

# Exploring Work-Life Balance Practices in Formal Policies of Polish Companies: Meeting Generation Z expectations in the Labor Market

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**Abstract:** *This study explores work-life balance practices as formalized in employee policies of companies operating in Lodz region and alignment of those policies with the expectations of Gen Z recruits.*

*The study was conducted using data from 37 companies. The data was collected through both interviews with company representatives during a Job Fair on October 23rd, 2025 organized by the University of Lodz at the Faculty of Management, and from the participating companies' websites.*

*Study results indicate that a growing number of employers recognize the need to ensure work-life balance, such as flexible working hours, flexible work arrangements, and access to remote work. Among the surveyed companies, remote and hybrid work proved to be the most popular work-life balance practices, while traditional benefits such as training, international projects and career development opportunities, remain the most popular within the Lodz region labor market.*

**Keywords:** *Work-Life Balance (WLB), Generation Z (Gen Z), Remote Work, Flexible Work, Hybrid Work, Labor Market.*

## 1. Introduction

An individual's decision to apply for or accept a job is influenced by many factors, and these factors vary depending on personal priorities and generational preferences. For Generation Z (Gen Z), currently the youngest generation in the labor market, flexible work arrangements, remote work options, and policies supporting personal well-being, have become decisive factors in job selection.

Work-life balance has ceased to be a secondary issue and has become a primary factor influencing job choices. The shift in work organization toward remote work is blurring the lines between work and personal life, which has intensified the need for enhanced work-life balance strategies.

## 2. Factors Motivating applicants to accept an Employment Offer

Several factors influence an individual's decision to apply for or accept a job offer. These motivators vary depending on personal priorities, industry standards, and generational preferences. The most common motivators include:

- **Compensation and benefits** - Competitive salaries, bonuses, and benefits, such as health insurance and retirement plans remain fundamental considerations for job seekers. According to a survey by Glassdoor, 67 percent of employees consider salary and benefits as the top determinant when evaluating job opportunities [4].

- **Career development and growth opportunities** - Employees seek positions that provide training, career advancement opportunities, and skill enhancement. Companies that offer structured development programs and internal promotion opportunities have a competitive edge in talent acquisition [12].
- **Job security** - Economic uncertainty, particularly during periods of crisis, makes job security a crucial factor. Employees prefer employers that are financially stable with long-term growth prospects [13].
- **Workplace culture and organizational values** - A positive work environment, strong leadership, and alignment between personal and company values contribute significantly to job satisfaction and long-term retention [8].
- **Work-life balance** - Flexible work arrangements, remote work options, and policies that support personal well-being have become key drivers in job selection, particularly in the post-pandemic workforce [3].

Kelliher et al. (2019) argue that "employees increasingly value flexible working arrangements, remote work options, and a culture that supports work-life balance as key drivers of job satisfaction" [7]. This shift is particularly visible among younger generations, such as Millennials and Gen Z, who prioritize work-life integration over traditional career advancement metrics [12]. Studies suggest that organizations that fail to address these concerns experience higher turnover rates and struggle to attract skilled employees.

The implementation of **work-life balance** policies impacts various aspects of employment, including:

- **Employee well-being** - This approach focuses on creating a workplace environment that supports employees' overall health, including physical, mental, and emotional aspects. It's a holistic strategy that goes beyond offering gym memberships or health insurance. Some organizations provide learning opportunities, mentoring programs, or even financial planning resources to support personal and professional growth [51]. Poor work-life balance contributes to stress, burnout, and mental health issues, negatively impacting job performance and retention rates [9]. In contrast, when individuals effectively manage their professional and personal commitments, they tend to feel more content in their roles.
- **Job satisfaction and engagement** - Employees who feel their work-life balance needs are met exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction and are more engaged in their roles [2].
- **Retention and turnover rates** - When employees feel overwhelmed by work demands without adequate support for personal life, they are more likely to seek employment elsewhere. Organizations that fail to offer adequate work-life balance programs experience higher turnover, as employees seek employers that support their well-being [1].
- **Loyalty** - Research indicates that a positive work-life balance leads to increased loyalty, as employees value the organization's assistance in handling personal commitments, which in turn reduces stress and enhances job satisfaction [50]. Implementing flexible work arrangements, such as remote work, and flextime can significantly boost employee loyalty. These arrangements provide employees with greater autonomy over their schedules, allowing them to manage personal responsibilities more effectively.
- **Employer attractiveness** - Companies that emphasize work-life balance in their corporate branding are more successful in attracting talent, particularly in competitive labor markets [5].
- **Productivity and performance** - Employees with better work-life balance are more productive and less likely to take unplanned absences due to stress or exhaustion [6].

In effect, work-life balance has evolved from being a secondary concern to a primary one influencing job choices of Millennials and Gen Z.

### 3. Work-life balance priorities among intergenerational employee groups

In a workplace that varies in age and gender, individual employee needs must be addressed. The report "Wellbeing Across Generations" by Wellbeing Polska, highlights significant intergenerational differences in expectations of employers regarding the well-being of organizational participants.

The report indicates that Baby Boomers (1946-1964) primarily need access to healthcare focused on chronic diseases and support during retirement. They prefer traditional (inpatient) therapy and injury prevention.

Generation X (1965-1980) values work-life balance and mental health prevention more than Baby Boomers, although, like the older generation, they prefer personal contact. They appreciate, for example, on-site wellness days. Generation Y (Millennials, 1981-1995) pay more attention to pay inequality than older employees. They want to develop personally and professionally. They use programs that help build healthy habits (both online and offline). Generation Z (~1995-2012) willingly utilizes health support linked to technology, such as mobile apps. However, as a generation that is highly susceptible to anxiety and depression, including those related to social media use, they also expect mental health support in this area.

"Employee Mental Health", another Wellbeing Polska report, explains that employees would prefer to work in organizations that respect the boundary between free time and work time. This preference was declared by 61 percent of the respondents. Implementing work-life balance practices begins with changes to daily work organization, and one of the most commonly used solutions to support work-life balance is flexitime. It allows employees to independently decide the start and end times of their workdays, making it easier to balance their personal and professional responsibilities. Furthermore, models based on interrupted work and shift work are becoming increasingly popular, especially in companies that employ parents or caregivers.

Equally important is remote work, which, as a form of flexible working, has gained immense popularity following the pandemic. Today, many companies offer it on a permanent basis or in a hybrid model. This type of solution increases employee autonomy, improves well-being, and supports employee balance.

#### 4. Research Methodology

Survey subjects were all participants in the October 2025 Job Fair sponsored by University of Lodz. This event brought together nearly 40 of the largest corporations - representing various industries, such as pharmaceutical, information technology, manufacturing, consulting, logistics and banking sectors, as well as governmental agencies operating in the Lodz region. Each company's or group's official employer pages and the interviews with their representatives at the Job Fair were used as the primary sources for the analysis.

The Job Fair attracted students and graduates seeking professional interest and career opportunities. Students and alumni had the opportunity to participate in workshops, and to learn about current job offers and labor market trends. Participation in this event offered students and graduates not only an opportunity to find an attractive job or internship, but to build a professional network and plan their careers.

#### 5. Employer well-being practice policies in Lodz region: research results

Several patterns of common work-life balance practices emerge from the interviews conducted during Job Fair and analysis of the official websites of the sampled companies and institutions [13-48].

Table I summarizes the initiatives of 10 best-practice companies in the areas of work-life balance, and flexibility at work, along with an analysis of what they mean for the future Gen Z workforce.

TABLE I: Best practice companies and their well-being initiatives

Company	Sector	Practices	Gen Z relevance
Accenture	Consulting / Tech	Fully hybrid global model; "Future of Work" policy; unlimited online learning; mental health hub. [13]	Strong autonomy and digital culture align with Gen Z expectations for flexibility and upskilling. [13]
ABB	Manufacturing / Tech	Hybrid work for white-collar staff; "ABB Way of Working" global policy; employee well-being labs. [15]	Combines industry stability with digital tools — appealing to Gen Z engineers and analysts. [15]
EY Polska	Professional Services	Global policy on flexible working; well-being & resilience training; inclusive hybrid culture. [29]	Attracts Gen Z through empowerment and strong CSR engagement. [29]
Godel Technologies Europe	IT / Software	Fully remote-first policy; flexible hours and self-managed time. [31]	Perfect alignment with Gen Z's desire for freedom, trust, and asynchronous collaboration. [31]

<b>Grant Thornton</b>	Consulting / Finance	Hybrid model, “Smart Working” guidelines; 4-day week pilot; family-friendly benefits. [33]	Innovative flexibility model highly appealing to Gen Z seeking work life harmony. [33]
<b>Nordea Bank Abp.</b>	Banking	Formal hybrid model; home-office infrastructure; “Wellbeing @ Nordea” program with work-life balance resources.	Gen Z values stability and ethical culture; hybrid finance model supports remote autonomy.
<b>Philips Polska</b>	Manufacturing / Healthcare Tech	Remote options for many roles; “Work from Anywhere” and wellness platform. [38]	Integrates health, purpose, and tech innovation — three pillars valued by Gen Z talent. [38]
<b>PwC Polska</b>	Consulting / Audit	“Hybrid by Design” structure; flexible hours; dedicated well-being days and mental-health coaching. [43]	Appeals to Gen Z values of mental wellness, purpose, and development opportunities. [43]
<b>Saint-Gobain</b>	Manufacturing / Materials	Hybrid roles; well-being and inclusion programs; “Future of Work” training. [44]	Manufacturing sector modernization shows Gen Z that traditional industries can be progressive. [44]
<b>Tate &amp; Lyle GSS</b>	Shared Services	Hybrid work policy; flexible hours; global wellness and mentoring programs. [46]	Combines international exposure with flexible schedules that Gen Z values [46]

Source: Author’s own research based on interviews with company representatives and an analysis of companies’ official websites [13-48].

**Remote and hybrid work** is widely adopted among international corporations and shared service centers (Accenture, PwC, Nordea, EY, ABB, Godel Technologies, Philips, Commerzbank, Grant Thornton). Manufacturing and logistics firms (e.g., Geberit, Saint-Gobain, Colian, Barry Callebaut) implement partial hybrid models, mainly for office-based staff.

**Flexitime** is increasingly available in contemporary labor market. Most of the companies under study allow flexible start and finish times, especially in tech and service sectors. Rigid schedules remain in manufacturing and public-sector environments.

Large multinationals and consulting firms document their **hybrid / flex policies** formally (Accenture “New Work Now”, PwC “Hybrid by Design”, EY “Better Working World”). Local firms tend to treat flexibility as a managerial decision rather than formalized policy. Where companies have large manufacturing operations (e.g., Aflofarm), on-site requirements for production roles often limit remote options.

Nearly all surveyed employers offer **well-being initiatives** emphasizing employee health: private healthcare, psychological support, gym memberships, on-site gyms, parental leave and employee assistance programs (EAPs). Mental well-being, diversity, and inclusion are increasingly part of HR strategy statements. Mental well-being, diversity, and inclusion are increasingly part of HR strategy statements.

Moreover, continuous learning, mentoring, and online upskilling are frequently integrated into well-being programs as a retention tool for younger generations. Companies have normalized hybrid setups, using them as recruitment advantages to appeal to candidates seeking autonomy and balance as a post-pandemic adaptation standard.

## 6. Conclusion: Adapting well-being practices to the needs of Gen Z recruits

Gen Z expects a wide variety of well-being practices from prospective employers: freedom to choose where and when they work; alignment of their personal values with employers’ social, environmental, and ethical missions; clear career paths and mentoring; tech support for hybrid collaboration; safe work environments and open cultures with psychological resources.

For example, consulting services (Accenture, PwC, EY, Grant Thornton) manifest their policy alignment with needs of Generation Z through highly flexible, fully hybrid, and results-based roles and well-being initiatives in HR culture. Young professionals value hybrid models in banking offered by Nordea, PKO BP,

Commerzbank, BFF, as signs of modernization and trust. Tech companies such as Godel, TRI, and Corning provide for digital-native Gen Z creative autonomy and skill growth. Only public sector institutions (WUP Łódź, ABW) are the least aligned with Gen Z flexibility expectations and need deep modernization in HR policies.

In summary, those top-ranking companies in the study had successfully inserted the Gen Z expectations into their work design. They transformed flexibility and well-being practices from basic benefits into strategic retention tools.

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