

The Contemporary Employee in the Creation of Organisational Culture in the Polish Mining Industry

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Abstract

This paper describes the relationship between the employee and the organisational culture in a company. It places particular focus on the characteristics of today's employees, resulting from the typology of current working generations and highlights the characteristic features of baby boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. The practical part of this paper characterises employees and HR policies of two groups operating in the mining industry – Jastrzębska Spółka Węglowa SA and Lubelski Węgiel Bogdanka SA.

Keywords: Employee, organisational culture, Generation Y, mining industry

Introduction

Organisational culture is a corporate element which allows defining the company from a different perspective than the organisational perspective or one measured by economic values. This is such an extensive subject covering a broad range of aspects of a company's operations that it is difficult to clearly define the concept at hand, especially within the mining industry. The authors of this article have already discussed this topic in publications [1], [2], [3], [5], [6], [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19]. Nevertheless, it is without any doubt that the organisational culture of a company is related to its employees. Holland defines culture as the beliefs and views which are spreading in the company, on how to do business, and desirable employee conduct and their treatment [7], [8], [12], [24]. Therefore, the role of the employee is crucial in the shaping of organisational culture. Furthermore, companies, especially those operating in the mining industry, should take particular care of their employees and create good HR policies, so that their organisational culture is profiled appropriately.

An employee's functioning within an organisation is strongly determined by the level, type, and form of the organisational culture in the company. On the other hand, this functioning can also influence the form and level of this culture. Figure 1 presents the interactions involved in shaping organisational culture.

One can assume that employees come to organisations "equipped" with their own system of values, temperament, their own beliefs and views. They begin to function in an organisation with a defined system of standards, values, and procedures for action in place, and all the other elements which define and constitute its organisational culture. At some point, these "cultures" begin to intertwine. This is where appropriate human resources management comes into play. Its role should be to ensure that an employee "adopts" the culture of a given organisation and observes and applies its principles and guidelines. As a result, this can and should enhance the organisation's culture. Without appropriate management, the culture of an organisation can be weakened by its employees' individualism.

The characteristics of contemporary working generations

The workforce of Polish industry, including the mining industry, currently includes several generations. Representatives of the generation which sociologists refer to as Generation Y make up the predominant group. 1980 is the bottom limit for the classification of this group and its oldest representatives are in their late thirties, so they are vocationally active.

The general characteristics of this generation are presented in Figure 2.

After analysing these characteristics, it can be noted that this generation has many traits which predispose it to work in the mining industry, but also exceptionally unfavourable features when seen in the context of the present state of the profession.

One of the roles of the management is to streamline cooperation between this generation and other people. Several suggestions can be made on how to reorganise human resources management, i.e. how to change the organisational culture in this respect, to facilitate effective cooperation [4]:

- increase expenditures on training in basic skills, especially soft skills (ability to conduct correspondence, use book sources and magazines, and not only the Internet),
- explain cause-and-effect relationships; representatives of Generation Y are not very good at solving non-standard problems in the workplace, are more effective in solving typical, routine problems, but are unable to improvise,
- streamlining communication channels using the electronic media (instant messengers, mobile messaging, etc.)
- developing the culture of communication, especially of communication with customers, since Generation Y tends to communicate with other people as if they were their peers, which can be detrimental to the image of the organisation,
- introduce more frequent evaluations, as this generation grew up with video games, where the player can

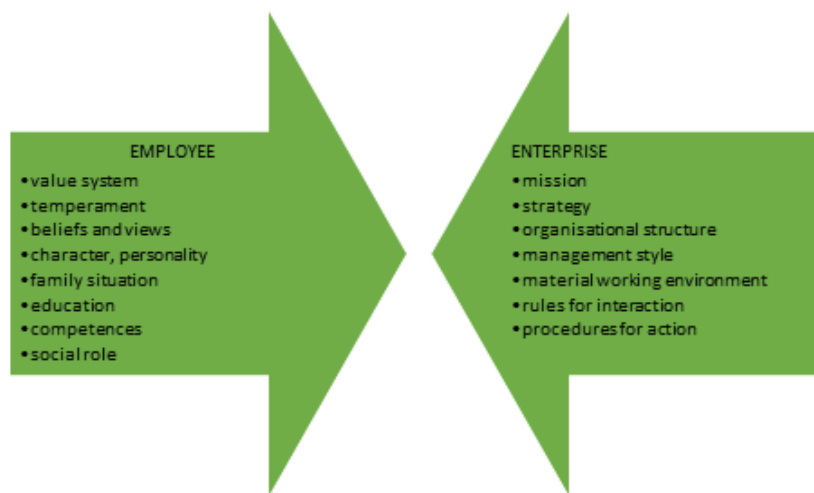


Fig. 1. The employee-enterprise interactions involved in shaping organisational culture. Source: own work
 Rys. 1. Interakcje pracownik-przedsiębiorstwo w procesie kształtowania kultury organizacyjnej. Źródło: opracowanie własne

- see his/her score on screen, so in the workplace young people also expect quick feedback;
- focus on the results, which is associated with granting them greater freedom in the workplace, e.g. allowing to make private phone calls. Generation Y works differently from older generations, more impulsively, and should be assessed based on the results.
- stimulate people to work, as Generation Y needs constant stimulation,
- take care of contact, young people can be loyal, but to other employees, not the organisation itself, if it provides them with opportunities for development, it will gain their loyalty, otherwise they will not hesitate to leave and join the competition,
- ensure a balance between professional and personal life; Generation Y values highly flexible working hours; spare time is very important for this generation.

The general profile of Generation Y in terms of views on work and professional life can be based on the most important theses and elements determining this generation [11]. These are:

- a high level of attained education and capacity for learning
- team working skills
- ability to carry out several tasks at the same time
- country-wide and global mobility
- a short-term outlook on career (in terms of the workplace as well as profession)
- expecting quick responses to their actions (e.g. evaluation, answers and advice)
- expecting a friendly atmosphere in the workplace and opportunities for self-development
- lower expectations for promotion in the organisational hierarchy
- unwillingness to be loyal to the employer
- appreciation of one's own values and life goals
- creating communities in the virtual world and communicating within these communities
- interpersonal difficulties in the real world, including the lack of ability to solve everyday conflicts

The current generation of workforce has, therefore, evident

potential. Nevertheless, in terms of their employment in the mining industry, it is important to take into account the wide range of employees working in mining companies. There are senior as well as junior workers. Therefore, one should take good care of their good relations, so that the work culture and culture of the organisation are developed in a positive way. In order to do this, knowledge of the basic characteristics of all the working generations is necessary. These include baby boomers, i.e. those born between 1946 and 1964, Generation X (1965–1977) and the aforementioned Generation Y (1978–1994).

Figure 3 presents the characteristic features of the vocationally active generations.

One objective of corporate culture is also to integrate employees. This integration does not apply to interpersonal relations of the staff, but it should be understood as the mental integration of employees with the company. Employees should feel that the mission, vision, and values of the company are also their own.

Culture should also facilitate the understanding of the mission, by identifying those elements which employees should prioritise. This is not only in the case of official duties, but also in creating the external image, brand, and value of the company.

However, the most fundamental task of corporate culture is to indicate algorithms, models and procedures recommended by the company. This builds in employees a sense of belonging to the company [20], [21] and, at the same time, it is an indicator of corporate culture.

The generational structure may, thus, strongly influence the processes, but it also significantly contributes to the shaping of the organisational culture.

The characteristics of the workforce and HR policy at JSW SA.

Jastrzębska Spółka Węglowa SA declares that its “greatest asset are its people. The most valuable employees for us are those who identify with our company and its mission.” [24]. This declaration is largely in line with the basic premises of creating a good, strong organisational culture.

The HR policy of JSW provides for the employment of new, educated individuals and investing in their education. Mining schools also serve this purpose. They attract young



Fig. 2. The characteristics of Generation Y. Source: own work on the basis of [4]
Rys. 2. Cechy pokolenia Y. Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie [4]

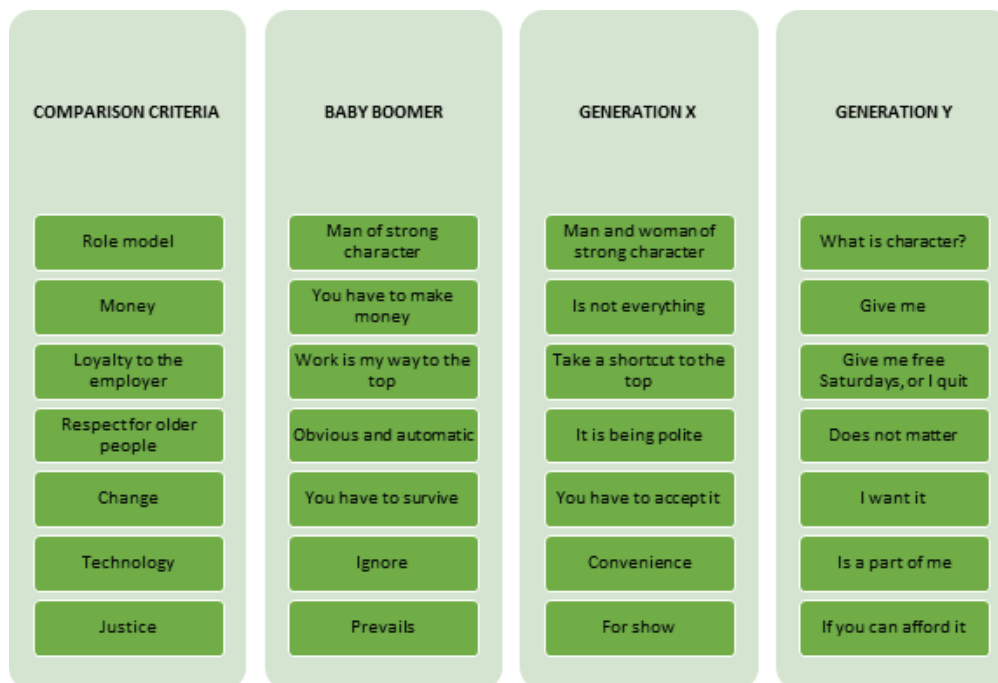


Fig. 3. A comparison of the features of baby boomers and Generations X and Y. Source: own work on the basis of [10]
Rys. 3. Porównanie cech pokolenia baby boomer, X i Y. Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie [10]

people, often from traditional mining families, complementing the implementation of production plans with one crucial element - the human factor as affecting local communities. Today, JSW employs approximately 21,500 people, of whom about 17,000 work underground. The specificity of underground operations necessitates mutual respect and observance of OHS procedures. Occupational health and safety rules and culture are among the basic elements of organisational culture. In mining companies, these are especially important in terms of its shaping and improvement.

As declared by the management of JSW, the main objectives of its HR policy include the provision of appropriately qualified specialists; the effective and rational use of human resources, and encouraging the professional development of employees through a career system, professional education and

training. In order to meet these objectives, JSW utilises a number of HR policy tools, including subsidised holidays, support for sick employees, non-repayable financial support, and special gifts for employees' children.

The pursued HR policy results in a fully shaped and continuously improved organisational culture. The company's es, shirts, and sports T-shirts.

In respect of improving the qualifications and education of the workforce, JSW has entered into agreements with AGH University of Science and Technology and Silesian University of Technology on student placements at JSW facilities. The best alumni of these universities are usually employed by JSW. The company is engaged in ongoing cooperation with AGH University of Science and Technology, Silesian University of Technology, and the University of Silesia.

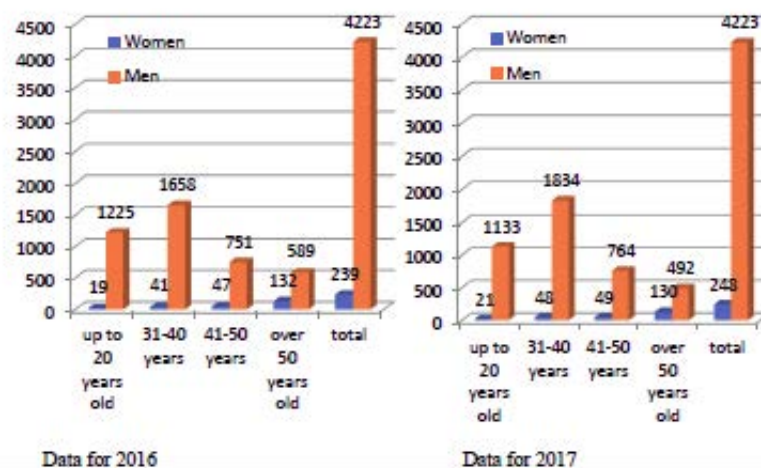


Fig. 4. The employment structure at GK LW Bogdanka SA by gender and age. Source: own work on the basis of [23]
 Rys. 4. Struktura zatrudniania wg płci i wieku w GK LW Bogdanka SA. Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie [23]

The characteristics of the workforce and HR policy at LW Bogdanka SA

The Lubelski Węgiel Bogdanka SA group offers its potential employees, as part of its HR policy, such benefit as:

- introductory and refresher training
- obtaining experience allowing further growth
- opportunities for developing professional skills
- the necessary working tools to carry out the entrusted tasks
- organisational culture focused on ensuring a friendly working atmosphere
- extensive social packages.

Therefore, the organisational culture is strongly highlighted already at the initial stage of the company-employee relationship. According to the company itself [8], human capital is defined as the most valuable kind, which influences the most the achievement of business and social objectives, building a market position, and, as a result, the development of all spheres of the Group's activity.

Employees of GK LW Bogdanka mostly have higher and upper-secondary education, who systematically improve their professional qualifications and who are active also "out of work". The Company supports both areas of employee engagement; on the one hand, by co-funding vocational courses and training or postgraduate studies, and on the other hand, by offering a wide range of cultural, sports and tourist events financed from the social benefits fund for employees and their families. The group declares that, being a responsible employer, it understands the work-life balance idea. The specificity of the mining industry does not support gender parity in employment; however, the company makes sure to offer employment for both genders. Nevertheless, a low female representation is evident, with the majority of them being over 50 years old (Fig. 4).

Lubelski Węgiel Bogdanka is a special company in its being the largest local employer. Local employees constitute a large group. This results in a strong bond between the company and the region and its residents. The employees come mainly from the Łęczna District and surrounding areas, located within a distance of about 50 km. There is also a large group of em-

ployees who moved to the region to work for this company. They usually hold managerial and executive positions. This proves their determination to work there, but also the strong reputation of the company as a good employer. In order to maintain this image, the company places great emphasis on the development of human capital through continuous improvement of their professional and interpersonal skills and effectively motivating them.

LW Bogdanka, similarly to the other company operating in the mining industry, faces the typical problems observed in this sector. These are in particular the generation gap and generational change in the employment structure. LW Bogdanka SA has implemented the Programme for Generational Change to secure its staffing needs. Its first stage was the Voluntary Leave Programme facilitating rational, coordinated, and spread-in-time closing of the generation gap, while maintaining business continuity. The programme provided younger mining staff with employment opportunities and ensured the stable onboarding of a new generation of employees. Its objective was to reduce employment levels and introduce organisational change, as well as to prevent uncontrolled competence drain. Preventing generation gap also involves close cooperation with industry-specific schools and higher-education institutions. The company is a signatory of letters of intent in this respect with AGH University of Science and Technology, the Mining School Complex in Łęczna, and the School Complex in Ostrów Lubelski.

The results of the cyclical employee survey provide a relatively faithful image of the organisational culture at LW Bogdanka in terms of human resources. The survey was made one of the principles of the Social Responsibility Strategy for 2014-2017 as leading to improvement in staff safety. Its results were collected and are presented in Figure 5. They point to the organisational culture at LW Bogdanka requiring improvement in terms of the employee's role; however, in general, the staff are satisfied with their jobs and assess the company positively.

Conclusion

This article evaluates the human resources policies of two enterprises operating on the mining market. Both companies strongly identify themselves with the shaping of organisational

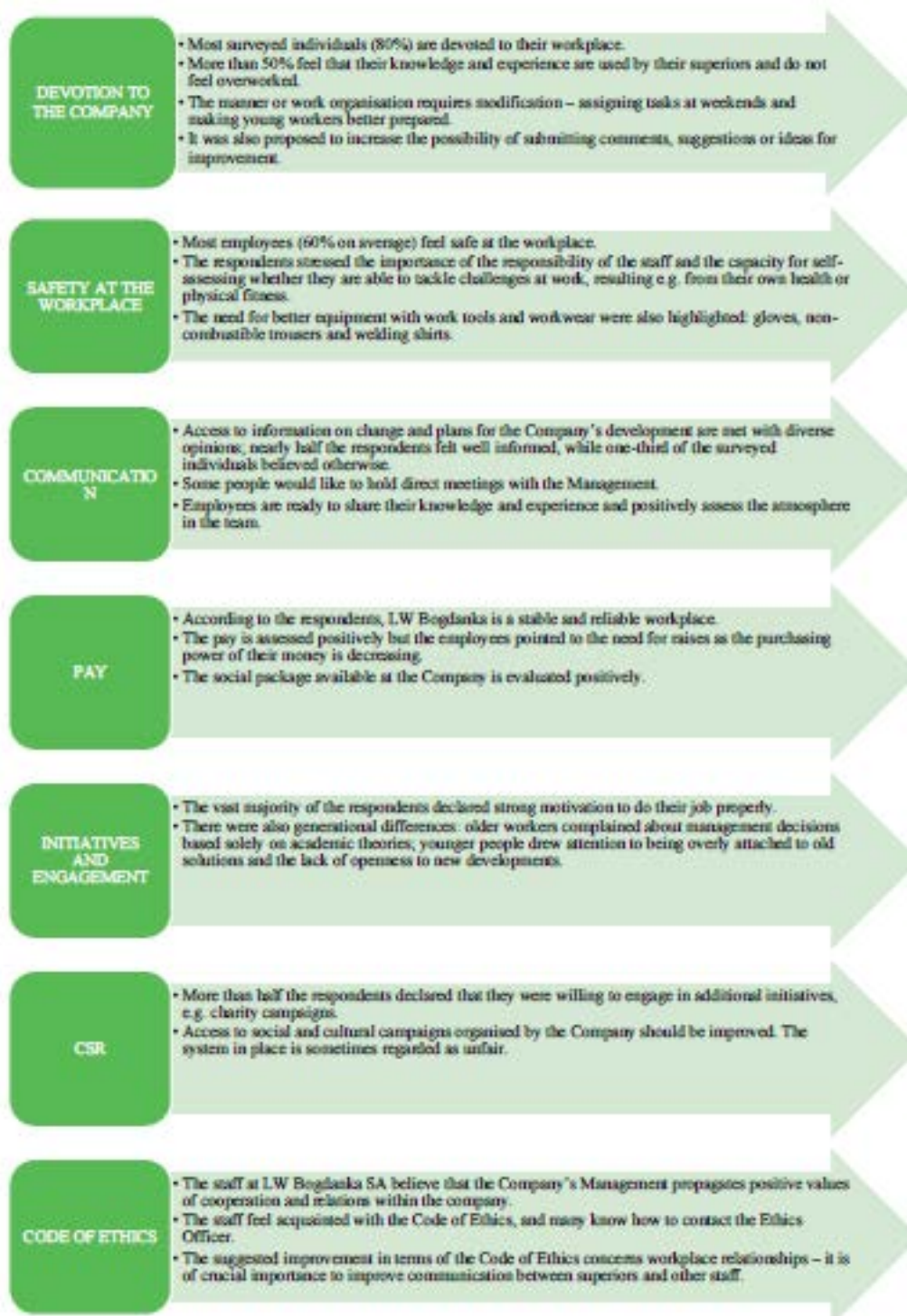


Fig. 5. Display of organizational culture GK LW Bogdanka SA. Source: own work on the basis of [23]
 Rys. 5. Obraz kultury organizacyjnej GK LW Bogdanka SA. Source: opracowanie własne na podstawie [23]

culture in their structures. After analysing the undertaken actions and initiatives, it is clear that they want to secure a good organisational culture. Both these entities employ appropriate measures related to HR policy. The companies are aware of the need to diversify their tools for the various generations which will use them. Presenting the characteristics of the baby

boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y, and the awareness of these, allows one to intentionally and deliberately shape an HR policy contributing to an improvement in the entity's organisational culture.

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Współczesny pracownik w kreowaniu poziomu kultury organizacyjnej w polskim przemyśle wydobywczym
W artykule opisano zależność występującą pomiędzy pracownikiem a kulturą organizacyjną firmy, w której on pracuje. W szczególności skupiono się na cechach dzisiejszych pracowników, wynikających z typologii pokoleń obecnie pracujących. Wskazano cechy charakterystyczne dla pokoleń baby boomer, pokolenia X i pokolenia Y. W praktycznej części pracy dokonano charakterystyki pracowników i polityki pracowniczej realizowanej w dwóch grupach działających w branży wydobywczej, Jastrzębskiej Spółce Węglowej SA oraz Lubelskim Węgłem Bogdanka SA.

Słowa kluczowe: pracownik, kultura organizacyjna, pokolenie Y, przemysł wydobywczy