

# Understanding the Attitude of Gen Z towards Work Environment

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**ABSTRACT:** The environment including the scientific-technical conditions and cultural-economic relations which surrounds the generations is changing significantly; thus, the socialization of new generation's takes place under these altered circumstances, which means that they are not the same as the former young generations. Acceptance of new values and understanding of new behavioural patterns are difficult for parents, teachers and also for decision-makers. In this article a literature review is made by the way of collecting secondary data to understand the basic characteristics of Gen Z and to understand their attitude towards work.

**Key words:** Gen Z, Millennials, Work Environment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Understanding generations means understanding how changes in society affect people. And the world is changing at faster and faster rates, requiring us to keep pace in this understanding. This is not intended to divide people. But by recognizing how our past experiences affect our perceptions, we can actually keep in line more proficiency.

According to Howe and Strauss (2000), there are three factors which can define generations more precisely than age, but these factors are also related to age; therefore, they are connected to cohort experiences:

- Perceived membership: the self-perception of members, which starts with adolescence and becomes complete in adulthood;
- Common beliefs and behaviour: attitudes towards family, career, private life, politics, religion etc. and behaviour (decisions concerning job, marriage, children, health, crime, sex, drugs etc.), which characterize the generation;
- Common place/situation in history: the turning points of historical trends and significant events which affect the generation during the important years, such as adolescence or young adulthood.

Generation Z are widely defined as those born from the mid-to-late 1990s. They've grown up with instant and continuous access to almost unlimited educational resources. They're accustomed to seeing start-up companies become global giants in months and years rather than decades. And they've only known a world defined by exponential technological development.

Generation Z, born in the 1990's and raised in the 2000's during the most profound changes in at least a century, represent the milestone generational shift of this era. Generation Z represents the greatest generational shift the workplace has ever seen. Generation Z will present profound challenges to leaders, managers, supervisors, HR leaders, and educators in every sector of the workforce. They are highly engaged in a virtual peer ecosystem, while enjoying the discourse at least of protection and direction from parents, teachers and counsellors.

## II. OBJECTIVES

- To understand the characteristics of Gen Z
- To understand the expectations of Gen Z
- To create awareness of the attitude of Gen Z towards work environment

## III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted was literature review and data collection is through secondary data. Discussions with representatives of Gen Z, Millennials and Gen Y were made regarding the topic being researched.

## IV. LIMITATION

This study is solely based on secondary data. Understanding of concepts will have more clarity with quantitative data.

## Characteristics of Gen Z

When generations are studied, the first question is how to define generations, what kind of age limits and cohort-limits should be defined and

how many generations should be thought about. For a long time, it was accepted that three generations should be examined, and it seemed obvious that young, middle-aged and old generations should be differentiated. The initial point of the generation research originally included the examination of the above three groups, which were called X-generation (based on Coupland, 2007), baby-boomers and the mature. American professional researchers were curious about the behaviour of the latest generation, which they called the Generation Y and the Millennium generation (Bakewell–Mitchell, 2003; Howe–Strauss, 2000; Marconi, 2000). Yankelovich and his colleagues defined four groups in order to follow changes and owing to the market pressure. They identify the Echoes (born between 1979 and 1991; career, independence and credibility are important for them), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1978; competence, diversity and enterprise are important for them), baby-boomers (born between 1946 and 1964; individuality, youth and egoism are important for them) and the mature (born before 1946; duty, winning and team work are important for them).

**Growing up in a post 9/11 world during a recession-** Gen Z were developing their personalities and life skills in a socio-economic environment marked by chaso, uncertainty, volatility and complexity. (Casey E, 2013). They are mature and in control (CDC Survey 2014).

**Entrepreneurship is in their DNA-** Surrounded by DIY education and crowdsourcing, these teens dream of self-employment. They feel pressured to gain professional experience at a very early age. It is said that 72% of high school students want to start a business someday (compared to 64% of college students) and 61% of high school students want to be an entrepreneur rather than an employee (compared to 43% of college students). (Mintel, 2014).

They use social media as a research tool- 52% of teen use YouTube or other social media cites for their typical research works. (Pew research, 2012). This generation is much less active than previous generations. 51% of teens list gaming as their main source of entertainment. (Mintel, 2013). Their social circles are global, 81% of online teens use some kind of social media and 26% of Gen Z would need to fly to visit to most of their social media friends. (JWT intelligence and Pew Research center).

### **Gen Z expectation out of workplace**

One thing is for sure, Gen Z will not be looking for the same things as Millennials look for when they started out. Millennials were all about finding meaning in their jobs and how best to make the world a better place. With Gen Z coming of age during the recession, they are putting money and job security at the top of the list. Sure, they want to make a difference, but surviving and thriving are more important. The cultures that can foster that are the ones that will win the war for talent with Gen Z.

Being in survival mode has made Gen Z very competitive. In fact, 72 percent of Gen Z said we are competitive with those doing the same job. (Stillman and David, 2017). Where Millennials had more of a collaborative mentality with everyone pitching in and working together, they are more independent and want to be judged on their own merits.

Gen Z is true digital natives. Ninety-one percent of Gen Z said technological sophistication would impact their interest in working at a company. As the workplace continues to figure out how best to incorporate technology, this generation will lead the way. This will not feel natural, as usually it is the older generations to lead the way. However, this is the first time we have the youngest generation as an authority figure on something really important. This will change the typical corporate hierarchy.

More than technology, Gen Z believes that their generation will bring an important entrepreneurial spirit to work. They will constantly look for ways to streamline processes and procedures. One thing we hear from a lot of Gen Z is that we think the other generations overcomplicate things. We have grown up in a time where often the middleman has been eliminated so we will look for ways to do things more efficiently when we show up at the office. We truly are a DIY [do it yourself] generation and will bring this mentality with us to work.

### **Gen Z's attitude towards work environment.**

On one hand generation Z has increased need for freedom and independence, but on the other hand they also call for safety. They need a safety in work environment in the background of the job. This working environment consists of two parts: physical and social environment. In these two categories they want to feel freedom and safety at the same time.

On the physical side they need the physical workplace. This generation doesn't want to do telework, they prefer working in the office, at

the workplace to working at home, despite they think it is a good possibility at special life stages. Although they are extraordinarily mobile they also call for a place where they can sit down every working day. It doesn't mean they like every kind of offices e.g. boxes, but they need a determined structure of work, they need an own table or corner on a table. They need a calm and fix place in the constant accelerating life. In the respect of freedom, using Internet applications – such as own e-mails, Facebook at the workplace – is important for them, they need some minutes during working hours, when they can have fun or can spend time periods when they have no tasks.

On the social side there is a powerful need for personal connections and the experience of belonging to a community at the workplace. The generation Z would like to have personal meetings with colleagues or with the boss, they think personal teamwork is the real teamwork. This result also contributes to the finding that the zappers need constant point in the social dimension, because they prefer personal forums instead of digital solutions. They want to have the formalities such as dressing up, going to workplace, they need to have some common stories with their colleagues; they need this side of the corporate culture. For this generation being part of a community in the organization is very important which cannot be achieved in an environment without these safety elements.

Freedom is essential too, first of all they want to separate work and private life, they need to decide the dividing line between these two parts. They call for also to work in teams and to have the possibility to use online platforms as additional channels. To summarize the generation Z is an extraordinarily mobile and autonomous generation, but these attributes don't diminish the need for physical and social elements.

This is a big concern. Gen Z is very entrepreneurial. Ideally, leaders will find ways for Gen Z to own their projects and become more entrepreneurial. However, a lot of Gen Zs' figuring out how to create [job] security on their own will pursue hobbies that can generate income on the side. The difference with this generation is that they won't see getting a job or pursuing these income-generating hobbies as an either/or. They will likely try to do both. Sure, this happened with other generations, but it was kept quiet and referred to as moonlighting. Today it is known as a side hustle. From Uber driving to selling stuff online and beyond, Gen Z will for sure have side hustles.

The first comment everyone makes is that if they hire Gen Z, companies don't want Gen Z to

pursue an outside work opportunity when they are working for them from 9 to 5. This seems fair; however, who works from 9 to 5 anymore? If it's not OK to work on outside projects during the day, then why is it OK for Gen Z to day job to e-mail me and expect answers after 5? If a Gen Z is not getting the job done because he or she is too busy during the day working on something else that's a problem. But if they are getting Gen Z job done efficiently and effectively, there shouldn't be a problem. It is good to believe those workplaces that can handle Gen Z side hustles will find increased retention and loyalty amongst Gen Z

### **Common conflicts between Gen Z and other generation**

A big conflict will be talking to Gen Z about career paths. Millennials paved the way for pushing career paths to advance at a much faster pace. Gen Z will continue to push for fast advancement; however, it will go way beyond just pace. As mentioned, Gen Z suffers from FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). Because they can see on their social media feeds what everyone else is doing at all times, they will want to pursue multiple paths at the same time. In fact, 75 percent of Gen Z would be interested in a situation where they could have multiple roles within one place of employment. It will make complete sense to them to work in marketing two days a week and product development the other three. Ideally, managers can figure out a way to offer multiple career paths, but if they can't, creating environments where Gen Z can be exposed to as many roles as possible will be critical. Initiatives like rotation programs will hit a home run with Gen Z because they'll get to feel as though they are working in many areas and therefore not fear they are missing out on anything. (Stillman and David, 2017).

Another conflict that will arise with Gen Z is around communication. Gen Z's are truly the emoji generation. Where other generations think in words, they often think in symbols. The problem is that traditional communication on the job has been about being very clear and concise with what you want to say. It was about being black and white with not a lot of room for gray. With the use of emojis, there will be a lot more room for interpretation and ambiguity. For example, let's say I sent my boss an e-mail that said, "I sent the proposal to our client" and put a tears-of-joy emoji at the end. What if my boss didn't know what that emoji meant? My boss might think I was sweating, crying from sadness or had a problem.

### Challenges in employing Gen Z

The first step will be recruiting them (Gen Z). Smart companies are figuring out what value propositions they need to put forth. For Millennials, it was all about how they could make a difference in the world, even more than a paycheck. For Gen Z, it will be about salary and benefits first and how they will be able to advance. That's a huge shift. In addition, companies trying to recruit Gen Z are realizing that it is all about hyper-customization. This generation has only known a world where they can download their own playlists, design their own Nike shoes and create a customized college degree. For Gen Z, everything has always been about standing out from the crowd. Therefore, it will be important that each Gen Z recruit feel that the job being offered to them is unique. Our national studies show how Gen Z is looking for customization: 56 percent of Gen Z would rather write their own job description than be given a generic one, and 62 percent of Gen Z would rather customize their own career plan than have the organization lay one out for them. (Stillman and David, 2017).

Companies on the leading edge are getting on our radar as early as possible. Because we are in survival mode, we are focused on creating security at a younger age. Fifty-five percent of Gen Z feels pressure to gain professional experience in high school. Traditional industries are struggling with Gen Z because they are not on our radar. We are daydreaming out the window [about working] at companies like Netflix or Google. We aren't likely thinking about agriculture or manufacturing. Usually companies think about reaching out to college students or they offer internships. But innovative companies are looking for ways to partner with high schools to get on the radar even sooner.

The organizational needs for adapting successfully to the environment, which are generated by this diverse set of challenges, embody in three cohesive field of management. Firstly, there is a significant need for highly empowered, skillful employees who can cope with uncertainty and manage non-routine and non-repetitive processes; secondly a flat and organic organization with decreased structure, simple rules and effective flow of information; and finally a new set of managerial tools (Pralhad& Hamel, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995; Eisenhardt, Brown, 1998; Molleman, Van Delft & Slomp, 2001; Davis, Eisenhardt & Bingham, 2009).

### Gen Z attitude towards teamwork

The team work as a separate category is interesting related to this generation. On one hand they are able to work in teams, they are accustomed to team work in the university. On the other hand they rather think about team work as an expectation that means they have to be able to work together.

Personal team work is the real teamwork for this generation, where everyone sits down at one place and brainstorm. The team spirit is better at personal meetings; it is difficult to be replaced online. Despite they are able to work with each other in an online environment too. In my opinion it is functioning that everyone sends his/her part to the others and so there will be a complete one, but it is not real team work. They miss in online environment the personal contact. They use expressions related to online team work such as not real team work", can't arrange a good team spirit".

### V. CONCLUSION

Gen Z is eager to contribute and make their mark. The key is to respect them, nurture them and help focus their energy and enthusiasm. Companies that embrace Gen Z and step up retention efforts will be rewarded with their hard work, good ideas and passionate engagement.

Armed with new insights, attitudes and expectations of Gen Z and Millennial workers, employers are better equipped to put tailored programs into place in order to better recruit, engage and retain these valuable workers. Successful organizations today, and in the future, will need to implement important workplace processes and programs including: collaboration, career development or advancement, financial stability, technology, managerial training and importantly work-life balance.

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