

Recruiting and retaining employees within companies, the challenge

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ABSTRACT:

In a world marked by a complex demographic trend characterized by an aging population, declining birth rates, and increasing workforce diversity, companies face major challenges in recruiting and retaining employees. In this context marked by a shortage of labor, increased competition among companies, and a growing diversity of candidate profiles, this research aims to analyze issues related to human resource management. It also examines the strategies and tools that can be implemented to attract and retain talent while taking into account the peculiarities of the labor market and the needs of different candidate profiles. The goal is to provide insights and recommendations to companies seeking to adapt their human resource management policies to a difficult demographic context, maximizing their attractiveness and competitiveness in the job market.

KEYWORDS:

Demography, shortage, recruitment, retention, strategy, attractiveness, companies

1 INTRODUCTION:

According to Jean Bodin (1576), "There is no wealth but of men". This quote is a fundamental principle in the field of human resources (HR), highlighting the importance of this factor in the functioning of companies. This rule is applicable to all institutions, which cannot function without the women and men who make them up. Therefore, HR is the central of their pillar, as the absence of even one member can lead to a general dysfunction. The current context of the labor market is also marked by increasing demographic complexity, characterized in particular by an aging population, a decrease in birth rates, and an increasing diversity of the workforce (Robert, I. Lerman, and Stefanie, R. Schmidt. 1999). These trends have a significant impact on companies and organizations, which must face significant challenges in terms of recruitment and employee retention.

The effectiveness of an institution worldwide, regardless of its market outcomes, depends primarily on the quality and degree of preparation of its personnel. The human dimension plays a crucial role in their policies and strategies and also remains the driving force behind the optimization of the performance process.

In this context, the 21st century has witnessed profound changes in all areas: social, economic, technological, political, geopolitical, geostrategic, and military. Currently, the issue of recruitment and retention in a difficult demographic context is of great relevance. Indeed, companies must face increasingly complex challenges in human resources management.

These demographic trends have a direct impact on the labor market, with a decrease in the number of available candidates and increased competition between companies to attract talent. Therefore, companies must demonstrate innovation and adaptability to succeed in recruiting and retaining the best candidates. Recruitment is a challenge for companies, which must attract the best candidates to remain competitive in the market. To achieve this, they must implement effective recruitment strategies, using different recruitment channels and offering attractive offers.

These alarming demographic trends raise the following question: what are the challenges that companies must face to achieve reliable recruitment of personnel that combines market requirements with the sustainability of the company?

This problematic raises several questions that will guide and direct our research, including:

- What are the specific challenges related to human resources management in a difficult demographic context?
- What are the most effective recruitment approaches to attract the best candidates in such a context?
- How to convince candidates to apply for the proposed positions?
- How to select and recruit the right people with the required profile?

- How to maintain competent employees in their positions?
- What are the different methods to retain a company and motivate its employees?
- How to enhance a company's value in a competitive environment?
- What strategies can a company apply for better attractiveness?
- How to attract collaborators when the workforce is in shortage?
- What human resources management strategies are in place?
- Do companies use marketing techniques to attract their future employees? What improvements could be proposed?

By answering these questions, this study aims first and foremost to identify the main constraints that companies may encounter in the recruitment and retention process, as well as in HR management. This step is essential to understand and clarify the different difficulties related to personnel management within companies and their influences on the job market, and provide practical recommendations to companies, especially those seeking to recruit and retain the best talent in a difficult demographic context, characterized in particular by a decrease in birth rates, an aging workforce, and increased competition among companies to attract talent.

In this context, we should analyze the different challenges that companies must overcome to ensure effective and efficient HR management in a world marked by a shortage of qualified labor, competition between companies to attract and retain candidates who present the best profile, taking into account the specificities of the labor market characterized by generational diversity, and challenges in continuous training that best meet the market's requirements, and the integration of new information and communication technologies. The aim is to draw a roadmap for companies to implement strategies and tools to adapt their HR management policy and their recruitment practices to the requirements of the market to maximize their attractiveness and competitiveness in the labor market.

2 HR MANAGEMENT, THE CONSTRAINTS

The structure of the global population is undergoing an aging process that is reflected in the age pyramid of companies¹. Moreover, the arrival of a new generations in the labor market², presents values, references, expectations, and behaviors that are radically different from those of previous generations. Recruiters in companies can be disconcerted by this youth and sometimes have difficulty to understand their codes to communicate with them.

2.1 The aging of the population

Current demographic trends vary by country and region of the world due to an increase in life expectancy and a decrease in fertility rates. The proportion of elderly people is increasing in many countries, which has significant implications for HR management within companies.

In France, for instance (**figure 1**), the demographic landscape is marked by two generations: the baby boom (1946-1965) and the baby gap (1974-1994), which are reflected in the age pyramid of organizations. However, the French population, like that of developed countries, is aging, leading to a reduction in the working-age population. Between 2000 and 2025, the population will increase by 9%, or 4 million people in France. The number of people over 80 will increase from 2.7 million in 2000 to 6 million in 2040, and the proportion of people aged 60 and over, will increase from 21% in 2005 to 31.1% in 2030. This trend leads to a gradual reduction in the proportion of 20–59-year-olds in the active population. After half a century of stability, the proportion of this age group has slightly increased until 2005, but has started to decline since 2006 with the retirement of baby boomers. It is expected to decrease to 44.8% in 2050³. Since 2007, the French active population has been disrupted with a scarcity of young (-800,000 for 20–29-year-olds by 2025) and experienced workers (-1.6 million for 30–49-year-olds), and an overabundance of seniors (+3 million for 50–64-year-olds).⁴

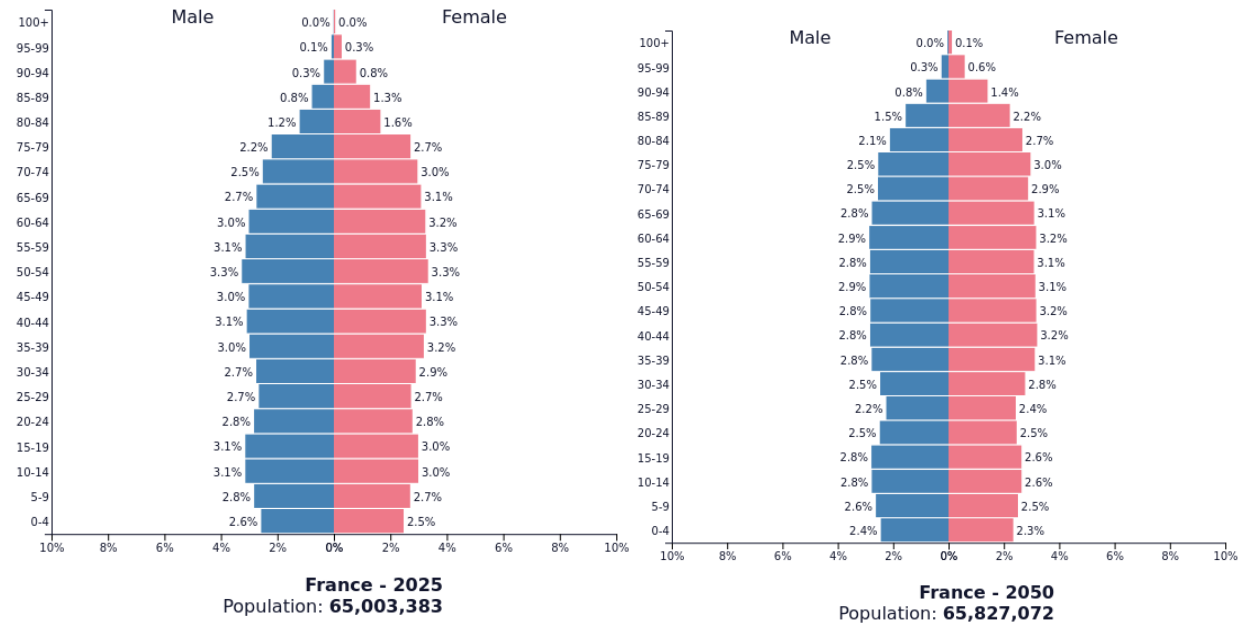
¹ What Is a Management Pyramid? (And Other Types of Management Structures). (2022). [Online] Available: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/management-pyramid#:~:text=A%20management%20pyramid%2C%20also%20called,the%20shape%20of%20a%20pyramid>. (September 26, 2023)

² Janzer, Cinnamon. (2021). Generational Differences in the Workplace: Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z, Workest by triNet zenefits, [Online] Available : <https://www.zenefits.com/workest/generations-in-the-workplace-boomers-gen-x-gen-y-and-gen-z-explained/> (September 1, 2023)

³ Nauze-Fichet, Emmanuelle. (2002). Projections de population active en 2050 : l'essoufflement de la croissance des ressources en main-d'œuvre in *ECONOMIE ET STATISTIQUE* N° 355-356, PP 73-104, [Online] Available : <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/fichier/1375923/es355-356f.pdf> (September 2, 2023)

⁴ Woll, C. (2006). La réforme du Medef : chronique des difficultés de l'action collective patronale. *Revue française de science politique*, 56, 255-279, [Online] Available : <https://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-de-science-politique-2006-2-page-255.htm> (September 2, 2023)

Figure 1: the French population in 2025 and 2050



Thus, it is increasingly evident that companies are struggling to find qualified personnel. This situation could offer more choices to young people in the labor market, but how to explain this shortage of labor when the unemployment rate is high (in many countries especially in developed ones)⁵ and the employment rate is still low at both ends? However, this imbalance is not only due to demographic factors but also to past trends of companies getting rid of excess staff using pre-retirement systems, which risks losing the company's expertise and experience. With the retirement of the baby boomer generation, the active population is contracting further, requiring careful consideration within each company on how to anticipate needs not only in terms of skills but also on how to distribute them optimally.

Today's companies have realized that they must adapt their rules to retain a motivated workforce. This involves paying particular attention to juniors to attract and retain them, and to seniors to maintain their performance at a high level. However, it is crucial not to manage employees based on

⁵ The Employment Situation -August 2023. Bureau of labor statistics. US department of labor. 2023. P 4. [Online] Available : <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empisit.pdf> (September 27, 2023)

their age but rather on their performance, skills, and actual activities. HR policies must be fair and tailored to the needs of each employee, whether individual or generational.

To achieve this goal, it is essential to understand the different generations working together and to collaborate optimally in the interest of all.

The current demographic trends have significant consequences for the labor market, such as⁶:

- Labor shortage⁷: the aging of the population means that older workers will retire, which could create a labor shortage in some areas. Employers may need to adapt their policies to attract older workers and retain their expertise.

- Pressure on retirement systems: with the increase in life expectancy, retirement systems will need to be rethought to meet the needs of the aging population. Governments and companies may need to find new sources of funding to maintain these systems.

- Impact on skills and qualifications: ethnic composition and international migration can have an impact on the skills and qualifications of workers. Employers may need to adapt their recruitment policies to attract and retain qualified workers.

- Changes in the nature of work: urbanization and changes in household structure can lead to changes in the nature of work, with increasing demand for home services, elderly care, and proximity services in urban areas.

- Increased competition: with globalization and international migration, competition for jobs could intensify, which could have repercussions on wages and social benefits.

- Adaptation to new technologies: digital transformation and work automation are redefining many jobs. Workers may need to acquire new skills to remain relevant in the labor market.

These current demographic trends can have a significant impact on the labor market, and employers and governments may need to adapt to these challenges and opportunities.

2.2 The Z Generation⁸: a major constraint in optimizing the recruitment process

Nowadays, within a sociological approach, companies' leaders must be able to understand the challenges posed by the new generations, especially the Z generation (Gen Z). Sociologists describe Gen Z, born between 1996 and 2008 (**figure 2**), as being both in search of meaning, recognition, and

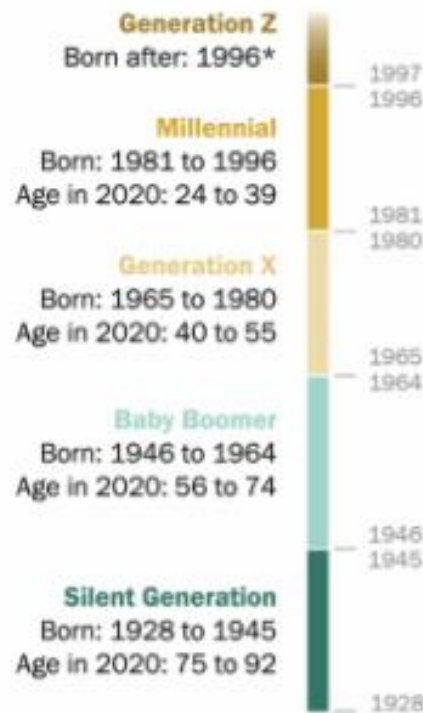
⁶ MACROECONOMICS OF AGING AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS (2019). International Monetary Fund [Online] Available: <https://www.imf.org/external/np/g20/pdf/2019/060519a.pdf> (September 2, 2023)

⁷ REPORT ON LABOR SHORTAGES AND SURPLUSES (2022). European Labor Authority. [Online] Available: <https://www.ela.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-03/eures-labour-shortages-report-2022.pdf>

⁸ Striving for balance, advocating for change (2022) the deloitte global 2022 GEN Z & millennial survey [Online] Available: <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/at/Documents/human-capital/at-gen-z-millennial-survey-2022.pdf> (September 26, 2023)

autonomy (Pataki-Bittó and Kapusy, 2021), but also as having difficulties committing to the long term (Csiszárík-Kocsír and Garia-Fodor, 2018). They also note that this generation values skills and favors human-sized environments.

Figure 2: The generations defined



Moreover, In the recruitment process, leaders must take into account the potential and weaknesses of Gen Z and make it a strength in the service of companies (Jeff Fromm and Angie Read, 2018). Indeed, Gen Z presents several advantages that recruiters can use to increase their productivity and efficiency at work (Jason. R. Dorsey and Denise. Villa, 2020):

Indeed, the first truth about Gen Z is to be a “digital native” generation (Lanier, K. 2017). The Gen Z is highly connected, aware of the world's security instability, and intelligent in understanding the new typology of threats and risks on the horizon, making them more aware than their predecessors of what is happening in the world, not only from a social and political point of view but especially from an economic and financial perspective⁹. For this reason, employers must include in their recruitment processes the fact that the Gen Z is realists, unlike the Generation Y, also known as millennials and

⁹ Slade, S. & Grabinger, A. (2014). Gen Z: The First Generation of the 21st Century Has Arrived. Richmond XYZ University, P 4

dreamers¹⁰, they also need to optimize their recruitment process by reinventing it, personalizing it, and using technology to attract the Gen Z.

This need is not a major obstacle to integrating young people into the company, and the autonomous choice of young recruits is essential and demonstrates their thoughtful commitment rather than being forced. It is important that company leaders and recruiters take into account this important factor that can further complicate the leadership process (Tim. Elmore, 2022)

➤ A highly connected generation of young employees:

Managers are aware of nomophobia (no mobile phobia), which is a new form of neurosis that has appeared among young people and is characterized by anxiety or a phobia of being without their smartphones. This condition can sometimes be incompatible with the demands of society and hinder the smooth running of work, which may require a total disconnection, sometimes for an extended period. Despite this, Gen Z, while adept at new technologies, also feels the need to find human and social values: "They are looking for activities related to nature and maintain a need for "real" sociability with their peer groups," says Frédéric Soussin (SOUSSIN, Frédéric and DURANDIN, Philippe. 1999).

Leaders must ensure that these needs are entirely compatible with the company's jobs :

➤ Chosen authority:

Gen Z seeks authority based on competence, which leaves little space for questioning the established order. In these conditions, it is legitimate to wonder how to attract this generation that rejects too-hierarchical and bureaucratic models. In fact, the "young Z" are waiting for a new type of leader who, when faced with new generations, if he wants to get the best out of them, must know how to handle a particular situational leadership style adapted to the lowest level.

➤ Culture of sharing:

Gen Z encourages the organization to re-evaluate its principles to promote a culture of cooperation that focuses on trust and a clear definition of roles and responsibilities. Gen Z are no longer just receives skills; they are now initiators and transmitters of these skills to their peers. Although this may seem incompatible with the traditional functioning of the company, which often values the experience of the elders as holders of knowledge and skills, it is essential that leaders learn to involve and empower this generation in decision-making processes to allow this new form of knowledge transmission.

¹⁰ IBID P 2

➤ Affective:

Recognition of work accomplished is of paramount importance to Gen Z, as it is a key element of their motivation and loyalty. Managers must take this into account, which is not incompatible, as recognition is already a fundamental value of a good manager who must be cautious and anticipate the gap between the values of Gen Z and those of the company. It is possible to respond to the aspirations of young employees by adapting current modes of operation while preserving fundamental principles (Ryan. Jenkins, 2019).

➤ Turnover:

For leaders, the ability to retain employees is a crucial issue. Indeed, the personnel turnover rate is an indicator of the quality of the human resources policy in place. The turnover rate allows the company to know how it renews its staff. This indicator reveals to the HR manager the quality of his human resources management. It can be defined as an indicator used to measure the frequency at which employees leave a company. It takes into account the departures and arrivals of employees and allows for the precise measurement of workforce renewal. The analysis of turnover allows for the evaluation of the company's ability to retain its employees and highlights any weaknesses in this regard (Vroom, Victor. 1964).

This ratio can mask very different situations. Depending on whether they are voluntary departures or layoffs, the conclusions to be drawn can be very different. The reasons for the high turnover rate may be related to recruitment problems, management, competitiveness in the job market, etc. In addition, besides the difficult-to-quantify but very real team cohesion issues, high personnel turnover can have a direct cost in terms of recruitment and training. The loss of skills due to too high staff turnover can become a real long-term strategic weakness. On the other hand, a virtually nonexistent turnover can undermine a company's innovation capacity.¹¹

Thus, the demand for highly sought-after skills stimulates movements in the job market. Additionally, the arrival of the new generations in the job market has changed the game, as workers from those generations are no longer hesitant to seek opportunities elsewhere, resulting in an increasing turnover rate. It is difficult to oppose this trend, as it reflects a profound change in mentalities, which is both legitimate and beneficial. However, the company has every interest in monitoring its personnel turnover rate. In addition, companies are faced with particular challenges: satisfying the needs of older employees and maintaining skills while also recruiting younger workers to fill retirements and thus address the constraints of the job market.

¹¹ Alex. 2021. Causes and Effects of Employee Turnover [Online] Available: <https://matterapp.com/blog/causes-and-effects-employee-turnover> (September 5, 2023)

3 THE JOB MARKET'S CHALLENGES

Companies must deal with a big problem: the shortage of available workers. They may face several challenges when seeking to recruit and retain employees (Barbara, Bruno. 2020). In some sectors or regions, there may be a shortage of qualified workers. This can make the recruitment task even more difficult, as there are fewer candidates available to fill vacant positions.

3.1 The challenges of continuous training and technological advancements in the job market

It is important for all companies to allocate resources to the continuous training of their employees to help them acquire new skills and advance professionally. However, this can be a challenge in terms of time and resources, especially for the small ones.¹²

Time: Small businesses often have heavy workload and limited personnel. When employees take time to attend training, it can result in additional workload for other employees, which can be difficult to manage.

- Costs: The costs of training can also be a challenge for small businesses, especially if they have a limited budget. In-person training can be expensive due to the costs associated with renting training rooms, travel, and trainer compensation. Online training can also have a cost, although it is often cheaper than in-person training.
- Production disruption: When employees attend training, it can result in a disruption of production or business activities. This can be a challenge for small businesses, especially those with 24/7 production or activities (W, Chan Kim and Renée, A. Mauborgne, 2023)
- Trainer availability: small businesses may struggle to find qualified and available trainers to deliver training. External trainers can be expensive, and internal employees who have the necessary skills may not have the time or experience to deliver training.
- Results tracking: It can be difficult for small businesses to track training results and measure their effectiveness. It is important to be able to assess the skills acquired by employees through training to know if the investment has been profitable.

New technologies can also have an impact on the skills required for a job, which can lead to a shortage of qualified talent for positions that require specific technological expertise. Companies must be willing to invest in the training of their employees to adapt to new technologies and avoid a shortage of qualified talent.

¹² Dixson Hoff, Jennifer. 2021. Why Small Businesses Need to Prioritize Continuous Learning. [Online] Available: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/why-small-businesses-need-to-prioritize-continuous-learning/398791> (September 5, 2023)

Despite these challenges, it is important for small businesses to find ways to invest in the continuous training of their employees, as this can bring many long-term benefits for the company and employees without neglecting technological advancements, which are a sine qua non condition in the development of every business that also remains faced with challenges in retaining its employees.

3.2 The talent war and employee retention¹³

With a shortage of qualified labor, companies can find themselves in competition to attract the best candidates. This can lead to an increase in salaries and benefits, which can be difficult for companies with limited budgets. The talent war is a challenge in the job market, particularly in the context of a labor shortage, as employers must compete to attract and retain the best talent for their companies.

The labor shortage can be caused by a number of factors, such as economic growth, increased competition among companies to attract qualified talent, an aging population, migration of skilled workers to other countries, or inadequate education or training of workers to meet the needs of employers.

In this context, employers must be able to offer competitive salaries, attractive benefits, a stimulating work environment, and opportunities for professional development to attract and retain talent. They can also use employer branding strategies to promote their company and attract the best talent.

Furthermore, employers must be able to offer opportunities for professional development and training to help workers acquire the skills they need to meet the needs of the company. Training and professional development can also help employers retain talent by offering career growth opportunities and demonstrating their commitment to employee development.

In summary, the talent war is a challenge in the job market in the context of a labor shortage, and employers must be able to compete to attract and retain the best talent for their company by offering competitive salaries, attractive benefits, a stimulating work environment, opportunities for professional development, and an effective employer branding strategy.

Once companies have successfully recruited qualified employees, it is important to retain them. However, in a challenging demographic context, employees may be tempted to seek opportunities elsewhere. Employee retention is a challenge in the job market in a context of labor shortage because workers have more employment options and may be more likely to change employers. When there is

¹³ Armagnac, S., Klarsfeld, A. & Martignon, C. (2016). La gestion des talents : définitions, modèles, pratiques d'entreprises. @GRH, 20, 9-41. [Online] Available: <https://doi.org/10.3917/grh.163.0009> (September 7, 2023)

-See also: Gyurák Babel'ová, Z., Stareček, A., Koltnerová, K., & Cagáňová, D. (2020). Perceived Organizational Performance in Recruiting and Retaining Employees with Respect to Different Generational Groups of Employees and Sustainable Human Resource Management. Sustainability, 12(2), 574. MDPI AG[Online] Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su12020574> (September 7, 2023)

a labor shortage, workers have more choices regarding the positions they can hold, which can lead them to seek better opportunities and change jobs more frequently.

This means that employers must strive to retain their employees by offering a stimulating work environment and meeting their needs and expectations. Employers must be attentive to the reasons why workers may leave their company, such as inadequate salaries, inadequate benefits, limited career prospects, an unattractive corporate culture, etc.

To attract and retain talent, companies must offer competitive benefits, such as attractive salaries and benefits, training and professional development opportunities, a positive corporate culture, flexible work schedules, paid leave and vacations, etc. Companies must also implement retention programs, such as mentoring programs, career and professional growth plans, rewards and incentives for employees who bring significant added value to the company.

Employee retention is also an important challenge in the context of a labor shortage because workers have more choices regarding the positions they can hold. Employers must strive to retain their employees by offering a stimulating work environment, meeting the needs and expectations of their workers, offering competitive benefits, and implementing effective retention programs.

3.3 Multigenerational workforce and recruiting the right talent

Multigenerational diversity can be a challenge in the job market (Angela. Mulvie. 2021) in a context marked by a shortage of labor. Employers must take into account the differences between generations in terms of motivations, expectations, preferences, and work styles in order to attract and retain talent from all generations.

For example, baby boomers are often more attached to job stability, while Generation Y and Gen Z are more likely to seek flexibility in their work (Marc, Miller and Susan, Lahey. 2019). In addition, younger generations are often more comfortable with technology and are more likely to seek jobs that offer learning and professional development opportunities (B, Abrams, Jennifer and von Frank, Valerie. 2013).

To address these challenges, employers can implement policies and practices that take into account the differences between generations. For example, they can offer flexible schedules for older workers, professional development opportunities for younger workers, and mentoring programs to facilitate the transfer of intergenerational knowledge and skills. Employers can also create inclusive and respectful work environments that promote diversity and equity.

The diversity of generations in the job market can present challenges, but employers can overcome them by implementing policies and practices that take into account the differences between generations and promote inclusion and equity. Companies must manage this diversity of generations

in their workforce, particularly with regard to differences in perspectives, expectations, and work styles. They must find ways to create an inclusive work environment for all generations. They can use a multigenerational workforce as a benefit rather than a challenge to make the recruitment process as simple and beneficial for the company as possible.

Indeed, due to increased competition and a shortage of qualified labor, it can be difficult for companies to find candidates that fit their needs. This can lead to longer recruitment times and higher costs to find qualified candidates.¹⁴

Increased competition in the job market means there is a high demand for skilled workers, which can make it difficult for companies to find candidates that meet their specific needs. In addition, the shortage of qualified labor means there is a limited supply of workers with the skills, experience, and qualifications required for certain positions.

These combined factors can make the recruitment process more difficult for companies, as there may be intense competition for the most qualified candidates. Companies may need to expand their talent search outside of their geographic area or even their home country to find qualified candidates. The recruitment process can also take longer, as companies may need to conduct more extensive candidate screenings and rigorous skill assessments. This can lead to longer recruitment times, which can harm company productivity.

Furthermore, increased competition for skilled workers can lead to higher costs for companies. Companies may need to offer higher salaries, more generous benefits, and other incentives to attract and retain skilled workers. This can result in higher costs for the company, which can affect its profitability.

¹⁴ Ewerlin, D. (2013). The influence of global talent management on employer attractiveness: An experimental study. *Zeitschrift Für Personalforschung / German Journal of Research in Human Resource Management*, 27(3), 279–304. [Online] Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23611108> (September 10, 2023)

CONCLUSION

The present research sheds light on the different challenges that companies face in recruiting and retaining their employees. Indeed, companies are constantly faced with the need to adapt their models and tools for HR management due to the evolution of the human environment and the sociology of civil society. This adaptation is even more essential as these organizations face numerous challenges in every aspect related to the management of employees and talents, including recruiting in quantity and quality and retaining a scarce resource. It is crucial for companies to ensure its success and sustainability by ensuring effective management of its HR. Companies that manage the constraints related to HR, such as the impact of population aging on the age pyramid, turnover, consideration of the specificities of Gen Z, and overcome the challenges of the job market, such as personnel training and current technological transformations, will be better prepared to thrive, recruit well, and retain their personnel in a context of labor scarcity.

In this context, human capital is essential for companies seeking to recruit and retain the most high-performing employees. To maximize their long-term effectiveness and profitability, companies must take the human capital of their employees in their recruitment and retention strategies. The psychological contract is also important for establishing positive and lasting work relationships that benefit all parties. Finally, attractiveness is also crucial for attracting qualified candidates and retaining employees, particularly by creating a positive culture and image for the company. These concepts are essential to making the company an attractive employer and a true brand. To do this, it is necessary to highlight the origins and pillars of HR marketing, which are of great importance for personnel management and the proper functioning of the company. By applying the logic and techniques of marketing and communication, the goal is to attract candidates, recruit and integrate them effectively, and also to retain involved employees.

By addressing these constraints, optimizing HR management, and implementing effective strategies, any company, regardless of its size, can transform its weaknesses and difficulties into strengths that can guarantee its development and prosperity in a world marked by a shift from traditional war aimed at conquering territory to an economic war where actors seek to conquer the market.

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