

TALENT MANAGEMENT FOR THE NEW WORKFORCE: A TCCM REVIEW OF GEN Z RETENTION STRATEGIES AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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Abstract- This paper reviews the talent management literature on Generation Z retention. It uses the TCCM framework to organize the evidence. The framework covers theory, context, characteristics, and methodology. The review follows PRISMA guidelines. We searched PsycINFO, ProQuest, and EBSCOHost for studies published between 2018 and 2024. Two-stage screening kept only empirical, peer-reviewed papers. Thematic analysis was used to sort the findings into core themes. Six theories dominate the field: social exchange theory, self-determination theory, Kahn's engagement theory, Herzberg's two-factor theory, expectancy theory, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Context matters. Hybrid work, gig work, and post-pandemic conditions shape what young employees expect. Industry patterns differ. Tech firms keep talent with autonomy, service firms with personalization, and regulated sectors with mentorship. Methodologically, most

studies are cross-sectional, rely on self-reports, and use narrow samples. No standard scale exists yet to measure expectation gaps. The literature points to four approaches: career development, flexible work, performance recognition, and inclusive culture. Gen Z wants fast, personal growth; flexible, trust-based work; and value-aligned, purpose-driven organizations. Five research questions emerge from the gaps. Future work needs longitudinal and mixed-methods designs, intervention studies, cross-industry comparisons, and ethnographic research. Firms need inclusive and just talent management. They must keep the psychological contract, practice ethical leadership, and embed sustainability in daily work. Retention works when employee well-being and organizational health support each other.

Keywords- Generation Z; talent management; employee retention; TCCM

framework; systematic literature review; future research agenda; psychological contract; hybrid work

I. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

Generation Z, born roughly between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s, is entering the workforce at a time when labor markets are changing quickly (Yahya et al., 2023). Unlike earlier cohorts, this generation brings distinct priorities; a demand for work-life balance, purposeful roles, and smooth digital integration; that often clash with traditional human resource models. Organizations therefore need integrated, value-aligned talent management frameworks if they are to manage the high turnover risk that marks this cohort's early career years.

The problem is not only practical but also theoretical. Most retention theories were built on the career patterns and values of earlier generations, so their fit with Gen Z remains unproven (Vieira et al., 2024). At the same time, the literature is fragmented: existing studies do not clearly explain how talent management practices translate into long-term engagement among these digital natives. This gap matters even more as job forms shift toward gig and contingent work, and as the pandemic reshapes what

young employees expect from their employers.

This review addresses that gap by organizing the evidence using the Theory, Context, Characteristics, and Methodology framework, which allows a multidimensional view of how organizations can build sustainable engagement through adaptive, technology-driven, and purpose-oriented interventions. Gen Z preferences are treated not as temporary generational traits but as signals that point toward necessary organizational redesign (Singh & Sinha, 2026). The synthesis draws on psychological theories, including self-determination theory and social exchange theory, to categorize the core drivers of Gen Z engagement, such as psychological safety and sustainability-related identities. It also examines how leadership and organizational culture must evolve to address the disengagement behind phenomena such as "quiet quitting" (Revuru & Bandaru, 2024; Kirti & Saini., 2022), and how digital competency combined with work-life integration policies can meet this cohort's expectations. In a post-pandemic environment often described as BANI (brittle, anxious, nonlinear, incomprehensible), aligning organizational goals with employee-centric priorities is a foundational step for reducing turnover.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To guide the synthesis, this review is structured around five research questions that mirror the TCCM dimensions and the retention-strategy focus of the paper:

- RQ1: Which theoretical perspectives have been used to explain Gen Z retention in the workplace?
- RQ2: In which contexts — industries, regions, and work arrangements — has Gen Z retention been studied?
- RQ3: What employee characteristics and organizational practices are associated with Gen Z retention?
- RQ4: Which methodological approaches dominate this literature, and what gaps remain?
- RQ5: What directions for future research emerge from the TCCM synthesis?

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2, Review Methodology, describes how the literature was searched, screened, and synthesized. Section 3, TCCM Analytical Framework, presents the four framework dimensions: theoretical perspectives, contextual conditions, characteristic patterns, and methodological gaps. Section 4, Gen Z Retention Strategies, examines career development practices, flexible work

arrangements, and organizational culture. Section 5, Research Agenda, sets out emerging research questions and future methodological directions. Section 6, Conclusion and Implications, summarizes the contributions and their implications for researchers and practitioners.

III. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

This review follows a systematic approach. We used the PRISMA guidelines to keep the process clear and to reduce bias.

We searched more than one database. PsycINFO, ProQuest, and EBSCOHost were used to find peer-reviewed articles. The search focused on studies published between 2018 and 2024. We looked for papers on Gen Z employment, organizational retention, and workplace engagement.

Screening was done in two stages. In the first stage, we checked titles and abstracts. We kept studies that were relevant to Gen Z in the workplace. In the second stage, we read the full text. We only kept papers that were empirical and that matched our focus on retention. This process removed older and weaker studies. In the end, we had a clear set of quality, peer-reviewed papers.

For the analysis, we used thematic analysis. This helped us sort the findings into core themes. The themes allowed us to compare organizational practices across different sectors. We also combined scoping review principles with systematic reporting. This helped us separate direct learning outcomes from broader organizational engagement.

3. TCCM Analytical Framework

The TCCM framework organizes the literature in four ways. It looks at theory, context, characteristics, and methods. We use it to map what is known about Gen Z retention. We also use it to find the gaps that still need work.

3.1 Theoretical Perspectives (T)

Most studies explain Gen Z retention with a small set of theories. Table 1 summarizes them.

Table 1. Theories Used to Explain Gen Z Retention

Theory	Core Idea	How it explains Gen Z retention	Sources
Social Exchange Theory	Employees reciprocate what they receive	Fair pay and a supportive environment create loyalty and commitment	(C. _____ & Padmakumari, 2026)
Self-Determination Theory	People need autonomy, competence, and relatedness	Digital fluency and job independence feed these needs and raise passion and performance	(Siarot _____ & Salapa, 2025)
Kahn's engagement theory	People pull back emotionally when conditions are poor	Explains disengagement and quiet quitting at work	(Ochis, 2024)
Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory	Motivators and hygiene factors work differently	Meaningful work drives motivation more than pay alone	(Aga et al., 2025)
Expectancy Theory	Effort leads to performance, which leads to rewards	Rewards work only when they match what employees expect	(Aga et al., 2025)
Maslow's Hierarchy of	Needs move from basic to higher order	Growth, purpose, and CSR satisfy Gen Z; money is only	(Ba, 2025)

Needs		the starting point	
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The message is clear. Gen Z wants advancement and clear roles, not just pay. Firms must move beyond transactional deals. They need holistic development plans that link careers to company values (Anggapradja et al., 2024). That means flatter structures, mentoring, and steady feedback (Oraibi et al., 2024). Employer

branding and visible career paths also matter. Retention works when both sides invest in each other.

3.2 Contextual Conditions (C)

Context shapes how these theories apply. Table 2 shows the main contextual findings.

Table 2. Contextual Conditions that Shape Gen Z Retention

Context	Key findings	Sources
Hybrid and remote work	Digital tools connect teams; autonomy raises the intention to stay; work and life are expected to blend	(<u>Kovtun & Protsenko, 2026</u>)
Labor market pressure	Job mobility is high and burnout is common; many Gen Z workers are ready to leave quickly	(<u>Lašáková et al., 2023</u>)
Gig and contingent work	Psychological safety must be protected to keep commitment alive	(<u>C. & Padmakumari, 2026</u>)

Hybrid work is a strong factor, but its effect runs through perceived autonomy. When employees feel autonomous, they stay longer (Salem, 2025). Work must also feel purposeful; monotonous tasks and missing recognition kill motivation (Sihite & Damanik, 2025). Job security and career growth act as buffers against burnout (Xueyun et al., 2023). Feedback loops

need updating too. Real-time, gamified feedback fits this cohort better than slow annual reviews (Yargattimath & Chikkamath, 2026).

3.3 Characteristic Patterns (C)

Patterns differ across industries. Table 3 shows what works where.

Table 3. Industry Patterns in Gen Z Retention

Industry or setting	What works	Sources
Engineering and tech	Technical autonomy and skill	(<u>Dieguez & Loureiro,</u>

	growth keep talent	<u>2025)</u>
Regulated sectors (finance, healthcare)	Mentorship and structured onboarding work best	<u>(Mosca & Merkle, 2024)</u>

3.4 Methodological Gaps (M)

Digital and transformational leadership styles support autonomy and psychological safety, and they match Gen Z's taste for collaboration and agile structures (Revuru & Bandaru, 2024).

The field has clear methodological gaps. Table 4 summarizes them.

Table 4. Methodological Gaps and What is Needed

Gap	Current state	What is needed	Sources
Time	Most studies are cross-sectional; they cannot show causality	Longitudinal designs that track employees over time	<u>(Evans-Uzosike & Okatta, 2020)</u>
Data source	Heavy reliance on self-reports; people describe what they want, not what they do	Multi-method designs	<u>(Nakash, 2024)</u>
Measurement	No standard scale for unmet expectations	Standard instruments to measure expectation gaps	—
Scope	Most data comes from Western settings	Cross-cultural and multi-country studies	<u>(Oraibi et al., 2024)</u>

IV. GEN Z RETENTION STRATEGIES

Retention strategies work best when they match what Gen Z actually wants. The literature points to four broad approaches:

professional development, work-life integration, performance recognition, and an inclusive culture. Table 5 gives an overview.

Table 5. Overview of Gen Z Retention Strategies

Strategy	Focus	What it does	Sources
Professional	Structural	Training and mentorship	<u>(Setiawan &</u>

development		support long-term career growth	<u>Hendarman, 2024)</u>
Work-life integration	Psychological	Flexible schedules and hybrid work reduce turnover	<u>(Tanoto & Tami, 2024)</u>
Performance recognition	Psychological	Real-time feedback and gamified goals keep people engaged	<u>(Yargattimath & Chikkamath, 2026)</u>
Inclusive organizational culture	Structural	Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives build belonging	<u>(Kanwal et al., 2025)</u>

The message is clear. Structural flexibility and personal purpose must work together. Future studies should move away from one-size-fits-all models. They should use longitudinal and mixed-methods designs. This will show how technology and personal values interact over time. Tools like the Analytic Hierarchy Process can help. They let firms weigh factors such as pay, cultural fit, and career mobility. Firms should also use digital tools to track employee feelings in real time. This changes retention from a reactive fix into a proactive plan. The goal is simple. Create a workplace that fits the whole person, not just the paycheck.

4.1 Career Development Practices

Gen Z does not want slow, rigid career ladders. They want fast, personal growth paths. Firms should create internal mobility options that build skills quickly (Research, 2025). Modular programs and

internal talent marketplaces help people move across roles and learn new skills (Ramadian et al., 2025). Mentoring matters too. It should support non-linear growth, letting people rotate through departments (Yahya et al., 2023). Platforms like Schneider Electric's "Open Talent Market" let employees shape their own careers while meeting firm needs (Silva et al., 2026).

Mentoring is also going both ways now. Reverse mentoring lets younger workers share their digital skills with older staff. This bridges the generational gap (Novari & Febrian, 2026). Such exchange builds a culture of continuous learning. It values purposeful growth over time served (Adelia et al., 2025).

Feedback keeps people on track. Frequent and constructive feedback aligns personal goals with firm goals (Yargattimath & Chikkamath, 2026). Clear visibility into

internal openings reduces turnover. It gives Gen Z the meaningful work and steady progress they want (Sharma & Abraham, 2024).

Table 6. Career Development Practices that Support Retention

Practice	What it does	Sources
Personalized career paths	Match growth to individual goals; build skills fast	(<u>Research, 2025</u>)
Internal mobility and talent marketplaces	Let people move across roles and learn	(<u>Ramadian et al., 2025</u>)
Mentoring and reverse mentoring	Support growth; bridge generational gaps	(<u>Yahya et al., 2023</u>)
Continuous learning culture	Keep development personal and current	(<u>Adelia et al., 2025</u>)
Frequent feedback	Keep goals aligned; reduce uncertainty	(<u>Yargattimath & Chikkamath, 2026</u>)
Visible internal openings	Show growth options; lower turnover	(<u>Sharma & Abraham, 2024</u>)

4.2 Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work is now a basic expectation. Ultra-flexible scheduling, powered by AI tools, lets employees match work to their best hours (Moghimi, 2025). Hybrid and remote models give people real autonomy. This autonomy reduces burnout and shows trust (Mokoagow & Permadi, 2025). Trust builds psychological safety, and that keeps loyalty alive in a digital workplace (C. & Padmakumari, 2026).

But flexibility needs boundaries. Digital well-being must be part of the policy. Without it, work bleeds into personal time (C. & Padmakumari, 2026). Asynchronous-first communication helps. It normalizes offline periods. It protects the unwritten deal between firm and employee (C. & Padmakumari, 2026).

When location and output are separated, the firm proves it trusts the worker. This trust is a strong retention tool. Work-life integration is the goal now.

Table 7. Flexible Work Arrangements and Their Effects

Arrangement	Effect	Sources
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Ultra-flexible scheduling	Work fits personal peak hours; less burnout	(Moghimi, 2025)
Hybrid and remote work	More autonomy, trust, and psychological safety; less stress	(Mokoagow & Permadi, 2025)
Digital well-being rules	Protect personal time and boundaries	(C. & Padmakumari, 2026)
Asynchronous-first communication	Normalizes offline time; protects the psychological contract	(C. & Padmakumari, 2026)

4.3 Organizational Culture

Culture decides whether Gen Z stays. Employees commit when their values match the firm's mission. Purpose-driven culture is a strong retention driver. People stay when their ethics line up with the company's goals.

Leaders must earn that trust. CSR cannot be just for show. It must be part of daily

work. The same holds for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Real policies matter more than slogans (Kanwal et al., 2025).

Transparent leadership builds the trust people need to feel safe. Supportive and empowering leadership styles work best. For Gen Z, a caring manager is one of the strongest reasons to stay (Wei & Yazid, 2026).

Table 8. Organizational Culture Factors That Build Retention

Cultural factor	Why it matters	Sources
Values alignment	Commitment grows when personal and firm values match	(Revuru & Bandaru, 2024)
Purpose-driven work	Meaningful, ethical work keeps people engaged	(Sihite & Damanik, 2025)
Authentic CSR	Social responsibility must be real, not cosmetic	(Haris et al., 2025)
Real DEI policies	Inclusion must be practised, not just branded	(Kanwal et al., 2025)
Transparent leadership	Open communication builds trust and safety	(Budiadi et al., 2025)
Supportive leadership	Caring managers reduce turnover	(Wei & Yazid, 2026)

V. RESEARCH AGENDA

The review points to clear gaps. These gaps shape what researchers should do next. We organize the agenda in two parts. First, we list the emerging research questions. Then, we suggest better methods.

5.1 Emerging Research Questions

The literature leaves several questions open. Table 9 lists the main ones.

Table 9. Emerging Research Questions for Gen Z Retention Research

Question	Focus	Sources
Do specific talent management practices affect Gen Z retention differently across sectors?	Sector differences, with perceptions of organizational justice as mediator	(Hendrawan et al., 2024)
How does the "zone of tolerance" for work expectations shape retention?	How much expectation gap people accept; which identity levels matter most	(King et al., 2021)
Does the perceived authenticity of CSR moderate the link between talent development and commitment?	Whether real CSR strengthens affective commitment across groups	(Herrera & Heras-Rosas, 2021)
How do culture and regional labor norms shape inclusive talent management?	Social acceptance of differentiating high-potential employees	(Swales et al., 2014)
Does the ratio of investment in high-potential pools versus the broader workforce affect turnover?	Resource concentration, psychological contract, and turnover across levels	(GAJDA & Zbierowski, 2023)

Beyond these questions, the field needs a shared measurement tool. No accepted scale exists yet that covers the main talent management activities, such as development and flexibility. A universal scale would make results easier to compare across studies (Sinisterra et al., 2024). Researchers should also test how the psychological contract works. It may

mediate the link between segmented labor benefits and turnover intention. If so, firms can design benefits that actually reduce exits (Poisat et al., 2018; Kumar et al., 2023).

Technology deserves attention too. Studies should look at how digital fluency shapes remote talent development. Virtual

mentorship may build organizational commitment, but we do not know if this works the same across cultures (Holban & Bedrule-Grigoruță, 2025). Longitudinal work is needed on personalized career pathways. We still do not know how customized HR practices affect long-term retention. Researchers should test whether such pathways build lasting organizational identification (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019). Two more areas stand out. First, intrinsic motivation may moderate the link between leadership-led talent management and affective commitment. This needs direct testing (Harb & Trad, 2024). Second, we need a framework that links exclusive talent management, perceived organizational

justice, and employee behavior (O'Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2017). The same applies to talent philosophies. We do not yet know how inclusive versus exclusive approaches affect equity and engagement over time (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2015; Kirti et al., 2023).

5.2 Future Methodological Directions

The field also needs better methods. Table 10 summarizes what should change.

Table 10. Methodological Directions for Future Research

Direction	What it means	Sources
Longitudinal and mixed-methods designs	Track retention over time; see how needs evolve with context	(<u>King, 2015</u>)
Cross-industry comparisons	Test whether retention models hold across sectors	(<u>Gebbels et al., 2019</u>)
Comparative analyses beyond single firms	Find context-specific drivers of engagement	(<u>Tansley et al., 2013</u>)
Surveys combined with narratives	Combine quantitative data with stories to explain career moves	(<u>Achmad et al., 2023</u>)
Intervention and field studies	Use pretest-posttest designs to show causality and rule out reverse causality	(<u>Dries et al., 2021</u>)
Ethnographic work	Capture lived experience and the cultural triggers of staying or leaving	(<u>Crowley-Henry & Ariss, 2016</u>)

The reason is simple. Most current studies are cross-sectional. They cannot show cause and effect. Pretest-posttest intervention studies and longitudinal field designs can. They also help rule out reverse causality, where good outcomes are mistaken for causes (Dries et al., 2021). Ethnography adds depth. Interviews and observation reveal the cultural triggers behind long tenure. Surveys alone miss these (Crowley-Henry & Ariss, 2016).

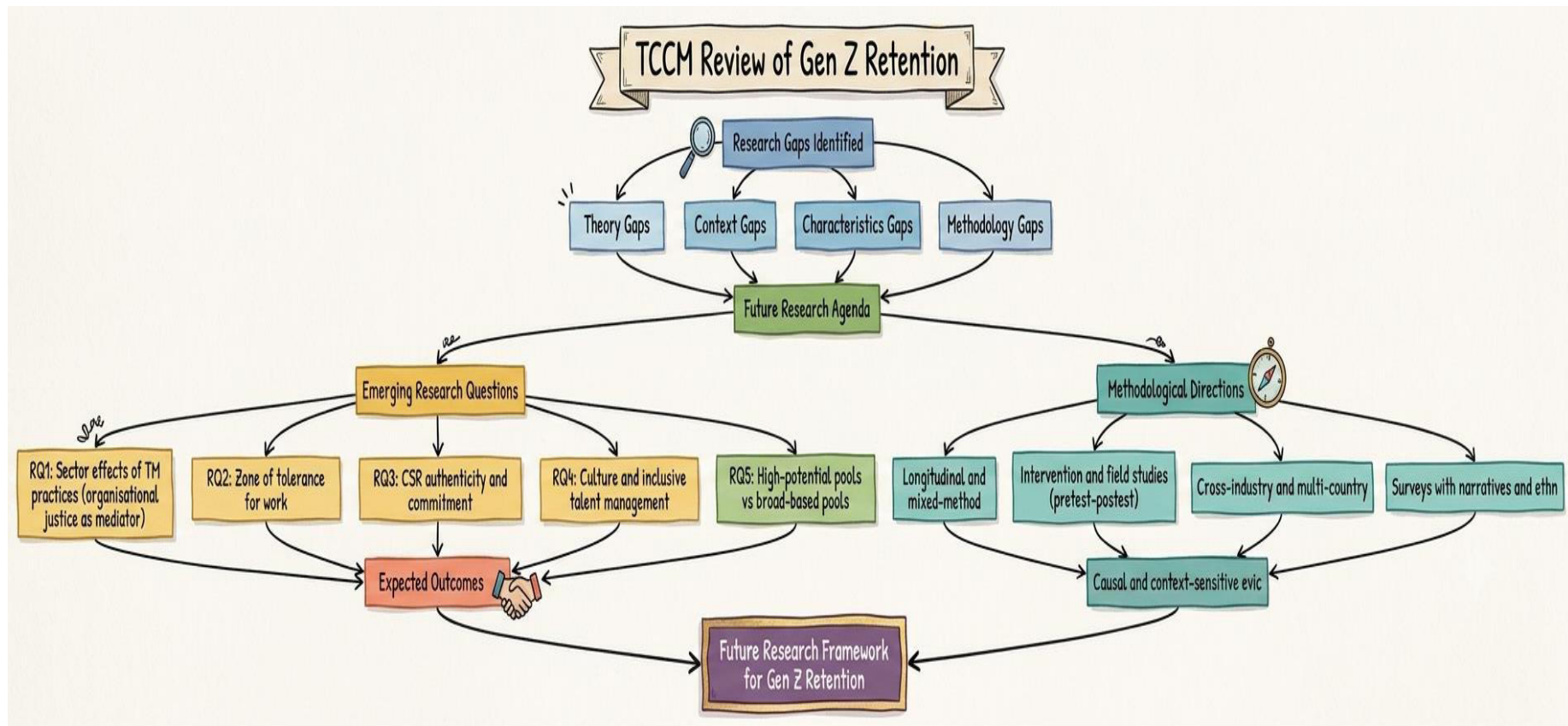


Figure 1: Proposed Future Research Framework

Figure 1 presents the proposed future research framework, which links the gaps identified in the TCCM synthesis to a set of research questions, methodological directions, and expected outcomes.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This review set out to map the talent management literature on Gen Z retention. We used the TCCM framework to organize the evidence. The findings show that inclusive and fair talent management matters. Firms that treat talent openly and justly are better placed to keep young workers (Akbar et al., 2025).

Theory needs to move beyond shareholder value. A pluralist view works better. It values the interests of employees as well as the firm. Talent management should also keep its promises. When firms say one thing and do another, trust breaks. The psychological contract then fails. Ethics matter too. Context-specific and ethical practices build integrity and well-being. These support long-term loyalty. A holistic view helps. It combines the emotional side of employees with data-driven HR work. Both are needed for a healthy and profitable firm.

Sustainability is a real retention tool. Firms that embed environmental and social goals in talent management stand out. This appeals to Gen Z values. Firms should also stop poaching talent. "Shared value" works better. Partnerships with communities extend the talent pipeline. They close

wider employment gaps. Internal strategies must match stakeholder goals. This supports long-term competitiveness.

Talent management must change its role. It should move from transactional oversight to building sustainable ecosystems. Employee well-being and organizational health then support each other.

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