

Keeping Generation Z means: measuring differently, leading differently, thinking differently.

Practical guide for HR professionals and executives – why Gen Z drops out when the employee experience cracks.

Introduction – The paradox of Generation Z

Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) is no longer just present as interns or career starters – many already hold team leader positions or are key people in digital and creative fields. They grew up in a world where technology, instant feedback and the disclosure of personal values are a matter of course – bringing new dynamics to companies.

While organizations compete for young talent, many are not prepared for this generation to respond to very different stimuli than previous ones. Gen Z craves security and freedom, development and balance at the same time – and doesn't hesitate to change companies if they find it all elsewhere.

And yet:

65% of Gen Z are considering quitting their job within 12 months, according to Deloitte (2024).

They change jobs **three times** as often as millennials in comparable positions.

68% of executives perceive the retention and motivation of this generation as a particular challenge (PwC, 2023).

This is not just an HR problem. **It is a strategic challenge.** It requires organizational flexibility, empathetic leadership and data-based decisions – which many models are not yet designed for.

Current studies: What do the data from 2025 show?

International HR studies from 2025 clearly show that **Gen Z is redefining work**. For them, the workplace is not only a source of income, but also a space for experience, a field of learning, a community and a place that creates identity. The quality of the **daily experience** counts more than title or employer brand.

Key study results:

According to **Business Insider / Upwork**, Gen Z is looking for short-term satisfaction, flexibility, and learning opportunities — loyalty is not an end in itself.

A **Guardian** survey shows: For 94%, work-life balance is more important than career.

According to **Resume.io**, 35% will turn down a job offer if the company culture is perceived as cold or "machined".

The **Deloitte Global Gen Z Survey (2024)** shows that 71% expect their employer to clearly represent social values.



Challenges according to studies:

- Lack of flexibility** – time and space autonomy is a must.
- Expectation of development** – personal growth is more important than a classic career path.
- Integration of work and life** – no separation, no sacrifice at the expense of the other.
- Wellbeing & psychological safety** – toxic climate leads to termination during onboarding.
- Experience-oriented corporate culture** – room design, community and authentic leadership count.
- Value-based** – they don't just want to hear about values, they want to see them lived.

These challenges cannot be solved by good HR intentions.
Targeted, generation-appropriate measurement is needed.

Why classic retention measures fail with Gen Z

Range	Classic approach	Generation Z expectation
Career	Status, hierarchy	Experience, Learning, Value Creation
Communication	Formal, top-down	Authentic, Frequent, Human
Working time	Fixed framework times	Flexibility and self-organization
Assessment	Annual feedback meeting	Immediate, concrete feedback
Corporate culture	Stability, loyalty	Trust, community, experience
Use of technologies	Controlled tools, fixed platforms	Mobile-friendly, intuitive, self-service systems
Learning and development	Formal training, standardized ways	Individual learning paths, microlearning, peer learning
Feedback formats	One-sided, from top to bottom	Dialogue-based, at eye level
Personality aspect	Clear separation of work and private life	Integrated identity – being present as a whole person
Leadership	Authoritarian, hierarchical	Mentor, Facilitator, Partnership

Why the problem lies in the system – not in the individual

Common misconception: "Gen Z is disloyal and oversensitive."

In fact, the problems arise at the **breaking points of corporate culture and the employee experience journey.**

- Culture** is the visible and invisible system of values, norms and behavior.
- The **adventure journey** includes all interactions and impressions from the first contact to the exit.

Fractures occur where:

- Values expressed and lived practice are at odds
- Development promises cannot be kept
- Psychological safety only appears to exist
- Feedback is missing or late
- Onboarding experience and everyday reality are far apart

Gen Z recognizes such inconsistencies extremely quickly. It evaluates not only performance, but also **authenticity, trust, and consistency**.

Typical symptoms:

- "Money doesn't motivate them" → There is a lack of sense coupling.
- "You are not committed" → There is a lack of emotional attachment to the manager.
- "You change all the time" → you don't feel seen or safe.

These are not individual deficits – **these are systemic feedback**.

Gen Z brings highly sensitive sensors with them. They quickly sense when trust is lacking, when development is only asserted or when values are not lived. For them, work is a space of identity. If they are not allowed to be themselves there, they move on – and early.

The solution does not lie in behavioral training, but in **systemic listening and targeted measurements**.

What should organizations measure to really retain Gen Z?

In Survex's experience, companies make a real impact when they measure along five key areas:

1. Experience meaning – "Does my work make sense?"

- Does the task fit my values?
- Do I feel impact and relevance?
- Do I feel seen?

2. Learning Agility – "Can I develop?"

- Can I try new things?
- Do I get feedback and space for reflection?
- Can I help develop others?

3. Psychological safety – "Can I be myself?"

- How open is the manager?
- How strong are my peer relationships?
- May I express my opinion?

4. Leadership culture – "Is my manager credible?"

- Does it really embody the values?
- Does it communicate transparently?
- Is she a human being – not just a role?



5. Cultural fit and community – "Do I really belong?"

- Am I part of a real team?
- Do I have to play a role?
- Are there shared, meaningful experiences?

Pulse Survey – Measuring in the language of Gen Z

The Survex Pulse Survey makes it possible to obtain feedback quickly and in a mobile-friendly manner – **in a targeted manner along the five key areas** described in point 5. The short, regular surveys not only provide data, but are also a signal of trust: they show that opinions count.

5+1 questions that reveal a lot:

- Sense of purpose:** "I know how my work contributes to the company's goals."
- Learning agility:** "I have the opportunity to try new things."
- Psychological safety:** "I can express my opinion openly in the team."
- Leadership:** "My manager is interested in me as a person, not just in my performance."
- Community:** "I can be myself in a team – without having to play a role."
- (Additional question – wellbeing indicator):* "I can also pay attention to my well-being at work."

The results clearly show:

- Where does the Gen Z employee experience chain break?**
Poor feedback culture, lack of development prospects or cultural misunderstandings are typical fractures – and early indicators of dissatisfaction and inner resignation.
- Where is the gap between leadership perception and reality?**
Leadership often thinks it offers security or development – while Gen Z experiences something completely different. The survey makes this discrepancy visible.
- Where are fast, focused interventions necessary?**
The data shows where there is an acute need for action – be it in a certain team or in a certain leadership style. In this way, resources can be used in a targeted manner instead of acting with a watering can.

What can HR and managers do specifically?

The responsibility for Gen Z's engagement doesn't lie solely with HR. **The biggest levers often lie in the everyday life of managers.** That's why we distinguish between systemic HR measures and concrete leadership behavior.

HR-side interventions (systemic):

Feedback culture:

- Microfeedback 1–2× per week on specific behavior
- Peer-to-Peer Feedback Circle (with training support)
- Storytelling feedback ("That's what I learned from you this week...")



Learning & Development:

- Mini Learning Sprints (3–4 weeks)
- Individual learning paths with target measurement
- Project-based learning with temporary roles for Gen Z

Digital Transparency & Communication:

- Open decision logs of the leadership
- Gen Z channels in Slack/Teams: Ideas, mood, suggestions

Stay Interviews & Psychological Safety:

- Introduction to the questions: "What keeps you here?" / "What would make you walk?"
- Measurement of trust indicators (e.g. network quality, sentiment)

Managers in everyday life:

Authentic presence:

- Weekly open office hours only for Gen Z employees
- One-on-one conversations also on personal topics

Trust & Autonomy:

- Quarterly target discussions at eye level
- Task redesign with growing scope for decision-making

New understanding of mentoring:

- Reverse mentoring: Gen Z as a mentor for senior leaders
- Topic-specific mentor months: e.g. wellbeing, values, purpose

Promoting community:

- Shared values dialog
- Enabling shared, meaningful experiences – voluntary, not prescribed

These measures only have an effect **if they are consistent**, not as one-off campaigns. The best results are achieved when HR and management work together to create the experience space.

Conclusion – Change of perspective instead of recipes

Keeping Gen Z doesn't mean "appeasing them." It means speaking their language, taking their signals seriously – and constantly developing the organization.

If you are only looking for tools, you will soon lose them. Anyone who **wants to learn, listen and shape** wins her as a partner.

This generation doesn't just want to work – it wants to **help shape it**. Anyone who has the courage to share responsibility will be surprised at how much potential, energy and innovative power they have.

It's not Gen Z's adaptation to the organization that is key – it's adapting the organization to the future.

