

Generation Z: The Workers Who Want It All

Managing the most diverse generation in history

Members
Quarterly
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Generation Z may be the workforce of the future, but it also presents a whole new set of obstacles and opportunities when it comes to current professional norms in the workplace. Gen Z already represents 25% of the workforce and will likely increase to 30% by 2030. This group were born between the late 1990s and the early 2010's and are also referred to as Zoomers. The COVID-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on many young professionals and graduates and has forced employers to quickly adapt and develop new approaches to work, growth and collaboration. It remains to be seen what the extent of the damage will be, but it is clear that this will have a lasting impact on the current generation.

Here are some insights into how they think and the skills or coping mechanisms they are likely to use to overcome the challenges they are currently facing.

Their media habits may surprise you

Leave Netflix to Gen X and the boomers. Gen Z consumes less television than previous generations. 55 percent said they use their smartphones 5 or more hours per day and 26 percent use it for 10 or more hours per day which is more than any other type of device. They are also a lot savvier about how they engage online. They grew up wary of marketing and are actively trying to exert some control over the content to which they are exposed. For example, there has been a significant increase in the use of ad-blocking software by young people in the past few years. This attunement speaks to the fact that they value how exterior factors impact their mental health. They will also expect you to care about this.

They are tech-savvy and not afraid of entrepreneurship

As a group, Generation Z could be aptly characterized as having a go-getter attitude, an inclination towards activism and a propensity to dream big. Their digital history from pretty much day one has left them with high expectations when it comes to technology. They are quick to embrace improvements and innovations that help them customize and enhance their online experiences. There is an emerging body of research that suggests they see this mastery of technology as a competitive advantage they have compared to other generations. They are therefore eager to use it to their benefit in order to start their own enterprises and advance professionally.

They are eager to leave their mark

Over 80 percent of Gen Z say that finding themselves creatively is important. This is supported by the fact that over 25 percent post original video on a weekly basis, while 65 percent enjoy creating and sharing content on social media. More so than any previous generation, they're not just looking to consume entertainment - they want to participate in shaping and creating it.

They prioritize pay and stability

Gen Z are actually more money-driven than their Millennial predecessors. More than half emphasize pay as the most important consideration when applying for their first full-time job. They're also motivated by traditional benefits and are looking for things like healthcare coverage, a retirement plan and life insurance. Although perks like snacks, happy hour and gym memberships are appreciated, they will not be enough to pull the wool over a Gen Z's eyes if the rest of the package isn't up to par.

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They need direct and constructive performance feedback

Eager to get ahead, Generation Z is looking to work in an environment surrounded by people who will help them chart a path to promotion. Not satisfied to simply get the position and remain static for long periods of time, Gen Z expects to get performance feedback, hands-on training and managers who listen and value their opinions. Less likely to put up with the constraints of a traditional top-down structure, about 50 percent of Gen Z respondents claimed that they would "never" tolerate an unsupportive manager.

They are looking to make strong connections at work

Although Gen Z also appreciates the freedom to work independently, they see the workplace as a field for collaboration. They're inspired to make strong connections at work and will be quick to look elsewhere if they feel their team dynamic is dysfunctional. They want to take a collective view regarding their organization's values and being part of a team where their ideas are heard is of great importance.

The impact of COVID-19

Even prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, Gen Z was having to contend with the fact that they were entering a precarious and competitive job market. Enter a global pandemic and the career journeys they were just starting to embark upon were largely put on hold or seemed to vanish altogether. With an astonishing number of layoffs and furloughs not to mention the many graduates whose prospects seemed to evaporate overnight, employers have an important role to play in rebuilding the workforce and ensuring that its youngest members have the tools and resources they need to recover.

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