

Gearing up for Gen Z: An Analysis of Employers' Recruitment Marketing Targeting the New,  
Generation Z, Workforce

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### Abstract

As the new generation, Gen Z, graduates and moves into the workforce - employers must adapt their recruitment practices to acquire top talent. To adapt, employers must understand their target audience's job-seeker and organizational characteristics and address these attributes in recruitment marketing job descriptions to elicit person-organization fit, ultimately, garnering top talent to apply to their organization. Using Deloitte's Gen Z studies as a basis for person-environment fit, this MRP seeks to be an extension of their studies to see if employers are, in fact, utilizing the specific content in their job descriptions with the primary research question: Do employers' online recruitment marketing communications rhetorically address person-organization (P-O) fit characteristics to attract the new generation Z, workforce?

### Acknowledgements

The theme of this major research paper revolves around the importance of people, and how the right people in the right place can make a world of difference in the workplace. It is no surprise that this notion runs parallel to the completion of my MRP.

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### Dedication

This is major research paper is in dedication to you, mum. We did it. Everything I accomplish, you accomplish too. Thank you for everything that you are.

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## Gearing up for Gen Z: An Analysis of Employers' Recruitment Marketing Communications

### Targeting the New, Generation Z, Workforce

#### **Introduction**

Entering the employment landscape with record low unemployment, Generation Z (Gen Z) is entering a job-seekers' market, with employers' eager to attract, hire and retain top talent (Stansell, 2019). As a result, recruitment today is more strategic, persuasive and targeted than ever (Sunderberg, 2014). It is commonly noted that human capital, or the individuals that make up a company, can drive or limit the success of an organization - making employee recruitment essential for organizational survival (Acikgoz, 2019; Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017). Human Resource (HR) professionals, or organizational recruiters, want to strategically acquire top talent for top performing organizations, and the candidate pool is changing with the new generational shift, the induction of the new generation of employees, Generation Z (Gen Z). Following Millennials, Gen Z consists of individuals born between 1995 and 2004. They are today's college and university seniors graduating and entering the workforce (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Deloitte, 2017; Deloitte, 2018; Muller, 2015; Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017). It is estimated by the year 2020 Gen Z's will represent 1 in 5 employees in the workforce, growing in their representation as baby boomers retire (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017, p. 810). Similar to the generations that came before, Gen Z's have specific job-seeker characteristics (skill sets, needs, values and practices) and job and organizational characteristics (such as work environment, compensation, image, benefits, etc.) presenting both challenges and opportunities when trying to recruit young talent (Acikgoz, 2019). As the generation pool shifts, recruitment and hiring processes must shift accordingly, taking those generational differences into account, to influence the number and types of applicants who apply, stay in the applicant pool and accept job offers at

their firm (Acikgoz, 2019, p.1). Entering the labour force in a job-seekers' market, graduates today have more choice over which position they want to be in. Employers must stand out to the new, Gen Z workforce, through targeted and persuasive marketing to hire highly skilled applicants. This MRP, therefore, focuses on the primary research question: Do employers' online recruitment marketing communications rhetorically address person-organization fit characteristics to attract the new, Generation Z workforce?

### **Literature Review**

As the globalization of businesses continues to intensify competition from not just local but global markets, organizations have seen an increase in the need for strategic human resources management in their firms (SHRM) (Mitchell, Obeidat & Bray, 2013). SHRM is essential for organizations to maintain a sustainable, competitive advantage over competitors for long-term success (Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001, Barney & Wright, 1998; Mitchell, Obeidat & Bray, 2013; Torraco & Swanson, 1995). As a result, human resource (HR) professionals' roles have shifted from primarily administrative support roles to strategic partners in business, collaborating with managers on creating a strategy to achieve organizational goals through policies and practices (Mitchell, Obeidat & Bray, 2013, p. 89). Many of the policies and practices are in alignment with business goals, in the various functions that HR facilitates including training and development, compensation, employment law information management, employee and labour relations, accounting and financial management, as well as occupational health, safety, and wellness (Mitchell, Obeidat & Bray, 2013). While all of these functions play an integral part in maintaining a successful organization, it is critical first to have the right people working for an organization - making talent acquisition, or recruitment and selection of talented human capital the most crucial functions that HR professionals are responsible for (Mitchell, Obeidat & Bray,

2013, p. 89). SHRM, therefore, requires HR professionals to be well-versed in what strategic recruitment entails.

### **Contextualizing Recruitment**

As Barney and Wright (1998) state, “the firm’s people are the most important asset” (p. 31). Creating competitive advantage consists of physical capital resources (the firm itself, equipment, finances), organizational capital resources (firm structure, planning coordinating and HR systems) and finally, human capital resources (skills, judgement, and intelligence of the employees) (p. 32). As Schneider (1987) reiterates, “the people make the place” (p. 437); therefore, the acquisition or recruitment of the right people to an organization is essential - but what does recruitment encompass?

Between organizations and job seekers, recruitment is a process that can be defined as the process and activities in which employers attract and influence the number and types of applicants who apply for a position, ultimately allowing employers to choose the applicant who best fulfills the job requirements and vacancy of the employer (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017; Ackigoz, 2019; Breaugh, 2008; Muscalu, 2015). In the *Human Resource Glossary of Terms* by Tracey (2004), recruitment is defined as the following

The first step in the process or matching job descriptions and applicant specifications with people. The process of surveying all sources of personnel, inside and outside the organization, to locate and attract the best possible candidates for new or vacated positions. The organization actively seeks candidates by advertising both internally and externally in newspapers and professional and technical publications, through search organizations, notices, and personal contacts (p. 566).

As Tracey (2004) states, the recruitment cycle is relatively straight forward. First, there is a position vacancy or new position created within an organization. As the overall goal is to hire the right person for the right position, the creation of the job description is an essential first step to the recruitment process.

## **The Job Analysis & Job Description**

First and foremost, the creation of the job description comes from a detailed job analysis. The job analysis involves managers, job incumbents, HR professionals, as well as subject matter experts to encompass all aspects of a position (Leon Rohr, 2016). Brannick, Levine and Morgeson (2007) state that, although the term work analysis is now the more inclusive term, traditionally, the analysis of team functions, work processes, and job systems is referred to as job analysis. Brannick, Levine and Morgeson (2007) further elaborate on the job analysis, describing it as a holistic process discovering and subsequently describing precisely what it is the employee is or will be doing at work. Collaborative efforts, usually between human resources and managers, involves writing a job description with the relevant job and organizational characteristics, as well as the knowledge, skills and abilities, required for the position stemming from the job analysis. Brannick, Levine and Morgeson (2007) review the two principle methods of data collection, work-oriented and worker-oriented. Work-oriented methods may consist of time-and-motion studies, functional job analysis, and task inventories. Worker-oriented methods may consist of collection through job method elements, position analysis questionnaires and cognitive task analysis. As well as hybrid methods, combining both work-oriented and worker-oriented methods, through collection methods such as task generation meetings, knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAO) meetings and analysis, and multimethod job design questionnaires (Brannick, Levine and Morgeson, 2007). As the job analysis mainly focuses on making sure the right person is hired, it also provides legal protection for the company. It is of the utmost importance that organizations are following all federal legislation such as pay equity acts and accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities act to ensure fair compensation and accessibility without discrimination.

After collection, the data from work-oriented and worker-oriented methods and job analysis, job descriptions must communicate these essential variables about the job and organization in their advertising. Necessary characteristics to communicate include elements such as, "salary, job content, opportunities of learning, flexibility and independence on the job, image of the company, 'company's area of business, growth and potential for the company and the industries in which it operates" (Rai & Kothari, 2008, p. 48). Preparing the job description and job specifications helps to identify applicants as well as identifying the appropriate pool of applicants in which segment of the labour market to look for qualified applicants (Holm, 2012, p. 244). The job description is essential as it not only describes the position but is also used to entice potential candidates to a position, and later on, to measure if candidates will fit both the position and the organization (Leon Rohr, 2016). This notion of person and the organizational fit is supported by Engstrom, Petre and Petre (2017). Engstrom, Petre and Petre (2017) find that job advertisement also signals to potential candidates what the organization and leaders' value, offering candidates the opportunity to understand the work environment and culture the candidate may be working within – and whether or not they prefer it for themselves.

Once complete, marketing the position is done through either a single or variety of mediums to reach the target audience of potential candidates. There are many methods, and mediums HR professionals may use to market for candidate recruitment. For example, traditional marketing includes television, radio and newspaper advertisements, job fairs, and pre-placement campus talks (Rai & Kothari, 2008). While traditional methods of recruitment are still in use, with the proliferation of technology, recruitment has also made its transition online, to e-recruitment.

**Job Advertisement & E-Recruitment**

As Allden and Harris (2013) state, “e-recruitment describes the process of recruiting talent online” (p. 36). While the medium has shifted from paper and in-person communication, “e-recruitment is rapidly becoming one of the fastest-growing recruitment techniques” (Holm, 2012, p. 243). Notably, the use of internet-related sources such as corporate websites, job boards, internal and external portals, and social networks such as LinkedIn are now being used for recruitment of candidates (p. 244-5). Researching the impact of e-recruitment on the recruiting process, Holm’s (2012) finds that e-recruitment slightly differs from the traditional recruitment process. The main difference is the change of sequence of tasks, as well as the fact that e-recruitment mainly centres around three significant steps: attracting, sorting, and contacting candidates (p. 253).

Rai and Kothari (2008) express how persuasive a communication tool recruitment marketing is in building both awareness and attraction in candidates. In order to move to the next stage of recruitment, processing incoming applicants, there must be a pool of candidates to choose from (Holm, 2012). Candidates must be attracted to the position apply and, after careful pre-screening and review, candidates shortlisted may be selected for an interview with the ultimate goal of being selected for the position. Attraction, therefore, is incredibly crucial so recruiters may have a large pool of qualified applicants to evaluate and select from. While the process and method of recruitment are essential, recruitment marketing may be especially powerful in attracting candidates if hiring managers and HR professionals can incorporate recruitment strategy with notable recruitment theories from Schneider (1987), Spence (1973), and Kristof (1996).

**Schneider's (1987) Attraction-Selection-Attrition Theory**

Within scholarly literature, Schneider's (1987) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework is a longstanding recruitment theory understood through a personnel psychology lens. The ASA framework highlights the reciprocal nature and interplay of individual characteristics and organizational characteristics in the recruitment and selection process. The ASA process covers the full cycle of the employment process. Attraction refers to employee recruitment and job search; the selection focuses on the organizational process in which employers select the candidates, and finally, attrition ends the cycle with employee turnover (Schneider, 1987). Thus, from the personnel psychology perspective, Schneider (1987) asserts that individuals are attracted to careers that intersect with their values and traits. The attraction aspect of the recruitment process, therefore, is instrumental in the acquisition of top talent as recruitment is a mutual interaction between both job-seekers and employers with two different objectives. Yen, Murrmann and Murrmann (2011) highlights that, from the organization, a priority of recruitment is to garner the attention of job seekers to their openings with specific information to stimulate interest in the position, and ultimately application. Using a theoretical lens such as Schneider's (1987) is beneficial. Moreover, looking through Spence's (1973) signaling theory lens allows professionals to understand how their recruitment messaging efforts may stimulate interest.

**Spence's (1973) Signaling Theory**

In recruitment, job seekers often do not have the full spectrum of information about a company available, and they make inferences on the cues present in the materials provided – making recruitment materials such as job descriptions the primary source of information (Gregory, Meade & Thompson, 2013; Spence, 1973). Spence's (1973) signaling theory states recruitment materials should nod to not only the task description, but also features such as



organizational characteristics, benefits, values, rewards, and organizational initiatives. Gregory, Meade & Thompson (2013) affirm that variables such as website and aesthetics do not have a connection or impact on the potential candidate. As such, the content of the recruitment materials is the most prominent and necessary aspect and should include as much job and organizational information as possible to attract job seekers during the early stages of recruitment – such as keywords that align with said job seekers personal and organizational characteristics. Kristof (1996) offers a theoretical framework and conceptualizations on how to elicit person-organizational fit, which may be used to signal attraction to candidates.

### **Kristof's (1996) Person-Organization Fit Theory**

Similar to Schneider's (1987) ASA framework, Kristof's (1996) person-organization fit theory reiterates the importance of the reciprocal nature between personal and organizational characteristics in the attraction process of the recruitment cycle. According to Kristof (1996), person-organization fit is defined as, "the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) between people and the organizations in which they work both" (Kristof, 1996, p. 5). Kristof conceptualizes and details person-organizational fit as a theory encompassing both person-job (job seeker characteristics) and person-organization (organizational characteristics) characteristic congruence. Person-Organization (P-O) fit, as detailed by Kristof (1996), is the supplementary fit (when a person possesses similar characteristics to the environment) and complementary fit (when a person adds to the environment) between organizational characteristics such as culture values, norms, and supplies such as financial, physical, psychological resources, as well as personal characteristics of personality, values, goals and attitudes. The conceptualization of the Person-Organization can be

seen below in Figure 1: Various Conceptualizations of person-organization Fit from Kristof (1996).

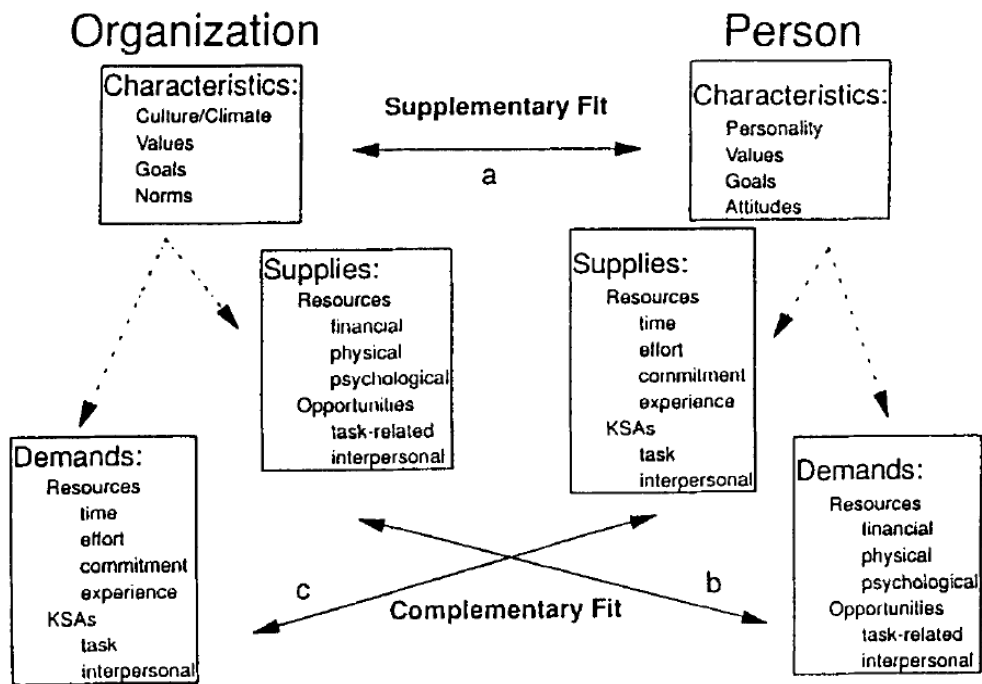


Figure 1 Conceptualizations of Person-Organization Fit (Kristof, 1996, p.4)

Roberson, Collins & Oreg (2005) note, since Kristof's (1996) original person-organization fit conceptualization in 1996, there have been additions to the theory. As Roberson, Collin & Oreg (2005) state, however, P-O fit in general refers to the compatibility between people and organizations (including organization, value, culture, work and job-specific characteristics) and create a P-O fit perception within the potential candidate, and ultimately, their attraction to the position and application (Roberson, Collins & Oreg, 2005). New Models proposed by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005), for example, provide new theories on person-environment fit (P-E) fit. Person-environment fit encompasses all types of fit between a person and certain aspects of their career through subcategories. The breakdown of P-E fit subcategories includes person-job (P-J), person-organization (P-O), person-group (P-G), and person-supervisor

(P-S). While these various subcategories are meaningful in determining fit for candidates and employees throughout the entire employment ASA life-cycle, recruitment literature primarily focuses on person-organizational fit as it encompasses both organizational and job-specific characteristics and fit perceptions of candidates (Kristof, 1996; Roberson, Collins & Oreg, 2005; Swider, Zimmerman, & Barrick, 2015; Westerman & Cyr, 2004). Moreover, P-O fit is a high predictor of job choice intentions (Cable & Judge, 1994).

Recruitment, therefore, has become increasingly important to reach target candidates. Understanding both the needs of the organization and that of the generational workforce, HR professionals should strive to hire by facilitating congruence between both the organizational and personal attributes in their recruitment content and transmitting messages to qualified job seekers using such language. Additionally, through using specific language and word choice, hiring managers and HR professionals can utilize another noteworthy theory – Spence’s (1973) signalling theory – to strategically attract candidates.

While understanding organizational attributes and characteristics of the organization may be easy for human resources professionals (especially if they are in-house), understanding the various workforce generations for strategic recruitment may be a laborious task, requiring extensive research. Presently, there are several past and present workforce generations to account for: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and of course, the most recent cohort of graduates entering the workforce, Generation Z (Bennett, Pitt & Price, 2012; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010; Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015).

### **Generational Recruitment: Dealing with Different Generations**

Generationally, each cohort of employees holds different values, dreams, morals, as well as different expectations and styles of working. In the context of recruitment, Acikgoz (2019)

identifies attributes such as these, as well as values, needs, interests and personality characteristics of a potential pool of candidates as job seeker characteristics. Throughout the generations, each cohort of workers displays specific job-seeker characteristics which have been used not only to characterize the generation but also to mark the years and give a title to classify each cohort. For example, individuals born within the same periods share specific, broad and impactful events – historical, social, familial, and economic – during developmental periods that shape their values distinct to that period that distinguish them from other generations (Twenge et al., 2010, p. 1120). Although there is some disagreement on the name and years of the generational work cohorts, scholars typically agree on the following generations: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z (Bennett, Pitt & Price, 2012; Twenge et al., 2010; Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015).

### **Traditionalists & Baby Boomers**

Firstly, the generation of workers given a specific workforce title are the Traditionalists (Bennett, Pitt, & Price, 2012). At the beginning of the 20th century, Bennett, Pitt and Price (2012) characterize the Traditionalist generation of workers by their dedication and sacrifice, deriving identity from hierarchy and positions. Following the Traditionalists, the Baby Boomer generation born in the late 1940s to the 1960s view work optimistically and as an adventure with personal gain, working without rest. Baby Boomers were affected by civil and women's rights movements and, during times of political and civil unrest, Boomers looked to their professions for long-term security and results and strived for maximum effort in all tasks for their organizations (Society of Human Resources Management, 2004; Twenge et al., 2010).

**Generation X**

Generation X, or Gen X'ers, born in the mid-1960s to late-1970s characterize work as a challenge to be achieved but not at the expense of private life (Bennett, Pitt & Price, 2012). Historically, Gen X'ers experienced economic and familial uncertainties, as parents began to divorce, and businesses began downsizing. Downsizing led to a lack of commitment to employers and, as a result, an increase in job-hopping and the beginning of work-life balance movements. Additionally, Gen X'ers experienced the introduction of some technology in the workplace, as well as the movement towards a more diverse and equitable workplace (Society of Human Resource Management, 2004; Twenge et al., 2010).

**Millennials**

Following Gen X, Millennials (also referred to as GenMe, iGen), born in in the late-1970s to the mid-1990s, began fully integrating work and life, seeking fulfillment and wanting to contribute to both (Bennett, Pitt & Price, 2012; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010). According to the Society of Human Resource Management (2004), Millennials grew up with the internet and instantaneously accessible information, making them tech-savvy, quick learners who embrace diversity and require supervision to stay on task. Notably, Millennials are regarded as “fundamentally different from any other group of young people in the last 50 years” (Bennett, Pitt & Price, 2012, p. 280) introducing more technology in the workplace, new forms of communicating, emphasis on social responsibility, and less loyalty to organizations (Deloitte, 2017). That is until Generation Z arrived – now regarded as the most connected, clever and educated generation to enter the workforce (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017, p. 809).

### **The New Workforce: Gen Z Generational Differences and Organizational-Fit Preferences**

Born between 1995 and 2004, Generation Z is the newest generation to begin entering the workforce (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Deloitte, 2017; Deloitte, 2018; Muller, 2015; Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017). Similar to that of the previous workforce generations, Generation Z has their own unique job-seeker and organizational characteristics that uniquely distinguish the generation and their workforce habits.

#### **Job Seeker Characteristics of Gen Z**

Interestingly, as some of Gen Z are the children of Millennials born in the mid-'90s to 2000, Gen Z's possess similar values to their parents such as responsibility, thoughtfulness, and determination (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). As well as valuing development and diversity, explicitly citing tolerance, openness, and respecting different ideas and ways of thinking (Deloitte, 2018, p. 10; Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017, p. 807-810). Similar to millennials, Gen Z's are technological, global, and social; however, they are heavily influenced by social media and brands (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017, p. 809). Interestingly, when surveying Millennials and Generation Z's on their outlook towards the future, Deloitte (2018) found that Gen Z are more optimistic about the economic future with half of the respondents predicting they will be better off financially than their parents, and 43% expecting to be happier than their parents (p. 14-15).

Nonetheless, although Gen Z excels in many areas, there are specific markers for each generation that also detail their pitfalls. Surveying Gen Z's about work and the workplace in the articles, "Generation Z Enters the Workforce" (2017) and the *2018 Deloitte Millennial Survey* (2108), Deloitte discovers that there are several areas in which Gen Z's perceive they have shortfalls: problem-solving, critical thinking and communication. For example, 92% of Gen Z's

cited the generational gap technology created in their lives, with 37% expressing concern that technology is weakening their interpersonal relationships and ability to develop people skills (Deloitte, 2017). Scholars Kick, Contacos-Sawyer and Thomas (2015) echo Deloitte's (2017; 2018) findings, emphasizing Gen Z's interpersonal communication shortfalls in establishing relationships between employees and supervisors. These shortfalls are imperative to know about the generation, as they present possible threats and challenges for the future of the workplace. When surveyed, 92% of human resources (HR) professionals believe that emotional and social skills are increasingly important – an area Gen Z's struggle with the most (Deloitte, 2017, p. 4; Kick, Contacos-Sawyer & Thomas, 2015). The communication issues threaten tacit knowledge – information about processes, customers and culture – that is passed down through each generation of workers (Deloitte, 2017). Gen Z's communications, if unresolved, threaten the passing of tacit knowledge on as the baby boomers and Gen X'ers retire (p. 5). Along with tacit knowledge, successful relationship building, in-person collaboration, leadership development and more are at risk because relationship formation occurs through context, observation, and socialization – not through independently working online (Deloitte, 2017, p. 5-7; Kick, Contacos-Sawyer & Thomas, 2015).

### **Organizational Characteristics of Gen Z**

It is important to note that Generation Z is still growing and changing, but similar to their job seeker characteristics, there are essential job and organizational characteristics Gen Z's look for. In the context of recruitment, Acikgoz (2019) states job and organizational characteristics are the specific attributes about the job, such as benefits, work environment, location, size, and image, which are instrumental attributes likely to attract and influence a potential candidate to apply for a position (p. 5). In addition to job seeker characteristics of Generation Z, the Deloitte

(2017 & 2018) surveys publish the job and organizational characteristics that top the Gen Z's wish list when actively seeking employment. Asking participants to rank job and organizational attributes from most to least significant when considering working at an organization, the question yields the following top 4 answers: positive workplace culture (57%), financial rewards/benefits (51%), flexibility (44%), and the opportunities for continuous learning (44%) (Deloitte, 2018, p. 18) - representing Gen Z's organizational characteristics.

Each organizational characteristic Generation Z listed was not only ranked but described to account for the specific aspects they are looking for in an organization. Gen Z's consider a positive workplace culture to consist of openness and transparency, open conversations regarding good and bad business news, diversity, inclusion, and generally communicating with entry-level employees (Deloitte, 2017). In terms of human resource core functions, there is some overlap between each of the organizational characteristics. For example, providing employees with financial rewards/benefits, flexibility and continuous learning opportunities helps to foster a positive workplace culture. While each of these characteristics does work together to create a positive workplace, they also fall under two other core functions of human resources, compensation and training and development. Both financial rewards/benefits and flexibility are elements within the compensation core function of human resources. In terms of financial rewards or benefits, these consist of purely monetary value such as pay or bonuses while flexibility may include programs such as paid time off, family leave, as well as flex work times rather than rigid hours for healthier and satisfying work hours (Deloitte, 2017; Deloitte, 2018).

Finally, training and development is the core function that houses continuous learning opportunities. Comprising both informal and formal development practices, Gen Z's are looking for opportunities to hone their skills. For a Gen Z, informal learning is achieved through



observation and socialization, a process known as passing on tacit knowledge where, “specific information about process or customers (along with... culture), is usually passed down within organizations through decades of in-person collaboration and communication (Deloitte, 2018, p. 18). Formally, Gen Z’s want soft-skill development through mixed modalities such as gamification and simulations in the onboarding process and access to learning assets when the need (p. 13). These personal and organizational intergenerational differences, while in some instances slight, are all essential for HR professionals to understand how Gen Z’s characteristics fit to, therefore, use with recruitment marketing strategies.

### **Aligning Generation Z’s Person and Organizational Fit Characteristics**

Between Gen Z's personal and organizational characteristics, there is alignment between what Gen Z's value and what they are looking for from the organizations where they wish to work. Analyzing job and organizational characteristics against job seeker characteristics of Gen Z's, there is alignment as seen in workplace cultures that support flexibility and well-being of employees, employers who provide formal and informal development both personally and professionally, and compensation as they expect to be more economically sound than their parents (Deloitte, 2018, p. 25-28; Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017, p. 807-810). Noting the parallel alignment between job seeker characteristics and job and organizational characteristics, the needs, expectations, values and interests of Gen Z are identified. This identification helps companies to become well-equipped in meeting those expectations, furthermore, attracting and retaining the best candidates (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017). Deloitte's (2018) four identified organizational characteristics of positive workplace culture, financial rewards/benefits, flexibility, and continuous learning opportunities, provides HR professionals with critical generational workforce insights to inform content for strategic

recruitment marketing communications. The generational insights into both job seeker and organizational characteristics can allow recruiters to use language strategically in their recruitment practices. If used, HR professionals may facilitate the first step of Schneider's (1987) ASA framework - attract young talent – through using Kristof's (1996) person-organization fit and using Spence's (1973) signaling through Gen Z's preferred medium - online Recruitment marketing.

### **Recruiting the New Workforce: Signaling P-O Fit and Attracting Gen Z's Online**

Traditionally, the talent acquisition process consisted of paper-copy resumes, advertisements, campus-visits, job fairs and employment agencies to influence the number and types of applicants to apply for a position (Acikgoz, 2019, p.2). While many of these activities still exist, many hiring processes have shifted to online channels also known as online or e-recruitment, within the last two decades, establishing practices such as company websites, job boards, and social networking sites (p. 2) - the method preferred by Gen Z's. Once HR professionals understand the needs of their target candidates, they can craft messages to attract the new workforce, Gen Z, directly. When marketing recruitment to Gen Z, it is essential to know what information resonates with the audience to craft messages that directly fit their interest (Hawlk, 2017). Citing Barber (1998), Roberson, Collins and Oreg (2005) state there is some evidence that applicants' perceptions of job and organizational attributes have positive effects on applicants. Consequently, the initial phase of recruitment is essential. With the identification of Gen Z's job seeker characteristics (culture, compensation and training and development) and organizational characteristics (positive workplace culture, financial rewards/benefits, flexibility, and opportunities for continuous learning), HR professionals can

integrate this specific terminology in recruitment marketing to influence Gen Z's to application intentions to fill vacant positions.

Therefore, using job seeker and organizational characteristics as outlined by Deloitte (2017; 2018), the congruence of Gen Z's job seeker and organizational characteristics provide terminology for key messaging. In turn, key language can be used strategically to foster person-organizational fit perceptions in Gen Z's in recruitment marketing materials, both old and new. Thus, using specific messaging to attract through person-organization fit signaling has immense importance in Gen Z job descriptions. Signaling the attention of Generation Z's, hybrid approaches as mentioned by Liu, Keeling & Papamichhail (2016) with the inclusion of job-seeker, job and organizational characteristics provided by the target audience present new, strategic potentials for employers worth exploring and calls to question, are employers doing this in their Gen Z recruitment advertisements? This question provides the basis for this Major Research Project and the following research questions.

### **Research Questions**

The proliferation of technology and Generation Z into the workforce provides both opportunities and challenges for human resource professionals. Consequently, this MRP focuses on the primary and secondary research questions:

***RQ1.** Do employers' online recruitment marketing communications rhetorically address person-organization fit characteristics to attract the new, Generation Z workforce?*

***RQ2.** If person-organization fit characteristics are addressed, how frequently is each characteristic being communicated within the online recruitment job advertisements?*

### **Research Methodology**

This MRP, therefore, investigates whether employers are adapting their recruitment communications to attract Gen Z talent to their organizations. Theoretically, this MRP will use person-organization fit (P-O) theory and terminology outlined by Kristof (1996), as well as the job seeker and organizational characteristics of Generation Z, outlined by Deloitte (2017; 2018). This MRP uses the P-O fit perceptions framework as it encompasses general compatibility between personal and organizational characteristics rather than person-environment (P-E) fit. As stated, the person-environment fit (P-E fit) proposed by Kristof-Brown (2005) is too broad in scope. Additionally, P-E fit focuses on the entirety of the ASA framework rather than focusing on recruitment (Roberson, Collins & Oreg, 2005). Whereas P-O fit has been used in several pieces of literature to encompass both job seeker and organizational characteristics in various studies (Kristof, 1996; Roberson, Collins & Oreg, 2005; Swider, Zimmerman, & Barrick, 2015; Westerman & Cyr, 2004) and, notably, is a high predictor of job choice intentions (Cable & Judge, 1994). In terms of methodology, this MRP seeks to answer the primary and secondary research questions through a quantitative content analysis of employers' recruitment marketing in the form of online job descriptions. Through a quantitative frequency count of P-O terminology, this MP questions whether employers are addressing the needs of Gen Z's in their recruitment marketing communications to draw in talent.

### **Data Collection: The Job Description**

In terms of data collection and samples, various recruitment marketing materials make viable data samples to use in determining whether employers and organizations are rhetorically addressing person-organization fit for Gen Z recruitment. As RQ1 suggests, the scope of recruitment marketing materials must be online, thereby eliminating options such as on-campus

recruitment talks and sessions, radio and television advertisements, and job fairs. It does, however, include a broad scope of options such as company websites, search engine optimization, campaigns and social media marketing on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook – many of which are successful methods according to WebFX Digital marketing (2019). As highlighted by Gregory, Meade & Thompson (2013), marketing materials such as job descriptions are not only a primary source for job and organizational information, they are an excellent source to collect information about an organization as a whole. Job Descriptions provide cues as to whether or not a candidate may be attracted to such a position. Appropriately, online recruitment job posting sites such as Monster, Workopolis, Jobpostings.ca, LinkedIn and Indeed offers an abundance of job descriptions in one location, as well as the opportunity for employers to utilize paid promotions and search engine optimization within the search engine itself (WebFX, 2019). These job sites are capable of generating a large pool of candidates, a higher chance of visibility by candidates, and ultimately, a greater pool of job descriptions available for collection. Ergo, when selecting which job site to pull job descriptions, Indeed was selected as the source to pull from, as it's ranked as the number 1 job site worldwide (Indeed, 2019).

Fifty random samples of job descriptions are manually collected from the online job site Indeed beginning Monday, May 13th, 2019 and ending Friday, May 24th, 2019. In terms of sample specifications, the job samples are from any industry and may be public, private and non-profit, advertising in Toronto for consistency. The type of work includes all durations such as full-time, contract, part-time and temporary. Positions will not include management or supervisory roles. The search will use terms such as entry-level, junior, associate, assistant,

developer, consultant new graduate, and future graduate, as higher-level positions such as manager and senior will are not targeting entry-level workers, such as Gen Z's..

### **Research Measures: Extending Deloitte's Survey**

As previously stated, the P-O terminology is sourced from Deloitte's (2017; 2018) study, involving a combination of the top-four identified organizational characteristics, representing (P-O fit) including positive workplace culture, financial rewards/benefits, flexibility and learning opportunities, which run parallel with the core functions of culture, compensation and training and development and their job seeker characteristics the generation described (p. 25). Deloitte's (2018) job seeker and organizational characteristics construct the foundation of the codebook, coding for the distributional structure (the number or frequency) of the characteristics in online and primary recruitment texts in the form of job descriptions (Davis & Lachlan, 2017, p. 421). Additionally, Tracey's (2004) definitions from *The Human Resource Glossary: The Complete Desk Reference for HR Executives, Managers, and Practitioners* is used to not only understand the characteristics themselves but to incorporate additional characteristics that may not have been outlined by Deloitte to ensure that the categories are mutually exclusive and exhaustive when coding (2017, 2018).

#### **Code: Positive Workplace Culture**

According to Tracey (2004), workplace, or corporate culture, may be defined as "the atmosphere or environment surrounding an organization that influences and shapes the behaviour of its people and .... Interpersonal relationships within it" (p. 145). Workplace culture consists of aspects such as communication, as well as management's values, norms and leadership styles as it is typically incorporated top-down from upper management (p. 145). In addition to the norms, behaviours and values as outlined by Tracey (2004), Deloitte (2017) includes characteristics such

as openness, diversity (race, religion, education, age, disability, etc.), transparency, engagement, interaction (p. 12-13), as well as positive nature (Deloitte, 2018, p. 13).

### ***Sub-codes***

Based on the definitions from Tracey (2004) *The Human Resource Glossary: The Complete Desk Reference for HR Executives, Managers, and Practitioners* and Deloitte (2017; 2018), the sub-codes created include the following: Inclusive/ Diverse/ Equitable, Engaging, Open/ Transparent, Collaboration/ Teamwork/ Community, Communication (with team/ management), (Positive) culture, Passion/ Recognition/ Make a Difference, Atmosphere/ Attitudes in Environment, Values, Awards/ Referral of Organization, Reference Without Specific Term.

### **Code: Financial Rewards/Benefits**

While the Deloitte (2018) study found that Gen Z's primarily focus on the financial aspect of financial rewards and benefits such as a high or competitive salary (p. 18), it is essential to note that benefits and rewards are not only different but involve many aspects within a company's compensation structure. Benefits are considered "economic goods" that are given in addition to base pay (Tracey, 2004, p. 63). Benefits can vary depending on the organization, but may include and aren't limited to bonuses, stock ownership plans, pensions, insurance, tuition assistance, paid vacation and holidays, health and dental benefits, as well as fringe benefits such as rest periods, product reimbursements and discounts, savings plans and more (p. 63). Rewards, however, are typically a form of compensation for something done by an individual or group, such as recognition for performance, including bonuses, stipends or honorariums (p. 528).

***Sub-codes***

Based on the definitions from Tracey (2004) *The Human Resource Glossary: The Complete Desk Reference for HR Executives, Managers, and Practitioners* and Deloitte (2017; 2018), the sub-codes created include the following: Base Pay (specified), Base Pay (unspecified), Bonuses, Performance Pay, Incentive Plans, Commission, Profit Sharing, Fringe Benefits (i.e. Reimbursement, Parking, Gym Memberships, Discounts, Health and Wellness Activities), Stock-Ownership, Competitive Pay, Company Savings Plan, Employer Matching, RRSP, Benefits (i.e. Health, Dental), Vacation, and Reference without specific key term.

**Code: Flexibility**

While still falling under the compensation function of HR, and sometimes considered a form of benefit, flexibility also has its considerations and may be delineated through specific characteristics. Deloitte (2017) states that flexibility can be found within optional employee hours and locations, as well as through various programs such as paid time off, family leave (p. 20). Flexibility is considered to be optional scheduling or work locations giving employees the ability to balance work-life responsibilities through structures like flexitime or schedules, homeworker options, job sharing, work sharing, compressed workweeks and flex work locations (Tracey, 2004, p. 265). Overall, it consists of the options of where and when employees work (Deloitte, 2018, p. 20).

***Sub-codes***

Based on the definitions from Tracey (2004) *The Human Resource Glossary: The Complete Desk Reference for HR Executives, Managers, and Practitioners* and Deloitte (2017; 2018), the sub-codes created includes the following: Paid Time Off (Not Vacation time), Family



Leave, Optional Work Locations, Flexitime/ Flexible Schedules, Work-Life Balance, Company-Specific Holidays, and Reference without Specific Key Term.

### **Code: Continuous Learning Opportunities**

While Deloitte uses the term "opportunities for continuous learning," the study is referring to training and development. Development activities are designed or offered to create change in the on-the-job behaviour and performance of an employee not only to attain company objectives but to develop employee potential for career advancement (Tracey, 2004, p. 181). Training, specifically, is all of the learning experiences planned to provide those individuals with the knowledge, skills and abilities to attain personal and professional goals and growth (p. 677). Moreover, Marsick (1987) as quoted by (Nbeet, 1994) details that workplace learning is “the way in which individuals or groups acquire, interpret, reorganise, change or assimilate a related cluster of information, skills and feelings. It is also primary to the way in which people construct meaning in their personal and shared organisational lives” (p. 4).

Moreover, Deloitte (2017; 2018) offers a wide range of experiences that can aid with training and development such as apprenticeships, formal and informal training, honing skills, onboarding, observations, coaching, shadowing, mentorship, open conversation sessions and rotational job positions, on the job training (2017, p. 5-13). Training and development activities may be formal or informal, led either in house by employers, outsourced from third parties, or facilitated out-of-house by training or academic institutions.

### ***Sub-codes***

Based on the definitions from Tracey (2004) ) *The Human Resource Glossary: The Complete Desk Reference for HR Executives, Managers, and Practitioners* and Deloitte (2017; 2018), the sub-codes created includes the following: On-The-Job Training/ Experience,

Onboarding, Hone/ Build Skills, Mentorship/ Shadowing Management, Continuous Training/ Learning Development Programs, Apprenticeship, Classes (internal/ external), Personal/ Professional Growth (Eager/ Encouraged to learn/ New Challenges/ Growth), and, Reference Without Specific Key Term.

### **Coding Application**

Using these codes and sub-codes based on Deloitte's (2017, 2018) findings and descriptions and extended to Tracey's (2004) definitions for categorically exhaustive code characteristics, the job descriptions (see Appendix A) will be manually applied against the coding structure to see whether or not organizations are meeting the needs of Gen Z in their online recruitment marketing communications (p. 225). For each code, there will be 1 point applied to gather the cumulative frequency of each sub-code and code as a whole to yield quantitative results (see Appendix B). The study is essentially an extension of the work Deloitte has done, taking it a step further, seeking to answer the question of whether or not this information is being applied to strategic recruitment communications to recruit Gen Z talent effectively.

## **Research Findings**

### **Research Question 1**

***RQ1.** Do employers' online recruitment marketing communications rhetorically address person-organization fit characteristics to attract the new, Generation Z workforce?*

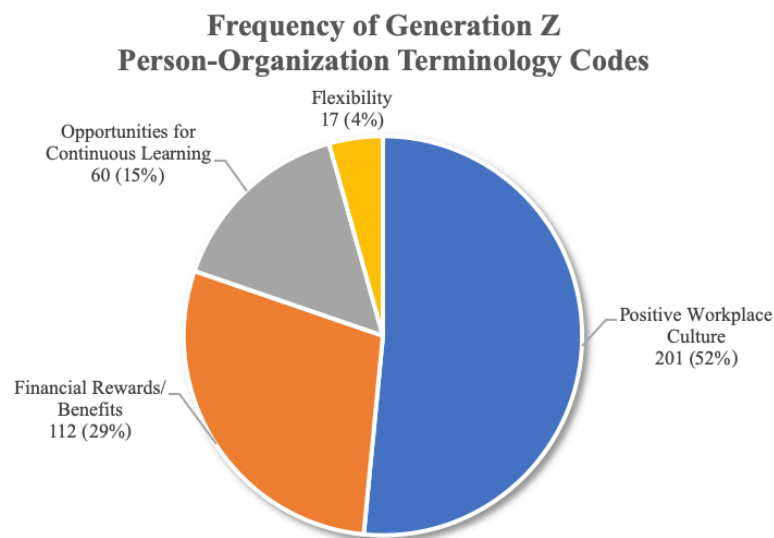
After applying the deductive coding structure, within the fifty job descriptions, the quantitative frequencies demonstrate that person-organizational characteristics are present in employers' online recruitment communications. Ultimately, employers are, in fact, rhetorically addressing each of the four categories deemed vital to Generation Z. In total, there were 390 manually coded frequencies of the person-organizational fit codes (see Appendix C) within the

fifty job descriptions. Undoubtedly, it is found that the research question (RQ) 1 is correct; employers are rhetorically addressing person-organization fit characteristics within their online recruitment marketing communications. The frequencies of the four codes, positive workplace culture, training and development, financial rewards/benefits, and flexibility), however, may be further breakdown to analyze what employers are choosing to rhetorically communicate in their recruitment marketing materials as investigated in RQ2.

### Research Question 2

***RQ2.** If person-organization fit characteristics are addressed, how frequently is each characteristic being communicated within the online recruitment job advertisements?*

Results from research question (RQ) 1 confirm that employers are, in fact, rhetorically addressing Gen Z person-organization fit in their recruitment marketing materials with 390 total frequencies. While RQ1 is a yes or no question, RQ2, however, questions the distribution of frequency of the four codes: positive workplace culture, training and development, financial rewards/benefits, and flexibility by employers (see Appendix C). As seen in Figure 2 below, the results are as follows:

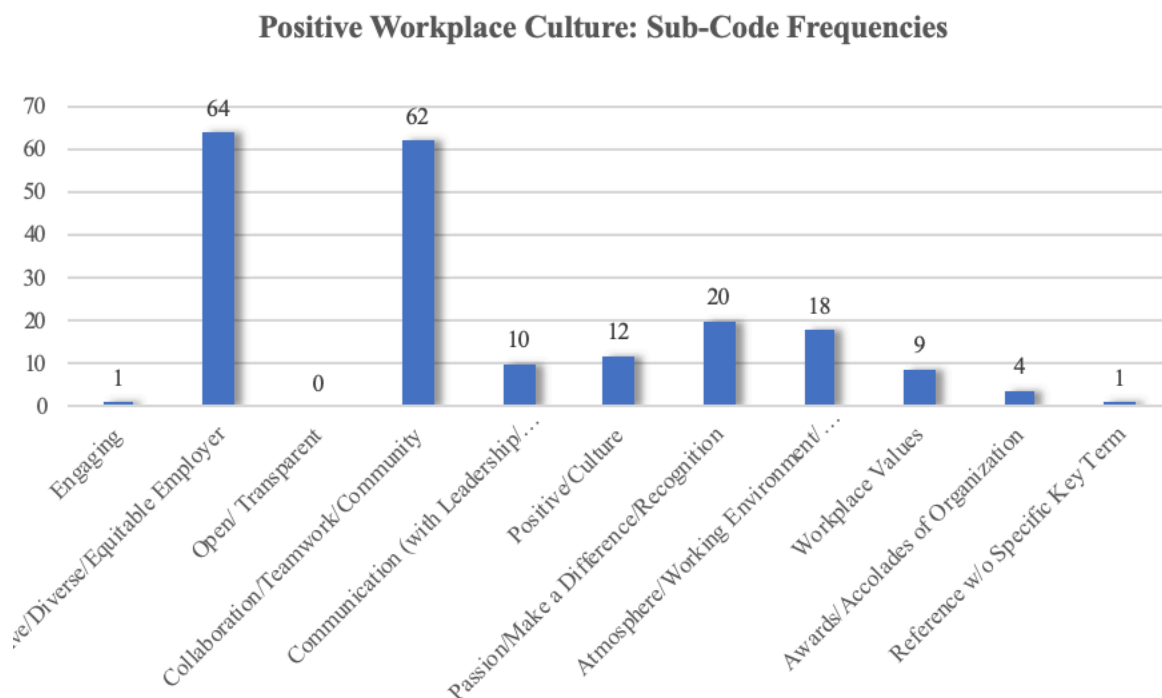


*Figure 2 Frequency of Generation Z Person-Organization Terminology Codes (Author, 2019)*

As displayed in figure 2, the frequency of each person-organization is split up between each code category. The frequency of rhetoric for each code is as follows: positive workplace culture (201), financial rewards/benefits (112), opportunities for continuous learning (60) and flexibility (17). Furthermore, each code is broken down into sub-codes, yielding further quantitative findings breakdown.

### Positive Workplace Culture Sub-Code Breakdown

When broken down, the positive workplace culture code yields the following frequencies per each sub-code:



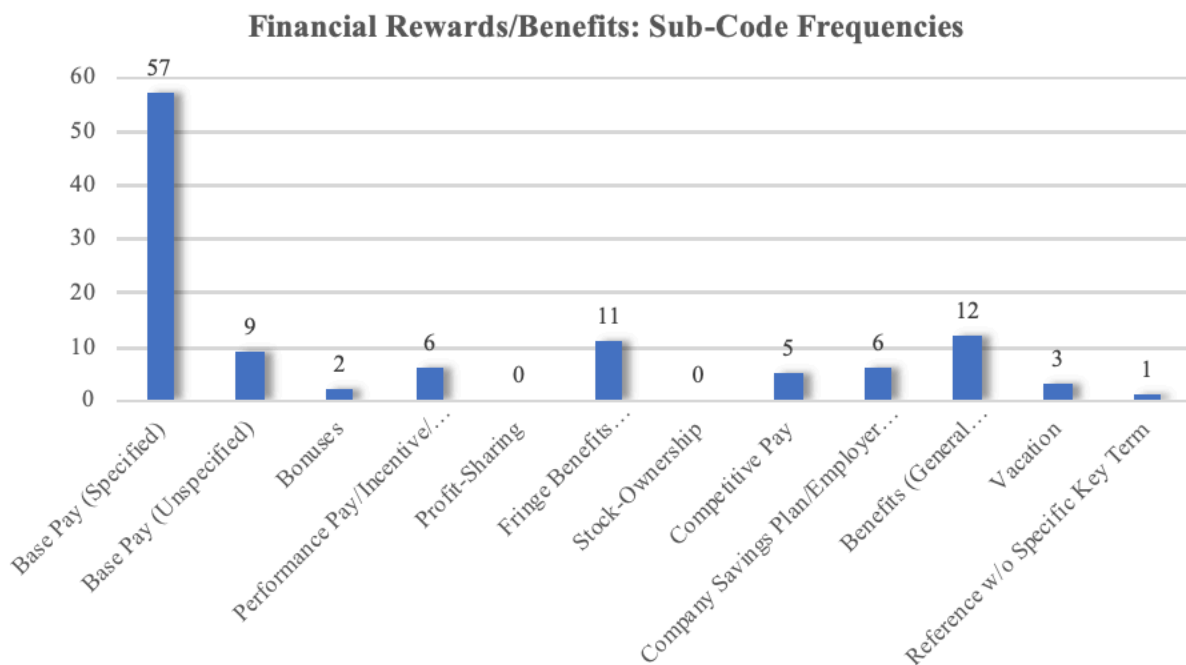
*Figure 3 Positive Workplace Culture: Sub-Code Frequencies (Author, 2019)*

The most frequently used rhetoric belongs to positive workplace culture. With 201 instances, 52% of the 390 coded frequencies were for positive workplace culture in the job descriptions. When the rhetoric is broken down (see Figure 3), the terms most frequently used to

express a positive workplace culture include terms referring to diversity like inclusive, or equitable (64 times), as well as terms relating to teamwork such as collaboration and community (62 times).

### Financial Rewards/Benefits Sub-Code Breakdown

When broken down, the financial rewards/benefits code yields the following frequencies per each sub-code:

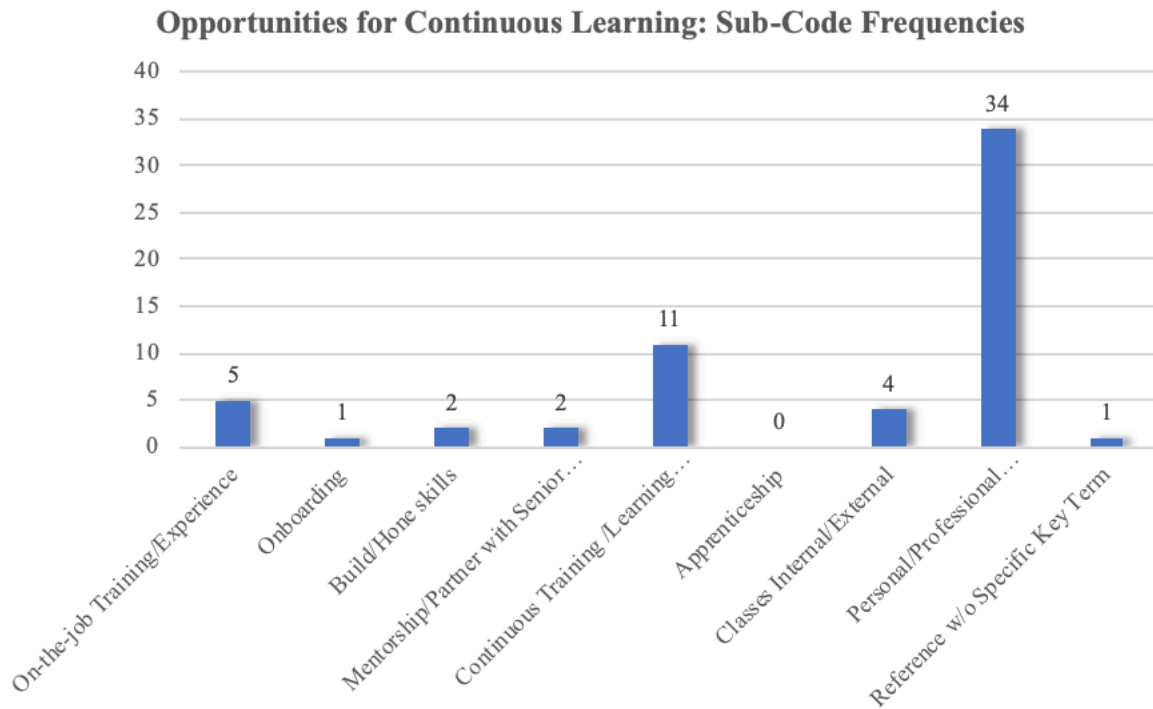


*Figure 4 Financial Rewards/Benefits: Sub-Code Frequencies (Author, 2019)*

Following positive workplace culture, employers frequently used financial rewards/benefits with 29% or 112 times within job descriptions. The rhetoric used to convey financial rewards/benefits are the actual monetary base pay (57 times), the general reference to benefits (12 times), and fringe benefits (11 times) (see Figure 4).

### Opportunities for Continuous Learning Sub-Code Breakdown

When broken down, the opportunities for continuous learning code yields the following frequencies per each sub-code:



*Figure 5 Opportunities for Continuous Learning: Sub-Code Frequencies (Author, 2019)*

The third most frequent code used is opportunities for continuous learning with 60 recorded codes, occupying 15% of the overall coded frequencies. Rhetorically, employers used key terms referring to the promotion and support of both personal and professional growth (34 times), as well as stating training or learning development programs available to candidates (11 times) (see Figure 5).

### Flexibility Sub-Code Breakdown

When broken down, the flexibility code yields the following frequencies per each sub-code:

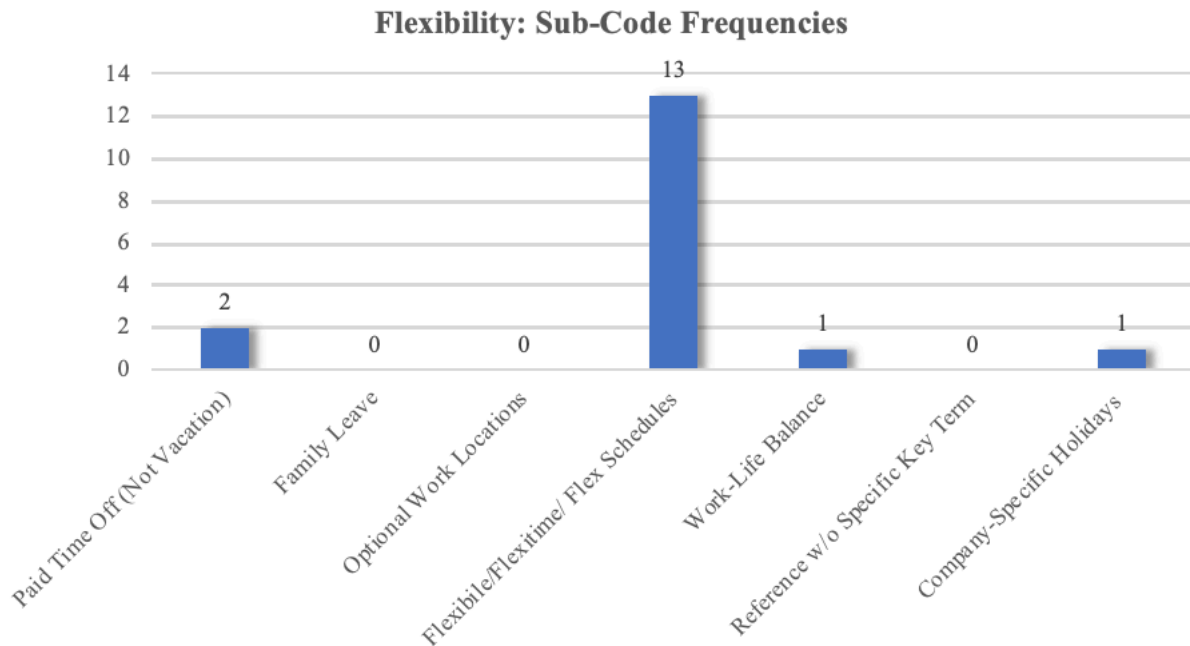


Figure 6 Flexibility: Sub-Code Frequencies (Author, 2019)

Finally, the lowest with only 4% of total frequencies is flexibility with only 17 coded instances from all 50 job descriptions. With only 17 coded frequencies, flexibility was staggeringly low compared to the three other codes. Of the 17 codes, the rhetoric surrounding flexibility consists of flexitime or flexible work schedules (13 times) and paid time off – not referring to vacation time already given (2 times) (see Figure 6).

While findings from RQ1 confirm that employers are using person-organization rhetoric in their recruitment marketing materials, RQ2 provides the breakdown of how frequently each person-organizational fit code and sub-code are present. The frequency of each code provides

compelling quantitative data for analysis and discussion in terms of what this means for both employers and Generation Z candidates concerning attracting Gen Z talent through recruitment marketing materials.

### **Discussion**

As human resources professionals gear up for the new generation, Generation Z, there is a demand for human analytics to make strategic and informed recruitment decisions. Focusing on attracting Gen Z's, this major research paper provides primary, quantitative data from two main research questions. The first research question (RQ) 1 centres on whether employers' online recruitment marketing communications rhetorically address person-organization fit characteristics to attract the new Generation Z workforce. Secondly, the research question (RQ) 2 inquires how frequently each characteristic is being communicated within the online recruitment job ads. While the findings of both research questions are numeric, the data derived from the MRP research provides the basis of the following analysis on how data-driven insights can inform decisions for recruitment communications. When reviewing recruitment strategies for the incoming generation, HR professionals, recruiters, and hiring managers alike may consider the following insights for tailoring their recruitment marketing communication materials.

#### **Benchmarking Recruitment Ads: Employers are on the Right Track**

Regarded globally as one of the world's top consulting and advisory firms, Deloitte is reputable for its world-class capabilities in solving complex business needs (Deloitte, 2019). As a result, Deloitte is known for their research and, generally speaking, their forecasting and insights are valuable for companies to not only benchmark against but to put into practice. In 2018, Deloitte conducted the "Deloitte Millennial Survey" (2018), surveying Millennials on their outlook on businesses - most importantly, the survey also included opinions from the incoming



workforce - Generation Z. Deloitte's (2018) survey comes at a pinnacle time in the workforce. The entry of Generation Z into the workforce represents the shifts towards strategic human resources management policies and procedures for procuring top talent to their firms (Acikgoz, 2019; Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017). Deloitte's insights, therefore, provides insights companies benefit benchmarking against for continuous adoption to new trends.

Acting as an extension of the Deloitte (2018) Millennial Survey, this MRP uses Deloitte's findings as to the basis for its methodology. The codes and sub-codes of the MRP are from Gen Z respondents rating their top four work attributes. The most valuable attribute for Gen Z's is positive workplace culture (57%). In second, following positive workplace culture, the most valuable attribute is financial rewards/benefits (51%). Tied for third is flexibility and opportunities for continuous learning (44% each) (p. 18). These attributes are the basis for both the codes and sub-codes when manually coding the fifty job descriptions, creating ease when benchmarking against Deloitte for best practices.

Once coded, RQ1 is shown with 390 total frequencies of coded rhetoric recorded in the fifty job descriptions, with RQ2 delving into how frequently each characteristic is being communicated. Based on the number of incidences of each coded attribute present, the MRP's coding characteristics may be ranked by the use of frequency. Benchmarking Deloitte's (2018) person-organization characteristics ranking against the frequency of the terms used in job descriptions from RQ1, employers hold up to the trends as follows:

*Table 1: Benchmarking Generation Z Work Characteristics Rankings. Source: Deloitte (2018) & Author (2019).*

Rank	Deloitte (2018)	Author's Findings (2019)
1	Positive Workplace Culture	Positive Workplace Culture
2	Financial Rewards/Benefits	Financial Rewards/Benefits
3	Flexibility & Continuous Learning Opportunities	Continuous Learning Opportunities
4		Flexibility

Benchmarked against Deloitte (2018), the first insight is clear - employers are on the right track with the rhetoric they are applying in their recruitment marketing materials. As a leading consulting and advisory firm, benchmarking against Deloitte's findings (2018) provides best practices organizations can use to revamp their recruitment marketing communication. In comparison to Deloitte (2018), three out of the four characteristics match the MRP findings in terms of rank and frequency. Positive culture, rated number one by Gen Z's, is the most frequent rhetoric coding found throughout the job descriptions with 201 counts. Financial rewards/benefits rated second in importance to Gen Z's, is the second most frequently used term with 112 rhetorical codes counted. Thirdly, continuous learning opportunities also matched the importance ranked by Gen Z's, used the third most in job descriptions by employers with 60 counts. The findings from Deloitte and this major research paper begin to differ, however, when it comes to flexibility. Gen Z survey respondents ranked flexibility as their third most crucial workplace characteristic – tied with continuous workplace opportunities. In the MRP findings, however, flexibility is the least frequently used characteristic in recruitment marketing materials. Flexibility is coded only 17 times throughout the fifty job descriptions. Interestingly, the Conference Board of Canada (2018) survey found that the majority (86%) of Canadian

workplaces offer flexible work arrangements for employees. In their job descriptions, however, the Conference Board of Canada also found that Canadian companies are not highlighting their movement towards flexible arrangements in their job descriptions. It is currently unclear why companies are not highlighting their movement towards flexibility especially when findings indicate employee engagement increases when they know they have greater control over how and when their work is accomplished (Conference Board of Canada, 2018).

Based on the findings from this MRP, it is theorized that employers are spending a disproportionate amount of time and content focusing on positive workplace culture and financial rewards/benefits, thereby negating other characteristics desired by Gen Z's such as flexibility and continuous learning opportunities. Interestingly, however, while flexibility rhetoric is severely underused throughout recruitment job descriptions, overwhelmingly, the results of this MRP indicate employer's recruitment rhetoric is addressing the needs of Gen Z. Based on the findings, employers are frequently using the person-organization characteristics that Gen Z's care the most about when actively job seeking.

### **Room for Recruitment Marketing Improvement**

While, yes, employers are on the right track with their recruitment marketing rhetoric for Generation Z's, there is room for improvement – particularly with increasing the frequency of flexibility rhetoric and decreasing the ambiguity in rhetoric.

#### **Increasing Frequencies of Key Words**

Of the top four characteristics identified by Gen Z's, when coded for this MRP, there is a vast difference in the frequency of each rhetoric code. In terms of distribution, positive workplace culture has 201 instances, financial rewards/benefits with 112, continuous learning

opportunities with 60, and the outlier – flexibility- with a mere 17 cases. In comparison to the other three codes, flexibility is shown to be the outlier.

Upon consideration, there may be a few reasons for the lack of representation in recruitment materials. First, under section 23(1) of the Human Rights Code, it states advertising must not infringe on upon equal treatment through the direct or indirect of classification of the prohibited grounds of discrimination (OHRC, 1990). With the movement towards more diverse and inclusive work environments, one reason for the high frequencies of positive workplace culture may be legislation. Employers are seeking to not only comply with legislation but see the value in letting candidates know they are inclusive workplaces – so much so that many job descriptions list “equal opportunity employers” on the bottom of their job descriptions. As legislation technically requires all employers to be free of discrimination, employers see the movement towards positive workplace cultures and the return on investment when creating a diverse and inclusive team, while simultaneously displaying legislative compliance. Moreover, there is no legislation stating employers must provide continuous learning opportunities and flexibility to their employees. As employers do not have to offer miscellaneous benefits, this may also be a factor in the lack of coding frequencies for continuous learning opportunities and flexibility. Similarly, compensation is implicit in regard to work; however, the nature of financial rewards and benefits is not something that employers are required to expand on in job descriptions.

At this time, it seems as though rhetoric in job descriptions mainly reflects legislative requirements. It is also possible that workplaces are not including rhetoric around attributes such as flexibility because many still do not offer the flexible work arrangements. While it is beneficial for employers to include these organizational attributes for P-O fit, the lack of

legislation may mean that employers include the bare minimum in their job descriptions, and therefore a lower frequency of key words and less fit with potential Gen Z candidates.

Second, there may be a lower frequency because employers are considering it as a part of the compensation mix – inferring it's a part of the financial rewards/benefits. According to Tracey (2004) benefits may come in the form of an “economic good” particularly with paid vacation and holidays (p. 68) flexibility is different from financial rewards/benefits in the eyes of Gen Z respondents from Deloitte's (2018) survey as Tracey (2004) differentiates flexibility primarily as the moveable work hours, locations and work types (p. 265). As Gen Z's recognize flexibility as an important work attribute on its own, recruiters should follow suit in specifically including flexibility rhetoric rather than potentially leaving it to be assumed as a part of the compensation structure within their job advertisements to ensure they're fully meeting the P-O fit of Gen Z's.

In addition to the possibility that recruiters are not differentiating between financial rewards/benefits and flexibility, the two terms fitting under the compensation structure may also be the reason that there are fewer sub-codes available for flexibility – and therefore fewer recorded instances in this MRP. When creating sub-codes for each of the significant P-O codes (positive workplace culture, financial rewards/benefits, continuous learning opportunities and flexibility), creating sub-coding based off of Deloitte (2018) and Tracey's (2004) definitions, flexibility has fewer sub-codes as, in essence, it is a sub-code in itself in compensation and even potential financial rewards/benefits. To illustrate, positive workplace culture has 11 sub-codes, continuous learning opportunities has 9, financial rewards/benefits has 12, and finally, flexibility has 7. This in itself is ultimately a limitation as there are fewer coding opportunities for flexibility in comparison to the three other codes.

While it is unproven that increasing the frequency of P-O rhetoric will increase the likelihood of stronger signalling of P-O fit, it is an assumption from this MRP that this is the case. Theoretically, this MRP suggests that higher frequencies of P-O fit terminology results in a higher ability to signal fit will be from employers. Higher fit, thereby leading to a more significant attraction – and hopefully, increasing odds of more top application and thus selected by the firm. Yen, Murrmann and Murrmann (2011) highlights that, for the organization, a priority of recruitment is to garner the attention of job seekers to their openings. Garnering interest is done with specific information to stimulate interest in the position, and ultimately application – which may be achieved through another well-known theory, Kristof's (1996) Person-Organization Fit perceptions. Increasing fit, consequently, should increase attraction to the job or company – while also simultaneously increasing employer branding, appeal in algorithms and overall employer branding. As previously discussed, employers are certainly following best practices when it comes to signalling P-O fit to attract Generation Z talent through the high rhetoric count, as seen with the high-frequency use of positive workplace culture, financial rewards/benefits, and continuous learning opportunities. However, there is still room for improvement – particularly with message specificity.

### **Room for Improvement: Decrease Ambiguity in Recruitment Rhetoric**

As employers integrate Gen Z's preferred person-organization characteristics, HR professionals should increase Gen Z-specific rhetoric in their recruitment marketing. In turn, increasing P-O fit should increase the chances of signalling suited to Gen Z's; ultimately increasing the odds that organizations acquire the best Gen Z talent. Following these best practices, employers, theoretically, should be the most effective at marketing materials to attract Gen Z talent to their firms.

*“A place where you are encouraged to stretch and grow”. “You’re open to feedback and constant improvement”. “Exposure to rewarding career advancement opportunities”. “Many opportunities for personal and professional growth”*

While these examples from the coded findings don’t clearly state it, they are all referring to the overarching code of continuous learning opportunities. This ambiguity or inference of meaning was repeatedly found throughout the job descriptions. Many of codes were conveyed through vague sayings, similar to the example above, rather than the job descriptions clearly summarizing with key terms – more implicit rather than explicit. For job seekers, ambiguity in the rhetoric of job descriptions may be a deterrent as vague sentences may be open to more interpretation rather than simply stating, “A place where you are encouraged to stretch and grow through continuous training and development opportunities offered by our organization.” While the rhetoric ambiguity is problematic because of how open it is to interpretation, the lack of clear terminology may also affect the ability for positions to signal person-organizational fit and garner attraction. Intriguingly, however, when coding, flexibility is the most explicitly used term in comparison to the other codes.

Throughout coding, there has been much ambiguity with rhetoric. It can be slightly ambiguous to not only Gen Z’s but candidates in general when determining whether or not there is alignment between personal and organizational fit. Surprisingly, despite flexibility having the fewest number of sub-codes and references, the term “flexibility” is the highest in terms of explicit use while the other codes were much more implicit. The word “flexibility” is counted 13 times in coding the fifty job descriptions. Flexibility is the only code to use the code as explicit terminology to that degree in the P-O fit rhetoric when coding job descriptions for the MRP. This

provides clear and specific rhetoric, and in turn, signalling for Gen Z's when reviewing job descriptions. Theoretically speaking, P-O fit is a congruence of the job seeker and organizational characteristics such as values, norms, culture, personality, values, goals, resources, and environment (Kristof, 1996). As stated previously, the Deloitte (2018) survey characteristics of positive workplace culture, financial rewards/benefits, continuous learning opportunities and flexibility, align with the job seeker and organizational features of Generation Z outlined in the literature review based on the generation's preference. Using job seeker and organizational characteristics as described by Deloitte (2017; 2018), the congruence of Gen Z's job seeker and organizational characteristics provides terminology for key messaging. The key messaging can be used strategically to foster person-organizational fit perceptions in Gen Z's in recruitment marketing material. Not only determining fit but signalling the fit in job descriptions is essential. Applying signaling theory (Schneider, 1987), to attract candidates, there should be increased use of P-O signals. In this case, the terminology is used to improve P-O fit within candidates to get cues about the company from materials such as job descriptions for the source of information for not only the job itself but the organization as a whole (Gregory, Meade & Thompson, 2013; Spence, 1973). When writing job descriptions, therefore, it is more beneficial for recruiters to use clear and specific rhetoric rather than ambiguous sentences that may be unclear to candidates to ensure they are adequately signaling person-organization fit and drawing as much attraction as possible from candidates.

### **Limitations**

This major research paper, like any other major research project, is subject to certain limitations that may affect the outcomes of research or discussion. From the theory and design perspective, this MRP focuses on Generation Z's, assuming that they are recent young graduates



born in the mid-'90s to 2000. Additionally, Gen Z's are active job seekers rather than passive; solely seeking entry-level positions in the workforce that do not include the supervision of other employees. While in most cases with new graduates they are seeking entry-level positions, there may be some exceptions that can vary based on past employment and career experiences. This MRP also assumes that Gen Z's are seeking positions external to the organization, rather than internal to the organization.

Moreover, the primary, quantitative research produced by this major research paper operates on the basis that Deloitte's (2018) work attributes correlate with Kristof's (1996) person-organization fit theory based on job seeker and characteristic job alignment. Currently, Deloitte's (2018) findings are not correlated with Kristof's (1996) person-organization fit theories but were chosen based on support in the literature and at the discretion of the author of this major research paper. These theoretical assumptions may have made an impact on this major research paper. Moreover, there may also be a limitation in using Kristof's (1996) person-organization fit theory rather than the newer, expanded person-environment theories (Kristof et al., 2005).

Additionally, as mentioned in the discussion, the overlap of the human resources function for coding may have impacted the coding structure, and therefore, the manual coding of the job descriptions themselves. As both financial benefits/rewards and flexibility fall under the compensation structure of human resources, there is a high chance that flexibility is considered by employers to be an added financial reward/benefit, skewing the data, making the frequency of flexibility significantly lower in results in comparison to the three other codes. Moreover, the difference in numbers of sub-codes may have attributed to a discrepancy in the frequency of each code. In terms of data collection, there are a few notable limitations. While the data collection of

fifty job descriptions was randomized, it was random based on searches using entry-level positions which may have skewed the data, as well as the impact of paid advertisements, promotions, and sponsorships from more substantial corporations impacting the placement of job advertisements on Indeed. Moreover, using solely Indeed, the online platform, as the only means of data collection may be tailored for online users. This may potentially adversely exclude some groups if the content within online recruitment communications differs from messaging released in newspapers, by employment agencies and more. In this case, it may be skewed in favour of the content to be read by those of Millennial and Gen Z generations, lacking inclusion for all ages. Finally, both the theoretical and research design and collection provide their potential limitations on this major research paper and are essential to acknowledge for transparency as well as academic credibility.

### **Opportunities for Future Research**

This major research paper, in essence, is a quantitative primary research paper. The two research questions are: RQ1 Do employers' online recruitment marketing communications rhetorically address person-organization fit characteristics to attract the new, Generation Z workforce?; and, RQ2 If person-organization fit characteristics are addressed, how frequently is each characteristic being communicated within the online recruitment job advertisements, are quantitative in nature? While there is a lot of interpretation, analysis and discussion that is drawn from the number of findings of this major research paper, a future qualitative analysis may provide additional fruitful meaning. For example, a qualitative analysis of what Generation Z's think about the use of person-organizational fit terminology in recruitment marketing as well as why recruiters are using these terms, or if they are not, why not. Moreover, whether or not Gen

Z's prefer to see more specific, explicit terminology in job descriptions rather than implicit references to overarching functions such as flexibility and positive workplace culture.

Additionally, it may be interesting to research the strength of signalling key terminology of Deloitte's keywords and the impact it has on attraction for Generation Z candidates - are employers seeing a return on investment when using specific terminology? Finally, it may be worthwhile to research whether Generation Z's are looking for this terminology in recruitment materials and how important it is to them that organizations communicate this information to them in such a pivotal stage.

### **Conclusion**

Ultimately, as Schneider (1987) wisely writes, “the people make the place” (p. 437). For strategic human resource professionals and hiring managers alike, the rhetoric in their recruitment marketing materials, supported by the findings in this MRP and scholarly support, are on the right track but has room for improvement. As Gen Z's are entering the workforce post-graduation, now is an optimal time to consider reviewing their recruitment marketing strategies (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Deloitte, 2017; Deloitte, 2018; Muller, 2015; Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017). Professionals should strive to include as much of the P-O rhetoric as possible, as frequently as possible – for all person-organization characteristics important to Generation Z talent while also ensuring they are not negating the previous workplace generations. Low-frequency terminology, such as flexibility, should have their frequencies increased throughout job descriptions. Gen Z's are looking for flexibility, and employers that do offer flexible arrangements benefit from highlighting this in-demand characteristic.

Additionally, employers should strive to be more explicit rather than implicit in the rhetoric that they use. Generation Z's know what attributes they want in a workplace – it is

efficient and clear to state outright “positive workplace culture” rather than “values diversity and inclusivity.” Clear rhetoric provides clear signals, rather than ambiguity that is privy to the subjective interpretation of each potential candidate.

Moving forward, HR professionals, recruiters and managers reap the benefit of using specific person-organization fit terminology within their marketing rhetoric. P-O terms make it easier for not only employers but candidates to find the right career fit to foster high-engagement talent in a competitive job market for long-term organizational success through human capital resources (Barney & Wright, 1998, p. 32). The right fit of talent, after all, drives or limits the success of an organization (Acikgoz, 2019; Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017).

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## Appendix A

Label	Title
JD1	3D Visualization Graduate
JD2	Account Executive
JD3	Administrative Assistant
JD4	Administrative Business Associate
JD5	Analyst, Capital Management and Corporate Development (New Graduate)
JD6	Application Development - Junior Microsoft Programmer
JD7	Assistant Claims Adjudication
JD8	Assistant Graduate Studies
JD9	Associate Assignment Editor
JD10	Associate Merchant
JD11	Associate Producer
JD12	Associate, Treasury & Investor Relations
JD13	Avionics - Junior Mechanic CAT38
JD14	Bid Coordinator Data Entry & Researcher
JD15	Career Educator
JD16	Client Associate - RR
JD17	Criminal Law Associate
JD18	Customer Retention (Entry Level)
JD19	Data Entry Clerk
JD20	Entry Level Logistics Associate
JD21	Entry Level Marketing & Promotion Assistant
JD22	Entry Level Paralegal Associate
JD23	Entry-Level Sales Representative
JD24	Event Coordinator
JD25	Exciting Junior Investigator Position with Global Consulting Firm
JD26	General Trades Assistant
JD27	HR Research Analyst - Recent Graduate
JD28	Insurance Advisor - New Grad Wanted - Toronto
JD29	JR Design Office Coordinator
JD30	Junior Consultant, Strategy & Operations Consulting
JD31	Junior Geomatics Officer
JD32	Junior Legal Assistant
JD33	Junior Recruiter/ Resume Writer
JD34	Junior Web Application Builder
JD35	Junior Web Applidation Developer
JD36	Labour & Employment Junior Associate
JD37	Law Grad LLB Required for Downtown Toronto Law Office
JD38	Learning Specialist
JD39	Legal Assistant - Capital Markets/ Corporate Commercial (Recent Grads Apply)
JD40	Litigation Law Clerk
JD41	New Graduate Initiative - PSW
JD42	Part Time Jr. Bookkeeper
JD43	Production Coordinator
JD44	Professional Fundraiser - Entry Level
JD45	Retail Sales Assocaite - Toronto Blue Jays
JD46	Sales Associate
JD47	Sales Associate - Ladieswear - Hudsons Bay
JD48	Sales Coordinator
JD49	Service Bartender
JD50	Support Assistant (Administrative/ Clerical)

Appendix B

Overarching HR		Sub-Codes											
Function	Code (Org. Character)	JD1 JD2 JD3 JD4 JD5 JD6 JD7 JD8 JD9 JD10 JD11											
Culture	Positive workplace culture	Inclusive/ diverse/ Equitable	3		4	2	2	1		2	3	1	3
		Engaging								1			
		Open/ transparent											
		Collaboration/ Teamwork/ community	2	1	1	1	2	2		1	3		3
		Communication (with leadership/ team)								1			
		(Positive) culture		1	1						2		
		Passion/ make a difference/ recognition		2							1		1
		Atmosphere/ attitudes/ working environment								1	1		1
		Values of workplace											
		Awards/ Referrals of organization										2	
		Referring without specific key term											
Training & Development	Opportunities for Continuous Learning	On-the-job training/ experience		2									
		Onboarding											
		home/ build skills											
		mentorship/ partner with senior staff/ shadowing											
		Continuous training/ learning development programs								1			
		Apprenticeship											
		Classes (internal/external offerings)									3		
		Personal/ Professional Growth (I over eager to encouraged learn/ new challenges/ promotions)	1	2						1		2	1
		Referring without specific key term		1									
		Compensation	Flexibility	Paid time off (Not Vacation time)									
Family Leave													
Optional work locations													
Flextime/ Flex schedules				1	2				1				
Work/Life balance													
Referring without specific key term													
Company-specific Holidays													
Financial Benefit/ Rewards		Base Pay (specified)		3	3					3	2		
		Base Pay (unspecified)						1				1	
		Bonuses											
		Performance Pay/ incentive plans/ commission											
		Profit-sharing											
		Fringe benefits (reimbursement, parking, gym memberships, discounts, health and wellness activities)								1			
		Stock ownership											
		competitive pay									1	1	
		Company savings plan/ pay into / employer matchingRSP									1	1	
		Benefits (General health, dental)									1	1	
		Vacation										1	
		Referring without specific key term									1		

[illegible]

[illegible]

## Appendix C

***RQ1.** Do employers' online recruitment marketing communications rhetorically address person-organization fit characteristics to attract the new, Generation Z workforce?*

HR Function	Code	Sub-Code	Characteristic Frequency	Total Code Frequency			
Culture	Positive Workplace Culture	Inclusive/Diverse/Equitable (Equal Equity Employer)	64	201			
		Engaging	1				
		Open/ Transparent	0				
		Collaboration/Teamwork/Community	62				
		Communication (with Leadership/ Team)	10				
		Positive/Culture	12				
		Passion/Make a Difference/Recognition	20				
		Atmosphere/Working Environment/ Workplace Attitude	18				
		Workplace Values	9				
		Awards/Accolades of Organization	4				
		Reference w/o Specific Key Term	1				
Training & Development	Opportunities for Continuous Learning	On-the-job Training/Experience	5	60			
		Onboarding	1				
		Build/Hone skills	2				
		Mentorship/Partner with Senior Staff/Shadowing	2				
		Continuous Training /Learning Development Programs	11				
		Apprenticeship	0				
		Classes Internal/External	4				
		Personal/Professional Growth/Encouraged to Learn/New challenges/Promotions	34				
		Reference w/o Specific Key Term	1				
		Compensation	Flexibility		Paid Time Off (Not Vacation)	2	17
					Family Leave	0	
Optional Work Locations	0						
Flexible/Flexitime/ Flex Schedules	13						
Work-Life Balance	1						
Reference w/o Specific Key Term	0						
Company-Specific Holidays	1						
Financial Rewards/Benefits	Base Pay (Specified)		57	112			
	Base Pay (Unspecified)		9				
	Bonuses		2				
	Performance Pay/Incentive/ Commission		6				
	Profit-Sharing		0				
	Fringe Benefits (Parking/Memberships/Discounts/Activities)	11					
	Stock-Ownership	0					
	Competitive Pay	5					
	Company Savings Plan/Employer Matching	6					
	Benefits (General Health/Dental/Vision)	12					
	Vacation	3					
	Reference w/o Specific Key Term	1					
					Cumulative Frequency of all Person-Organizational Characteristics:	390	

**RQ2.** *If person-organizational fit characteristics are addressed, how frequently is each characteristic being communicated within the online recruitment job advertisements?*

HR Function	Code	Sub-Code	Characteristic Frequency	Sub-Code frequency %	Total Code Frequency	Total Code Frequency %	Final Ranking		
Culture	Positive Workplace Culture	Engaging	1	0%	201	52%	1		
		Inclusive/Diverse/Equitable Employer	64	32%					
		Open/ Transparent	0	0%					
		Collaboration/Teamwork/Community	62	31%					
		Communication (with Leadership/ Team)	10	5%					
		Positive/Culture	12	6%					
		Passion/Make a Difference/Recognition	20	10%					
		Atmosphere/Working Environment/ Workplace Attitude	18	9%					
		Workplace Values	9	4%					
		Awards/Accolades of Organization	4	2%					
		Reference w/o Specific Key Term	1	0%					
Training & Development	Opportunities for Continuous Learning	On-the-job Training/Experience	5	8%	60	15%	3		
		Onboarding	1	2%					
		Build/Hone skills	2	3%					
		Mentorship/Partner with Senior Staff/Shadowing	2	3%					
		Continuous Training /Learning Development Programs	11	18%					
		Apprenticeship	0	0%					
		Classes Internal/External	4	7%					
		Personal/Professional Growth/Encouraged to Learn/New challenges/Promotions	34	57%					
		Reference w/o Specific Key Term	1	2%					
		Compensation	Flexibility	Paid Time Off (Not Vacation)	2	12%	17	4%	4
				Family Leave	0	0%			
Optional Work Locations	0			0%					
Flexible/Flexitime/ Flex Schedules	13			76%					
Work-Life Balance	1			6%					
Reference w/o Specific Key Term	0			0%					
Company-Specific Holidays	1			6%					
Financial	Rewards/Benefits		Base Pay (Specified)	57	51%	112	29%	2	
			Base Pay (Unspecified)	9	8%				
			Bonuses	2	2%				
			Performance Pay/Incentive/ Commission	6	5%				
		Profit-Sharing	0	0%					
		Fringe Benefits (Parking/Memberships/Discounts/Activities)	11	10%					
		Stock-Ownership	0	0%					
		Competitive Pay	5	4%					
		Company Savings Plan/Employer Matching	6	5%					
		Benefits (General Health/Dental/Vision)	12	11%					
		Vacation	3	3%					
Reference w/o Specific Key Term	1	1%							
			Cumulative Frequency of all Person-Organizational Characteristics:		390				