenges that encourage mobility and a desire to switch organisations (Ślebarska, 2023).

Therefore, it is essential to adapt job responsibilities to meet the expectations of desirable candidates and provide opportunities for personal development. In other words, such candidates should be presented with a clear development path and allowed to actively participate in various projects to ensure they feel a sense of influence over their surrounding environment.

Proactivity has also been examined based on the assumptions of the SPO scale. It is posited that proactivity is a personality variable that, on one hand, highlights individual differences and, on the other, is shaped by environmental factors. The scale assumes that adulthood begins with entry into the labour market, culminating in full-time employment, which completes the transition to adulthood. The study identified the following areas of activity: socialisation, feedback seeking, self-promotion, innovation, career development, and stress management (Bańka, 2015).

These identified areas of activity align with proactive behaviour and are inseparable, mutually reinforcing each other. It can be said that they form a specific set of traits characteristic of a given attitude, as well as its intrinsic domain.

Quantitative and qualitative research conducted among employees in the Polish BSS sector focused on the impact of work motivation on employees' demonstration of proactive behaviours. The findings revealed that financial aspects, career advancement, a clearly defined development path within the organisation, additional benefits, training opportunities, greater independence, praise, more frequent evaluations from supervisors, and a positive work atmosphere all contribute to fostering proactive attitudes (Rogozińska-Pawełczyk and Matuszewska-Kubicz, 2021).

In general, research has concentrated on efforts related to the construct of traits that form proactive attitudes (Bańka, 2005; 2006). The characteristics of proactive individuals indicate that proactivity is linked to self-efficacy, which is responsible for engagement in the career-building process. These traits are associated with motivation, which activates latent agency and influences the efficiency of task execution, problem-solving abilities, and the creation of ambitious professional development plans (Myszka-Strychalska, 2020).

Other studies have highlighted connections between proactive attitudes and self-esteem, efficacy, and, notably, professional burnout (Schwarzer and Taubert, 1999).

Additionally, research underscores the role of organisational culture in promoting proactive attitudes. Organisational culture plays a pivotal role in shaping environments that encourage initiative, experimentation, and risk-taking, which are crucial for fostering proactivity in the workplace.

Organisations that cultivate a work environment conducive to initiative, experimentation, and risk-taking are more likely to succeed in dynamically changing contexts (Goerdel, 2006). Proactivity supports a culture of continuous improvement and learning, which is essential in a rapidly evolving business environment.

However, challenges associated with implementing proactivity within organisations have also been highlighted. This requires not only appropriate skills and knowledge but also changes in organisational culture, management systems, and human resource management practices. Organisations often face difficulties transitioning from traditional, reactive management models to more proactive ones, demanding engagement at all levels of management (Bindl, Parker, and Sharon, 2010).

Proactivity is presented as a key element of effective management in dynamic market conditions. It combines the ability to anticipate future events, flexibility in decision-making, and the capacity for rapid adaptation to changing circumstances. Proactive management not only enables organisations to utilise resources more effectively and achieve better outcomes but also contributes to fostering a culture of innovation and continuous development. This approach requires strategic planning as well as employee engagement and motivation (Wu and Parker, 2012).

A review of research highlights the pivotal role of organisations in promoting proactive attitudes. While this is not an easy task, it appears increasingly significant concerning Generation Z. These young individuals will form the backbone of organisational human resources. Therefore, focusing on the factors that, in their view, motivate them towards desirable attitudes is becoming ever more important.

2. Methodological Assumptions and Research Process

Generational diversity is a significant factor influencing professional attitudes, work styles, and expectations regarding the workplace. In particular, Generation Z, which is entering the labour market, exhibits unique preferences and needs that differ from those of previous generations. The aim of this article is to present the findings of research conducted on the proactive attitudes of Generation Z employees and to identify tools for influencing young workers to foster their proactivity in the workplace.

The study aimed to analyse the relationship between existing systems used in organisations and the level of proactivity among Generation Z representatives. The research was diagnostic in nature, focusing on evaluating how various organisational

strategies support proactive behaviours among young employees. The specific objectives included:

> ➢ Identification of key elements in systems that support proactive attitudes in the workplace.
> ➢ Analysis of non-financial factors influencing employee engagement.
> ➢ Evaluation of the effectiveness of organisational strategies aimed at fostering proactive behaviours among young employees.

The research was conducted among individuals born after 1995, aged between 18 and 28, residing in the Pomeranian Voivodeship. The respondents represented diverse professional backgrounds, including both the private and public sectors. An important criterion for selecting the study group was having professional experience or combining work with education.

The study included 366 participants, of whom 49.5% were women, 45% men, and 5.4% identified as intersex. A significant proportion of respondents (52.7%) were younger, aged 18–23, while 47.3% were aged 24–29, reflecting the natural dynamics of Generation Z entering the labour market.

The study was conducted between March and April 2024, employing the diagnostic survey method, which enabled the collection of data on the attitudes and experiences of young employees. The survey questionnaires were distributed via online platforms, email, and SMS.

The research process was based on a quantitative approach, supported by the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing) method, which facilitates automated data collection from young individuals who prefer digital communication tools. The main thematic areas of the survey included factors influencing proactivity in the workplace, types of support provided by supervisors and colleagues, indicators of participation in decision-making processes and team activities.

3. Analysis of Research Findings

After analysing the research results, it can be concluded that nearly half of the respondents (40.2%) reported a lack of awareness regarding proactive attitudes. This result highlights an urgent need for education in this area among young Generation Z employees. At the same time, the findings indicate varying levels of awareness among young workers about the characteristics of proactivity.

The largest percentage of respondents (81.1%) associated proactivity with taking initiative independently. This finding demonstrates that Generation Z commonly perceives proactivity as self-reliance and a willingness to take initiatives. Similarly high percentages were recorded in relation to active engagement (74.6%) and finding

unconventional solutions to problems (58.2%), indicating an appreciation for creativity and activity in performing professional tasks.

Significantly fewer respondents identified traits such as an innovative approach to tasks (33.6%) and inspiring colleagues to take action (32.8%). These results suggest that young employees less frequently associate proactivity with more complex aspects, such as team leadership or pursuing innovation. This indicates a potential area for development in the context of education and workplace support.

Surprisingly, a low percentage of respondents linked proactivity with anticipating future problems and taking preventive measures (24.6%) or a willingness to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions (31.1%). These results suggest that Generation Z is less likely to associate proactivity with strategic thinking skills and accountability for the outcomes of their actions.

Table 1. *Factors supporting proactive behaviours*

No	Category	Percentage
1	Opportunities for promotion and personal development	73,8%
2	Flexibility in decision-making	54,9%
3	Positive workplace atmosphere	50%
4	Support from management and colleagues	45,9%
5	Access to tools and resources	44,3%
6	High level of organisational culture	33,8%

Source: *Authors' calculations*

The conducted research identified key factors supporting proactive behaviours in the workplace among Generation Z representatives. The results highlight a variety of elements that can significantly influence the activity and engagement of young employees.

A critical factor supporting proactive behaviours among Generation Z employees is the opportunity for promotion and personal development (73.8%). This result underscores the importance of career prospects and skill acquisition in motivating young workers. Flexibility in decision-making (54.9%) and a positive workplace atmosphere (50%) emphasise the value of autonomy and effective team communication. Support from management and colleagues (45.9%) and access to tools and resources (44.3%) were also identified as significant factors. These findings demonstrate that young employees value an environment that supports their efforts and enables them to perform their duties effectively.

A high level of organisational culture (33.8%) was less significant, which may suggest a need to place greater emphasis on organisational values in daily work.

It can therefore be concluded that organisations aiming to foster proactivity among Generation Z should focus on providing development opportunities, flexibility, and a

positive workplace environment. Ensuring adequate support, access to tools, and the promotion of organisational culture values is also crucial, as these factors can contribute to higher levels of engagement and innovation.

Table 2. *Factors hindering proactivity*

No	Category	Percentage
1	Lack of time and resources	63,6%
2	Insufficient motivation among colleagues	52,1%
3	Lack of opportunities for professional development	50,4%
4	Excessive bureaucracy	37,2%
5	Overload of responsibilities	28,9%

Source: *Authors' calculations.*

The next question addressed the factors that limit proactivity among Generation Z employees in the workplace. The most frequently mentioned obstacle was a lack of time and resources (63.6%), highlighting the importance of effective task management and the availability of tools to support the completion of duties. Another significant limitation was insufficient motivation among colleagues (52.1%), pointing to the need to foster team engagement and strengthen shared responsibility for work outcomes.

A lack of opportunities for professional development (50.4%) was also identified as a critical factor hindering proactivity. Young employees clearly expect clear career prospects, which requires organisations to invest in training programmes and skills development. Excessive bureaucracy and an overload of responsibilities further contribute to reducing employees' willingness to take initiatives.

Therefore, to support proactivity among Generation Z, organisations must better manage resources, motivate teams, and provide opportunities for professional growth. Reducing bureaucracy and ensuring a balanced distribution of responsibilities can further enhance employee engagement and creativity.

Table 3. *Preferences for non-financial rewards*

No	Category	Percentage
1	Participation in courses and training	60,7%
2	A work schedule tailored to individual needs	54,1%
3	The possibility of remote work	51,6%
4	Praise and recognition	40,2%

Source: *Authors' calculations.*

The conducted research also examined the presence of motivational systems within organisations. A notable 28% of respondents indicated that such systems were absent in their workplaces, significantly limiting motivation to engage in proactive behaviours. The findings reveal a dominance of material rewards, with as many as 91.4% of respondents preferring salary increases, bonuses, financial incentives, and

tangible rewards, highlighting their critical role in fostering the engagement of young employees.

Simultaneously, the study demonstrated that non-financial factors also play an important role in motivating Generation Z. The highest number of respondents pointed to participation in courses and training (60.7%) and a work schedule tailored to individual needs (54.1%) as significant elements supporting engagement.

While young employees favour material rewards, organisations should also focus on developing motivational systems that incorporate flexible work arrangements and opportunities for professional growth. Non-financial benefits can enhance employee engagement and loyalty, contributing to a more motivated and committed workforce.

Table 4. *Elements of systems supporting proactive attitudes*

No	Category	Percentage
1	Opportunities for personal and professional development	75,4%
2	Flexible working hours	73,8%
3	Courses and training	60,7%
4	Access to essential work tools	44,3%
5	Positive workplace atmosphere	41%

Source: *Authors' calculations.*

In the subsequent part of the study, respondents were asked to identify key organisational elements that support proactive attitudes among Generation Z employees. Participants evaluated factors that motivate them to engage in behaviours beyond their standard professional duties.

The highest-rated factors were opportunities for personal and professional development (75.4%) and flexible working hours (73.8%). These results indicate that young employees particularly value organisations that provide space for self-improvement and allow for work schedules tailored to individual needs. Additionally, courses and training, access to essential work tools, and a positive workplace atmosphere also play a significant role in motivating young employees.

Therefore, organisations that invest in employee development through training, ensure flexibility, and foster a positive work environment can effectively support proactive attitudes among young workers. Creating conditions conducive to development and flexibility should be a key component of HR strategies.

4. Conclusions

The research findings allow for several significant conclusions regarding the proactive attitudes of Generation Z employees. A key factor supporting proactivity in this age group is the opportunity for personal and professional development, as well as flexibility in organising working hours. Young employees particularly value a work

environment that provides space for self-improvement and the ability to tailor schedules to their individual needs.

At the same time, it is evident that barriers such as a lack of time and resources, as well as insufficient motivation among colleagues, significantly hinder their ability to engage in behaviours that go beyond standard professional duties.

The study revealed that Generation Z's motivational preferences are strongly tied to material rewards, which remain the primary factor driving engagement. However, non-financial factors such as participation in training, flexible work schedules, and the possibility of remote work also play a significant role in fostering long-term commitment. It is also noteworthy that nearly half of the respondents lacked a full understanding of what a proactive attitude entails, highlighting the need for education in this area.

The findings suggest that organisations aiming to support proactivity among young employees should not only invest in professional development but also create a flexible work environment. Additionally, it is essential to promote organisational values that encourage initiative and innovation. Enhancing resource management and reducing bureaucracy can further improve the efficiency of young employees' efforts. Generation Z possesses substantial potential to bring new, creative solutions to organisations, provided they receive appropriate support and space to act.

However, it is important to remember that the issue of fostering and teaching proactive attitudes is not solely the responsibility of Generation Z employees. The organisational culture that supports proactive attitudes is also shaped by other employees and even the task teams in which Generation Z employees work. They can draw behavioural and attitudinal examples characterised by proactivity from their colleagues.

Equally significant is the role of the direct supervisor, who creates an environment conducive to employee proactivity. Moreover, beyond providing this space, a supervisor should be capable of discussing and implementing proposed initiatives or solutions.

5. Recommendations

Based on the conducted analysis, the following recommendations can be formulated to support proactive attitudes among Generation Z employees in the workplace:

Development of Competencies and Proactive Education:
Organisations should invest in educational programmes and training that increase young employees' awareness of proactive attitudes. It is crucial to introduce workshops that develop skills such as initiative, creativity, and problem anticipation. The lack of knowledge about proactivity, as indicated by nearly half of the respondents, underscores the need for action in this area.

Systems Supporting Professional Development:

Research has shown that opportunities for personal and professional development are key factors in fostering proactivity. It is recommended that organisations provide clearly defined career development paths, regular training sessions, and access to mentoring programmes that enable continuous skill improvement.

Work Flexibility as a Motivational Tool:

Organisations should promote flexible working arrangements, such as adaptable schedules and the possibility of remote or hybrid work. Such an approach allows young employees to better balance work and personal life, positively impacting their engagement.

Team Support and Leaders Encouraging Proactivity:

Collaboration and motivation within teams should be strengthened. Leaders should play a role in supporting employee initiatives, providing constructive feedback, and creating an environment where taking on new challenges is recognised and rewarded.

Motivational Systems Based on Material and Non-Financial Rewards:

While material rewards, such as bonuses and salary increases, are crucial for Generation Z, it is equally important to develop non-financial reward systems. Positive effects can be achieved through recognition, praise, opportunities to participate in prestigious projects, and access to training programmes.

Reducing Organisational Barriers:

To foster proactive attitudes, organisations should effectively manage time and resources, minimise bureaucracy, and optimise task distribution. Eliminating these barriers supports greater employee engagement and creativity.

Building an Organisational Culture that Promotes Proactivity:

Organisations should create a work environment that encourages initiative and innovation. A culture based on openness to change, collaboration, and appreciation of individual contributions to organisational success enhances engagement and willingness to take proactive actions. This includes conducting educational initiatives and supporting managers in fostering proactivity.

Implementing these recommendations can enhance organisational efficiency and the engagement of young employees, creating conditions for their full professional development and realisation.

Adapting management systems to the needs of Generation Z will allow organisations to better leverage their potential in a dynamically changing business environment.

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