

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Management



Master's Thesis

**Navigating the Future Workplace: Teleworking
dynamics and the Integration of Generation Z**

Coline SALAMÉ

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DIPLOMA THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Salamé Coline

Economics and Management

Thesis title

Navigating the Future Workplace: Teleworking dynamics and the Integration of Generation Z

Objectives of thesis

The main objective of this diploma thesis is to study how companies can adapt their teleworking policy to maintain a collaborative and engaging environment while meeting Generation Z's needs.

This research investigates the characteristics and expectations of Generation Z in the workplace and examines teleworking and its impact on organizational dynamics.

Although Generation Y has been more widely studied in the context of work, Generation Z is still very new and lacks material on its desires in terms of work and especially in the specific context of teleworking post-Covid-19. Teleworking, for its part, has only very recently been swept aside by the pandemic that has made this practice widespread.

Understanding their workforce needs is essential for organizations striving to thrive in a dynamic business environment. This research will provide valuable insights for companies seeking to adapt their teleworking policy.

Methodology

This thesis is divided into two main parts – one theoretical and the other practical.

In the first part, a comprehensive review of existing literature on major changes in the workplace over the past decade will be provided, including remote work, technological developments, diversity and inclusion, and generational shifts. These will be linked to the evolving roles and responsibilities of managers in response to changing workplace dynamics.

In the second part, semi-structured individual interviews were used as the main data collection method to enable participants to express their opinions, experiences and expectations in depth. This type of interview leaves a certain amount of freedom to the interviewee, while at the same time being supervised.

This thesis explores the expectations and behaviors of Generation Z in terms of teleworking. A simple questionnaire would have been limited in its ability to explore these aspects, and would have lacked the elements to intelligently answer this research question.



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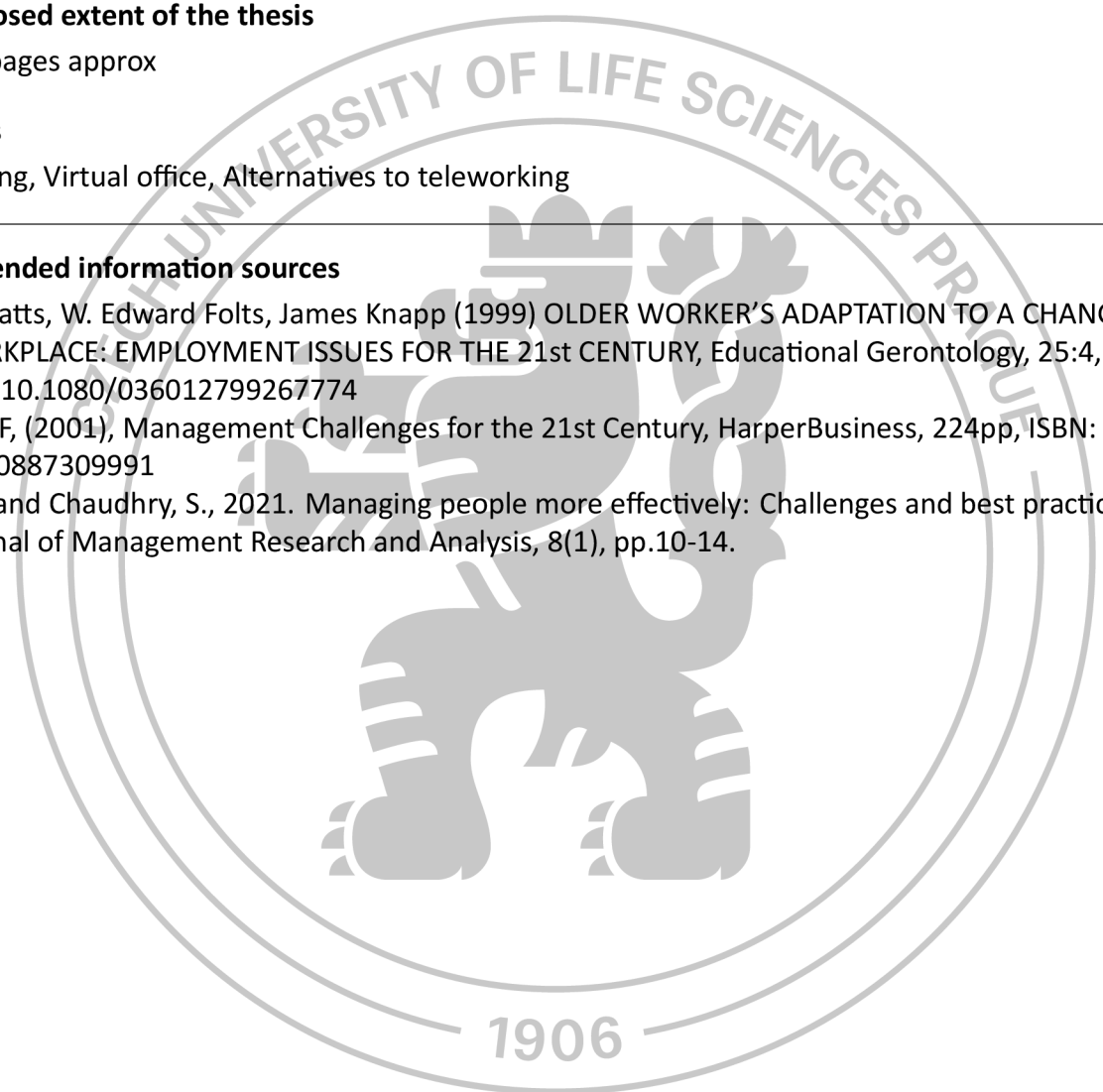
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The Diploma Thesis Supervisor

Ing. Richard Selby, Ph.D.

Supervising department

Department of Management and Marketing

Electronic approval: 22. 3. 2024

doc. Ing. Ladislav Pilař, MBA, Ph.D.

Head of department

Electronic approval: 25. 3. 2024

doc. Ing. Tomáš Šubrt, Ph.D.

Dean

Prague on 25. 03. 2024

Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my master's thesis titled "Navigating the Future Workplace: Teleworking dynamics and the Integration of Generation Z" by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the master's thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights.

In Prague on 28/03/2024

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Navigating the Future Workplace: Teleworking dynamics and the Integration of Generation Z

Abstract

The current era is raising many questions about the future of work, particularly since the widespread adoption of telecommuting in the wake of the pandemic and the increasing integration of Generation Z into the job market. Studies demonstrate a growing quest for flexibility and a better work-life balance on the part of this young generation, a quest that seems to find satisfaction in the practice of telecommuting.

Our qualitative exploratory study, based on interviews conducted with different generational and professional profiles, provide concrete recommendations for businesses seeking to navigate the new reality of the labour market.

The results reveal that, although teleworking is valued across generations, the digital nativity of Generation Z and their entry into the labour market in a period of unprecedented flexibility and technological integration sets their expectations apart. In order to fully capture the benefits of teleworking while overcoming its challenges, companies need to adopt a balanced approach and consider appropriate strategies for maintaining commitment and corporate culture in a flexible working environment.

Keywords: flexible working practices, technological developments, workplace dynamics

Navigace na pracovišti budoucnosti: Dynamika práce na dálku a integrace generace Z

Abstrakt

Současná doba vyvolává mnoho otázek o budoucnosti práce, zejména od doby, kdy se v důsledku pandemie rozšířila práce na dálku a kdy se na trhu práce stále více začleňuje generace Z. Studie ukazují, že tato mladá generace stále více usiluje o flexibilitu a lepší rovnováhu mezi pracovním a soukromým životem, a zdá se, že toto úsilí nachází uspokojení v praxi práce na dálku.

Naše kvalitativní průzkumná studie založená na rozhovorech vedených s různými generačními a profesními profily poskytuje konkrétní doporučení pro podniky, které se snaží orientovat v nové realitě pracovního trhu.

Výsledky ukazují, že ačkoli je práce na dálku ceněna napříč generacemi, digitální nativita generace Z a její vstup na trh práce v období nebývalé flexibility a technologické integrace odlišuje její očekávání. Aby bylo možné plně využít výhod práce na dálku a zároveň překonat její problémy, musí společnosti zaujmout vyvážený přístup a zvážit vhodné strategie pro udržení angažovanosti a firemní kultury ve flexibilním pracovním prostředí.

Klíčová slova: flexibilní pracovní postupy, technologický vývoj, dynamika pracoviště

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1. Introduction

The next generation of workers is thought to redefine what it means to have a career, with choices and preferences that focus on different values, aspirations and frameworks than their predecessors. In the next working landscape, people will place greater emphasis on finding work that is fulfilling, offers opportunities for personal growth and fitting with their personal lives rather than simply working to pay the bills or ascend the professional ladder.

Indeed, “In 2030, 75% of the working population will be from Generations Y (born between 1980 and 1995) and Z (1995-2010)” (Gentina & Ruchenstain, 2023). Therefore today’s managers do not have the same missions, do not take on the same challenges, and do not work with the same workforce as yesterday’s managers.

The characteristics and aspirations of Generation Z’s members are challenging conventional paradigms of the current work organisation. In order to attract, integrate and retain this young talent, companies need to understand their expectations, their specific skills and their values.

Often characterised by their great ease with digital technologies and their search for a balance between professional and personal life, Generation Z is entering the labour market at a time of great change.

The integration of teleworking has become crucial for businesses in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has accelerated the transition to more flexible and decentralised forms of working.

In this context, the generalisation of teleworking is closely linked to the underlying trends of individualisation, skills development and, above all, flexibility and the spread of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

However, most companies are still experimenting with their teleworking models and making adjustments, while some are taking a real step backwards by bringing their employees back to the office.

By raising the question of how to adapt teleworking policies to the expectations of Generation Z, this thesis aims to contribute to the debate on how work and organisations are

changing in the digital age. It aims to provide insights for corporate decision-makers, so that they can successfully navigate this new labour market reality.

2. Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The main objective of this diploma thesis is to study how companies can adapt their teleworking policy to maintain a collaborative and engaging environment while meeting Generation Z's needs.

This research investigates characteristics and expectations of Generation Z in the workplace and examines teleworking and its impact on organisational dynamics.

Although Generation Y has been more widely studied in the context of work, Generation Z is still very new and lacks material on its desires in terms of work and especially in the specific context of teleworking post-Covid-19. Teleworking, for its part, has only very recently been swept aside by the pandemic that has made this practice widespread.

Understanding their workforce needs is essential for organisations striving to thrive in a dynamic business environment. This research will provide valuable insights for companies seeking to adapt their teleworking policy.

The Research Question

Over this work, I will try to answer the following research question: how can companies adapt their teleworking policy in order to meet the specific needs of the Generation Z workforce?

2.2 Methodology

This thesis is divided into two main parts - one theoretical and the other practical.

In the first part, a comprehensive review of existing literature on major changes in the workplace over the past decade will be provided, including remote work, technological developments, diversity and inclusion, and generational shifts. These will be linked to the evolving roles and responsibilities of managers in response to changing workplace dynamics.

In the second part, semi-structured individual interviews were used as the main data collection method to enable participants to express their opinions, experiences and expectations in depth. This type of interview leaves a certain amount of freedom to the interviewee, while at the same time being supervised.

This paper explores the expectations and behaviours of Generation Z in terms of teleworking. A simple questionnaire would have been limited in its ability to explore these aspects, and would have lacked the elements to intelligently answer this research question.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Characteristics of teleworking

3.1.1 Introduction of teleworking

According to Taskin (2006), teleworking traditionally refers to the “*performance of a professional activity, in whole or in part, at distance (i.e. away from the immediate vicinity of the place where the result of this work is expected and without any physical possibility for the manager to supervise the performance of work) and by the means of ICTs*”. Teleworking fundamentally impacts the structure of work and control by giving workers more autonomy to organise, plan and execute their work.

Although teleworking now seems to be commonplace in the western world, until the beginning of 2020 teleworking was not widely used in companies, nor was it even imaginable (Gaidhani, Arora, & Sharma, 2019).

As businesses and employees have been slowly transitioning to remote work, the sudden impact of the COVID-19 pandemic serves as an unforeseen and extensive experiment for numerous workers and organisations.

In only few days, tens of millions of Europeans found themselves teleworking as a result of the health crisis. According to Eurofound, the proportion of people who answered ‘yes’ to the question ‘*Did you work from home for the first time because of Covid-19*’ was 37.8% in France, 29.2% in Spain, 39.9% for Italy and 55.1% for Belgium (Eurofound).

Jon C. Messenger (2019) defined in his work the transformation of telework across three generations which reflects the evolution of work arrangements facilitated by advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Table 1: Three generations of work arrangements

Generation	Location	Technology	Characteristics
First Home Office	Fixed home location	Basic ICTs (e.g., phone, fax, early internet)	Work from home, limited to certain tasks and roles
Second Mobile Office	Various locations (e.g., cafes, libraries)	Advanced mobile technologies (e.g., laptops, smartphones)	Flexibility in work location, enabled by mobile tech
Third Virtual Office	No fixed location, fully online	High-speed internet, cloud computing, collaboration tools	Fully virtual teams, no geographical constraints

Source: Messenger, 2019

First Generation: The Home Office

The first concept of telework initially focused on the reduction of commuting time and costs by relocating work from the employer's offices to the employee's home.

This generation of telework was enabled by the early use of computers and telecommunications tools, allowing for work that was heavily reliant on information processing to be done outside of traditional office settings. It was characterised by stationary technology such as fixed computers and telephones, making telework synonymous with working from home or close to it (Hackney, A., Yung, M., Somasundram, K. G., Nowrouzi-Kia, B., Oakman, J., & Yazdani, A., 2022).

Second Generation: The Mobile Office

The introduction of smaller, lighter, and wireless devices such as laptops and mobile phones marked the transition to the second generation of telework. This generation expanded the concept of telework beyond the home office to include working from virtually anywhere (Hill & Miller, 1996).

The mobility made possible by these new technologies allowed employees to work from third places such as cafes, trains, and airports, blurring the lines between home and office workspaces. This second generation reflected a shift towards more flexible work arrangements, where work could be done across various locations, not just at home or at the office.

Third Generation: The Virtual Office

Finally, the third generation of telework, powered by even more advanced ICTs like smartphones and tablet computers, further expanded the concept of telework to include virtual offices. This generation leveraged cloud computing and high-speed internet access, enabling work to be done from any location, at any time, through devices that fit in the palm of a hand (Dery, 2014).

The virtual office makes work more flexible and mobile, becoming something you do rather than a place you go. It's a big change from traditional home-working, towards dynamic working that doesn't depend on a specific location.

Consequently, the introduction of telework has had a significant impact on individuals and organisations. We will now explore the effects of teleworking, aiming to understand better the main challenges and opportunities that arise from remote work.

3.1.2 Opportunities

a) Flexibility

According to Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay (2006), teleworking allows employees to save time on commuting, particularly when they are living far from their usual place of work. It also enables them to adopt flexible working hours so they can dedicate more time to their family or personal activities.

As a result, teleworkers and their supervisors report that teleworking reduces stress and fatigue (Tremblay, 2001) since they have more control on their daily schedules and they experience less work interruptions.

Organisations benefit from greater productivity, lower absenteeism, reduced turnover and savings on overhead costs (Greer & Payne, 2014).

b) Autonomy

When employees telework, they are physically distanced from their managers and must adapt to the reduced number of interactions with them, thereby gaining autonomy. Berinato (2014) has shown through his study that full-time teleworkers have less desire to leave their jobs. They are indeed happier and more productive than those who alternate with a few days' teleworking a week (who are themselves more productive and happier than those who do not telework).

This proof of an increased level of happiness and productivity proportional to the amount of teleworking carried out proves that teleworking implies a different kind of management, one that is favourable to the fulfilment and development of workers. So, whether they are aware of it or not, management will not be the same for teleworking or face-to-face employees (Mutiganda et al., 2022).

The practice of teleworking within an organisation also reflects a company's desire to encourage its collaborators to invest more in themselves and the company, and not just work

for their superior (Rey & Sitnikoff, 2006). In other words, teleworking is a way of developing self-discipline, so that employees can manage themselves and no longer deplore about inadequate management from their superior.

However, this kind of management only applies if the manager is willing to place his or her trust in the employee. Teleworking will not have a positive effect on people's work if managers are too controlling because of a lack of trust (Solís, 2017).

3.1.3 Challenges

While teleworking offers numerous benefits such as flexibility and autonomy, it also introduces significant challenges. Therefore, managers need to develop strategies for ensuring communication, collaboration, and productivity among remote teams.

a) Technology adoption

Teleworking first requires specific technological skills to allow effective utilisation of digital tools and communication platforms. Teleworkers need to learn how to use collaborative working and project management software, as well as communication tools such as videoconferencing and instant messaging.

Research conducted in 2020 by Adam Ozimek has identified technological issues as the biggest drawback of transitioning to remote work is, which are a direct consequence of the sudden and unplanned shift due to the pandemic.

The surveys polled a combined 1,500 hiring managers so the results reflect the views and plans of those with direct influence over businesses' remote work decisions.

Table 2: Main constraints to teleworking

What, if anything, about remote work at your organisation has worked poorly?	
Technological issues	36.2%
Increased distractions at home	32.0%
Reduced team cohesion	30.5%
Difficulties in communication	30.3%
Teams are less organised	23.3%
Less productivity	22.5%
Nothing has worked poorly	14.8%

Source: Ozimek, 2020

The most popular answer for what has worked poorly was technological issues, which is shared by 36.2% of respondents. The next most popular response was increased distractions at home, for 32% of respondents.

Indeed, this study implies that many workers and companies are adapting to a new technology they have not used before. However, good knowledge of ICTs is essential in order to set up a functional teleworking framework.

b) Isolation and psychological distress

The real challenge of teleworking lies in the ability to manage the despatialisation it induces (Taskin, 2003). This means not only physical distance, but also the psycho-sociological distance associated with the worker's distance from colleagues and shared spaces, depriving them of formal and informal exchanges.

Transitioning to remote work practices has brought significant challenges for both organisations and their employees, particularly in the context of work across multiple locations. This shift emphasises the importance of re-evaluating isolation as a central challenge for organisations when work is becoming more decentralised and technology-mediated.

The importance of social relationships in the workplace is a source of human motivation, productivity and well-being. Research has shown that individuals who have strong social connections at work tend to be more motivated and engaged in their tasks (Taylor, 2015).

Isolation can have a lot of consequences on the efficiency of individuals because it leads to disengagement, low job satisfaction, reduced wellbeing and poor performance. In remote work, spending more than 2.5 days per week working remotely is found to lead to the deterioration of workplace relationships (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

Indeed, distance reduces their sense of belonging to a team or a company, and leads to a loss of meaning for what they bring with all their personality. Workers lose their bearings and their only reference point is their manager. Despite the effective use of information and communication technologies, teleworking breaks the social bonds that bind a team together, with exchanges often remaining purely professional. As a result, the manager-managed relationship is overshadowed by all the non-professional aspects that are so crucial (Gajendran, 2007).

Gaining autonomy, freedom and flexibility is not always entirely beneficial for the employee. The ultra-connectivity brought about by teleworking can threaten the permeability of professional and private boundaries. When employees are physically present in their organisation, they know that their involvement is engaged for a limited period, whereas when they telework, the boundaries between work and private life are blurred. Teleworking allows them to connect to their workplace at any time of the day, and any place (Brandão, & Ramos, 2023).

Employees may also feel they owe their managers when they are awarded the right to telework, which is sometimes seen as a privilege. As a result, they will work harder to repay their 'debt', increasing the risk of burnout (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

There are therefore several conditions for the success of this new management style, listed by Mello in 2007: firstly, managers must be comfortable with the idea of giving their subordinates the freedom to organise their work activities, missions and projects as they see fit. Secondly, they must show their capacity of delegating and adopting decentralised management of work, and finally develop new systems for assessing and evaluating performance at work.

c) Rethinking management

Shifting to remote work implies rethinking our management techniques and adapting them to virtual teams.

It does not require the same skills as those required to lead a physical team, and the role of the e-leader is more challenging because of the new constraint of physical distance (Contreras, Baykal & Abid, 2020). Managerial methods relevant in a traditional work environment need to be reviewed to avoid the direct consequences of weak interpersonal bonds.

Since virtual leaders are not able to physically observe their members, they should find a way to set their expectations virtually.

A virtual team leader plays three important roles: first he needs to provide a link between team members so that they can get an overall picture of their environment. Second, the virtual team leader sets a direction to ensure that all actions have a clear purpose and are aligned with the team's goals and objectives. Lastly, the virtual leader functions as an operational coordinator, identifying the appropriate resources and developing strategies to address issues and challenges (Mehtab, 2017).

Building trust in a remote environment is a process that requires attention and effort from both managers and employees. Leaders need to work harder to maintain a visible and supportive presence in a virtual workplace.

When presenting an idea in a face-to-face interaction, the follower may observe sincere interest in the nonverbal reactions of the manager. Employees who interact with their manager mainly through technology may feel their opinions carry less weight because they are missing the nonverbal signs that we send as humans that are not transcribed through our screens and e-mails (Milbrath, 2023).

Managers therefore need to make additional efforts to make sure that individuals can correctly interpret their opinion when ideas and initiatives are presented. They need to keep in mind that there are higher chances for people to misinterpret information while using electronic communication.

Due to repeated incidents and reduced visibility of the work of its teams, Essilor Luxottica asked its HR and management departments to implement an IT system to accurately assess the work rate of its employees. Similarly, Citibank recently raised attention by opting to monitor the activities of its teleworking employees daily, with the aim of calling back to the office those deemed less efficient (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, de Corbière, & Elie-Dit-Cosaque, 2023).

These examples illustrate the potential excesses of teleworking, particularly where there is a lack of trust on the part of management. The use of surveillance technologies to monitor remote working can signal a management approach based more on mistrust than on trust and autonomy. This not only risks damaging the relationship between employers and their employees but can also have a negative impact on worker morale and productivity (Jeske, 2022).

Without trust, teleworking, which in theory should offer flexibility and autonomy, can be transformed into a stressful and guarded experience, eroding the potential benefits of this working arrangement.

3.2 Characteristics and expectations of Generation Z in the workplace

3.2.1 Definition of Generation Z

In this research, we explore the concept of "generation" from its sociological perspective, defined by Attias-Donfut (1991) as a group of individuals who are approximately the same age and who have lived through common historical experiences or events, resulting in a similar worldview and a common mode of thinking to certain extents.

The changing generational structure of the population, especially in the working population, is another challenge for managers. The modern workplace consists of four different generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, and now entering Generation Z. Each of them has specific characteristics which need to be identified by employers (Dolot, 2018).

Managers need to ensure that the different generations can coexist properly in their common working environment, by providing them with the necessary support to allow them to understand each other and work together without threatening the organisation's productivity and culture.

Generation Z, born roughly between 1995 and 2010 (Gaidhani, Arora, & Sharma, 2019), is the most recent generation to enter the workforce.

They currently account for about 2 billion of the world's population and are expected to represent 27% of the workforce by 2025 (World Economic Forum, 2021).

They are often referred to as 'digital natives', as they grew up with technology and are very comfortable with various digital communication tools such as social media. They quickly adapt to new technologies and often play a role in driving technological innovation. The internet has also enabled Gen Z to have a global perspective from an early age. They are more likely to be aware of global issues, cultural diversity and social issues (De Witte, 2022).

Generation Z is so named because it follows X, Y, but Z also means "zapping" and comes from the tendency of this generation to zap what it does not consider useful. The dominant characteristic of this generation is that its members are in the age of "everything, right now"

and instantaneity. Timeframes have shrunk and the world is moving faster by the day (Scheunders, 2021). Growing up in an age of information overload, Gen Z is known for having shorter attention spans. They are used to quickly consuming and processing information, which differentiates them to other generations.

A study conducted by Wijaya and Kokchang (2023) highlights Generation Z's awareness regarding environmental and sustainability issues since they are the first generation to experience the severe impacts of climate change.

Generation Z is often portrayed as materialistic, with a significant emphasis on the acquisition of material goods. A report from Bank of America, cited by Business Today in 2022, suggests that 45% of Generation Z aims for financial success to easily afford material goods, a proportion higher than observed in millennials (34%) and Generation X and boomers (30% each).

Members of Generation Z enjoy the benefits of the modern technological age: they have the ability to multi-task with efficient results. They receive and process information quickly, but they are used to accessing information more easily than previous generations (Dadić, 2022).

The remarkable development of technology has opened the whole world to them (White, 2017). There's almost nothing they can't find out or discover. *“Meeting new people, customs, habits, different cultures, attitudes and values, different opinions, travels and insights - for that information is much more accessible to them, and the world is in the palm of your hand.”* (Dadić, 2022).

By understanding the capabilities and strengths of this generation, it can be inferred that they are more tolerant, supportive, open, and willing to accept differences than their predecessors. Internet access provides a solid foundation for developing awareness of others, understanding a multicultural society, and broadening perspectives (Dadić, 2022).

It is essential for organisations to understand these specificities if they are to engage this generation and respond appropriately to their needs and preferences. However we need to keep in mind that individual experiences may diverge, and not every member of Gen Z will exhibit all of these characteristics.

3.2.2 Generation Z expectations regarding work

Members of Generation Z have specific expectations and preferences when it comes to work.

On one hand, the importance attached to consumption by this generation may raise concerns about the emergence of a materialistic generation, with consumption as its sole value (Chaplin & John, 2010). Attracted by brands and more exposed to financial difficulties, Generation Z would logically favour companies that advocate traditional transactional loyalty strategies, especially those based on monetary rewards.

In contrast to preconceived ideas, recent studies in marketing show that young people are not as materialistic as one might think; they exchange, share, and thus do not seek only to own objects (Chaplin et al., 2019).

The study led by Chillakuri (2020) explored subjective opinions to identify the key variables which are crucial to design an effective onboarding program of new Generation Z hires, which are displayed in the Table 3 below. This document highlights 3 main categories:

Meaningful work

Generation Z values a clear understanding of the organisations' values, vision and strategic goals. They are willing to commit fully to a work that is meaningful for them because it enables them not only to fulfil their personal ambitions, but also to maintain a good balance between their professional and private lives (Bonnet, 2020).

Work-life balance

This generation needs greater flexibility and work-life balance at the workplace, often permitted through the possibility of remote working which enables them to operate flexible working arrangements.

Generation Z grew up watching their parents sacrifice their personal lives for their professional careers, and have witnessed the damaging effects of a lack of work-life balance. Younger generations are therefore more likely to be more demanding when it comes to respecting their private lives and the interference of their work with it (Kovary & Pearson, 2017).

Table 3: Onboarding expectations

First order	No. of responses
Meaningful work	114
Performance management	81
Work-life balance	78
Personal connect	76
Bigger picture at work	64
Learning and development	56
Rewards and recognition	29
Innovation	28
Career development	28
Diversity and inclusion	26
Organisational culture	21
Internal mobility	18
Corporate social responsibility	16
HR policies	15
Core values	15
Leadership	12
Supportive team	2
Office events	1
Total	680 (136 x 5)

Source: Chillakuri, B. (2020)

Personal connect

Thanks to digitalization and collaboration tools, we can now easily connect from anywhere in the world. It offers flexibility in terms of time, space and practice. However it has an impact on relationships in the workplace: the personal experience acquired through direct exchanges with colleagues and leaders is seen as valuable, and Gen Z perceive personal connections as crucial for career advancement.

This generation therefore has a high need for flexibility, which is often made possible using teleworking, enabling them to maintain a greater work-life balance than previous generations and to be more efficient at work. Nevertheless they are also super vigilant about the impact of technology on human relations, which are highly valued and are a main part of working life that should not be hindered.

To conclude, Generation Z members have an entrepreneurial mindset and value opportunities for creativity, innovation and problem-solving. Meanwhile they also think work-life balance as a significant concern. Flexible work arrangements such as remote work options and flexible hours are very appreciated by this generation. Finally, a major characteristic of this last generation is how they often seek purpose and meaning in their work (Gaidhani, Arora & Sharma, 2019).

3.2.3 Generational landscape in the workplace

This generational division within the workforce has significant impacts on organisations. It is essential for managers to understand the different segments which form their workforce and recognize how the expectations regarding employment may vary across these generational lines. Socio-economic context, as well as scientific and technological advancements, shape individuals' worldviews.

These factors influence not only their perspectives on work but also their values, attitudes and preferences, all of which need to be considered by forward-thinking leaders to effectively manage and engage their workforce.

These generations differ through attitudes towards work, loyalty towards the employer, attitudes regarding respect and authority, training styles and needs, desire for a better work/life balance and attitudes towards supervision (Tolbize, 2008).

There are a lot of stereotypes about how different generations relate to work, for example when young workers and generation Z are frequently accused of wanting to work less and of being uncommitted to their jobs, while previous generations have been characterised as more hardworking.

Younger generations tend to be more results-focused rather than process-oriented like the older ones. They focus more on being flexible regarding their time and how they complete tasks, in order to boost their productivity and still get their job done right and respecting deadlines (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011).

Younger workers have been reported as less loyal to their employers than older generations such as Boomers. They are indeed more loyal to their co-workers than to their company. They also value job-hopping as a “normal, accepted method of career advancement” (Bova & Kroth, 2001).

Managers can influence and increase their employees' loyalty towards their employer by offering opportunities for career development, trainings to develop new skills or a better salary and benefits.

Authority is no longer perceived in the same way over the generations. Traditionally, an authoritative leader was perceived positively by his employees, and authority sometimes constituted one of the criteria that made a manager a good manager in the eyes of his employees.

According to Deal (2007), 13% of members of the 'traditional' generation perceive authority as an important value for a superior, compared with 5% of Boomers, 6% of Xers and 6% of Yers. However, this percentage is still low and shows that there is often a tendency to attribute a judgement to an entire generation, when in reality this only represents a minor part of the population.

Gen Z individuals, the newest entrants into the workforce, may seek supervisors who provide clear expectations and offer opportunities for continuous learning while embracing technology (Gaidhani, Arora & Sharma, 2019).

To conclude, young employees do not want to be reduced to their age and supposed lack of experience, and have their contribution limited. They expect the authorities to listen to them too, and to treat their perspectives with respect. Therefore managers have to strike a balance that satisfies both parties, which can be complex and challenging.

3.3 Adapting teleworking policies for Generation Z

3.3.1 Implementing a teleworking policy

Companies have embraced various strategies and adaptations to foster a harmonious and productive remote work environment. In examining the landscape of teleworking policies, it becomes imperative to understand the nuanced approaches organisations have taken to accommodate the diverse needs of their workforce.

Table 4 presented below is a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of telework for both employers and employees, and complements those discussed in more detail in our previous section.

Knowing these pros and cons is obviously imperative for managers and organisations seeking to implement an effective teleworking policy, and to adopt an approach that takes account of both the opportunities and the limitations of this new working arrangement.

Table 4: Advantages and disadvantages of teleworking for employees and employers

FOR EMPLOYEES	
ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Better work-life balance Less time wasted in traffic Possibility of finding a job outside your region without distance being an obstacle Possibility of working from home despite limited mobility due to illness or disability Reduced need to travel (possible environmental benefit) Flexible working hours Potential increase in motivation and productivity Greater autonomy at work Reduced stress	Increased social isolation of employees Decrease in formal and informal information and communication Risk of missing advancement opportunities Possible conflicts between professional and private roles Greater demands on "self-motivation" and time management
FOR EMPLOYERS	
ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Space reorganisation (renovations, centralization, decentralisation, relocation) Cost savings on commuting between home and workplace Increased attractiveness of the company (image) promoting recruitment and employee retention Productivity increase Enhancement of flexibility in the company's activities and services	Delicate control, need to find new forms of management Increase in support, selection, and other associated costs Possible decrease in engagement and loyalty More challenging internal communication Harder socialisation of new employees

Source: Walrave, 2010

Before implementing a teleworking policy, companies must be aware of the four success factors of telecommuting: the characteristics of the functions or positions targeted for telecommuting, the personal characteristics of teleworkers, the characteristics of organisations, and the characteristics of teleworkers' families.

These key factors should not only be thoroughly discussed prior to the adoption of a new teleworking policy but also remain priorities during the project preparation and implementation of telecommuting in the company (Walrave, 2010).

Characteristics of job functions or positions

Companies must select the functions for which teleworking is best suited, considering the specific equipment, information or machinery required on the company premises. For example, jobs requiring frequent face-to-face interaction are less suitable for teleworking (Lartail, 2011).

Personal characteristics of teleworkers

According to various authors, certain character traits and specific skills are essential to enable a teleworking project to be implemented correctly. The teleworker must demonstrate a level of autonomy, the ability to solve problems without constantly consulting colleagues, as well as time management skills and the ability to juggle professional and personal roles. The Telework Guide published by TechnoCompétences in 2020 goes even further and sets out a detailed list of specific eligibility criterias (Technocompétences, 2020).

Characteristics of organisations

The characteristics of organisations in the context of teleworking mean that management methods need to be adapted to change the organisational culture, with particular emphasis on improving the climate of trust and the effectiveness of internal communication. Explicit management support and commitment are essential, as is training for managers to meet the challenges of establishing new forms of supervision and evaluation (Walrave, 2010).

Characteristics of teleworkers' families

It has been observed that interruptions by family members can be frequent, and clear rules concerning respect for working time and space need to be established. Family support is positively linked to the employee's perceived quality of life and satisfaction with teleworking. Arrangements for the separation of work and private activities need to be adapted to the character of the teleworker, because some will easily integrate home working while others can require physical or time barriers (Madsen, 2006).

3.3.2 Technology Integration

For teleworking to be well understood, teleworkers need to be autonomous, comfortable with computers and remote communication methods, proactive and disciplined (Brunelle, 2010).

Workers belonging to Generation Z tend to highly value tech-facilitated businesses and they prefer to avoid companies functioning through the traditional models with minimal technological solutions (Singh & Dangmei, 2016).

Can we link generation Z's penchant for teleworking to their natural ease with technology?

Members of Generation Z emerged during the digital age; consequently, they view technology as an integral component of their everyday lives and constant connectivity has shaped their perspectives and behaviours. The omnipresence of technology in their formative years has cultivated a profound comfort and proficiency in utilising digital resources.

However, Generation Z employees suffer more than others from the impact of switching back and forth between applications. Their close relationship with technology (they use more applications at work than other generations) makes them more vulnerable to digital overload and multitasking (Asana, 2023).

3.3.3 Preferences for remote work

Teleworking preferences and perceived barriers vary significantly between these cohorts, highlighting the need for policies and management practices that are sensitive to generational differences (Çera, Ndreca, Çera, Asamoah, & Matošková, 2023).

As seen previously, Generation Z value flexibility, autonomy, and a work-life balance, which teleworking can provide. However, they also seek meaningful work and opportunities for professional growth, which can be challenging in remote settings.

According to the study conducted in 2023 by Asana company, the switch to hybrid working is particularly popular with Generation Z: 68% of this generation prefer hybrid working,

compared with an average of 57% of all workers. This is hardly surprising, given that many of them have had more experience of teleworking than face-to-face working.

However, not all hybrid working methods are created equal. 51% of Gen Z members say that they miss face-to-face collaboration (compared with an average of 44%), a problem that could be solved by some coordination at company level. Since Zers go to work to meet up with their colleagues, they prefer companies with clearly defined presence days. What's the point of going to the office if no one else is there? A synchronised hybrid approach would meet their needs perfectly (Asana, 2023).

Many members of generation Z entered the job market 100% remotely, given the conditions imposed by the pandemic. At that time, companies were not yet prepared for this way of working, and did not have the right tools and methods, which may have made the teleworking experience particularly negative for many Zers. According to a study conducted by Żarczyńska-Dobiesz et al. (2022), Generation Z sees teleworking as beneficial and in line with their expectations of flexibility and independence. They perceive a return to office work as a potential loss of these benefits, and fear that they will have to comply with stricter rules and discipline.

Despite a generally positive adaptation to teleworking, marked by an ability to maintain or increase their productivity, the study indicates a desire for more social support and integration from employers in this way of working. For this form of working to be sustainable and satisfying, it is crucial that employers address the needs of integration, social and professional support, and work-life balance. (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, Chomątowska, Janiak-Rejno, Strugała, 2022)

Members of Generation Z want to go into the office every day during the early stages of their employment, until they feel able to take on their home tasks independently. They expect their colleagues, superiors and managers to guide them in understanding the company, particularly its culture and working methods. They express a desire to have regular exchanges with their line manager, with a preference for face-to-face interaction over videoconferencing or Skype calls (Chillakuri, 2020).

4. Practical Part

4.1 Research design

As a reminder, this study is an exploratory one, using qualitative analysis to explain the means used to provide answers to the problem explored in this thesis. Qualitative research is adapted to a “how” problem that offers a detailed understanding of individuals' attitudes, behaviours and motivations, which is essential to answering the research question (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

As the aim of this thesis is to explain how companies can adapt their teleworking policy to meet the expectations of Generation Z, live exchanges are therefore more relevant since this method allows interviewees to express their opinions in detail, offering a deeper understanding of the values and preferences of this generation.

Immediate reactions and facial expressions during a live interview provide valuable clues as to what is important to interviewees, allowing questions to be adjusted and certain points to be explored in greater depth depending on the responses.

Unlike surveys or questionnaires, which can often be limited to surface information, live interviews allow us to delve deeper into the reasons behind opinions.

4.2 Research approach

Different platforms were used to select participants in order to maximise the chances of gathering different points of view and feedback, while ensuring a diversity of profiles and experiences.

The main contact channel chosen was the **My Job Glasses**¹ website: the primary aim of this French platform is to put students and professionals in touch with each other using digital

¹ <https://www.myjobglasses.com>

tools. During these virtual meetings, students can ask the professionals they meet questions about their jobs, and thus give direction to their career plans.

The nature of the platform, which is based on professionals volunteering to share their experience, motivated its use. In fact, we deduced that approaching strangers who were willing to devote some of their personal time to meet and help students would be a relevant choice; as it would enable us to talk to people with a genuine interest in the subject and ideas to share, given that they were under no emotional obligation to carry them out.

This platform was also chosen for its easy access to a variety of profiles and its commitment to facilitating exchanges between generations.

However, some constraints were encountered, particularly in terms of limited weekly contact (only 3 contacts per week were allowed).

Two other methods were also used to find respondents: direct contact, i.e. acquaintances identified as relevant profiles for this study, and networking (after detailing the profile sought for these interviews).

We calculated a response rate to assess the effectiveness of the different contact channels used in our study, displayed in Table 5 which can be found in Appendix 2.

4.3 Sampling method

17 interviews were conducted. In this panel of interviews, there are several profiles which provide a diversity of data. Workers with different teleworking arrangements, different generations (Generation Z workers are specified in the quotes), jobs, departments, hierarchical positions add value to the data collected.

For ease of reading and understanding, we have drawn up a table showing all these data, which can be found below with Table number 6. For confidentiality reasons, we have kept the names and companies of our respondents anonymous.

A diversified selection of interviewees was chosen, focusing mostly on profiles who worked in jobs for which telework is applicable.

We analysed the respondents' profiles to understand their career path, sector of activity, level of experience and geographical location. This analysis enabled us to give context to the responses and identify any trends based on the different profiles.

Human resources professionals were preferred in the selection process, given their expertise in the management of work policies and practices, and their proximity to generation Z candidates entering the labour market, through recruitment and career development functions.

By comparing the experiences and expectations of different generations, we can better understand the similarities and differences in adapting to teleworking. This helps to contextualise the challenges and solutions specific to Generation Z compared with previous generations.

The perceptions and expectations of different generations can be validated or challenged when confronted with the reality of teleworking. Exchanging views with participants from different generations helps us to see these nuances, and to better understand where generation Z stands out.

Table 6: Overview of respondents - Teleworking and Professional Profiles

REFERENCE	POSITION	DEPARTMENT	SECTOR	GENERATION	TELEWORKING POLICY	WORK LOCATION
W1	HR Director	HR	Technology, information	GEN Z	HYBRID	Paris region, France
W2	Talent Acquisition	HR	Finance	GEN Y	HYBRID	Greater Lyon area, France
W3	Human Resources Officer	HR	Recruitment	GEN Z	HYBRID	Barcelona, Spain
W4	Head of Talent Acquisition	HR	Manufacture of chemical products	GEN Y	HYBRID	Lyon, France
W5	Captain RH	HR	Technology, information	GEN Y	HYBRID	Paris region, France
W6	HR Development Officer	HR	Retail	GEN Z	NO TELEWORKING	Rouen, France
W7	Extracts sales assistant	Sales	Cinema	GEN Z	HYBRID	Paris region, France
W8	HR Officer	HR	Sports, leisure and recreation facilities	GEN Z	HYBRID	Rennes, France
W9	Asset & Liability Manager	Finance	Finance	GEN Z	HYBRID	Paris region, France
W10	Psychologist, coach and supervisor	N/A	Psychology	GEN X	HYBRID	Paris region, France
W11	Junior Architect	N/A	Architecture	GEN Z	NO TELEWORKING	Paris region, France
W12	HR Manager	HR	Hospitality	GEN Y	HYBRID	Paris region, France
W13	Digital HR Project Manager	HR	Retail	GEN Z	HYBRID	Paris region, France
W14	Internal Controller	Finance	Finance	GEN Z	NO TELEWORKING	Paris region, France
W15	HR Manager	HR	Finance	GEN Y	HYBRID	Greater Nantes Area, France
W16	HR Consultant	HR	Retail	GEN X	HYBRID	Paris region, France
W17	HR and Management Consultant	RH	Consulting	GEN X	HYBRID	Paris region, France

4.4 Interview process

The interviews were conducted on an individual basis and were recorded with the participants' consent for later analysis. Before each interview, participants were given detailed information about the purpose of the study, the conduct of the interview and aspects relating to confidentiality and consent.

Support

The interviews were conducted either by telephone or videoconference, depending on the participants' preferences. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages: a phone call can offer greater scheduling flexibility, while video conferencing allows for better non-verbal communication.

Table 7: Supports used for the interviews

Support	Phone call	Visio conference
Number of interviews conducted	7	10
Share of interviews	41%	59%

The interviews were based on an interview guide which is detailed in Appendix 1. The interview questions were drawn up based on the previous literature review and the broad outlines of the literature review.

To ensure that the questions addressed the relevant aspects, the interview guide was drawn up by category. 5 categories emerged, all with the aim of gathering precise information for the analysis.

The first part consisted of an introductory question to introduce the respondent's profile. Here, the aim was to understand their hierarchical position within their company, the sector

of activity in which they worked, whether they were responsible for a team, the size of their team and their main missions.

This introduction also enabled us to distinguish which generation they belonged to, and if they were not from Generation Z to what extent they were linked to this generation. This part gave us a better idea of which aspects of teleworking would be compatible or not with the respondent's profile.

The second category gathers information on teleworking preferences, needs and motivations, which provides a better understanding of the motivating factors for teleworking as well as their own perception of the work/teleworking. This category highlights what different generations specifically enjoy or do not enjoy in terms of teleworking and the possibility of flexibility. Ultimately, these questions enabled us to gather valuable information about the different teleworking policies adopted and their modalities.

The third part of our questionnaire dealt in more detail with generation Z: for respondents from generation Z, the aim was to identify their expectations and how they position themselves within their generational group. And for respondents from other generations, the aim was to understand their perception of Generation Z's behaviour and expectations at work in relation to the one to which they belong.

Being able to put the expectations of the different generations into perspective enabled us to identify how generation Z differed from the others, and this enabled us to differentiate generational specificities from age-related specificities.

The aim of the fourth part is to acquire a better understanding of the measures taken by companies at different levels to adapt their management techniques to these new working arrangements. The goal was to understand the direction in which the respondents' companies are moving, whether in relation to teleworking or new innovations to meet the needs of their employees.

Finally, we allowed each respondent to add additional information if they felt that an important aspect of the subject had not been covered in the previous questions.

Bonus questions were also prepared so we could bounce back if the previous questions didn't go far enough or didn't push the respondent enough to develop their answers. However, we hardly ever needed to use them.

All interview transcripts, translated from French, can be found in appendix 3 (Other appendices).

It is important to note that the questionnaire was adapted and readjusted to the rhythm of the interview. The questions had to be adapted to the respondent's speaking pace.

5. Results and discussion

5.1 Results

We have decided to present the results in 5 main categories.

1. Current teleworking policies
2. Telework preferences, needs and motivations
3. Telework limits
4. Generation Z's contribution to the perception of work
5. Teleworking as a valuable tool for companies

We have added an extra category to complete the overall analysis as a bonus, called *Additional insights*.

These categories will be analysed one by one in this section and the participants will be referred to as Worker 1 → W1, W2, ..., W17.

In the presentation of the results, you will find insights with illustrations thanks to extracts from the interviews conducted. We have selected the most relevant quotations.

5.1.1 Current teleworking policies

A) Teleworking integration

To carry out this study, a variety of profiles were selected for the interviews, particularly in terms of teleworking policies, in order to be able to study in depth how the different frameworks for teleworking would impact on employees' views and preferences.

First, it is important to point out that each of the interviewees insisted on the fact that teleworking was generalised within their company after Covid-19.

For some, the possibility of teleworking existed before the pandemic but was very limited; teleworking was authorised only occasionally, or even for exceptional cases. There were no regulations as such before this period, it was mostly occasional requests submitted to the manager who could grant or refuse teleworking to help in an emergency.

W15: *“Before covid, we had the possibility of teleworking but it wasn't yet part of the culture, it was a punctual thing. For example, it allowed me to stay at home because I had a technician coming in during the day. There was no resistance because we were already well equipped to do it.”*

W4: *“Our company implemented teleworking for the first time in 2015 and allowed 2 days of teleworking per month. Everything accelerated with covid, where we applied 100% teleworking to all jobs that made it possible.”*

B) Implementing policies

It was only after the pandemic that long-term agreements were discussed and signed within these companies to provide a framework for teleworking on a wider scale.

Most interviewees were currently employed by companies applying a hybrid teleworking policy. Detailed data on the different teleworking policies of the interviewees can be found in the Table 6.

W2: *“We have adopted a flexible approach in line with the National Teleworking Charter, although this is not mandatory. It recommends 50% teleworking per week, i.e. two and a half days, but this can vary depending on the position. For example, our auditors have client travel which may affect their teleworking arrangements.”*

The profiles of professionals whose companies do not allow them to telework have also been included in this study to better understand how employees react to this type of policy, and how companies justify their rejection of teleworking.

W11 (GZ): *“No, I'm not allowed to telework. To tell the truth, I don't even know what my company's policy is, and I don't think they even have one. I didn't even ask if it was possible to telework at my job interview, for fear that it might be considered inappropriate.”*

Only one of our respondents had a compulsory teleworking policy. His company had chosen to make teleworking compulsory on several days of the week during which employees were not expected to come into the office.

W7 (GZ): *“I was only in the office 2 days a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. And the rest of the week I was teleworking. Teleworking was imposed on Monday and Friday, so I don't believe you can call it a flexible model as such.”*

Before the pandemic, teleworking was present but limited and not embedded in company culture. It was used sporadically and mostly for exceptional circumstances, highlighting a lack of formal teleworking policies. The necessity of teleworking during the pandemic led to a cultural shift where companies moved from ad hoc arrangements to more structured teleworking policies.

Most interviewees were part of companies that had adopted hybrid teleworking policies, suggesting a move towards models that balance on-site and remote work. However, the idea that there is no one-size-fits-all model of teleworking is becoming more evident as there is an ongoing re-evaluation of its role and effectiveness within the corporate landscape.

W16: *“Successive agreements on teleworking reflect the company's willingness to adapt, but also show the challenges of such an implementation.”*

5.1.2 Telework preferences, needs and motivations

A) Is Generation Z really more interested in teleworking than other generations?

In this part, we put into perspective the interest of generation Z in teleworking compared to other generations, to understand if there is indeed a higher interest for teleworking for Gen Z members.

What we identified through the interviews is that most of the benefits attributed to teleworking are not specific to Generation Z, but shared by the majority.

W16: *“All these generations are interested in teleworking for different reasons. For older people, it's to improve their quality of life. For parents, it's to have more time with their children. For generation Z, it's to be more efficient and have more freedom.”*

Every Gen Z interviewee expressed a certain interest in teleworking.

W14 (GZ): *“I'd like to have 1 day of teleworking from time to time.”*

W8 (GZ): *“When I had job interviews, I always asked if it was possible to telework. It depended on the distance from my home, but I always asked for at least 1 day a week to telework.”*

However, teleworking is not essential for them. They are still able to envision themselves in a company that does not allow teleworking.

W12: *“When I recruited my apprentice: she never once asked me about teleworking.”*

W4: *“Personally, I don't find teleworking a major blocking point for this generation. As long as all the other aspects of the job are attractive, such as interesting work, a good company culture and competitive wage, they are prepared to sacrifice the possibility of teleworking.”*

W14 (GZ): *“For me, teleworking isn't a requirement, and it never has been. I don't mind not having any. The office is supposed to be a pleasant place. If teleworking is a way of breathing a sigh of relief, that means I don't like what I'm doing any more and it's time for a change.”*

Our interviews do not indicate a higher interest of Generation Z for teleworking, compared to other generations.

B) A particular context that justifies the ability and desire to telework

W13 (GZ): *“I think our interest in teleworking can be explained by our aptitude for digital technology: we were born with the Internet. Our expectations have changed because they're not based on the framework: people used to use their computers just for work, whereas with us it's part of everyday life, even in school we only worked on our computers.”*

W10: *“The interest is greater for this generation because they were born into the world of IT. It's like second nature to them. They take a measured interest in it, seeing it as a tool and not something wonderful.”*

Generation Z undeniably has a natural aptitude for digital technology. They are strongly influenced by their early exposure to digital technology, which shapes their perception of teleworking. They see technology as an essential tool in their daily lives, and teleworking is perceived as an extension of this technological use, offering both practical and flexible benefits in their working lives.

W5: *“They entered the workplace with teleworking as the norm. But we can see that companies are starting to go back to teleworking. We're wondering whether this isn't going to lead to a clash of cultures.”*

As quoted by Worker 5, Generation Z is entering the professional world with teleworking already firmly established as the norm. This reality has shaped their perception of the working environment, giving them a natural affinity for remote working. Their limited experience of 100% face-to-face working may explain this increased interest in teleworking. This also represents a challenge for companies seeking to bring them back into the office, as

they have to deal with a generation accustomed to greater flexibility and autonomy in the way they work.

This perspective highlights the importance of understanding the attitudes and behaviours of Generation Z in order to design effective strategies for implementing telework in organisations.

Here, we can conclude that our interviews lead us to believe that teleworking is generally valued by generation Z, and that they are very interested in it. This interest can also be explained by their natural comfort with digital technology. But that is not a make-or-break factor for them when considering job opportunities, and they are prepared to sacrifice it if all their other expectations are met.

C) Telework motivations

In this section, we have identified the advantages which were most quoted by the interviewees, regardless of their generation.

Less stress and fatigue due to reduced commuting times

The first advantage of working from home is that you don't have to commute to work. The great majority of interviewees are employed in the Paris region, where the transport network is very busy and commuting times very long for most people. In our interviews, it became evident that commuting was a major source of stress and fatigue for all of our participants.

W2: *“Teleworking allows me to significantly reduce my commuting time [...] and reduces the stress associated with transport.”*

W9 (GZ): *“Everyone has a commute of at best 45 minutes and at worst 1.5 hours every morning and evening.”*

The Paris region's transport network is known for its congestion, especially during peak hours, which can result in overcrowded trains, buses and metros. Coupled with the extensive distances that many individuals must travel to reach their workplaces, commuting becomes

a draining and time-consuming activity. As a result, many employees start their workdays feeling stressed and exhausted before they even reach the office.

W14 (GZ): *“Not being able to telework is more exhausting: you waste more time in transport and on top of that you have to put up with pressure from Parisians, potential traffic breakdowns... You're under extra stress.”*

W7 (GZ): *“As I live in Paris, the first advantage for me is not having to use public transport. This means I get more sleep; I can do things more quickly when I get off work, or I can get home to see my family over a long weekend.”*

W9 (GZ): *“I spend almost 2 hours a day in transport, and in Paris transport is tiring and stressful. I arrive at work and I'm already exhausted: I've already been pushed in the RER, I've sweated, and the day still hasn't started.”*

Flexibility

Teleworking offers a multitude of advantages, but one of the most significant is undeniably the greater flexibility it gives employees.

This flexibility is expressed in a variety of ways, allowing workers to better organise their schedules according to their needs and preferences. For example, working remotely allows employees to plan their working hours more flexibly.

W2: *“It allows me to manage my schedule better and be more flexible in my day-to-day organisation.”*

In addition, teleworking also allows some employees to live further away from the company, giving them the freedom to choose a place of residence that better suits their housing needs and preferences.

W10: *“Teleworking allows you to live further away from the company. Today, some people are even considering relocating to the countryside thanks to this new arrangement.”*

W2: *“For example, if I had to move abroad, I would like to be able to keep my job in France, as a friend living in Dubai did.”*

When employees are able to choose how they work, they place greater value on their physical presence in the office. In other words, flexible working can help to make time spent in the office more meaningful for employees.

W4: *“Allowing greater flexibility means that people appreciate coming to the office more, which makes their presence more meaningful because they choose to come in person in the office.”*

Better work-life balance

This benefit focuses on the ability to better juggle work and personal responsibilities. Teleworking can reduce or eliminate commuting time, providing more time for leisure, self-care, and family.

This helps reduce the stress associated with trying to fit everything into a busy schedule and allows employees to create a healthier separation between their work and personal lives.

W3 (GZ): *“Being at home makes it easier for me to get organised. It helps considerably to balance my professional and personal life.”*

W9 (GZ): *“When you telework, you are more flexible in your personal life: for example, I can make a doctor's appointment at 6pm, which would be impossible without teleworking. You also save on personal constraints, such as household chores: it's easier to do the shopping, the washing up, the cleaning, or your laundry.”*

However, it's worth qualifying our comments here and going against the prejudices that are often directed at this generation, which suggest that this quest for a work-life balance is nothing more than laziness and the desire to work less.

Members of Generation Z are prepared to invest themselves fully in their work and make sacrifices when they share the same values as their company.

W7 (GZ): *“Work-life balance is important, but I'm prepared to sacrifice some personal things, to have harder and busier days if my work has a positive impact on the world.”*

Increased concentration and productivity

W6 (GZ): *“As HR people, we're very often solicited, so when I'm teleworking, I'm more relaxed. When I'm working on a project that requires me to concentrate, I prefer to telework, so I don't get interrupted by other people knocking on my door.”*

W8 (GZ): *“When I'm teleworking, I can get on with certain projects without being disturbed. It gives us a calmer, more concentrated environment. It also allows us to think about new projects and new ideas. And finally, it gives us a certain level of confidentiality in what we do, making it easier to protect personal data while we're at it.”*

These interview extracts highlight increased concentration and improved productivity as main benefits of teleworking thanks to a calm, undisturbed environment.

In addition, teleworking encourages the generation of new ideas and projects by providing employees with a space favourable to reflection and creativity.

It also provides better protection for personal data by ensuring a higher level of confidentiality when working remotely.

These combined advantages suggest that teleworking can offer significant benefits for both employees and businesses, by promoting a more efficient and secure working environment.

D) What really influences the interest for teleworking

W1: “Some Generation Z professionals, particularly those in jobs requiring intense concentration, such as developers, may prefer to work from home. This may be motivated by a need for tranquillity, to minimise interruptions, or even by a certain shyness that can make face-to-face social interaction less comfortable.”

To summarise, the appeal of teleworking within Generation Z is highly dependent on individual personality, adaptability, and the type of job held. It is essential to explore these specific aspects to fully understand the teleworking preferences of this generation.

E) Teleworking policies and its influence on teleworking habits

Our respondents were all asked about the practical application of their teleworking policy. A minority of our respondents were not aware of the teleworking conditions under which they operate.

Today, teleworking is increasingly regulated by teleworking charters.

The telework charter, as described in the document "*How to introduce telework*" by Michel Walrave, is a set of guidelines and agreements relating to the practice of telework.

The charter should be designed with the assistance of the legal department to ensure that it complies with the legal and tax aspects of teleworking and can be attached to employees' contracts of employment. The charter plays a key role in clarifying the mutual expectations and obligations of employers and employees, thereby promoting the successful and equitable implementation of teleworking (Walrave, 2010).

It was very interesting to study how the pace of teleworking imposed by the company influenced our respondents' use of teleworking.

The degree of freedom given to employees seems to reinforce generation Z's interest in coming to the office. Indeed, by studying the answers obtained during the interviews in

detail, we understand that the members of generation Z are those who make the least use of teleworking on a regular basis and reflect a real need to create links.

W12: *“In my previous company, it was certainly a request on their part to be able to telework, but in the end, we realised that they came to the office almost every day.”*

W13 (GZ): *“For me, the 2 days a week model suits me because I don't need more teleworking, I'm not already using 100% of my current package. [...] Generally speaking, it's colleagues with children or who live far away who tend to prefer teleworking the most.”*

5.1.3 Telework limits

Covid-19 was a real experiment for teleworking adoption and revealed its many weaknesses. The abrupt introduction of a 100% remote system without any transition and adaptation period certainly amplified its negative effects, but also made it possible for many to realise the dangers of the system if it is not properly managed.

A) Lack of social interaction, isolation

The most significant drawback our interviews revealed was the lack of social interaction and the potential for isolation.

W6 (GZ): *“The advantages are well known, but the disadvantages are rarely considered. Yet teleworking has led many people to isolate themselves. It makes people less sociable, even though social ties are very important for a healthy lifestyle.”*

In traditional office settings, employees benefit from daily face-to-face interactions with colleagues which foster collaboration, informal exchanges and a sense of belonging.

W9 (GZ): *“Sometimes, it can happen that I go several weeks or even a month without seeing a colleague, especially if we don't have the same teleworking days.”*

W13 (GZ): *“You can see the difference with those who telework because you don't see them in the office very often, so there's less of a bond, the cohesion isn't the same. You miss out*

on the socialising, you don't get the private jokes that go on during meals or improvised afterwork events on your way out of the office.”

This lack of social links can sometimes have profound effects on an individual's well-being, both mentally and emotionally.

W7 (GZ): *“I wasn't really fulfilled in my missions, so the only positive point in my work was my team: when I didn't see them, there weren't really any positive points... What I like is sharing good times, talking about common projects, having contact. When you telework, you're really cut off from the world.”*

Moreover, the members of Generation Z are still young, most of them in the early stages of their careers, while others are still students. Their monthly income is limited, and most of them still live alone in student accommodation, having not yet started a family. They do not telework under the same conditions as other generations, most of whom have more developed financial resources and a more comfortable working environment at home.

W17: *“The housing situation in major cities is becoming increasingly complicated. Younger people don't earn enough to live comfortably in Paris. And teleworking in a studio apartment quickly affects your mental health, making it easier to find yourself in distress.”*

Consequently, this generation is even more vulnerable when it comes to teleworking, and more likely to fall into isolation and mental distress.

B) Impact on corporate culture

Daily interactions, spontaneous conversations and moments of conviviality within the company help to strengthen the sense of belonging and shape the organisational culture. However, in a remote working environment, these informal interactions are often absent or limited, which can compromise the development and preservation of the corporate culture.

W3 (GZ): *“Teleworking limits the time it takes to build a corporate culture, because in my opinion, a company's identity is largely built through informal moments shared between individuals. Culture is not built as well in a remote environment.”*

With the spread of teleworking, employees are coming into the office less frequently, resulting in a different, less friendly atmosphere. As a result, this changing atmosphere further discourages employees from coming to the office, fuelling a cycle of declining presence at the workplace.

W5: *“As there are fewer moments of sharing in the office, people are getting used to staying at home. It's a trend that everyone is following.”*

C) Management

Teleworking as a major evolution in working patterns has had a significant impact on the way managers lead, supervise and interact with their teams. Teleworking has challenged traditional management models, requiring rapid adaptation and substantial changes in managerial approaches.

W10: *“Today, managers have real difficulty in managing a team where everyone can work from home. They are often a bit in the dark because they suffer from the lack of an education and training system developed to support them in supervising the teleworking practices of their teams.”*

Managers' lack of trust in their teams is one of the most significant limitations of teleworking, and this can compromise its effectiveness and potential benefits.

W16: *“The big fear for managers is that they have to trust people. There's a particular organisation to set up, and there may be control tools. But the starting point is that you no longer have the person next to you, so inevitably the relationship of trust becomes more complex.”*

W11 (GZ): *“Last time I heard a girl on the train say that she'd beaten her personal record because she'd only opened her computer for half an hour during the day. I thought, that's pretty serious. I understand that some managers have doubts and are afraid that people will abuse it.”*

Excessive supervision

When managers don't trust their teams, they often use excessive surveillance to make sure the job gets done. This can result in productivity monitoring, frequent requests for reports, or even implementation of computer monitoring tools to track employees' activities. This constant surveillance can create a climate of stress and mistrust, undermining employee motivation and productivity.

W3 (GZ): *“Now that people are no longer coming into the office, we know that it's easier for them not to work their hours. We're introducing a monitoring tool, so that we can keep a very close eye on people's activity. We want people to perform where we expect them to. As long as the results are there, there's no problem. On the other hand, if the person is no longer performing, then we take a look at them and make adjustments.”*

W7 (GZ): *“My manager trusted me more and supervised me less when I was in the office. But when I started teleworking, she was on my back all day and required that I share my screen with her, which increased my stress and killed my productivity.”*

Micromanagement

Lack of trust can also lead to micromanagement, where managers tend to supervise every aspect of their employees' work. This limits employees' autonomy, preventing them from taking the initiative and working creatively and independently. Micromanagement is not only demoralising for employees, it can also impede their ability to achieve their goals and excel at their tasks.

W7 (GZ): *“My boss uses a rather police management style: I have no autonomy, everything has to be checked by me because we work as a duo. When I'm teleworking, she calls me all*

the time, and the exchanges are much less fluid on a video call: in terms of form, it feels like a more aggressive management style.”

D) Excessive workload

In this subsection, we examine how teleworking, often presented as a way to achieve a better work-life balance, can paradoxically lead to increased stress and work overload for employees.

The flexibility offered by teleworking can also lead to a culture of overwork, where individuals feel pressured to compensate for perceived shortcomings, as several respondents observed.

This creates a vicious circle of work overload, where the boundary between work and personal life becomes increasingly blurred, exacerbating tensions between employees and employers.

W6: *“I’ve also known colleagues who switched to 100% teleworking and developed burnouts, with serious consequences on their ability to work.”*

W7 (GZ): *“People defend teleworking as a way of achieving a better work-life balance, but in the end it’s the other way round: when you’re away from the office, you’re considered to be unavailable. But when you’re teleworking, it’s assumed that you’ll be connected for longer in the evening, because you don’t have the commute, or simply that you’ll stay connected.”*

W13 (GZ): *“With teleworking, you can work whenever you want. In the annual satisfaction survey results, one point came up again and again: people work too much, whether at weekends or late at night. You’re not supposed to work on the weekend, but nobody cares, because you want to make up for your excessive workload. We realise that we’re working too much, and that increases the tension between employee and employer.”*

E) Lack of comfort at home

Several respondents mentioned the problem of teleworking equipment in their interviews. Although most of them are able to carry their laptop with them, they do not have the same level of comfort when working from home.

In the office, most have a second screen, which is more comfortable, especially when working with data. Generally speaking, the office furniture provided by the company is often more pleasant for employees compared to their own.

W9 (GZ): *“In terms of equipment, I'm a little less comfortable at home than at work. Although the company provides certain equipment such as an extra screen, keyboard and mouse, I feel less comfortable than when I have my two large screens at work.”*

W12: *“I don't even have a desk at home. I really don't have the same equipment. It's not as comfortable as at the office, where I have a second screen to work on.”*

F) Motivation

Generation Z respondents noted that teleworking had a negative impact on their motivation. They are generally more stimulated when they are surrounded by their colleagues in the office.

W9 (GZ): *“I also notice a slight drop in motivation when I'm teleworking. I feel less proactive than at the office, where the working atmosphere and the presence of colleagues are more stimulating.”*

It is interesting to note here that this is a statement which did not come up for the other generations, whereas all the respondents from generation Z mentioned it. This reinforces the idea that this generation attaches greater importance to personal relationships within the company.

G) Concentration

W15: *“It's clear that concentration isn't necessarily the same: people are more easily distracted in videoconferencing. Whereas when you're in an in-person meeting, if someone picks up their phone, for example, you see them. People aren't really disciplined when they're teleworking.”*

W11 (GZ): *“It's quite popular to work by videoconference for meetings, but it's a pain, it's not at all suitable. You can hear the dog and the children in the background, it's not effective, or at least not as effective as when I've got my nose to the grindstone.”*

These extracts highlight the difficulties in concentration and efficiency associated with video conference communication when teleworking. The distractions and limitations of this mode of communication can negatively affect employee productivity and well-being, underlining the importance of finding strategies to mitigate these challenges when working remotely.

H) Information gaps

A lot of information is shared informally within an office or organisation. Whether it's during coffee breaks or lunches, spontaneous moments of sharing allow information to be exchanged. Remotely, this form of exchange is much more limited and can lead to a feeling of isolation among certain team members who miss these moments.

W5: *“The main disadvantage of teleworking as an employee is that you miss out on a lot of information. A lot of things happen informally in the office. When you're there, it's cool, you know everything. But when you're working remotely, people don't necessarily think to give you this information.”*

D) Teleworking is not applicable to everyone

W11 (GZ): *“I think it's absolutely brilliant to be able to work from the four corners of the globe. But it really depends on what field you're working in. In architecture, we inevitably get less quality output, we're less productive, we're not used to this way of working. But we can see that it's becoming more widespread thanks to improvements in technology.”*

W14 (GZ): *“Our company employs French artisans whose profession does not allow them to telework. Our top management does not want any difference to be made between artisans and head office employees who work in the office, and justifies its decision to ban teleworking by the importance of equality between employees.”*

W1: *“During Covid, teleworking was widely used. Some functions were limited, such as delivery drivers, but around 60-70% were in hybrid mode. People in head office jobs that could be done remotely (developers, customer service, etc.) were more likely to telework.”*

These extracts highlight that teleworking is not universally applicable to all sectors and professions, with variations in its effectiveness depending on the area of activity.

While some professions, such as architecture, may experience a deterioration in production quality as a result of teleworking, others, such as office functions, may adapt more easily. Inequalities in access to teleworking can also arise, as illustrated by Worker 14 whose company's choice is to forbid employees to telework in order to maintain equality.

These extracts highlight the need to consider the specificities of each area and the organisational and equality implications when implementing teleworking policies.

5.1.4 Generation Z's contributions to the perception of work

A) Balance between work and personal life

Unlike some previous generations, Generation Z places less value on the "always at work" culture and instead aspires to a more balanced approach to life, where work is an important but not exclusive aspect of their identity and personal fulfilment.

W10: *“They are capable of sacrificing a career for a more balanced life. It's a new approach that they are introducing, quite different from the imaginary of the Trente Glorieuses period. Today, they have realised that focusing solely on work has a huge impact on stress, health, family life, children's education...”*

W15: *“What they want above all is work-life balance. We can see this because in our sector, it's a complicated issue because the job doesn't really allow for a good work-life balance. There are very intense periods, and that requires extra investment. So we find it hard to recruit young people and make promises.”*

W16: *“We're forced to recognise that the younger generations have a particular vision of the workplace: they've seen their parents suffer, live through very complicated situations, and sacrifice a lot for their work. So inevitably they say ‘no, I don't want to go through the same thing’.”*

These interview extracts highlight a break with previous professional attitudes and practices, in which the emphasis is on work as the main source of success and security.

Together, these statements illustrate a profound change in the conception of work and working life, marked by a quest for balance and a rejection of disproportionate sacrifices for the sake of a career.

B) Importance of team cohesion and social ties

The importance of social ties came up very frequently in the interviews: respondents were unanimous in saying that generation Z values the atmosphere of a team, good cohesion between members and moments of conviviality. It was therefore very interesting to gather their ideas, given the contradiction with the practice of teleworking, which limits moments of sharing and exchange between colleagues.

W5: *“I’m currently recruiting a trainee, and I always ask candidates the same question: what would make this traineeship a failure? The answer I get most often is that there’s a bad atmosphere at work. I was really surprised by this, because for me it was never a criteria when I was looking for an internship.”*

W14 (GZ): *“The relationship with the manager and the team is also crucial. It has to fit. In my opinion, it’s essential to feel good in your working environment.”*

C) Need for trust and autonomy: less control, more freedom

When we asked our Generation Z interviewees about how they envision the workplace and their expectations and motivations when applying for a job, several key themes emerged.

Our participants highlighted a growing trend among younger workers who value autonomy and independence in their roles. Gen Z members express a desire to have the flexibility to manage their work in their own way, while also having responsibilities and the trust of their manager.

W13 (GZ): *“What’s important for me is to have a balance between autonomy and supervision. I want to be flexible in the way I manage my work, while having responsibilities and knowing that my manager trusts me to do the job properly without being constantly supervised.”*

The traditional hierarchical relationship is evolving, with the younger generation seeking empowerment in the workplace. This resistance to traditional management structures is seen as a driving force behind the demand for greater autonomy.

W17: *“Today, we no longer speak of a boss, but of a manager. This generation has developed a resistance to hierarchy: they have different expectations of the relationship with the manager. They reject control and disempowerment. They want more autonomy, and one way of achieving this is by allowing them to work from home.”*

D) Lower attachment to the company

Many interviewees, such as those mentioned below, have argued another of the specific characteristics of generation Z is that its members are much less attached to the company than previous generations.

W3 (GZ): *“On the other hand, you get the feeling that they don't have the same attachment to the company as other generations, who were prepared to stay with the company for a long time. For Gen Z: it's a bonus if the company suits them but it's the minimum, they easily say "if they're assholes I'm out of here".”*

W17: *“One negative point which is specific to Generation Z is their lower level of commitment to the company.”*

This may be linked to their greater ability to separate their personal and professional lives. As a result, they are less cautious about change, particularly when it comes to companies, which they also see as a lever for development. They are rational and less emotional in their professional choices, and will look for the most advantageous package for them.

Members of this younger generation are therefore more difficult for companies to retain and build loyalty.

E) Greater emphasis on CSR

Many respondents also acknowledged that generation Z is more attentive than previous generations to corporate social responsibility and to the actions and projects that companies are implementing to contribute to a better world.

W16: *“There are also some very positive aspects: the younger generations are looking for CSR-oriented companies, and they are particularly demanding when it comes to corporate environmental responsibility. They are looking for a company with values in line with those they want to express through their professional life.”*

W7 (GZ): *“For me, the most important thing is that the company meets the challenges of our modern world: that it respects the environment of course, but above all that it sticks to genuine measures and not cheap greenwashing that hides the misery of reality.”*

F) Keep things in perspective

W1: *“Given that Generation Z is currently the youngest in the labour market, they occupy positions at the start of their careers and do not yet have major responsibilities. It's easier for them to demand a healthier life balance because work is not yet their priority.”*

The extract underlines the need to qualify the idea that generation Z is introducing a radical change in the perception of work. It highlights the fact that members of Generation Z are currently in the early stages of their careers, where they do not yet have major responsibilities. As a result, their preference for a better work-life balance may be influenced by their current situation and may not necessarily represent a sustainable trend as they progress in their careers and take on more senior roles.

This perspective highlights the importance of taking into account the specific context in which young workers' attitudes and behaviours are formed, and suggests that perceptions of work may change as they gain more experience and responsibility. As such, it is necessary

to critically examine generalisations about Generation Z and recognise that their influence on perceptions of work may be more complex and nuanced than is often claimed.

5.1.5 Teleworking as a valuable tool for companies

A) Develop your workforce

Autonomy & responsabilisation

Teleworking provides companies with a multitude of opportunities to develop their employees significantly. By enabling employees to work remotely, teleworking fosters a sense of autonomy and empowerment. Workers are often required to manage their own schedules, set their own objectives, improve their communication skills and make decisions independently. This autonomy boosts their self-confidence and ability to self-direct, which is essential for their professional development.

W14 (GZ): *“Teleworking has really made me more proactive and independent in the way I work. One of the methods I’ve developed is to scrupulously note down what I’ve achieved and where I’m stuck, so that I can communicate better with my manager about the follow-up to my tasks.”*

Productivity boost

All the advantages of teleworking for employees, as we saw in the previous section, result in better employee productivity, which is valuable for the company.

W5: *“Companies [...] are noticing the direct consequences: their employees are becoming more efficient, more effective and more motivated.”*

W4: *“Finally, in terms of productivity, we are seeing that people are working better.”*

Technological skills

Teleworking requires mastery of digital communication tools and technologies. By working remotely, employees have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with these tools and develop their digital skills. This can include the use of online collaboration software, project management platforms and even advanced virtual communication techniques. This development of technological skills is increasingly valuable in an increasingly digitised world of work.

W1: *“In my opinion, teleworking has one major advantage for a company: it encourages us to learn how to use online software and collaborative platforms, improving productivity and efficiency. It fosters instant communication, project coordination and reduced deadlines. It standardises processes, professionalises the use of online platforms and enables documents to be shared easily.”*

The hybrid working model can also be used to develop virtual communication skills and manage interactions within an international company, as explained by Worker 1 below.

W1: *“This hybrid approach has been particularly relevant for us as an online company [...] which has proved to be excellent training for our interactions with customers and suppliers, who can also be in hybrid mode given that we are an international company.”*

B) Attract and retain talent : work on your company culture

Teleworking has emerged as a pivotal tool for companies aiming to attract and retain top talent. Teleworking offers a range of benefits as we have seen before, so it gives access to a broader talent pool, making it an attractive option for both employers and employees.

W6 (GZ): *“Working in human resources, you realise that you have to keep up with the times and offer more to new recruits. It's important for our employer brand, and it differentiates*

us from others in the market. We know that young people are looking for opportunities to telework, so it's essential to offer them if we want to be attractive.”

By embracing teleworking as part of their workforce strategy, companies can position themselves as forward-thinking employers, capable of meeting the evolving needs and expectations of today's workforce.

W13 (GZ): *“These days, it's frowned upon to ban teleworking: to me, it says a lot about a company's culture and its approach to its employees. Prohibiting teleworking can reflect a lack of trust in employees on the part of the employer, which can have a negative influence on my choice when I'm looking for a job.”*

Teleworking is also an effective retention tool when employees are forced to resign due to relocation. By offering a remote working model to these employees, it enables companies to strengthen the loyalty of their staff by making that extra effort to keep them in the organisation.

W5: *“But it also allows us to keep people who have relocated. Their missions are almost entirely performed from home; this enables us to avoid people quitting and to support our employees in their life projects; these remain exceptional cases, but we are seeing more and more of them.”*

In addition, before the widespread adoption of teleworking, employees working remotely could feel excluded or disconnected from face-to-face meetings, which could lead to inequalities in terms of communication and participation.

However, with widespread teleworking, feelings of exclusion are reduced and the sense of belonging to the company is strengthened.

W4: *“Moreover, teleworking has a more inclusive aspect, because our company is international. Before, when we had face-to-face meetings, those who were working remotely felt excluded. Now, with everyone teleworking, everyone is on equal footing.”*

C) Cost savings

Getting employees to work from home is a real opportunity for businesses. With fewer staff physically present in the office, costs associated with energy consumption (heating, electricity, air conditioning) and office supplies can be reduced.

W10: *“We can see that companies are taking advantage of the situation to change offices and make savings on facilities.”*

Some even impose a teleworking day for the whole company, as explained by Worker 12 in the quote below, to maximise these cost savings.

W12: *“I recently returned to the office full-time, except on Fridays, at the request of management. Everyone has to work from home on Fridays.”*

Some companies go even further by moving offices. By allowing teleworking, the need for office space is reduced, and companies take advantage of this to cut costs by moving to smaller premises. This can lead to a considerable reduction in rents, property charges and maintenance costs.

W9 (GZ): *“The implementation of teleworking has been given a major boost by the relocation of our offices, originally in the heart of Paris, to Nanterre in September 2022. [...] We see that many companies are relocating to save costs.”*

W3 (GZ): *“In addition, it allows us to rethink our office space requirements. By reducing the number of people in the office, we can save on premises, and that counts for a lot.”*

Finally, as we have already mentioned, teleworking boosts employee productivity through increased efficiency, and reduces absenteeism by allowing them to work from home when they are tired or a little ill.

In conclusion, teleworking is much more than a simple cost-saving measure for companies; it is a global strategy for developing employee potential, attracting and retaining the best talent, while adapting to contemporary economic and societal challenges. Companies that embrace this way of working position themselves as leaders in a constantly changing

environment, ready to meet future challenges with a committed, skilled and flexible workforce. However, certain measures, such as relocating offices or imposing teleworking days, are quite radical and can push employees who are not teleworking enthusiasts into isolation.

It is therefore very important for managers and companies to find the right balance in the use of teleworking to maintain an engaging and collaborative environment. Thanks to our observations, we have been able to determine the most important aspects that need to be considered in the construction of a teleworking policy, which we will now detail in the next section through concrete managerial recommendations.

5.1.6 Additional insights

In this section, we have added other interesting aspects which have been mentioned during interviews and raise questions that it would be interesting to explore in further studies, to take the analysis further.

Gender equity issues

W13 (GZ): *“We also realised that women who had started teleworking had increased their workloads as they tried to save time on household tasks. This brings to light issues of gender equity, which goes against the dynamic initially encouraged by teleworking.”*

Worker 13 stresses that while teleworking was supposed to offer flexibility and efficiency, it has inadvertently led to women being overloaded with work.

By spending time at the office, women avoided certain household tasks. However, teleworking is seen by women as an opportunity to complete more tasks in their day, by adding their household duties to their professional duties. Ultimately, teleworking tends to perpetuate gender disparities, calling into question its original aims.

The problem of wage indexation

W13 (GZ): *“I can't see a trend towards full remote either. In any case, it would be too much of a mess in terms of contract regulations [...] because mobility often allows you to pay less for your rent, for example, so you have to index wages to the cost of living in your new city of residence.”*

Adjusting remuneration to the cost of living depending on where employees live, particularly with the rise of teleworking, leads to significant complexities. This requires continuous monitoring of living costs in different regions and adjusting contracts accordingly, a task which is both complex and with a high risk of error.

The administrative burden and the risk of employee dissatisfaction make the widespread adoption of such policies unattractive to companies seeking operational fluidity and consistency.

Teleworking has a price for employees too

W15: *“I'd like to highlight an aspect of teleworking that is often underestimated: its financial impact on employees. Unlike some employers who cover the additional costs of teleworking, our company does not. This represents a significant burden for employees.”*

This last extract highlights the fact that companies tend to turn a blind eye to the potential costs for employees of teleworking. Indeed, over and above the comfort of the office, employees save on their daily expenses by coming to work in person. Therefore, it is likely that more demands from employees to be compensated for the time they spend working from home emerge in the future.

5.2 Discussion

The results of our analysis allow us to state conclusively that, on the whole, all the concepts discussed in the literature are reflected in the results obtained. No major contradictions were found between the results and the literature review. The notable nuances that can be addressed and the limitations of this research are explored in this section.

Our study confirms the complex relationship between generation Z and teleworking, as highlighted in the literature. Although this generation is perfectly at ease with the technology required for teleworking, it does not necessarily benefit from it as expected, particularly in terms of the quality of the working environment.

Moreover, generation Z, which has had little or no experience of entirely on-site work, has a crucial need for social contact and direct collaboration. This expectation comes up against obstacles such as lack of motivation, insufficient support and mentoring, and difficult communication with managers, highlighting the particular challenges of teleworking for these young professionals.

The literature review also highlights that generation Z has a strong desire for flexibility and a work-life balance. However, our practical analysis suggests that this approach needs to be nuanced. While the desire to distinguish themselves from previous generations and not to be overwhelmed by work is confirmed, other factors play a crucial role in their professional investment. Generation Z is particularly committed to companies that reflect their values and respect their commitments to sustainability and social responsibility.

However, the relatively early stage of their professional careers can make it easier to keep their professional and personal lives separate. We indeed need to ask ourselves whether this balance will be maintained as their responsibilities increase through their careers.

Furthermore, it was proved in this study that the practice of teleworking, while offering a certain degree of flexibility, does not in itself guarantee a balance between professional and

personal life, thereby questioning the systematic equation of teleworking with a better quality of life.

The literature review highlighted a strong tendency among Generation Z to reject strict control and to value autonomy and freedom at work, an observation that our results fully confirm. This generation expresses a profound need for autonomy, clearly rejecting rigid hierarchical structures. They aspire to be heard, to progress rapidly in their careers and to contribute meaningfully to their organisations.

While current research emphasises the widespread adoption of teleworking as the expected evolution of the workplace, our results revealed the opposite trend, particularly among Generation Z employees who express a preference for in-person interaction.

Businesses, after overcoming an initial period of scepticism, have identified significant benefits to teleworking, particularly in terms of flexibility and cost reduction. Nevertheless, this transition brings with it considerable challenges, such as the increased risk of burnout and isolation for employees, calling for careful management and a search for balance between the benefits of teleworking and the fundamental need for social interaction.

This in-depth analysis of the aspirations and specific challenges faced by Generation Z in relation to teleworking and work-life balance has enabled us to formulate targeted managerial recommendations, which will be explored in the next section.

5.3 Managerial implications: recommendations

These interviews enabled us to identify a range of good practices put in place by various companies or suggested by our respondents to counteract the possible excesses of teleworking and preserve team cohesion, a strong corporate culture and healthy and motivated and committed employees.

5.3.1 Trust-based management

Trust-based management is crucial for the successful implementation of teleworking because it creates a supportive and empowering environment where employees can thrive, regardless of their location. By fostering trust between managers and employees, organisations can maximise the benefits of teleworking while mitigating potential challenges and risks.

W12: *“And in terms of management, I'd advise checking in on your staff once a day, but not to stalk them. It's more a question of goodwill than trust.”*

W4: *“Trust is undeniably the most important thing. If we start by controlling everything, we don't give employees the chance to show that they can be productive by working remotely.”*

5.3.2 Teleworking might threaten the proper integration of new employees

Our respondents stressed the incompatibility of teleworking during the onboarding period for new employees, which generally lasts a month. This period is crucial for getting to know your colleagues, your team and the company as a whole. According to our interviews, teleworking should not be encouraged during this period, as it threatens the employee's experience and team cohesion in the long term, and can lead to the isolation of the newcomer.

W1: *“For me, the greatest challenge of teleworking is the integration process following recruitment, i.e. for new arrivals. I think it's essential for an employee to benefit from face-*

to-face contact with the teams and to be able to discover the office atmosphere and create interpersonal links with colleagues.”

W7 (GZ): *“My first month in the company absolutely has to take place at the head office. I need to immerse myself, to meet everyone, to feel at home. I want to feel comfortable enough with the tools, the people, the managers, the other people to be able to say to myself: ‘This is it, I feel sufficiently autonomous and I can start teleworking’.”*

5.3.3 Invest in tailored trainings

W6 (GZ): *“We have quite an ageing workforce. We need to train our managers in order to educate them on how to manage a teleworking team. Some managers like to telework but don't want their teams to be able to do so either. We need to change their view of teleworking and remove this reluctance.”*

Our interviews highlighted a real need for training of managers to better supervise teleworking. Specialised trainings can help managers develop the necessary skills to lead effectively in a remote context, including how to motivate, engage and support employees remotely.

W10: *“I work with training managers and I can see that they find it particularly difficult to manage this arrangement. They often tell me: ‘I find it hard to get them to work together remotely’.”*

5.3.4 Ensure a suitable working environment at home

As we saw before, respondents mentioned a lack of comfort when they are working from home. Some interviewees explained that they benefit from a specific budget to buy equipment (for example a more comfortable desk chair) which is provided by their company. Some others can ask to lend some equipment to bring back to their home, for example a second screen.

Having a suitable teleworking environment is essential for ensuring employee productivity. Companies therefore need to allocate a certain budget to ensure that their teams are properly equipped with the necessary tools.

W12: *“From a technical point of view: companies need to be able to supply their teams with IT tools for when they are working at home. Today, most companies have a budget for equipping their teams: they offer or lend specific equipment on request.”*

5.3.5 Gather feedbacks through surveys

Interviewees who are managers and therefore responsible for teams emphasised the importance of consulting their teams frequently about their working conditions. Gathering the opinions of employees enables us to assess whether the system in place is working properly or whether adjustments are necessary. To this end, most recommended that regular employee satisfaction surveys be conducted.

W17: *“Teleworking can be a tool, but it has to be managed and regulated. And to do that, you need to survey your employees on a fairly regular basis; although it's well known that it's not really part of the French culture to use social barometers.”*

W5: *“We have set up a system of regular surveys to better measure the energy and motivation of our teams and identify any alerts or frustrations. This enables us to ask employees how they envision themselves, and they can also share ideas. Through these surveys, we also assess their workload to check that there is no excess.”*

W4: *“Once we've put this teleworking policy in place, we need to check that it's still effective for our employees via satisfaction surveys: it's important to check that it's still meeting their expectations, that they don't feel overwhelmed by the workload.”*

5.3.6 Stay alert to health repercussions

Remain attentive to the workload and working hours

To manage teleworking effectively, managers need to keep a close eye on their teams' workloads and working hours, ensuring a balance between productivity and well-being. It is fundamental to set clear expectations while remaining flexible, to prevent overwork. Open communication is essential to adjust workloads and maintain employee engagement, fostering a balanced and supportive working environment.

W6 (GZ): *“It's crucial to pay attention and target work overload in order to prevent burnout.”*

W17: *“It's very easy to check the workload in the workplace, but much more difficult when teleworking.”*

The right to disconnect

The use of digital tools in the employment relationship can blur the boundaries between work time and personal time. The right to disconnect, as introduced in the French Labour Code, aims to regulate the use of digital tools to promote respect for rest periods and work-life balance, which can be disrupted by information and communication technologies (Lerouge, 2017).

W8 (GZ): *“We have a right to be offline from 6pm to 6am. During this period, if we are contacted, we have the right not to reply, even if in reality this is quite rare.”*

W17: *“We can't introduce teleworking without a disconnect policy. There have to be ways of switching off work so that you're not constantly connected.”*

This right must be respected and even encouraged by companies to limit the side effects of teleworking.

Regularity of in-person rituals and events

Our research has shown that people now feel the social detachment involved in the practice of teleworking on a larger scale.

W15: *“Despite the advantages that teleworking can offer, many people see its limitations and prefer the company of their colleagues. There seems to be a 'rebound effect' where, after a period of adaptation to teleworking, people realise the importance of direct social interaction.”*

A necessary effort must therefore be made by managers to encourage physical encounters between employees, which can be compromised in flexible settings.

W10: *“Whenever possible, I think it's important to hold in-person meetings. It helps to bring the team together and encourages exchanges, which is very important to maintain a good dynamic and cohesion when teleworking.”*

W8 (GZ): *“Our charter includes measures to ensure that in-person meetings are held regularly, thereby preserving social interaction and teamwork.”*

Teleworking is also pushing companies to innovate in order to encourage sharing and strengthen team cohesion, whether through seminars or team building activities, which are becoming increasingly popular and aim to solidify the corporate culture.

These attractive corporate events enable all employees, regardless of the team they belong to or the work pattern they follow (full remote, hybrid, on site, etc.), to get together and share quality moments.

W5: *“We organise 7 corporate events a year. The idea is not to bring people in just for the sake of it, but to use these events as a pretext to encourage people to work in the office at these times.”*

5.3.7 Alternatives to teleworking

While teleworking represents a valuable option for improving work-life balance, there are other innovative approaches to consider.

W11 (GZ): *“I don't think we should necessarily push for the full adoption of teleworking. However, it would be beneficial to allow employees to arrange their working hours more flexibly. Personally, I rather start my working day much earlier so that I can be free earlier in the afternoon. For me, this would be a great step forward.”*

These alternatives focus on increasing flexibility in working arrangements beyond the workplace, mainly through adaptable working hours and restructuring the traditional working week.

W16: *“The traditional view of working hours is now outdated, requiring adaptation, particularly through teleworking, which was not immediately popular.”*

Worker 16 underlines here that the traditional view of working hours is now obsolete, suggesting that teleworking, initially unpopular, has pointed to a deeper problem: the rigid structure of the working day itself. The move towards teleworking is just one aspect of the wider need for adaptable working environments which respond to employees' individual needs and preferences.

W3 (GZ): *“In our company, we allow flexibility in terms of working hours: people can organise their week as they wish, as long as they respect the key times for collaboration.”*

Many respondents in their interviews referred to flexible working as an effective alternative to teleworking to meet the needs and expectations of many employees, including those from Generation Z. Rather than focusing solely on the workplace, flexible working offers employees the flexibility to manage their working time more autonomously and in line with their individual preferences.

6. Conclusion

→ **Teleworking is a criteria for people because it is part of the quest for freedom and well-being at work encouraged by generation Z.**

The widespread introduction of teleworking is perfectly in line with emerging trends and the growing need for freedom and well-being at work. This development reflects a fundamental change in the way people think about their careers and working lives.

W16: “By demanding only productivity and results, we've reached the end of the road, and today we can see that at the HR level there has been a huge evolution. We've abandoned the purely economic vision: it's the end of the period when we only saw the results and looked at the company's workforce, and wondered how many people we were going to cut to achieve our financial targets [...]. This has made HR realise that a company's resource management needs to be particularly careful. Today, we want to encourage people and give them a purpose within the company.”

Firstly, teleworking offers unprecedented freedom to workers. By allowing them to choose their working environment, such as their home, a café or a coworking space, teleworking breaks down the traditional boundaries of the office. This increased flexibility gives them a sense of control over their schedule, which is particularly valuable to Generation Z, who value autonomy and the ability to shape their own work experience.

Teleworking also contributes to employee well-being by reducing the stress and constraints associated with commuting. By eliminating the often taxing daily commute, workers can devote more time to activities they enjoy outside work, improving their overall quality of life.

Furthermore, teleworking encourages a work culture based on results rather than physical presence. Employees are judged on their effectiveness and contribution, rather than on the number of hours they spend in the office. This encourages a more flexible and balanced approach to work, where individuals are encouraged to find working methods that best suit their personal needs and preferences.

Employees and employers have therefore found valuable benefits in teleworking: particularly in terms of developing, attracting and retaining talent.

W4: *“The question we need to ask ourselves is: why are we teleworking? For the well-being of employees? To save costs? The ‘why’ is much more interesting than the ‘how’.”*

Our HR respondents emphasised that in order to set up the right teleworking policy, companies need to define precisely what they want to achieve by implementing telework. Defining a horizon with positive impacts on both the company and its employees then allows adjustments to be made to achieve these objectives and contribute to a stronger corporate culture.

→ **Their preference for remote work can also be explained by the fact that they have known almost exclusively the hybrid model.**

The idea that Generation Z is the most inclined to telework is a widespread but inaccurate perception. In reality, the appeal of teleworking transcends generations, reflecting a universal desire for flexibility and work-life balance.

Generation Z's preference for teleworking can largely be attributed to the circumstance of starting their working careers at a time when the traditional working model, based on physical presence in the office, was already evolving towards more flexible forms, particularly as a result of the transition induced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This generation, entering the labour market during or after this period of transition, did not experience the traditional model of full-time, in-person work as their predecessors did. Instead, they were immersed in an environment where teleworking was the norm, meetings were held online and collaboration was often done remotely.

This experience helped to shape their perception of work. Rather than seeing teleworking as a temporary adaptation, Generation Z see it as a viable and even desirable option for organising their working lives.

→ **Teleworking as a trust demonstration**

We have seen that generation Z is known for its desire for autonomy and flexibility, and values the possibility of teleworking because it represents for them a symbol of trust and freedom on the part of employers.

For these young professionals, having the opportunity to telework represents more than just a remote working option; it is a demonstration of the recognition of their skills and their ability to manage their time and tasks independently.

Indeed, despite this stated desire for freedom and flexibility, the reality shows that generation Z often makes less use of teleworking than other generations.

This trend suggests that this generation places a high value on in-person interactions and collaboration within a traditional working environment. They indeed prefer to come into the office rather than work remotely.

However, when a company refuses to allow them to telework, they are reluctant to see this as a reflection of management's lack of confidence in their teams.

It is therefore important for companies not to neglect their efforts to maintain face-to-face cohesion for their teams. We need to counter the clichés which assume that teleworking is more comfortable. If companies manage to create a pleasant working environment for their employees, people will resort less to teleworking.

→ **What is the future of teleworking?**

W13 (GZ): *“There's a growing trend towards banning teleworking in order to boost productivity and encourage employees to bond. We can see that some companies are asking themselves: shouldn't we go back to our old model? That's under discussion in our company.”*

Our analysis showed that a full remote model was not the preferred solution for the majority of our respondents. People value informal exchanges, social ties and the creation of personal relationships within a company, and take pleasure in coming to the office when the links

between employees are strong. All these aspects shape a company's culture, which today needs to be developed to attract talent looking for a pleasant, friendly working environment.

W12: *“In my previous company, I teleworked much less because very few people did. In-person work was deeply rooted in the company's culture, even though we had the right to telework.”*

In addition, studying different teleworking models revealed that people generally followed the general trend of the employees of the company to which they belonged: if the majority telework, then the atmosphere in the offices is no longer the same and this discourages people from coming to work in-person. Therefore, the question remains...

→ **How do we get our employees back to the office?**

W3 (GZ): *“As an employer, we really prefer our employees to be in the office as much as possible. We see this as a real advantage that helps us stay competitive and keep our corporate culture alive.”*

Since the Covid pandemic and the spread of teleworking, many companies have taken advantage of the situation to make savings on their offices, opting for smaller facilities with less capacity, as quoted in previous sections. However, in the context of a return to on-site working for employees, this trend is clearly swimming against the tide.

W17: *“It would be very complicated to go back on this practice, especially now that many companies have developed an economy around it.”*

W7 (GZ): *“We couldn't even wake everyone up and tell them to come back to the office: it's no longer possible. They had no choice but to implement telecommuting with covid, and they changed headquarters immediately after. Now we're running out of room at the head office for a return to in-person work.”*

As we saw earlier, these companies must clarify their objective: if their goal is truly to bring employees back into the office because they believe in the importance of social links and of

a face-to-face culture, then they need to ensure that they have the adequate space to welcome everyone.

W13 (GZ): *“Most of my colleagues don't telework so I don't either.”*

Our analysis highlighted the vicious circle of teleworking (section 5.1.3). Companies need to reverse this trend: the more employees come back to work, the less people will want to telework (as highlighted by Worker 13 in the quote above). They are afraid of missing out on important moments of sharing at the office, and consequently threaten the relationships that bind them to their colleagues. Generation Z are particularly inclined to return to the office more often under these conditions, as we have seen that they highly value a good atmosphere at work.

Moreover, the risk of isolation arising from hybrid models has been identified through this study. Therefore, if teleworking is adopted by an organisation, collaborative moments must be guaranteed to encourage team cohesion and the bonding of employees.

There are a few possible levers of action for these organisations, such as setting up team rituals.

We have seen that in several cases, the team manager often is able to influence the application of a teleworking package. The hierarchical superior can therefore push his or her team members to telework on the same days, to ensure that they are together in the office on the other days.

W8 (GZ): *“It's preferable that the teleworking days are the same for the whole team if we want the system to work efficiently.”*

Based on our analysis of these interviews and the feedback we have received, we recommend that companies implement mandatory presence days. In fact, some respondents already have this system in place and appreciate it, as it ensures them to see all their colleagues in the office at least once a week. This breaks the vicious circle that discourages people from coming to the office for fear of not finding their colleagues there.

→ **Answering to their need for a work-life balance: despite the clichés about "lazy" teleworking, the reality is completely different.**

Teleworking is often quoted as a major advantage in improving work-life balance. However, our study has shown that this balance is not always improved, and the flexibility of working hours, made possible when working from home, can often lead to the opposite effect.

Companies can't turn a blind eye to this reality, although this phenomenon is more common among people in higher hierarchical positions, who take on more workload and responsibilities.

W17: "We used to leave and come back from work. Today, that's no longer the case; work has entered the home."

Concrete measures need to be implemented to understand how employees' workloads are responding to this new working environment, and to provide support for those who are caught up in the possibility of working more by extending their working days or even working at weekends.

W14 (GZ): "Our offices close at 8.30pm, and we apply the same rule for Teams, cutting off business communications at this time to maintain a healthy separation between professional and personal life."

These measures can include training managers on remote management and raising employee awareness of burnout. Tools for monitoring working hours can also be used to identify the most serious cases and raise awareness before they reach critical stages that could endanger employees' health.

→ **Equity or flexibility dilemma**

Two distinct arguments were put forward in our interviews concerning the choice of a telework model applicable to a company's activity.

On one hand, the argument for uniformity, arguing that all employees, regardless of their role or position, should be subject to the same teleworking rules to ensure fairness within the organisation.

W13 (GZ): *“It is important to note that, in some cases, factory directors may be able to work remotely, but not manual workers. This disparity creates a lack of consistency and can be perceived as unfair.”*

On the other hand, others, such as respondent 16, argue that teleworking should be tailored to the specificities of the position and team functioning, recognising that needs and opportunities vary greatly from one role to another.

W16: *“We need to assess the impact of the possible choices, bearing in mind that the solutions may be of variable geometry. Everything will depend on the sector of activity and the type of job targeted. The vision of teleworking will not be the same in marketing or purchasing, for example, because the challenges and needs are different.”*

This debate highlights the challenge of striking a balance between creating a fair and equitable teleworking policy for all, while taking into account the specificities and requirements of each role.

→ **Other work arrangements are possible.**

We have seen in section 5.3.7 that companies are now experimenting new ways to provide more flexibility to their workforce, in situations where teleworking is not applicable or not preferred. These other arrangements can help a company to meet the needs expressed by their employees.

W5: *“I think we're moving towards more flexible working patterns: there's a lot of talk about the 4-day week, or unlimited holiday. There are initiatives to offer more flexibility, but we don't really know what the advantages and disadvantages are yet.”*

W17: *“Perhaps tomorrow the four-day week will be the main topic of discussion.”*

However, this is still a delicate territory for companies, given that they do not yet know the established results of switching to such policies and the possible effects on business productivity. These are measures that are gradually being implemented, but which remain experimental for the moment, but which will perhaps become more popular in the next few years.

→ **A generation introducing new standards, a new vision of work: is it going to stay?**

The idea that Generation Z is introducing new standards and a broader vision of work beyond its influence on teleworking practices is particularly intriguing.

W10: “Soft skills are fundamental, and we have realised that employee performance depends on a very important psychological and emotional balance. Companies are increasingly taking this into account, understanding that happy employees work harder and better.”

This generation, often characterised by their advanced use of technology and willingness to challenge traditional norms, also appears to embody a profound change in the way work is perceived and approached.

Their desire for flexibility, autonomy and work-life balance is influencing not only the way teleworking is adopted and integrated into companies, but also organisational culture as a whole.

This generation could therefore shape future working models by emphasising values such as diversity, inclusion, employee well-being and corporate social responsibility. As Generation Z continues to progress in their careers and take up leadership positions, it is likely that these new standards and visions of work will stay, significantly influencing professional practices and organisational dynamics for years to come.

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8. Appendix

1) Interview guide

Part 1 - Professional background and experience

1. Can you introduce yourself and explain your current position?

Part 2 - Teleworking policy

2. Do you telework? Does your company/position allow it? What are the rules of this policy?
3. What specific benefits do you find in teleworking, and how does it fit with your needs and motivations as an employee?
4. What do you see as the main disadvantages of teleworking?
5. If you had to apply for a new job tomorrow, would the possibility of teleworking be one of your criteria? To which extent?

Part 3 - Generation Z (expectations and relationship with teleworking)

6. In your professional or personal context, could you share your vision of the expectations of Generation Z (born after 1995, up to 28 years old) ?
7. How would you assess the interest of Generation Z in teleworking?

Part 4 - Management practices

8. Do you see teleworking as a constraint on team cohesion? Have you put anything in place to maintain cohesion in this new remote environment?
9. How does your company support work-life balance in a teleworking environment?
10. Have you seen a change in management techniques with the introduction of teleworking?
11. How do you see the teleworking framework evolving in your company, taking into account the expectations of generation Z?
12. What advice would you give to other companies looking to adapt their teleworking policy to meet the expectations of generation Z?

Part 5 - Conclusion

13. Is there anything else you would like to add that you think would be useful to explore regarding teleworking and Generation Z and that could be relevant to my thesis?

Bonus questions

14. How do you ensure communication and performance monitoring in a teleworking environment?
15. Do you have specific policies to prevent overwork and burnout?
16. How do you ensure that employees feel recognised and valued, even at a distance?
17. What tools and technologies does your company use to facilitate teleworking, and how do these choices meet the expectations of Generation Z?
18. Can you share examples of best practice or successful innovations in managing teleworking for this generation?

2) Tables

Table 5: Overview of contact channel performance

Contact channel	MyJobGlasses website	Direct contact (Acquaintance)	Indirect contact (Networking)
# People contacted	30	5	5
# Interviews realised	11	5	1
Response rate	37%	100%	20%
Share of total	65%	29%	6%