

# AGILE APPROACH IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: FOCUS ON GENERATION Y

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**Abstract:** The paper aims to provide an overview of human resource management's characteristic features in agile companies and identify the attributes preferred by Generation Y representatives in everyday work life. Detailed literature review of general agile attributes and specifics of agile HR management has shown that the phenomenon is not sufficiently examined. There is a gap in the literature research related to the agile approach applied to Generation Y. Based on a literature review and primary data analysis, the authors identified the attributes of agile organisations that correspond to Generation Y preferences in the field of working conditions. In this way, the authors have opened a discussion on the possibilities of applying the preferred agile approaches to attract Generation Y representatives, increase their work motivation and satisfaction. The paper's findings support the information base used by HR professionals and companies to ensure that factors such as flexibility, informality, continuous learning, etc. are known by managers and companies. It realises the importance of agile principles in the working environment created for Generation Y to produce a greater added value. The literary part of the paper provides an introduction to the general agile management approach, specifics of agile HR practices and indicates key factors influencing work and supporting effective cooperation with Generation Y. Key findings of the detailed literature review were applied to empirical findings of the sample of Generation Y representatives in the Czech Republic and used for discussion and recommendations. This article aims to contribute to the debate on agile management approaches with regard to Generation Y and its leadership. The paper contributes to a gap in the literature, as key findings confirm that Generation Y is open to adopting an agile approach and prefers some of the agile factors in corporate and human resource management over traditional systems.

**Keywords:** Agility, agile management, human resources, Generation Y, manager.

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## Introduction

Today, the concept of agile is increasingly associated with the success of companies. It is not only about project management but also elements of agility support success in today's dynamic business environment. The attitude to agility may vary from generation to generation. At present, Generation Y (also called as Millennials) is increasingly represented on the labour market not only among employees but also in managerial positions. The

Millennial generation has now become the largest generational cohort in the workforce. As Millennials become more prevalent in organisations and in management, there is a need to understand how these persons will manage the incoming generation of workers, how Millennials will want to be managed in the future (Crocitto & Youssef, 2003). The aim of the authors is to explore this issue concerning elements of agile management. The term 'agile' is described in Otto's Encyclopaedia

(Otto, 1888, p. 446) as nimble, adept and energetic. 'Agile' means quick, active, flexible, and responsive to change. This definition accurately captures the fundamental essence of agile project management: the ability to respond quickly to changing external environments, varying requirements, etc. An agile organisation is one that uses interactive project management methods to continuously deliver a product to a customer based on active cooperation with the team, which helps to ensure a quick response to any changes (Šochová & Kunc, 2014). The role of an HR department in an agile organisation is to facilitate and improve organisational agility and increase talent motivation, which implies changing the HR's mission and role to the more coaching and serving role of talent-professionals (Gieles & van der Meer, 2017). Although HR is one of the areas that often lags behind in agile transformation, an appropriate personnel strategy and a change in the approach to employees are critical success factors in implementing a new agile corporate culture (Šochová, 2019). Human resource organisations should encourage and reinforce self-guided work teams, a comparatively new concept and highly effective within management (Nawaz & Gomes, 2020). Changing an HR approach brings advantages: good support for the agile way of working in teams, improved employee engagement and development (Gieles & van der Meer, 2017), a more effective continuous learning environment (Dingsøyr et al., 2012) and knowledge management practices (Tenório et al., 2020), more effective talent acquisition (Nawaz & Gomes, 2020) and performance management (Šochová, 2019). The Manifesto for Agile HR Development (2017) states that the mission of human resource management is to support people engagement and personal growth; to encourage people to welcome change and adapt when needed; to help to build empowered, self-organising and collaborative teams; to nourish team's motivation and capabilities; to harness employee's different strengths and talents and to help them to build the environment they need to do a great job (Agile HR Development Manifesto, 2017).

One of the key principles of agile management is prioritising individuals and interactions over processes and tools (Manifesto for Agile Software Development, 2001). As mentioned above, the mission of HR is also to promote people's cooperation, facilitate

continuous learning and an inventive mindset. While individual care and interaction are key challenges for human resource professionals, there is also an opportunity for HR to become a driving force for organisational agility.

Human and intellectual capital is an essential source of business competitiveness (Jermář, 2012). Also, the principles of agile management welcome changing requirements and transform them into a competitive advantage for the customer (Ulrich, 2018). The synergy of both creates a winning position in the current business environment, which requires the ability to anticipate and respond quickly to emerging market opportunities.

According to Lindvall et al. (2002), the three most important factors that lead to the agile approach's successful adoption are culture, people, and communication.

The application of an agile approach depends on many factors such as the type of organisation, focus and age structure of employees. Generation Y accounts for a significant share of employees in the labour market, and the number of representatives of the younger generations is naturally growing. However, it must be taken into account that due to low birth rates over the past decades, fewer young people are set to enter the workforce in the near future – particularly in European countries. In accordance with Deloitte European Workforce Survey (2018), as of 2017, there had come to be fewer Millennials and Generation Z in the labour market than baby boomers. Therefore, if employers want to succeed in the labour market, they must respect the preferences of the younger generations. With regard to the characteristics of Generation Y (see chapter 1.3), organisations can increase their attractiveness through elements of agile management that are preferred by younger employees. A detailed literature review presented in the paper provides a comparison of traditional and agile approaches in the field of human resource management and especially management of Generation Y (from employees and managers perspective).

If the corporate culture of the organisation supports agile management, the role of the HR department is to support the selection, retention and development of those who want to operate in an agile environment and apply the elements of agility in their work.

Identification of agility approach and

preferences of Generation Y in the work environment, both in the literature and empirical results, builds an impetus for managers who work with Generation Y and confirms that elements of agility are perceived by Generation Y as important for their functioning in the environment of the organisation.

### 1. Literature Review: General Principles of Agile Management

The current changes in the labour market have led to discussions on agility and Generation Y. The rapid environment, influenced by technological changes, is forced to respond flexibly to the requirements of all stakeholders. Most of the existing research has examined agility at the organisational level of analysis and conceptualised strategic agility as the organisational ability to respond quickly to ever-changing market demand and to anticipate, initiate, and leverage change. Other previous agility studies have mainly focused on the association between agility and IT technologies. However, there is still a limited understanding of the role of human resource management within strategic agility (Ahammad et al., 2020), although the role of the HR function in promoting agility is considered as appreciable (Zheltoukhova, 2014) and demographic, i.e., generational change cannot be ignored. Companies that

have implemented an agile philosophy can leverage its benefits while attracting, retaining and developing Generation Y employees. To indicate the similarity between the elements of agile management approach and Generation Y's preferences, the paper first provides general definitions and principles of agility. Agile methodology arose in the mid-1990 years of the last century due to conventional project management, which has been criticised for bureaucracy, rigidity and inability to react flexibly to changes (Antlová, 2015). Traditional project management has existed for thousands of years. The first significant projects are often referring to the construction of the Egyptian Pyramids, constructing the Great Wall of China or Notre-Dame Cathedral in Chartres (Máchal et al., 2018). However, to succeed in the contemporary, so-called new knowledge-based, globalised, entrepreneurial, IT-driven, and innovation-oriented economy (Atkinson & Stewart, 2012), to move aggressively into the era of e-business, e-commerce, and the web, it is crucial to think and act differently. In February 2001, the world's leading experts agreed on the Manifesto for Agile Software Development as an alternative to documentation driven, heavyweight software development processes. The authors defined agile using the following values (see Tab. 1).

Tab. 1: Elements of agile development

Important elements	Less important elements
Individuals and interactions	Processes and tools
Working software	Comprehensive documentation
Customer collaboration	Contract negotiation
Responding to change	Following a plan

Source: own according to Manifesto for Agile Software Development (2001)

Agile management methods, which have been gradually entering human resources management, place great emphasis on talents and require flexibility and constant interaction of the team members. The traditional management hierarchy has been replaced by cross-functional and self-organising teams empowered with decision-making authority and focused on the dedicated project with maximum effort (Manifesto for Agile Software Development,

2001; Šochová & Kuncce, 2014). There are many benefits to using agile networks within teams instead of more structured, traditional team models: these teams are selected based on each employee's unique skill set. They can help to maximise the potential of every employee (Petrucci & Rivera, 2018).

For a further overview of the agile principles in human resources management, there are essential and fundamental differences between

**Tab. 2: Differences between the traditional and the agile approach**

Aspect	Traditional approach	Agile approach
<b>Fundamental assumptions</b>	Systems are fully specifiable and predictable	Continuous product improvement and testing based on rapid feedback and change
<b>Control</b>	Process focus	People focus
<b>Management style</b>	Command and control	Leadership and collaboration
<b>Decision-making authority</b>	Project manager/board determined by the hierarchy	Agile development teams
<b>Role assignment</b>	Individual and specialised	Self-organised with role interchangeability
<b>Knowledge management</b>	Explicit	Tacit
<b>Communication</b>	Formal	Informal
<b>Customer role</b>	Important	Critical
<b>Organisational form and structure</b>	Bureaucratic and highly formalised	Flexible, informal and participative
<b>Development model</b>	Life-cycle model	Incremental, iterative
<b>Organisation</b>	Large, mechanistic	Small, organic
<b>Quality control</b>	Heavy planning, late heavy testing	Continuous control of requirements, continuous testing
<b>Visibility</b>	High in the acceptance stage, low in the build phase	Overall project visibility is stable

Source: own processing according to Engelhardt (2019), Juricek (2014) and McElfish (2011)

conventional and agile methods depicted in Tab. 2.

Personal agility assumes self-awareness, commitment to personal growth, support of others on the path to success, etc. Agility also means openness to change, willingness to experiment, try new things and accept possible failures. The agile, results-oriented and out of the box thinking individual adapts well in new situations and is a team player (Ulrich, 2011).

### 1.1 Agile Approach in Human Resource Management

Compared to traditional human resource management, which involves comprehensive personnel work, agile HR is focused on engaging, getting feedback and adapting to key customer requirements; on breaking down large projects and initiatives into smaller, more manageable ones; on experimenting, learning from mistakes, testing pilot projects and not seeking perfection; on creation self-guided teams and completing the work in a

shorter time (Nawaz & Gomes, 2020). A great emphasis is placed on talent management. An agile way of managing the entire company and the partnership between businesses and HR is key to working with people. The higher goal is to become the employer of choice for potential job seekers. Since many employees represent Generation Y, agile HR practices must find a positive response in this group.

The creators of the Manifesto for Agile HR Development (2017) are uncovering better ways for developing an engaging workplace culture through the following values:

- collaborative networks over hierarchical structures;
- transparency over secrecy;
- adaptability over prescriptiveness;
- inspiration and engagement over management and retention;
- intrinsic motivation over extrinsic rewards;
- ambition over obligation.

Different approaches to key personnel activities are shown in Tab. 3.

Tab. 3: Differences of the traditional and the agile human resource management

Area	Traditional HR	Agile HR
<b>Responsibility for human resources</b>	Human resources department	Managers and teams
<b>Approach to learning</b>	Training as a tool to achieve a specific level of performance	The continuous learning environment, real-time workshops
<b>Approach to recruitment</b>	Staff are acquired and managed under the project plan and schedule	Continuous talent acquisition, investment in the employer's brand, focus on candidates' experience
<b>Approach to talent management</b>	Non-transparent processes owned by HR; inaccessible talent management processes	Employees take responsibility for their personal development; talent management is supported by HR
<b>Approach to employee evaluation and remuneration</b>	Annual assessment of the fulfilment of typical key performance indicators; annual bonuses	Continuous and open feedback, the system of mutual rewards and recognition, team bonuses
<b>Approach to goals</b>	Personal goals; communicated across the hierarchy	Shared values and company vision; team goals
<b>Communication</b>	Regular interaction with team members	Transparent information flow with a high level of intensity
<b>Employee motivation and engagement</b>	Provided through the standard means: rewards, punishment and recognition	Employees are motivated by their own interests and alignment with the mission
<b>Mission of the HR department</b>	HR is focused on keeping records of activities and results in the area of people management, the measure of success is the completeness of documentation	HR is focused on increasing employee engagement and promoting cooperation; the measure of success is the level of employee satisfaction, innovation and trust
<b>Value added</b>	Cost-cutting	Value for customers/inspired associates

Source: own according to Denning (2018), Huzooree and Devi Ramdoo (2015), McElfish (2011) and Šochová (2019)

Furthermore, key differences between traditional and agile HR will be presented.

First, it is essential to emphasise the planning and organisational aspects of the HR team's work to ensure a quick and flexible response to the business's needs. Human resources processes and structures should be used to create and maintain necessary skills for the company's success (Máchal et al., 2018). In an agile model, people's responsibilities and leadership shift from the HR to individual managers and possibly even to the teams themselves, depending on their maturity (Gieles & van der Meer, 2017).

An agile way of working helps continually adapt the talent acquisition process to the

constantly changing labour market (Nawaz & Gomes, 2020). Very rapid technological advances characterise the current business environment, emphasising innovation, intense competition and digitalisation. In this environment, an employee's ability to learn new things and quickly adapt to change and corporate culture become more important than a set of skills at a given moment (Šochová, 2019). Due to working in self-organising teams where learning is a continuous process, competencies are necessary. However, motivation and personal qualities are increasingly important (Gieles & van der Meer, 2017). These are very difficult to change, unlike competencies. Therefore, it is crucial to attracting employees

who have the right motivation and personal qualities and focus less on knowledge and skills. By selecting new co-workers that must entail new individual capabilities, it is essential that particular norms, values and personality characteristics are taken into account in relation to the job specification and the internal and external organisational environments (Assen, 2000). According to Deborah Henrett, Group President of Procter & Gamble (PWC, 2011), the skills needed in the workforce are going to be less about human intelligence and slightly more about the ability to handle emotions and interact with the social environment. In addition, it is necessary to find concord between the candidate's values and the organisation's vision (Hershatter & Epstein, 2017).

Interviews should be based on equality between the potential employer and the candidate. The peers are increasingly involved in interviews, emphasising how the candidate fits into the team (Šochová, 2019). Gender-neutral wording must be observed in the job advertisement. According to Kurian (2017), employers should pay close attention to the language used and what it signals: female Millennials generally respond better to nurturing, positive language as opposed to competitive connotations that entice males. There is a visible departure from an advertisement for specific positions with specific knowledge (Šochová, 2019).

The attractiveness of the organisation becomes essential for potential candidates. Talents are attracted by meaningful work (Denning, 2018). Now, the autonomy, mastery and mission of the company are important to employees (Gieles & van der Meer, 2017). The working environment, teams, work-life balance and learning are also of great relevance (Hershatter & Epstein, 2017). To evaluate job satisfaction in agile development teams, Tripp et al. (2016) collected survey data in June 2013 from 252 respondents who worked as software-development professionals in agile and non-agile companies in the USA. The survey results confirmed that agile development teams with higher levels of agile project management practices had higher perceptions of job satisfaction. In addition, the extent of use of agile project management practices positively impacts the perceived job characteristics of job autonomy and feedback (Tripp et al., 2016).

Flexibility in personnel management and a creative corporate culture support the

employees' inventive activity and continuous knowledge sharing (Tenório et al., 2020). The main format of education and development in agile companies is on-the-job training (Šochová, 2019). Training leaders at all levels of the organisation act as hands-on trainers, not as supervisors, and therefore developing programs to promote diversity in teams, present various techniques are helping to reveal individual potential and strengthen employees' capabilities (Huzooree & Devi Ramdoo, 2015; Šochová, 2019): pair-working, employee self-assessment, leadership evaluation including feedback from different interest groups, etc.

Agility is mainly dependent not only on the capabilities and competencies (to learn and evolve with change) of both managers and workers and on the interactions between the powers of the technology and the abilities of the employees working with the technology (Assen, 2000).

The employee performance appraisal also has its specifics. In a constantly changing environment, classic key performance indicators and annual bonuses lose their weight. Agile management anticipates that the targets will change several times during the year (Šochová, 2019). Goals and objectives are set in such a way that employees clearly understand the business dynamic, fully grasp the organisational vision and regularly track the organisation's progress (Huzooree & Devi Ramdoo, 2015). Another difference is the lower focus on individuals favouring teams that set their personal and professional goals leading to high-performance (Šochová, 2019). Quantitative research validates that empowering leadership style, which encourages individual thinking and self-development, and provides greater responsibility and autonomy to those being led, is positively related to team performance. The relationship between the applied project management method (traditional or agile) and team performance has not been demonstrated (Garcia & Russo, 2019). Further research shows that agile units are over 1.5 times more likely to report higher performance compared to their competitors (Denning, 2018). In contrast to the annual performance review, real-time digital feedback is emerging as an alternative feedback mechanism that can facilitate more effective communication and capitalise on the communication preferences and skills of Millennials (Petrucci & Rivera, 2018).

A career planning process is developed to help employees clarify their career aspirations, identify competency gaps and develop an improvement plan accordingly (Huzooree & Devi Ramdoo, 2015). An essential part of the process is timely and sufficient feedback, which provides employees with the assurance that they are continuing to move along a linear, progressive path (Hershatter & Epstein, 2017). A relatively new tool for valuing colleagues' achievements is the so-called kudo system of mutual rewards and recognition (Šochová, 2019).

Most traditional companies use a remuneration system that links directly to assessing whether performance is above or below project expectations, which often causes employee frustration (Huzooree & Devi Ramdoo, 2015; Šochová, 2019). The goal of HR in the agile organisation is to create a reward system that motivates people by nature and recognises the important contributions of the associates (Hershatter & Epstein, 2017). In mature agile organisations, team members distribute the reward package according to the individuals' merits (Šochová, 2019). Employees should be rewarded for the learning, thinking 'outside of the box', implementing innovations, and adaptation necessary for organisational change. Profit sharing in corporate gains also signals a team perspective and rewards employees for their efforts (Crocitto & Youssef, 2003).

Another trend in the agile world is the absence of specific jobs, or more precisely, job descriptions. Teams change over time depending on initiatives or priorities, and the leader of the initiative is the one who is willing to put energy, knowledge and enthusiasm into it (Šochová, 2019). Multi-level management and strict communication and reporting activities are being replaced by lean self-organising teams (Juricek, 2014; Manifesto for Agile Software Development, 2001).

It is worth highlighting the importance of the HR function in the social dimension of project management. Building trust, honesty, integrity, and sensitive perceptions among team members increases motivation and morale and leads to all stakeholders' personal growth (Máchal et al., 2018). According to the 13th Annual State of Agile Report by CollabNet VersionOne (2019), the benefits realised by agile companies relate to improving team morale, team productivity, and managing distributed teams. As far as the organisation is based on

self-organising teams, the servant leaders must master coaching and facilitation techniques to help employees in their professional and personal development (Šochová, 2019). The servant leadership aim is in serving employees instead of giving directives to the team. It leads from the rear, sharing work among others with reliability and faithfulness; and results in the strong relationship, leadership, and direct style of reporting, leading to higher degrees of loyalty, devotion, determination, dedication and productivity (Nawaz & Gomes, 2020). Teams must learn to communicate fast and effectively among developers, operations, support, customers, management, and business areas to make and respond to changing requirements quickly (McElfish, 2011). The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within the team is a face-to-face conversation (Manifesto for Agile Software Development, 2001). Agile HR techniques promote a culture of experimentation and an inventive mindset in the organisation (Dingsøyr et al., 2012), where knowledge are shared through close interaction between team members (Bannerman et al., 2012) or through frequent interactions and collaboration with the client (Dorairaj et al., 2012). The agile innovative environment supports the development, leveraging, and deployment of improved and renewed capabilities and competencies and helps companies outperform competitors based on speed and dexterity (Assen, 2000).

HR is continuously finding new ways on how to refine the services provided. Agile professionals are using the concept of lean and agile to prioritise their tasks and improve workflow. Embracing agile across human resource could enable the team to facilitate effective decision-making and collaborate to meet the requirements of the stakeholders in the minimum amount of time and with less bureaucracy (Nawaz & Gomes, 2020). It is worth mentioning the use of the Scrum, one of the most widespread iterative, incremental and team-based Agile Methods (Miklosik et al., 2012). It allows teams to test an idea with minimal investment and minimal functionality; thus, the losses are minimal if the concept is not feasible (Šochová, 2019). The more traditional human resources activities shift to the team's responsibility, the more time can be devoted to analysing personnel data which is essential for strategic decision-making and maintaining a

**Tab. 4: Topic of agility in management approach worldwide**

Survey title	Authors	Answer	Year	Scope	Key findings
<i>Agile Readiness Survey Results</i>	Ambler	192	2017	Global	The area of software development is considered to be the most agile; other IT areas are at different levels of readiness, showing a willingness to change; finance, marketing, purchasing and law demonstrate rather unpreparedness.
<i>13th Annual State of Agile Report</i>	CollabNet VersionOne	1,319	2019	Global	46% of respondents use agile practices to manage outsourced development projects; 40% plan to increase agile methods in outsourced development projects within 24 months. 95% of respondents reported at least some of their agile projects have been successful, with 48% reporting that most or all of the agile projects were successful.
<i>The Peculiar Features of HRM in Agile Companies</i>	Zavyalova, Lisovskaia, Alsufyev, Dominiak, Zamulin, Sokolov	149	2018	Russia	A significant difference in the use of HRM practices in agile vs. traditional companies; HR in agile companies is much less involved in hiring, selection, training and development processes; greater responsibilities for line managers in these processes; employees involved in strategy and decision-making, and promote knowledge sharing.
<i>The Business Agility Report: Raising the BAR</i>	Business Agility Institute	394	2018	Global	Top 3 agile industries: Consultancy, IT, Financial Services & Insurance; 69% of respondents are using agile practices less than three years; most organisations rate their business agility fluency low but report tangible benefits from their investment in agility: a better way of working, increasing customer and employee satisfaction, improved market performance.
<i>Agile Transformation: From Agile experiments to operating model transformation</i>	KPMG	128	2019	Global	81% started their agile transformation in the last three years. It is a strategic priority for the majority (63%) to become an agile organisation. 84% reported using either Scrum or Kanban in their organisation, where 78% uses Scrum, and 46% uses Kanban. Less than 15% of respondents agree that their employees are ready for an Agile way of working.
<i>Beyond the Hype: Global Digital Risk Survey</i>	Deloitte	166	2018–2019	Global	Only 9% of respondents said their risk management function had successfully adopted an agile culture.

Source: own according to CollabNet VersionOne (2019), Leybourn (2018), Ambler (2017), Deloitte (2019), KPMG (2019) and Zavyalova et al. (2018)



competitive position in the market (Gieles & van der Meer, 2017). The personal strategy should create working groups that focus voluntarily on a specific area and look for ways to improve it (Šochová, 2019). Kurian (2017) encourages companies to involve Millennials more in the business and provide them with a broader context of the business goal, especially by asking for their opinion on how to improve the customer experience or what products should be in the planning stages next.

Ulrich (2018), the founder of modern HR management, states that HR practices around people, performance, information, and work can be crafted to foster strategic, organisation and individual agility. When HR both advocates for and models agility, they ensure that strategies, organisations, and individuals anticipate and adapt to dynamic change as fast as the change occurs. Modern human resources face the challenge of working with a young generation of employees who have different expectations than their predecessors.

## 1.2 Agile Approach in Surveys: Secondary Data Overview

The previous chapter pointed out the specifics of personnel processes in agile companies and their benefits for working with people and achieving competitiveness in the labour market. The authors are of the opinion that knowledge of agile HR principles and preferences of Generation Y, which now form a significant part of the company's human resources and which are the focus of this paper, will allow companies to increase the attractiveness among current and potential employees. To apply best practices, people managers need to draw inspiration from quality knowledge resources. However, a literature review has shown a gap in agile HR management research in Generation Y employment. The number of studies related to the topic is limited. This paper's literature review points to insufficient attention paid to the examined phenomenon of the agile management approach concerning Generation Y, both in science and practice. However, the subject's topicality increases with a growing representation of the younger generation in the labour market. Most surveys analyse the issue from a general or ICT perspective (see Tab. 4).

The above overview of secondary data shows that research related to the agile approach mainly focuses on ICT worldwide.

According to Rozmajzl and Hovorková (2012), the results of global surveys prove that agile processes work and are accepted in practice. The situation in the Czech Republic is different: most companies do not use public methodologies, and the extent of knowledge about Agile methods is low in practice (Rozmajzl & Hovorková, 2012), although this situation has been partially improving (see Tab. 5).

As Tab. 5 shows, several surveys on agile management in the Czech Republic have already been published. So far, however, none of them has addressed the agile principles applied to Generation Y, as identified by the authors of this paper. Generation Y described in chapter 1.2 seems to be willing to accept agile attributes in the managerial approach and in the work environment. Therefore the authors pay attention to these aspects in the following part of the paper.

## 1.3 Agile Approach of Generation Y

A Generation Y is a group, which is identified by the year of birth, and this definition varies by author. Hershatter and Epstein (2017) stated that the first Millennials were born in 1982. Smith and Nichols (2015) defined the Millennials as individuals born between 1980 and 2000. They are called Millennials because of their closeness to the new millennium and being raised in a more digital age. Manpower (2016) works with the term Millennial which refers to those born between 1982 and 1996.

The percentage of Millennials in the workforce is likely to grow as baby boomers begin to retire (Valenti, 2019), although in Europe, for example, the population is ageing (Deloitte, 2018). Manpower (2016) supplemented the forecast of 35% of Millennials on the labour market in 2020 with the words of Jaroslava Rezlerová, Manpower Group's General Manager for the Czech and Slovak Republics: Most employers across the economy say they cannot find enough people with the right profile. Employers will inevitably listen much more to what current and future generations are looking for in the labour market. Companies need to be more creative and cannot afford not to be attractive to Millennials.

Each organisation strives to achieve a consistently high level of performance of its employees. There are numerous studies on what Millennials value in the workplace, but only a few studies examine the leadership

**Tab. 5: Agility in the management approach in the Czech Republic**

Survey title	Authors	Answers	Year	Key findings
<i>Agile Methods in the Czech Republic</i>	Buchalcevořová, Leitl	21 IT companies	2005–2006	Most companies do not use public methodologies and replace them with internal company standards or manage projects on an ad-hoc basis. 14% of respondents do not use any method.
<i>Survey of Agile Management in the Czech Republic</i>	Agile Association & Etnetera	171 agile companies	2013	The scope of knowledge about agile methodologies is relatively low. 43% of respondents indicate basic knowledge about agile methodologies, 19% consider their knowledge to be advanced, and 19% admitted they hear the concept of agile methodology for the very first time.
<i>Current State of Agile Methodology Worldwide and in the Czech Republic</i>	Tománek	452: Czech Republic, USA, Germany, Malaysia	2013	36% of projects in the surveyed company were managed agilely; Scrum methodology, together with Extreme programming techniques, was chosen as a suitable agile methodology.
<i>Agility approach in innovation projects</i>	Antlová	40 companies (100+ employees)	2014	Agile methodologies widely applied in the ICT and start-ups. Managers of innovative projects in automotive companies are also aware of agile management. In construction and logistics, as well as in-service providers agile approaches are used less in innovation.

Source: own processing according to Agilní Asociace & Etnetera (2013), Antlová (2015), Buchalcevořová and Leitl (2006) and Tománek (2015)

qualities most appealing to this generation (Valenti, 2019). The authors of this paper also found out that only a few studies deal with the phenomenon of agile approach about Generation Y both from Millennials' perspective as employees or managers. The literature gap and the growing importance of Generation Y have led authors to explore this issue in more details. As quoted above, employers endeavour to be attractive to younger generations. Therefore, given the growing trend of agile management and Millennials' importance in the labour market, the authors aim to find an area in which these two phenomena intersect. It is a matter of finding the attributes of agile management, which are valued and sought after by representatives of Generation Y. In the following paragraphs, the characteristics and

preferences of the Millennials will be presented.

Šikýř (2014) combines employees' willingness to work with specific requirements and in the interest of the expected results of the organisation with internal motives and external stimuli. Understanding the needs of Generation Y in the working environment may help to adequately define intrinsic and extrinsic motivators of their high work commitment; it can also help answer whether the concept of agile management of organisations is in line with the preferences of this generation. Job design tactics that increase internal motivation are related to workplace diversity and autonomy (Matošková, 2019; Foss et al., 2015). Motivation is highly likely to be effective if it is based on knowledge and understanding of the needs that encourage individuals to act.

Generation Y representatives have different priorities and expectations from employment, and if these are not met, they have no problem changing jobs in rapid succession. On the other hand, they bring many new ideas to organisations, they are flexible and purposeful, they adapt quickly, and they are not afraid of change. They perceive tasks as challenges, have a positive approach to them and look for non-standard solutions that can be a source of competitive advantage for organisations (Kubátová et al., 2013). Millennials bring with them leadership trends such as high-quality real-time feedback, agile networks of teams in most cases without formal authority, advanced people analytics, micro-learning, personalised learning, and artificial intelligence that will shape the future of organisational leadership (Petrucci & Rivera, 2018). Millennials want a coach, not a boss; they want to be connected to the purpose of the organisation; they prefer personalised content such as short videos, brief news feeds, short articles and photos (Petrucci & Rivera, 2018). The agile networks seem to be a possible solution since they allow employees to move among teams, eventually finding the one to exert the most significant influence. Notably, such a system provides the added benefit of promoting a free flow of information, breaking down information silos and strengthening the organisation as a cohesive unit (Petrucci & Rivera, 2018).

Based on the empirical data, Smith and Nichols (2015) confirmed that Millennials prefer a minimum of rules and regulations. Keeping the best of Generation Y engaged, it is recommended to give them more control over their work and the first choice on any special projects or choice assignments (Tulgan, 2011). The Millennials' need for continual change at work challenges HR professionals to devise tailor-made positions and career paths that make it possible to move from one task to another with gradually increasing demands (Kultalahti & Liisa Viitala, 2014).

Based on the phenomenological study of generational response to organisational change, Generation Y prefers face-to-face communication for messages related to organisational change. It also likes involvement in the change initiative. Millennials were described by all generations in the study (baby boomers, Generation X and Y) as accepting or adapting to change and having the mindset

of making changes and looking for personal advancement (Bourne, 2015).

Two university workshops held in the spring and autumn of 2019 in Romania resulted in a portrait of a future manager/mentor preferred by Millennials: the leader of the future is trustworthy, capable of inspiring, open-minded, empathetic and human; emotional intelligence helps them in building and developing the organisation of tomorrow, a digitalised, flexible and creative organisation, but with a people-oriented culture, promoting transparency and caring for the environment (Popescu Dogaru et al., 2019).

Generation Y appreciates flexibility in timetables and locations, working methods and other work arrangements; prefers to plan the content of the work independently and expects this freedom to be demarcated by a framework and goals; Millennials value work projects that vary are challenging and developmental but at the same time not too time-consuming (Kultalahti & Liisa Viitala, 2014). Surprisingly, young people who are just building their own life including homes, cars, and other material things, did not discuss salaries when explaining poor motivation (Kultalahti & Liisa Viitala, 2014).

The results of PWC (2011) online survey entitled "Millennials at Work, Reshaping the Workplace" reflect Millennials' attitude to work and their job expectations:

- 21% of respondents considered flexible working conditions to be an attribute of an attractive employer; only professional development and motivational evaluation were rated higher;
- the third factor (24%) deciding on the acceptance of a job offer was the content of the work; the possibility of change was important for 16% of graduates; an absolute majority of votes was given to the opportunity for personal growth (65%);
- development is associated with the desire of Millennials to work with inspiring colleagues (18%);
- training and development were identified as the most sought-after employee benefit (22%); flexible working hours came in second (19%);
- 21% of respondents would like to work from different places with a connection via technology.

According to a survey "Millennial Careers: 2020 Vision", conducted by ManpowerGroup

(2016), the Millennials claim that success at work depends rather on the right skills than on the right connections (46% vs. 28% of the Millennials surveyed). The following is a suggestion to create opportunities for Millennials to work on different projects in different teams, pointing out the ability to acquire skills and build networks without changing employers (ManpowerGroup, 2016).

Following the millennial survey conducted by Deloitte (2017), 32% of participants identify with the style that is most likely to appreciate what is tried and true and be averse to change. Given Millennials' reputations for 'thinking big' about their career aspirations and impact, this may seem counterintuitive. One possible explanation may be that early in their careers, employees are often relied upon – and rewarded for – their attention to detail and their ability to follow a structured, systematic approach. Your parents and teachers might have called this “make a plan and stick to it.” Millennial preferences for clarity and certainty do not evaporate at graduation. The Global MBA Survey of more than 5,600 students also confirms that Millennials prefer to work in organisations with centralised decision-making, clearly defined responsibilities, and formalised

procedures. Nearly three-fourths, or 72%, agreed with the statement: “I prefer a structured environment with clear rules”, compared with just 33% of Generation X (Hershatter & Epstein, 2017). There are also unflattering statements about Millennials in the literature. Common complaints from baby boomers are that Millennials can be difficult to interact with, are entitled, and overly service-focused. They are also perceived as impatient, lacking work ethic, overconfidence, disloyalty and often laziness (Smith & Nichols, 2015).

The results of these surveys indicate that the young generation's preferences are in line with the principles of agile management (see Tab. 6).

The supervisor should be honest and open; they should be a leader and a friend and co-worker. Most Millennials agree with the statement that they prefer personal relationships with their bosses and feel comfortable approaching their bosses and asking for help when they need special treatment (Hershatter & Epstein, 2017).

## 2. Methodology

As confirmed in previous chapters, an agile approach in human resource management can be a convenient tool for maximising employee

**Tab. 6: Matching of agile characteristics and preferences of Generation Y**

Characters of agile organisations	Preferences of Generation Y
Informal corporate culture	Personal, friendly relationships with superiors
Flexible organisational structures	Flat organisational structures
Dynamic environment, frequent changes	Flexible working conditions, the possibility of change
Focus on people and results, not processes	Minimal rules and regulations
Work in geographically dispersed teams (international overlap)	Flexibility in terms of place of work and working hours (multicultural awareness)
Personal, informal conversation	Require frequent and ongoing feedback from managers
Self-organisation of teams (a division of tasks among team members, self-control, subsequent correction, etc)	They perceive tasks as challenges, have a positive approach to these tasks and are looking for non-standard solutions
Evaluation according to the results/benefits in the team	They want to show high performance and grow professionally
Common goals, teamwork and responsibility for results	Work with inspiring colleagues

Source: own based on Manifesto for Agile Software Development (2001), ManpowerGroup (2016), Smith and Nichols (2015) and Šochová (2019)

potential. The authors mapped the extension of agile approaches from project management and ICT to human resource management. In the previous chapters, the characteristics of agile HR management were introduced. The preferences of Millennials in human resource management were also analysed. The analysis of both – the attributes of agile HR and Generation Y's preferences – showed an overlap, at least on a theoretical level. The authors used this theoretical assumption for preparing a pilot survey, which aimed to confirm or disprove the assumption that the attributes of agile HR management described in the literature find a positive response among the Millennials (in other words, they correspond to Millennials' preferences).

An applied scientific research method was quantitative research, while a standardised questionnaire in electronic form (CAWI method) was used to collect data. The survey was conducted in March–April 2019. A professional LinkedIn network was used to collect data in this quantitative pilot survey. Although the authors are aware of the limitations of selecting and contacting respondents in this way (mainly the representativeness of the sample), the aim was to address a larger sample of respondents and obtain as much treasure as possible for further research. The criteria for selecting respondents were defined as follows:

- current status of employment – student;
- current location – Czech Republic;
- language – Czech.

Companies need to become the employer of choice for potential employees. As mentioned above, companies cannot afford not to be attractive to Millennials. Therefore, the pilot survey was focused on millennial students, as authors assumed that this group would most likely be looking for their first stable job in the near future (71% of surveyed students do not work full time). Knowledge of their preferences (especially in the agile management style) can help employers increase their attractiveness.

3,566 respondents met these criteria, all of whom were contacted by direct email. Communication support for the research took place on the Faculty of Economics (EF) of Technical University of Liberec (TUL), EF TUL Facebook and LinkedIn, and lectures at EF TUL. The return rate was around 8%. The structure of the surveyed group of respondents in terms of gender, age, employment relationship and

field of the employer was as follows: women (55%) and men (45%) were approximately equally represented; 41% of surveyed population represented Generation Y; only 12% of respondents were non-working students, the rest worked full-time (29%), part-time (21%) or occasionally (38%); approximately the exact representation in the sample were employees working in four groups covering homogeneous fields of employers.

The aim of the survey concerning the issues examined in the paper was to find out whether the attributes of agile organisations, described in the literature, were preferred by Generation Y. Furthermore, the survey aimed to answer these questions: whether Generation Y considers employers to be more attractive if they exhibit the attributes of an agile/flexible environment (flexible working conditions, personal development, etc):

- What motivates Generation Y (agile organisations build teams around motivated individuals);
- Whether the features of agile organisations based on theory and the Agile Development Manifesto are preferred among young people.

Findings aimed to answer these assumptions and can help employers create a motivating, agile/flexible working environment and succeed in attracting/employing the Generation Y.

### 3. Primary Data Analysis and Results

Based on the methodology described in Chapter 2 of this paper, a pilot survey was conducted in the first quarter of 2019, and addressed 3,566 respondents selected on LinkedIn according to the above criteria. The aim of the data collection was to find out in particular: whether the characteristics of agile organisations based on theory and Agile manifesto are preferred by Generation Y, specifically students who likely want to anchor in an organisation after graduation.

Respondents representing Generation Y were asked to express their attitude to the individual characteristics of traditional versus agile organisations (see Tab. 7) on a scale from 1 to 5, with a score of 1 indicating a preference for traditional attributes and a score of 5 showing a preference for agile attributes. The direction of preferences from traditional to agile attributes thus corresponded with the

**Tab. 7: Attitudes of Millennials to traditional vs. agile organisations in the Czech Republic in 2019**

Attributes of agile organisations	Average evaluation
Diverse work tasks according to individual abilities	<b>3.83</b>
Informal corporate culture	<b>3.63</b>
Personal conversation	<b>3.63</b>
Self-problem solving/conflict resolution in a team	<b>3.61</b>
Performance evaluation according to work results	<b>3.27</b>
Focus on results	<b>3.14</b>
Dynamic environment, frequent changes	<b>3.06</b>
Self-organised teams (distribution of tasks among team members, self-control, subsequent correction, etc)	<b>3.06</b>
Flat organisational structure	3.00
Short-term projects, incremental parts of projects	2.91
Working in geographically dispersed teams (international overlap)	2.89
Work on several projects simultaneously	2.87
Team responsibility for the results	2.87
Teamwork and common goals	2.78

Source: own

mark's growth from 1 to 5, while the neutral position would theoretically reach a mark of 3. This question aimed to find out the direction of preferences of the interviewed Millennials. Attributes were classified into agile or traditional according to the literature review presented in the previous chapters. The average rating of Generation Y preferences is shown in Tab. 7.

The data analysis showed that the selected sample of respondents tends to prefer some attributes of agile organisations. According to their abilities, respondents mainly prefer diverse work tasks, informal corporate culture, personal conversation, self-problem solving/conflict resolution in a team, performance evaluation according to work results, and focus on results. Slightly in favour of agility, preferences of a dynamic environment, frequent changes and self-organised teams were identified. On the other hand, attributes related to team responsibility or teamwork with a common goal and simultaneous work on several projects tend to be evaluated by respondents as less preferred, with a tendency towards a traditional way of managing people. This result may have been influenced by the fact that the respondents (students) still had limited work experience.

The illustrated results confirm the assumption of the possibility of partial application of an agile managerial (HR) approach for work with Generation Y.

Although many studies have examined millennial preferences in the work environment, the authors focused on the factors of agile managerial style, which is not sufficiently described in the literature with regard to Generation Y.

#### 4. Discussion and Limitations

As literature research has shown, agility has so far been discussed mainly at the organisational level as an instrument to respond flexibly and quickly to changing market demand and to anticipate, initiate and use change as a competitive advantage. Previous studies of agility both on a global scale and in the Czech Republic have focused mainly on agility in ICT or as a modern technique of project management. Thus far, only some of the studies have analysed the topic in a broader context and paid attention to the agile approach in human resource management. Human resources are crucial elements in the successful implementation and use of agile practices. Simultaneously, the application of agile principles leads to

effective management of employees, especially representatives of the younger generations, both at the beginning of their career and after reaching a leading position in the company. The paper identified a literary gap in the topic of agile management concerning Generation Y. Very few authors mention the connection between the issue of agile management and the characteristics and preferences of Millennials in the work environment, both as employees and managers. The secondary data presented in this paper confirm the trend towards an agile approach in many organisations worldwide. As for the Czech Republic, the results show that agile methodologies are used very little, especially in ICT, and many organisations do not know this concept. On the other hand, the results of various surveys point to the benefits of agile transformation, which consists of the flexibility of responses to a rapidly changing business environment and is often in line with Millennials' working attitudes. The secondary data correspond to the theoretical background presented in the first part of the paper, where, among other things, the overlap of agile principles into the field of human resources management was described.

The paper provided a detailed literature review on the concept of agility, agile management and the agile approach in the field of human resources. It highlights differences between traditional and agile approach both in general and human resources management. Based on a literature review and analysis of secondary data, the authors identified Generation Y's theoretical characteristics and preferences, which correspond to the attributes of agile organisations. This information served as a basis for collecting primary data on the sample of respondents selected from different generations and the subsequent analysis of those related to Generation Y in this paper. The aim was to examine whether Generation Y tends to appreciate the agile management approach and agile leadership style (or apply it to the management style in the case of managers – Millennials), ultimately increasing employee performance and job satisfaction.

The authors are aware of the limitations of the results obtained from the primary data in the structure of respondents (non-representative sample) and the tool used to contact them (LinkedIn users). Also, only selected pilot survey findings were presented in the paper, and the

topic requires more profound research. Due to the respondents' structure and the method of questioning, the results cannot be generalised to a population. However, a detailed literature review, secondary data analysis and partial results obtained from primary data provide a unique view of the issue and open up a space for further data collection and analysis, which the authors plan in the near future. Further examination of this issue and verification of the statistical dependence between Generation Y's characteristics and its work preferences and managerial approach (especially with agile management principles) will be the subject of further research.

## Conclusion

The agile model of human resource management is based on the fact that work with people, which has so far been perceived mainly as the implementation of standards and control mechanisms, involves primarily support on improving organisational agility. It changes the role and mission of HR. Agile people management means managing initiatives that promote adaptability, innovation, collaboration and speed. Agile talent management experts support and coach teams and leaders to take greater responsibility for human resources. At the same time, some general services continue to be centrally supported by HR. A literature review in the paper confirmed that adopting an agile way of working increases the efficiency and speed of responsiveness to market stimuli.

Transparent, agile teams demonstrate the benefits of this approach for the rest of the organisation and become ambassadors for agile business management. At its core, HR is one of the disciplines that strongly focuses on creating and maintaining the corporate culture. Agile management principles bring a new perspective on corporate culture. HR professionals should be the driving force for change and the governing function of a new agile culture, thinking and behaviour. The authors of various researches declare that the transformation from a traditional to an agile organisation requires the involvement of many areas of the organisation. HR can help and sometimes even have to initiate a change in communication with employees, their development and job satisfaction.

A literature review and secondary data analysis have confirmed that agility supports

success in a contemporary dynamic business environment. It is essential to understand the concept of successful organisation management. Primary data collected through an online pilot survey among selected Czech respondents representing Generation Y showed that this generation is open to many attributes of an agile work environment. Millennials are becoming the largest working generation, often also represented already in managerial positions, and organisations need to understand what motivates them to perform well in order to appreciate the way they work genuinely. In addition, the world is changing rapidly in unpredictable directions, so traditional management methods no longer meet the needs of organisations moreover in connection with changes in the working environment caused by the Covid-19 pandemic situation where the pressure on a flexible, dynamic environment and frequent changes is even greater (Deloitte, 2020). The topic of the article also gives space to develop the issue and open further discussion. The Agile Manifesto (2001) encourages organisations to build projects around motivated individuals, create a motivating environment for them, support their needs, and believe that they will perform a great job. Understanding the preferences of the young generation will help find the right motivators for high work commitment and answer the question of whether agile principles are the right direction companies should take to increase their attractiveness to potential job seekers.

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