

## How to Attract and Retain “Digital” Generation? *Experience from the Czech Statistical Office*

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### **Abstract**

External technical changes, which occur around reflect also in the Czech Statistical Office. Development of information technology has recently achieved exceptional progress. It has impact to most of our lives. How do we define “digital generation”? This generation is familiar with communications, media and digital technologies. To master computers is not only accomplishment of young people but also for older ones. Key employees are essential for existence of each section and dept. in the Czech Statistical Office. In order that state statistical service accomplished its mission, it has to acquire highly qualified statisticians, experts. These experts should have both theoretical knowledge and ability to master all the options, which technological devices offer to them. How to attract “digital generation”? To recruit right employees is the first step to the successful personal policy. How to retain “digital generation”? Key points how to retain employees in the office happy and satisfied. The most important instrument for retention of the employees it their right motivation. Hint benefits in the Czech Statistical Office. Training – care for professional development. Lifelong training of employees improves their professional skills. Training of expert employees and their further development belong among the most important benefit and motivation tools. Annual evaluation discussion proceedings. Catalogue of courses. Staff survey questionnaire – important feedback instrument of employees’ satisfaction - job satisfaction, further training, career development and motivation for work,

## Results and Discussions

### **How do we define “digital generation”?**

If a person comes across term “digital generation” usually has in mind young people up to their mid 30’s. This “digital generation” has experienced the world with computers and with new technologies over their whole lives. These technologies have become parts of their identities. Contemporary digital era has been shaping them, especially who they are and who they will become. Young people master the computers. They have their own opinions; they know a lot thanks to Internet access and thanks to sourcing web-based encyclopaedias, e.g. Wikipedia.

### **How can we recognize them?**

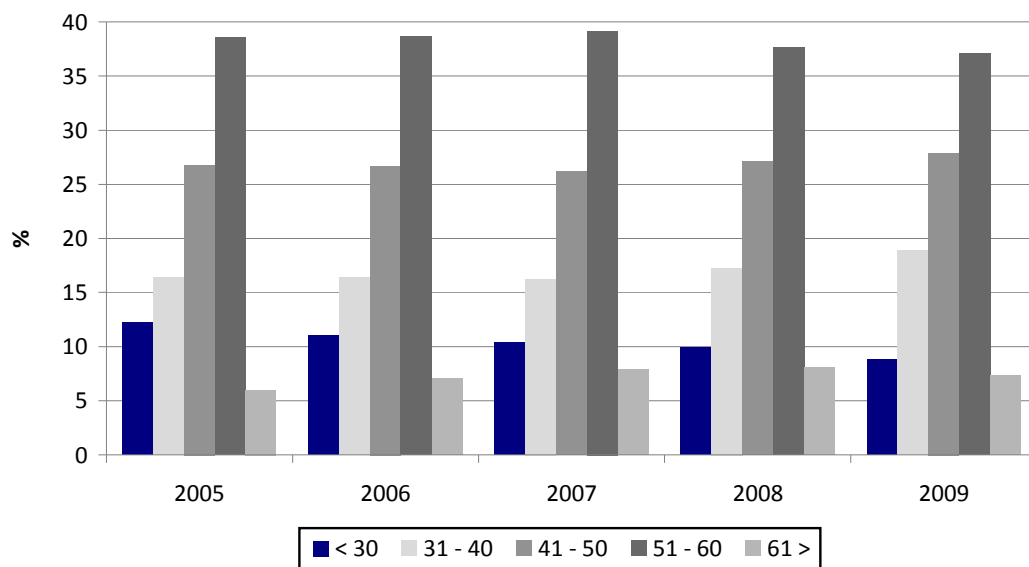
**Generation Y** (Wikipedia 2010) known as the **Millennial Generation**, **Generation Next** or **Net Generation**. This generation follows Generation X. They are referred to as **Millennial** or **Echo Boomers**. Birth dates ranging somewhere from beginning of 1970’s to the early 2000’s.

In 1975 total fertility rate reached 2,5 in the Czech Republic, thanks to pro-population policy, which brought consequently the highest birthrate after World War II. This generation is marked by an increased use and familiarity with communications, media and digital technologies.

However, to master computers is not only accomplishment of young people. Even older employees can master their computers. Age is not obstacle for mastering computers.

**Figure 1**

### Age groups in the CZSO



Czech Statistical Office 2010 a

Development of information technology has recently achieved exceptional progress. It has impact to most of our lives. Information technology devices infiltrate through most branches of our life, including statistics.

In order that state statistical service accomplishes its mission, it has to have highly qualified statisticians, i.e. experts. These experts should have both theoretical knowledge and ability to master all the options, which technological devices offer to them.

Thus the term “digital generation” covers not only young employees but also other (older) employees who are able to use modern technological devices. They are able to use it in the efficient way as well. They are called **key employees**. They are essential for existence of each section and/or dept. They are **experts**, who provide extra tasks to achieve excellence in their job performance. A key employee has surpassing knowledge, experience and drive. He/she is entitled to get extra benefits for their job. Key employees may work in the position heads of the section or regular employees.

### How to Attract „Digital Generation“?

The statistics is a field where has been used new modern information and communication technology. Recent technology gadgets attract young people a lot.

To recruit right employees is the first step to the successful personal policy. The Czech Statistical Office cooperates on regular basis with academic field in new talent recruitment. Human Resources Dept. of the Czech Statistical Office enables to employ students part-time during their studies, especially in last university years. Many CZSO employees earn or have earned their Ph.D. in the Charles University or the University of Economics, Prague.

It pays off to find the right employees for the right positions. To recruit only those who will become enthusiastic for job of a statistician and who accept new methods for collection, process and interpretation of statistical data.

One of the main challenges for young people is to cope with demanding entrance into work process. Some of them succeed, the others do not. The rest of them find out that they do not like job of civil servant in the first place or being statistician. They keep on looking for another job, in other field, mostly in commercial one. Young people with university degree and two-year experience in public administration, especially in the Czech Statistical Office, can easily get job with better pay anywhere, especially in private sector, mostly in banking sector.

This situation is a principal drawback in recruitment of young employees, university graduates. Scenario is always the same – a young employee gets in our Office and consequently he/she leaves after some time. It is substantially disadvantageous for the Czech Statistical Office. It is costly matter to train an employee both professionally and financially.

### **How to Retain „Digital Generation“?**

Management gurus: Ferdinand Fournier, Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman assert: **“A satisfied employee knows clearly what is expected from him every day at work”** (Heathfield 2010),

Changing expectations keep people on edge and create unhealthy stress. They rob the employee of internal security and make the employee feel unsuccessful. The need for a specific framework within which people clearly know what is expected from them.

It is definitely true, as employees should feel both happy and satisfied in their jobs. However during these years of economic crises the situation is quite different...

**Key points how to retain employees in the office happy and satisfied** (Heathfield 2010):

- Select the right people in the first place. The right person, in the right seat, on the right bus is the starting point
- Offer an attractive, competitive benefits package
- Provide opportunities for people to share their knowledge via training sessions, presentations, mentoring
- Provide high-tech computer equipment
- Offer performance feedback and praise good efforts and results
- Encourage employees to have team spirit
- Encourage employees to have good, even best, friends at work

We have to admit that public administration is not able to compete successfully to the private sector. It has better pay, better benefits than public sector. However due to recent economic crisis public administration is in better position than ever before. It becomes substantially more stable; employees do not have to face future uncertainty at some point.

There is a special law in the Czech Republic, so called Labor Law, which is applied in labor legislature in job market. However Labor Law is not entirely respected in private sector, though. Generally speaking, public employees appreciate to work in public administration as they have a stable position and less inclination to search better job position in uncertain private sector.

The most important instrument for retention of the employees is their right motivation. Management of the CZSO realizes it and permanent motivation of staff and care of their satisfaction are listed among strategic goals of the Office. (Czech Statistical Office 2004 e).

### **Hint benefits in the Czech Statistical Office**

- **Training and education at he workplace**  
Free of charge, during working hours  
Statistical courses, IT courses, language courses  
Training section serves for specific statistical training needs in the Czech Statistical Office
- **Subsidized meal plan**  
CZSO subsidies lunch meals in its cafeteria. Two thirds of lunch cost is free of charge, one third is from employee's pocket  
If there is no cafeteria in regional offices, meal voucher are provided
- **Flexible hours**  
Core business hours 9.00 a.m. – 3.00 p.m., flexible starting hours 6.00-9.00 a.m. and flexible ending hours 3.00 – 8.00 p.m. Required working hours: 40 hours weekly  
This benefit belongs among most appreciated benefits
- **Part-time hours**  
Female employees - mothers of small children are happy to be employed part-time hours
- **Extra 5 days paid vacation days**  
Extra 5 days paid vacation days, the total 25 days paid vacation days  
Some private sector offers 5 days less, i.e. 20 days
- **Cars, portable computers, mobile phones**  
For survey interviewers (car, hand-held computer, mobile phone) to make easier job performance  
Extra benefit for directors (laptop, mobile phone), of course only for official use
- **Smoke-free workplace policy in the Czech Statistical Office**  
Friendly environment for non-smokers - smoking is prohibited in all enclosed areas

The most important and appreciated benefit is the continual training and development of the employees.

### **Training – care for professional development**

The right employee training, development and education, at the right time, provides big payoffs for the employer in increased productivity, knowledge and loyalty.

Total costs for training reached 7 250 000 CZK, (appx. 279.000 €) in 2009. The average training cost per one employee accounted for 4 644 CZK (appx. 178 €) in 2009 (5 320 CZK in 2008). Each employee took part in 2.4 training courses in 2009 (2.5 training course in 2008).

**Table 1:**  
**Training of the employees in the Czech Statistical Office in 2009,**  
**Czech Statistical Office 2010 d**

Length of the course	Number of Participants
Short-term special training (shorter than 5 days)	3 466
Long-term training and language courses	320
Total	3 786

Lifelong training of employees improves their professional skills. It is a necessary condition for their work performance and one of priorities in human resources management.

Internal and external lecturers provide training. Internal lecturers are recruited directly from CZSO employees. External lecturers are from academic field – the University of Economics, Prague, Charles University, other universities and freelance lecturers.

Methodical and long-term care for training is a benefit “number one” for employees. It is also an efficient instrument to reach required work capacity at the same time. Well-pointed professional training enables to the employees to fill in gaps in their knowledge. Our main goals are further statistical education of young employees and IT knowledge update of older generation. This method leads to generations approach and link-up of statistical and computer knowledge of employees.

The most important professional statistical course is Specialized Study of Statistics for university graduates. It is two-year course that Czech Statistical Office organizes with the University of Economics, Prague. This study has lasted already 46 years (i.e. 23 runs).

The main assignment of training section, which is part of the Human Resources and Wages Dept., is to take care for training and professional development of employees. To maintain high quality of training is another main goal to accomplish.

*Contents of the training are specified:*

- Requirements of managers which follow strategic and priority targets of Office
- Results from annual evaluation discussion proceedings
- Regulations of the employees training in public administration

An important part of education is the participation in conferences, international discussions or courses abroad. Total 49 employees took part in courses abroad within the ESTP (European Statistical Training Program) in 2009.

### **Annual evaluation discussion proceedings**

Annual evaluation discussions proceed from 2004. Human Resources and Wages Dept. makes Rules for annual evaluation proceedings, which updates annually. It is discussion face-to-face between a superior and an employee. Employee’s performance and his/her job

assignments are evaluated. Other issues as training and employee's development are projected for future year as well.

### **Catalogue of Courses**

Training section compiles all requirements for employees training and compiles Catalogue of the Courses for relevant year. Then – Catalogue submits to the Management Meeting for approval and published on-line at internal web-portal of the Czech Statistical Office. There are enlisted the courses which are organized by training section directly in the Czech Statistical Office. This Catalogue of the Courses is published annually.

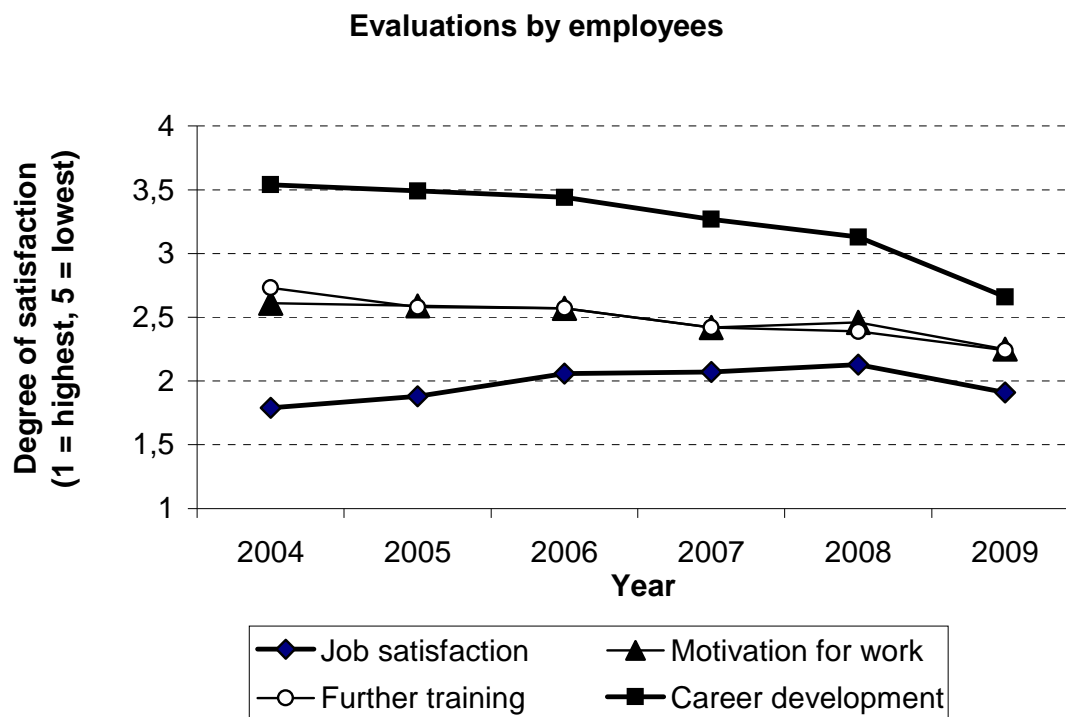
*Catalogue of the Courses covers six subjects:*

- Statistics
- Specialized training for interviewers
- Management courses and career development
- Computer technology
- Language courses
- Other specialist course

### **Staff opinion survey**

Annual questionnaire has been carried out from 2003. It is also an important feedback instrument for human management. Questionnaire is carried out every year, at the end of the year. A five-scale evaluation is applied. 1 is for the best; 5 is for the worst.

**Figure 2**



Czech Statistical Office 2010 c.

In addition to that, employees are encouraged to express freely their feelings or complaints on extra page to the questionnaire form.

Job satisfaction indicator is assessed as very good in long-term run. In 2009 was detected a turn in comparison with preceding years. It is probably mark of consolidation after personal audit (it was carried out in 2008),

Both indicators - further training and motivation for work show positive trends over long-term run. Marks are getting down which signifies that there is improvement.

Career development indicates a significant improvement. This indicator assessed poor outcome at first, however after introduction of career development program for employees after 2006, substantial improvement appeared. (Czech Statistical Office 2010 b).

## Conclusions

Long-term experience proves that secret for retention of the employees, including the digital generation, is the right motivation. The responsibility for employees' satisfaction has both, heads of the sections and directors. To motivate employees and take care for their satisfaction is strategic goal for all managers in CZSO. It is the way to retain highly qualified employees. The Human Resources Dept. has to support the effort of managers in succeeding of this assignment.

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