

From Managers to Mentors: Understanding Gen Z's Leadership Expectations in the Contemporary Workplace

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Abstract: The growing presence of Generation Z in the contemporary workforce is transforming traditional assumptions about leadership, career development, employee engagement, and workplace expectations. This paper examines the changing leadership expectations of Gen Z and argues for a transition from conventional command – and - control management toward coaching, mentoring, developmental feedback, psychological safety, and two - way knowledge exchange. Drawing on contemporary workplace and generational research, the study highlights Gen Z's emphasis on purpose, work - life balance, financial security, continuous learning, well - being, autonomy, and meaningful career development. The paper further examines the role of digital and artificial intelligence competencies, human - centred skills, and reverse mentoring in developing intergenerational organizational capabilities. A strategic four - phase roadmap is proposed involving leadership diagnosis and enablement, performance architecture redesign, reverse mentoring, and continuous assessment. The paper concludes that organizations seeking to attract, engage, develop, and retain Gen Z talent must reposition managers as facilitators, coaches, and mentors capable of supporting both individual development and organizational adaptability.

Keywords: Generation Z, leadership expectations, employee engagement, reverse mentoring, workplace well-being, career development, artificial intelligence, organizational transformation, human-centred skills, digital workforce