THE GEN Z BLUEPRINT

Building a Workforce that Thrives on Innovation and Inclusion

Q1 – 2024

ABOUT US

FSC is an independent creative agency based in Peckham, London. We partner with clients ranging from global corporates to UK start-ups to deliver exceptional strategic and creative work, using a unique, lean agency model to guarantee results while avoiding unnecessary costs and the usual agency bullshit.

LUCY KEMP

Lucy has spent over two decades working across different industries, developing a keen understanding of employee experience strategy. She is committed to creating the workplaces we all wish we worked in, by listening to and valuing everyone's input, and applying her EX Audit methodology. Her approach is grounded in data, and she actively engages in research to genuinely grasp what employees desire from their experience at work, so that she can advise companies on how they can do the right thing for the people that work for them. This paper is one of four she's releasing this year, aiming to provide actionable insights into improving workplace environments for all generations, including those just entering the workforce and those already in it.

Justin Small
CEO

Avalyn Kasahara
Head of Impact

Daria Petrillo
Senior Art Director

Katie Smith
Designer

Jo Duffy
Managing Editor

IMAGE CREDITS

Pg. 2 Photo by Tom Barrett (Unsplash)
Pgs. 4-5 Photo by Matheus Bertelli (Pexels)
Pg. 7 Photos by Keira Burton (Pexels), Ketut Subiyanto (Pexels), Tima Miroshnichenko (Pexels)
Pg. 16 Life Matters (Pexels)
Pg. 22 Tim Gouw (Pexels)
Pg. 33 Nicholas Green (Unsplash)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHY YOU NEED TO READ THIS REPORT

In an age where the workforce is rapidly changing, understanding Gen Z – the youngest entrants – is crucial for any forward-thinking organisation. Using a blend of research methods that included a comprehensive survey, focus group discussions and one-to-one chats, we spoke to over 2,000 members of Gen Z to shed light on their unique aspirations, preferences and needs as they navigate the professional landscape. We also talked to around 50 managers to get their views on the benefits and challenges of working with Gen Z. We hope our findings will provide the organisations employing them with the insights and tools to attract and, more importantly, retain them.

BUT WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Well, aside from the sheer numbers, there's the undeniable impact on the bottom line. Companies that can effectively tap into Gen Z's potential are likely to witness increased innovation, better brand loyalty, and a workforce that's engaged and motivated. Conversely, those that ignore or misinterpret their needs risk high turnover, decreased morale, and being outpaced by competitors. Alongside this we know that what the incoming generations want filters up within 2-5 years — so by getting it right for your Gen Z employees, you're actually getting it right for everyone.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Global Mindset:** Gen Z, often dubbed "Zoomers", are not just millennials rebranded. Having grown up in an interconnected digital age, they possess a global perspective, contrasting starkly with the previous generations.

- **Navigating a Complex Landscape:** Their formative years, marred by socio-political upheavals, the ubiquity of social media, and the global pandemic, have made them resilient, adaptable, and hyper-aware. They seek stability but also purpose in their professional pursuits.

- **Pay Still Matters:** While Gen Z highly values purpose and aligning with a company's ethos, this doesn't overshadow their practical desire for competitive pay and benefits.

- **Adaptability in Management:** Gen Z's distinct characteristics necessitate a paradigm shift in management. Transparent leadership, real-time communication, continuous learning opportunities, and an emphasis on psychological safety are no longer "nice-to-haves", but essentials.

- **Future Facing:** With the blurring lines of work and life, the advocacy for flat organisational structures, and a keen sense of social and political consciousness, Gen Z is poised to redefine tomorrow's workplace. Companies must stay abreast of these shifts to not only attract but also retain this dynamic workforce.

In this white paper, we unpack these findings, delving deep into the intricacies of what makes Gen Z tick, and exploring how companies can adapt and evolve to foster a symbiotic relationship with this new generation. The insights provided are backed by rigorous research, ensuring companies are equipped with actionable strategies to integrate Gen Z successfully into their workforce.

Prepare, adapt, and invest in understanding Gen Z. The future of your organisation might very well depend on it.

INTRODUCTION

WHO ARE GEN Z?

Let's start by defining our subject. Born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z is a generation raised in a digital age, where information is at the fingertips, and global connectivity is a norm rather than an exception. But to define them merely by their technological prowess would be a vast oversimplification.

Their formative years encompassed events of major global significance, from the 2008 financial crisis to the rise of social movements like Black Lives Matter and #MeToo, and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. Such events have instilled in them a sense of pragmatism, resilience, and a strong desire for authenticity and transparency in all facets of life, including their professional endeavours.

MEET THE MICRO-GENERATIONS

In unravelling the rich tapestry of this generation's workplace inclinations, it's important to acknowledge and understand that there are further generational divisions that fall under the broad umbrella of Gen Z.

After all, as McKinsey[1] notes, "The generation spans a wide range: the oldest Gen Zers have jobs and mortgages, while the youngest are still preteens".

Far from a monolithic entity, Generation Z comprises varied sub-cohorts at very different stages of life and development, each with its own unique pulse. As such, we've identified the three key 'micro-generations' that make up Gen Z:

[1] "What is Gen Z?", McKinsey & Company, https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-gen-z

ZILLENNIALS

The elder segment of Gen Z are commonly referred to as the 'Zillennials': born in the shadow of the early 2000s, they share some traits in common with their generational predecessors, the Millennials, while also pioneering many that Gen Z are most strongly associated with. Old enough to remember DVDs and flip phones, but young enough to have always had internet access, they are seasoned online navigators who value creative expression, authenticity, and social consciousness.

Currently in their twenties, with the oldest among them turning 27 this year, this cohort is predominantly already in the workforce and beginning to make their mark. They have taken the millennial's hustle culture and refined it, with side gigs becoming as standard as a morning brew, and a preference for remote and hybrid work arrangements offering up new opportunities when it comes to entrepreneurship and passion projects.

CORE ZS

Next up are the middle children of Gen Z — the cohort we will term the 'Core Zs'. Born into the upheaval and uncertainty of a post-9/11 world, and coming of age amid the crescendo of social media platforms and smartphones, they are true digital natives with rebellious spirits and well-developed social consciences. They resonate with activism, social justice, and are the driving force behind viral trends.

This cohort are on the cusp of adulthood: currently in their late teens and early twenties, the Core Z demographic encompasses both university students and those just entering the workforce. And those who are already working aren't just in it for a paycheck; they're crafting their personal brand narratives, paying close attention to company values, questioning received wisdom, and participating in the gig economy's boom on their own terms.

Z ALPHAS

Finally, we cannot overlook our youngest set, the 'Z Alphas', who have yet to dip their toes in the workforce but will certainly shape its future. Having grown up amidst global unrest and the unprecedented disruption of the pandemic, this group of teens and pre-teens are resilient, adaptable, dynamic, and innately tech-savvy.

Sharing traits with both the rest of Gen Z and the generation that succeeds them — Generation Alpha — this cohort are the most likely to have navigated an ipad before they could read, or appeared on their parents social media long before they were old enough to have their own accounts. They are just as likely to have a favourite influencer as they are a favourite TV show, having grown up consuming online content the way previous generations watched cartoons. When the time comes, these unique communicators and masters of creative expression are bound to bring new ways of doing things to the workplace — and it would pay dividends to be ready for them.

GLOBALLY, 25% OF GEN ZERS EXPECT TO CHANGE THEIR GENDER IDENTITY AT LEAST ONCE IN THEIR LIFETIME.

DIVERSE BY DEFINITION

Generation Z are known for having more advanced and progressive views on gender than any other generation. According to a report by Harvard Business Review[2], 56% of Gen Zers in the U.S. know someone who uses a gender neutral pronoun, and globally, 25% of Gen Zers expect to change their gender identity at least once in their lifetime.

Yet despite these fluid personal outlooks, our research reveals an intriguing gender-based divergence within Gen Z. Female Zoomers exhibit a strong inclination towards workplaces that advocate for equality and social responsibility. They're not just looking for a seat at the table; they want to reshape the table, bringing sustainability and ethical practices into the core business strategy. Male

Zoomers, while equally conscious of societal issues, place a premium on innovation and technology. They are drawn to companies that push the envelope in tech and offer a playground for their ambition to develop groundbreaking solutions. Gender fluid and non-binary Gen Zers are the harbingers of inclusivity, seeking out companies that not only support but celebrate diversity. They urge a departure from traditional gender norms and advocate for a spectrum of identities to be recognised and respected within the corporate culture.

Diversity itself is another cornerstone of Gen Z's identity. They are the most ethnically diverse generation so far,[3] and their expectations of their employers reflect this. They demand inclusivity not just in hiring practices but also in organisational culture, decision-making processes, and leadership representation.

Taken together, these micro-generations — alongside the gendered and culturally diverse perspectives of this generation — form a kaleidoscope of expectations and potential. Gen Z is not just influencing trends; they are redefining the very fabric of the professional world. Companies that acknowledge and embrace these complex layers will not only secure the loyalty of Gen Z, but also tap into a generational goldmine capable of catalysing a culture of innovation and inclusivity.

AN EMERGING MAJORITY IN YOUR WORKFORCE

A workplace trends report by Glassdoor[4] pinpointed 2024 as the year that Gen Z will overtake Boomers in the workforce for the first time ever. By 2025, Gen Z will account for 27% of the global workforce[5], and by

[2] "Companies Can't Ignore Shifting Gender Norms", Harvard Business Review, https://hbr.org/2020/04-companies-cant-ignore-shifting-gender-norms
[3] "Nearly half of post-Millennials are racial or ethnic minorities", Pew Research Center, https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/11/15/early-benchmarks-show-post-millennials-on-track-to-be-most-diverse-best-educated-generation-yet/psdt-11-15-18_postmillennials-00-00/shifting-gender-norms

GENERATION Z WILL ACCOUNT FOR:

27% OF THE GLOBAL WORKFORCE BY 2025

58% OF THE GLOBAL WORKFORCE BY 2030

the end of this decade, they will command a significant majority alongside the millennials, at over 58%.[6] Their influence, therefore, isn't just imminent — it's already here. With it, they bring fresh perspectives, innovative thinking, and a demand for workplaces to align with their values. But what exactly are these values, and how do they compare and contrast with previous generations? While Baby Boomers and Gen X might have prioritised job stability, and Millennials the quest for purpose, Gen Z seeks a harmonious blend of both. They yearn for workplaces where purpose and pay coexist, where flexibility doesn't come at the cost of stability, and where personal and professional growth happen in tandem.

THE STORIES BEHIND THE STATISTICS

You might wonder, with so much already said about Gen Z, why we decided to embark on this research. The answer lies in the nuances. Many broad strokes paint Gen Z, but we felt the canvas lacked the detail — a deeper understanding that can only be drawn from meticulous research, both qualitative and quantitative. Driven by the desire to offer more than just generalities, we adopted a multi-pronged research approach. We blended qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, with quantitative tools like large-scale surveys and data analytics.

The insights derived aren't just statistics — they're the stories, aspirations, and, sometimes, concerns of a generation eager to carve their niche. Our status as experts in this domain ensured a meticulous, informed, and comprehensive exploration of the Gen Z landscape.

In the sections that follow, we will unveil our findings, some of which will challenge popular perceptions, while others will reaffirm what many have suspected. But all of them will be instrumental for businesses to effectively engage with and harness the potential of Generation Z.

---

4 "Glassdoor's 2024 Workplace Trends", Glassdoor, https://www.glassdoor.com/research/workplace-trends-2024
5 "How is Gen Z changing the workplace?", Zurich Insurance, https://www.zurich.com/en/media/magazine/2022/how-will-gen-z-change-the-future-of-work
6 "How prepared are employers for Generation Z?", PwC, https://www.pwc.com/ug/en/press-room/how-prepared-are-employers-for-generation-z-.html

"GEN Z DARE TO QUESTION MY AUTHORITY,

IT'S SHOCKING."

– Director, Media Company

ZOOMERS VS BOOMERS: PERCEPTIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS OF GEN Z
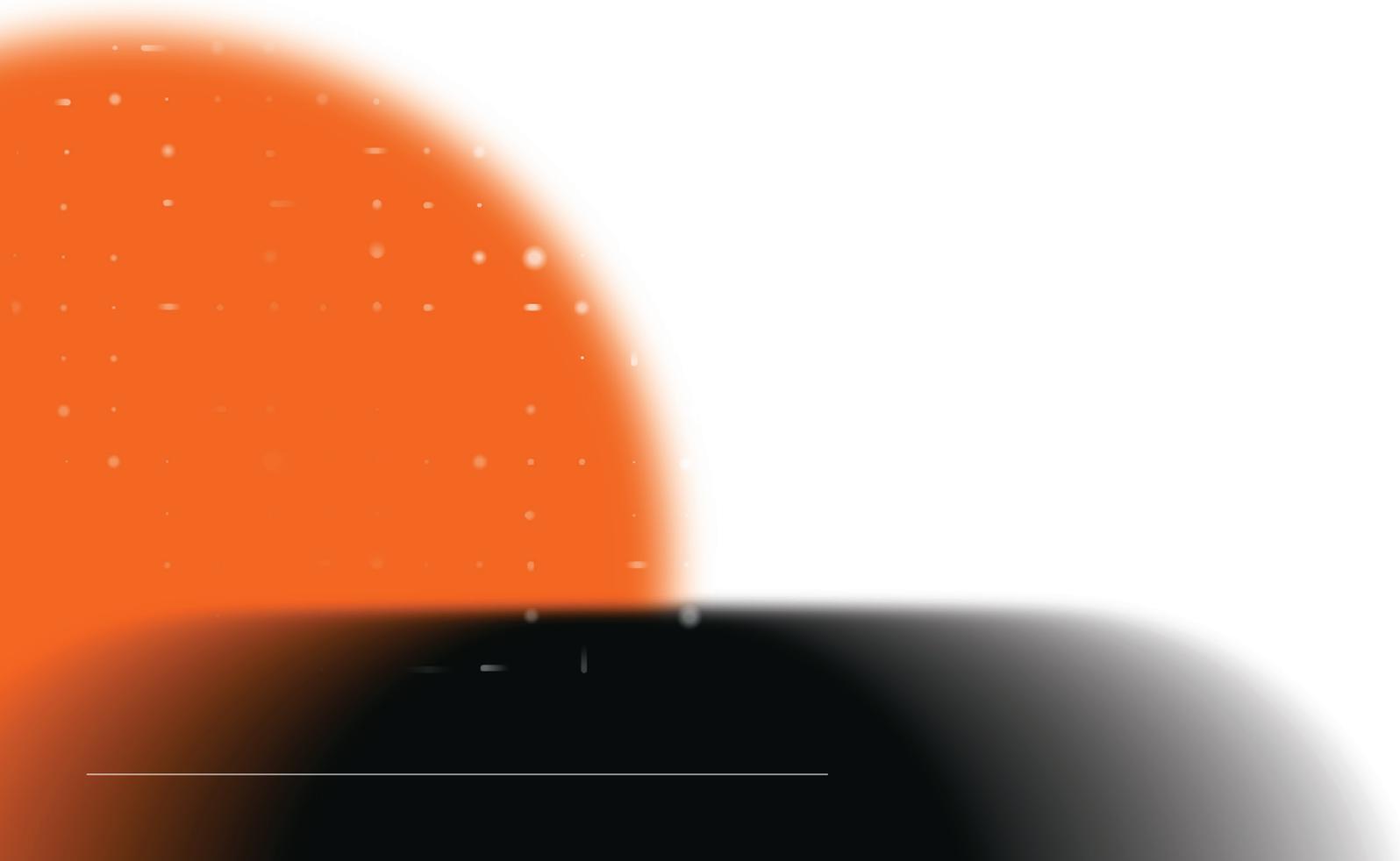
Gen Z, or the 'Zoomers' as they are colloquially known, often find themselves cast in the vast, overarching shadows of their predecessors — particularly the Baby Boomers.

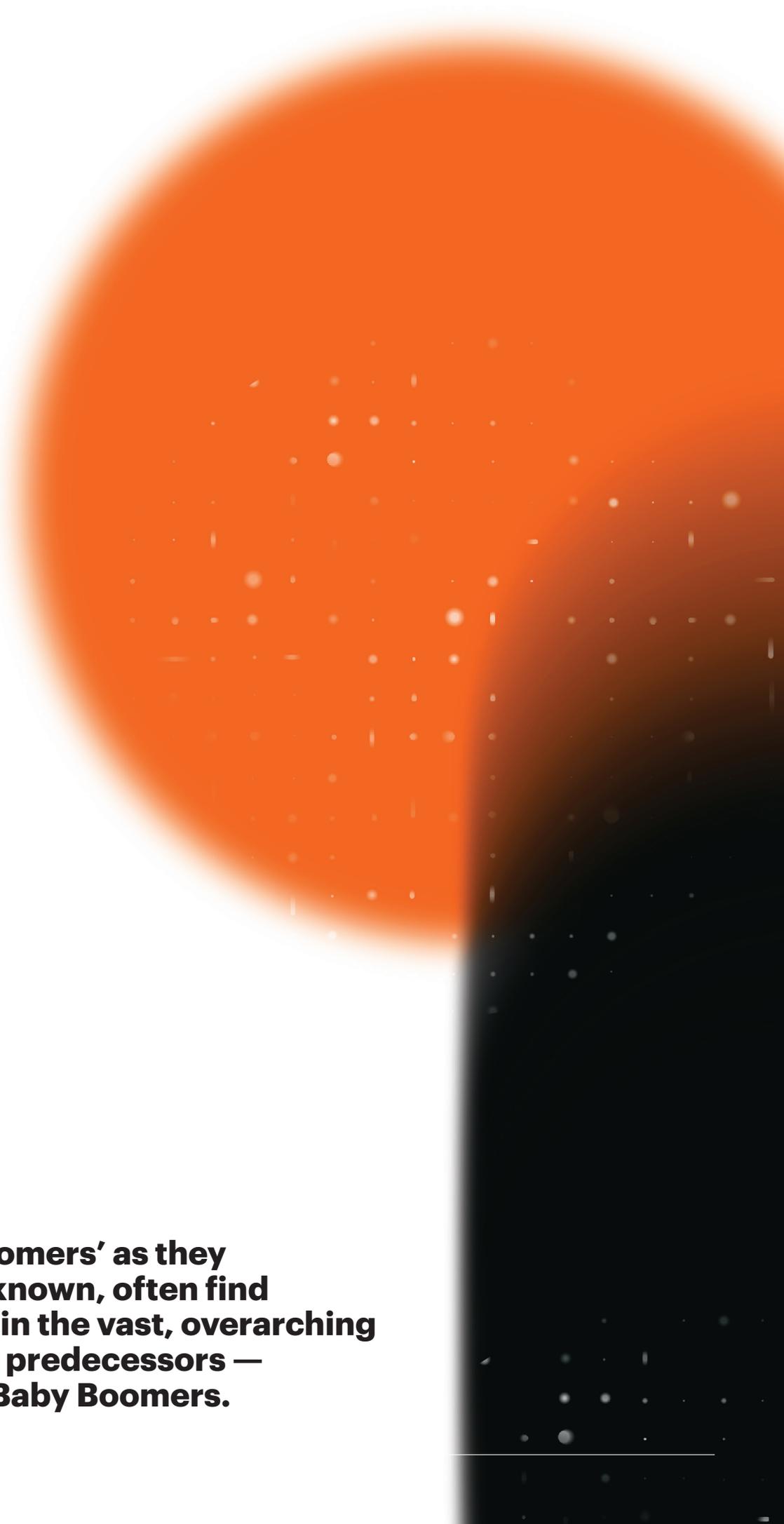# TECHNOLOGY AND CONNECTION ARE INTRINSIC TO GEN Z'S APPROACH TO THE WORLD AND THEIR WORK,

GETTING PAST THE STEREOTYPES

No generation escapes some degree of criticism levelled at them by their predecessors and successors, and while Boomers have been known to stereotype Zoomers as 'work-shy', 'entitled' or 'overly sensitive' due to the importance they place on work-life balance and mental health, many Zoomers will retort that Boomers are 'out of touch' with regards to both technology and workplace values.

EXIT

72% OF GEN Z HAVE EITHER LEFT OR WOULD CONSIDER LEAVING A JOB BECAUSE THEIR EMPLOYER DID NOT OFFER A FEASIBLE FLEXIBLE WORK POLICY

While playful banter about generational quirks is nothing new, it's vital to cut through these narratives to truly understand the psyche of Gen Z — and with 2024 slated to be the year that they overtake Boomers in the workforce, it's more important now than ever. Failure to look beyond generalisations will leave organisations in the dust, as the rise of Gen Z-led businesses continues.

THE DEFINITION: BEYOND DIGITAL NATIVES

Defining Gen Z as mere "digital natives" would be akin to defining a Monet painting by its frame — technically relevant, but missing the essence. After all, this generation has never known a world without the internet. Technology and connection are intrinsic to their approach to the world and their work, but because it is all they have known, it does not define them. The fact that "digital natives" is a label more often ascribed to Gen Zs by older generations is telling; while the technology they use is certainly integral to the fabric of their lives, it is no more significant to their individual identities than the invention of television was to the Boomers.

BUT BECAUSE IT IS ALL THEY HAVE KNOWN, IT DOES NOT DEFINE THEM.

54%

OF GEN Z WANT TO START THEIR OWN COMPANY.

Instead, we should be looking beyond this focus on Gen Z's digital habits and considering the economic, socio-political upheavals that have shaped their formative years. These events, alongside rapidly evolving approaches to parenting, are what drive their personal values. As a generation, their worldview is more expansive and developed than any of the recent generations that have come before them. They are pragmatic, yet optimistic, and above all have a collective strong belief that they can — and must — be agents of change.

MODERN MINDSETS IN A TRADITIONAL WORLD

Gen Z's attitudes towards work have already been the subject of much scrutiny, as well as a certain amount of hand-wringing from older generations. It's clear that they place a high value on flexibility and work-life balance;

according to a recent LinkedIn survey,[7] 72% of Gen Z have either left or would consider leaving a job because their employer did not offer a feasible flexible work policy.

Additionally, there is a rise in the desire to work for themselves. ONS analysis shows one in five (21%) 16-21 year-olds say it is likely they will be self-employed at some point in the future,[8] and according to a recent Nielson study, about 54% of Gen Z want to start their own company.[9] Despite the upheaval to the self-employment market post the COVID-19 pandemic, many Gen Zs are looking to find the earliest opportunity to go solo. With this in mind, the war for talent, as well as a restructure of working practices, is key for any organisation looking to bring talent in house.

---

[7] "5 Tips to Attract and Retain Gen Z", LinkedIn, https://www.linkedin.com/business/talent/blog/talent-acquisition/how-to-attract-and-retain-young-talent

[8] "More Young People Are Choosing Self-Employment – But Is There A Gap Between Dreams And Reality?", Youth Employment UK, https://www.youth employment.org.uk/more-and-more-young-people-are-choosing-to-become-self-employed-b ut-is-there-a-gap-between-expectations-and-reality/

[9] "A Majoirty of Gen Z Aspires to be Entrepreneurs and Perhaps Skip College. Why That Might Be A Good Idea", Forbes, https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernhard schroeder/2020/02/18/a-majority-of-gen-z-aspires-to-be-entrepreneurs-and-perhaps-delay-or-skip-college-why-that-might-be-a-good-idea/?sh=2cd7d09e5a45

AS A GENERATION, THEIR WORLD VIEW IS MORE EXPANSIVE AND DEVELOPED THAN ANY OF THE RECENT GENERATIONS THAT PRECEDE THEM. THEY ARE PRAGMATIC YET OPTIMISTIC, AND ABOVE ALL, HAVE A STRONG COLLECTIVE BELIEF THAT THEY CAN — AND MUST — BE AGENTS OF CHANGE.

Z IS FC
ZEITGI

CRISIS AS BACKGROUND NOISE

For starters, Gen Z's earliest global memories are often not of boundless optimism but of profound challenges. Economic crises like the 2008 financial meltdown, major geopolitical shifts, and the more recent global pandemic have given them a front-row seat to the vulnerabilities of our interconnected world. These events weren't mere news updates but tangible experiences, dictating job prospects for themselves and their families, altering their educational experiences, and reshaping their daily lives.

Yet, it's not all about crisis. This generation has also witnessed incredible strides in science,

technology, and even social justice. They've seen monumental shifts in attitudes towards LGBTQ+ rights, waves of environmental movements led by their peers, and the unparalleled acceleration of digital technology.

#LIFE

Unlike generations before them, social media has been prevalent in the ecosystems of Gen Zs from their formative years — and its daily presence in their lives is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it has democratised information, provided platforms for underrepresented voices, and fostered global connections. Gen Z can rally behind global causes, collaborate on innovations, and share perspectives across borders like never before.

Yet, the omnipresence of these platforms has its caveats. The pressure to curate perfect lives, the blurring lines between genuine connections and digital facades, and the instant but sometimes shallow gratification of likes and shares, has influenced their perceptions of self-worth and success. Moreover, with news — both real and fake — at their fingertips, they're constantly bombarded with global challenges, further influencing their worldview and perceived role in shaping the future.

OR EIST

One cannot fully appreciate the psyche of Gen Z without first understanding the tumultuous and transformative environment that has shaped their formative years. Their realities, unlike any generation before them, have been moulded by ceaseless change, both exhilarating and alarming.

GEN Z'S EARLIEST GLOBAL MEMORIES ARE OFTEN NOT OF BOUNDLESS OPTIMISM BUT OF PROFOUND CHALLENGES.

TURMOIL MEETS TENACITY

One might think that growing up amidst such turmoil might breed cynicism or apathy. However, our research suggests the opposite. While they are certainly more realistic — some might even say pragmatic — about the challenges they face, they also possess a resilient and proactive attitude. They're not just waiting for change; they're driving it.

Against the backdrop of these global shifts and the ever-present hum of social media, Gen Z's priorities, as detailed in our research, start to make profound sense. As we delve deeper into their specific aspirations and concerns, it's essential to keep this broader picture in mind. It is only against this vibrant tapestry of change and challenge that the true contours of Gen Z's Employee Experience can be fully understood.

"WE KNOW THAT ALL GEN Z WANTS IS TO HAVE AN IMPACT –

SO WE GET TO PAY THEM LESS."

– Hiring Manager, FTSE 500 Company

HOW BUSINESSES NEED TO ADAPT

Gen Z's entry into the workforce is not just another generational shift; it's a transformation. With their unique communication styles, progressive values, and enormous creative potential, Gen Z require — and deserve — managers who are ready to take a proactive role in recognising their unique talents, nurturing their developing skill sets, and helping to lay strong foundations for their accelerating influence on tomorrow's business world.

(CHANGE IS GOOD)

THIS IS A GENERATION USED TO DRIVING THEIR OWN LEARNING, AND SEEKING ANSWERS FROM THEIR PEERS, SO OPEN YOUR LEARNING PLATFORMS AND RECORDS TO INCLUDE LEARNING NOT PRESCRIBED BY THE ORGANISATION.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

The Insight: With their broad exposure to global cultures and diverse experiences, Gen Z doesn't appreciate blanket solutions. In our research, 82% of respondents emphasised the importance of personalisation in their work environment. Whether it's in the type of projects they take on, feedback they receive, or L&D opportunities presented, they seek a touch of personal relevance.

MANAGERIAL ACTION:

- **Customised Career Pathways and Tailored Learning:** Customise development pathways to align with individual goals, rather than the generic 'job specific' routes, and offer targeted learning based on personal skill gaps (as opposed to only offering what you already have).

- **Contextual Feedback:** Make feedback specific to individual experiences and aspirations and use the Situation, Impact, and Behaviour method for extra impact.

- **Flexible Benefits:** Standardised benefit packages might not appeal to everyone. Consider offering a menu of benefits. Some might prioritise mental health support, while others could value further education grants or flexible work schedules more.

- **Regular Check-ins:** Beyond formal reviews, encourage managers to check in with their teams regularly. These informal conversations can offer insights into individual preferences and adjustments needed.

Your ROI: Personalisation enhances employee engagement, reduces turnover, improves performance, and fosters a culture of individual growth and satisfaction.

GET (INTER)PERSONAL

The Insight: As the digital age has evolved, Gen Z has become increasingly accustomed to remote and hybrid work environments. However, this digital landscape, while offering flexibility, might inadvertently deprive them of the in-person interactions that traditionally foster soft skill development. These skills — ranging from interpersonal communication to team collaboration and conflict resolution — were most often learned organically through face-to-face engagements when in-office work was the norm. Our research showed that 78% of Gen Z employees felt that they missed out on developing certain interpersonal skills due to the predominance of virtual communications in their early career stages which, for many, coincided with the pandemic.

MANAGERIAL ACTION:

- **Interactive Soft Skills Sessions:** Focused on enhancing communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability. Bring the team together in person for these sessions, rather than providing hybrid or digital-only options.

- **Mentorship Programs:** Pair Gen Z employees with seasoned professionals within your own organisation. Consider their personal career pathways and match them with someone who took a similar route (e.g. developing through managerial or speciality).

- **Encourage Collaborative Projects:** Allow Gen Z employees to collaborate on projects with colleagues from diverse departments. This not only broadens their organisational understanding but also helps them practise and refine their interpersonal skills.

- **Feedback Loops on Interpersonal Dynamics:** During feedback sessions, apart from job-specific pointers, focus on how Gen Z employees are interacting with their peers, superiors, and subordinates. Offer constructive feedback on areas of improvement, reinforcing the importance of soft skills in career advancement.

Your ROI: Enhancing soft skills builds a well-rounded workforce, enhances team dynamics, and prepares employees for leadership roles.

GET CLEAR ON TRANSPARENT LEADERSHIP

The Insight: For Gen Z, transparency isn't just about openness; it's tied deeply to authenticity and trustworthiness. They've matured in a world replete with instances of misinformation, fake news, and corporate scandals, making them critical consumers of information. As digital natives, they have the tools to fact-check, verify, and explore multiple perspectives before forming an opinion. This has fostered a deep-seated need for genuine interactions and truthfulness. Their demand for transparency stems from a yearning for leaders who not only share information but also context, rationale, and even

vulnerabilities. Our research highlights that a significant 80% view transparency as a pivotal factor in leadership, with many equating it directly to trustworthiness and respect. In their eyes, transparency isn't a bonus — it's the foundation of authentic leadership.

MANAGERIAL ACTION:

- **Open-door Policies:** Implement this not just in name, but genuinely in practice. Allocate time to be amongst your teams, proactively understand ground-level dynamics, and engage in candid discussions.

- **Tell It Like It Is:** Authenticity is the key. Leaders should be present not just during triumphant moments but during challenges as well. Explain the "why" behind decisions, sharing the logic and emotion behind strategy shifts, market challenges, or organisational pivots.

- **Feedback Loops:** Cultivate an environment where feedback is a two-way street. Encourage leaders to actively seek feedback ensuring a culture of continuous improvement and mutual respect.

Your ROI: Increases trust and loyalty, encourages openness, and strengthens leadership credibility.

COMMUNICATE IN ALL THE RIGHT WAYS

The Insight: Born in the age of real-time updates and instant gratification, Gen Z has a distinct communication rhythm. Their early exposure to the likes of WhatsApp, Snapchat, and real-time notifications has shaped an inherent expectation of swift interactions. This is a generation that's more likely to ask Google than wait for a textbook answer. Yet, it's not just about speed; it's about resonance. They favour platforms and feedback that speak directly to them, cutting through generic jargon or vague directives. Over 70% of our surveyed Gen Z respondents indicated they would benefit from more frequent touchpoints, moving away from the traditional, often dreaded, annual review process. Their yearning for immediacy is less about impatience and more about a desire for continuous growth and clarity.

MANAGERIAL ACTION:

- **Digital Platforms:** Harness platforms like Slack, Trello, or Microsoft Teams to mimic the real-time interactions Gen Z is accustomed to.

- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Pulse surveys rather than annual surveys are the way forward for this. Monthly,

or even weekly, check-ins can bridge communication gaps and ensure alignment with organisational goals.

- **Regular Reviews:** Peer reviews and mentorship can offer diverse viewpoints and richer understanding. A notable 68% expressed an appreciation for such multifaceted performance insights, which can be particularly empowering in shaping their career trajectory.

Your ROI: Boosts clarity and alignment with organisational goals, and accelerates professional development.

DON'T REST ON YOUR L&D LAURELS

The Insight: Gen Z, more than any other generation before them, is acutely aware of the rapidly evolving landscape of almost every industry. Having grown up in a time of profound technological leaps, political shifts, and social changes, they recognise the impermanence of today's skills in tomorrow's world. A static skill set, for them, equates to stagnation or even regression. Our survey highlighted that a staggering 85% view continuous learning not just as a bonus or a checkbox, but as an intrinsic part of their professional journey. They've observed technological obsolescence in real-time – think of the swift transitions from DVDs to streaming or from traditional phones to smartphones. They're not just looking to climb a corporate ladder; they're looking to evolve, adapt, and be equipped for the multiple career pivots they anticipate in their future. For Gen Z, the boundary between work and learning is blurred. Every project, every role, every day is an opportunity to learn and grow. And they expect their employers to acknowledge and support this aspiration.

MANAGERIAL ACTION:

- **Open Up Learning Opportunities:** Do not rely on top-down learning, always driven by the business strategy. This is a generation used to driving their own learning, and seeking answers from their peers, so open your learning platforms and records to include learning not prescribed by the organisation.

- **Upskill Your L&D:** Distribute your learning and development team across business units, allowing them to embed with those that they are guiding learning for. Encourage them to become experts themselves in the business needs, so they can support in creating learning opportunities that meet the needs of the employees in their unit.

78%

- **Drive Coaching Practices:** Upskill your managers on coaching methodologies rather than directive action.

- **Encourage Cross-discipline Learning:** Gen Z are less likely to be limited by their job title, expecting to be multi-disciplined or neo-generalists. Find opportunities to drive cross-discipline learning, and do not limit an individual's learning path to that which drives a single specialism.

Your ROI: A culture of continuous learning encourages innovation, collaboration and growth, and creates a workforce far more likely to stay motivated and engaged.

BE GENUINE (AND GENUINELY INCLUSIVE) ABOUT PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

The Insight: Gen Z grew up in an era of burgeoning social movements and heightened awareness of individual rights, mental health, and diversity. As digital natives, they've had unparalleled exposure to global dialogues on inclusivity, equity, and individual expression. They've witnessed real-time societal shifts through online discussions, hashtag movements, and worldwide rallies for justice. Consequently, the notion of simply "fitting in" doesn't resonate with them; they value authenticity over conformity.

It's not just about avoiding bullying or open discrimination; it's about fostering an environment where every voice, no matter how divergent, feels heard and valued. An environment where they can voice an unpopular opinion, make a mistake, or share a new idea without the fear of humiliation or backlash. Our findings underline this, with 78% asserting the importance of psychological safety in their workplace. For Gen Z, this isn't just about being 'included' — it's about feeling valued, understood, and integral to the organisational fabric.

MANAGERIAL ACTION:

- **Lead By Example:** Any workplace culture is driven and reinforced by the behaviour of those who lead it. Set a positive example by acknowledging your own mistakes, encouraging feedback, and always welcoming questions, differing opinions, and new perspectives.

OF GEN Z EMPLOYEES FELT THAT THEY MISSED OUT ON DEVELOPING CERTAIN INTERPERSONAL SKILLS DUE TO THE PREDOMINANCE OF VIRTUAL COMMUNICATIONS IN THEIR EARLY CAREER STAGES.

80%

VIEW TRANSPARENCY AS A PIVOTAL FACTOR IN LEADERSHIP, WITH MANY EQUATING IT DIRECTLY TO TRUSTWORTHINESS AND RESPECT.

↑70%

INDICATED THEY WOULD BENEFIT FROM MORE FREQUENT TOUCHPOINTS (MOVING AWAY FROM THE TRADITIONAL ANNUAL REVIEW PROCESS).

- **Embrace Failure:** Create an environment where mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn and grow. To create psychological safety, it's important not to punish experimentation and some risk-taking, even when it doesn't pan out entirely successfully. Instead, reflect on what lessons have been learned and what can be done differently next time.

- **Celebrate Everyone's Wins:** Be sure to not only acknowledge what's going well, but to actively celebrate people's wins, no matter how small. Noticing and expressing gratitude for everyone's contributions to a project or task builds a sense of belonging and mutual respect among team members.

Your ROI: Creates a workplace where everyone feels safe to express themselves and try new things, prompting diversity of thought, collaborative problem solving, and innovation, and maximising employee retention.

RESPECT LIFE OUTSIDE WORK

The Insight: In our research, 75% of Gen Z expressed the significance of personal time, not just as a break from work but as an essential part of their holistic well-being. They seek roles where they can seamlessly integrate their job responsibilities with their hobbies, side hustles, and other personal commitments. They're looking for employers who recognise this, and who can offer flexibility, autonomy, and support in pursuing a life where work and personal activities complement, rather than compete with, each other.

MANAGERIAL ACTION:

- **Offer Flexibility:** Giving employees some autonomy over when, where, and how they work not only allows them to fit in personal activities, but demonstrates trust and boosts their wellbeing and engagement by enabling them to work in the way that best suits their needs.

- **Allow Time For Volunteering:** Gen Z are particularly motivated by social justice issues and community activism. Providing them with allocated time to volunteer in their communities or for causes that matter to them not only demonstrates that your values align with theirs, but encourages them to maintain well-rounded lives outside of work.

- **Regularly Review Workloads:** Check-in frequently with your employees to ensure that their workloads are achievable, and encourage them to speak up if they're feeling overwhelmed or, conversely, aren't feeling challenged enough.

Your ROI: Prevents stress, burnout, and disengagement, encourages accountability, and promotes trust and respect between employees and managers.

HAVING GROWN UP IN A TIME OF PROFOUND TECHNOLOGICAL LEAPS, POLITICAL SHIFTS AND SOCIAL CHANGES, GEN Z RECOGNISE THE IMPERMENANCE OF TODAY'S SKILLS IN TOMORROW'S WORLD. FOR THEM, A STATIC SKILL SET EQUATES TO STAGNATION — OR EVEN REGRESSION.

WHAT TO DO RIGHT NOW

Our deep-dive into the vibrant world of Gen Z has unravelled insights both anticipated and surprising. Their professional expectations are moulded by a mix of technological advancements, progressive values, and pivotal global events — and understanding these expectations is vital to attracting and retaining their diverse talents.

It's evident that this is a generation radically reshaping the very blueprint of our workplaces. But with their arrival comes an essential question: How can your business best position itself to flourish in this new landscape?

START PREPARING TODAY

To navigate the waters of Gen Z effectively and ensure the resilience and relevance of your business in the coming years, here's what you must do:

Prepare for Transformation: Anticipate the shifts brought by Gen Z and lay the groundwork for a workplace that accommodates their aspirations and values. Rethink traditional working models. Prioritise mental health as a core aspect of company benefits. This isn't about reactive changes, but proactively shaping an organisation that speaks to them.

Invest in Expertise: Understanding Gen Z is not a one-time task; it's an ongoing journey. Bring in experts who can offer insights, training, and strategies tailored to this demographic. Consider it not as an expense but an investment in the future.

Embrace Personalisation: A one-size-fits-all approach won't cut it. From flexible and hybrid working models to L&D programmes and feedback mechanisms, tailor your offerings and personalise your strategies to resonate with the unique nuances of each Gen Z employee.

Walk the Walk: Be clear about company values and be prepared to take a stand on pressing societal issues, ensuring these stances align with ethical and moral values. Uphold transparency across your organisation, and actively commit to sustainable and ethical practices.

Embed Inclusivity and Diversity: Beyond mere representation, ensure that diverse voices are heard, valued, and have a tangible impact on decision-making processes. Champion diversity in all its facets, ensuring a global-local blend in strategies, and designing offices with secure, inclusive, and comfortable spaces that promote both collaboration and individual reflection.

Seek Ongoing Feedback: Establish systems to regularly gather feedback, and ensure that you're acting on it where necessary. Understanding the evolving needs of employees ensures you're always one step ahead in providing a conducive environment.

Encourage Continuous Learning and Growth: Stay agile and create a culture of curiosity and growth, on both an organisational and individual level. Keep L&D

IT'S TIME TO RETHINK TRADITIONAL WORKING MODELS. PRIORITISE MENTAL HEALTH AS A CORE ASPECT OF COMPANY BENEFITS. THIS ISN'T ABOUT REACTIVE CHANGES, BUT PROACTIVELY SHAPING AN ORGANISATION THAT SPEAKS TO GEN Z.

initiatives current, ensuring they reflect both industry shifts and personal development needs. When it comes to technology, be prepared to learn from Gen Z: be open to adopting and integrating new tools that enthuse them and promote productivity.

Evolve Your Company Culture: Reflect on your current practices. Are they aligned with a flat structure, safe spaces, and clear ethical commitments? If not, it's time to make shifts — not just in policies, but in the very culture of your organisation. Always aim to foster an environment where every voice is valued and leadership is approachable.

However, the flip side presents a stark warning:

Failing to plan for Gen Z's ascendancy in the workplace can lead to serious setbacks:

Talent Drain: The risk of losing talented young professionals to more forward-thinking competitors is real. Gen Z seeks workplaces that resonate with their values and offer growth opportunities. Ignoring their needs could result in a significant talent exodus.

Recruitment Challenges: Attracting top talent will become increasingly difficult. Companies that do not align with Gen Z's expectations might find themselves struggling to fill key positions, hampering innovation and growth.

Stunted Growth: With the lack of fresh perspectives and new ideas that Gen Z brings, your company's growth could be significantly hampered. The dynamism and innovation they offer are essential for keeping pace in today's fast-evolving market.

Client and Customer Loss: Gen Z's influence extends to consumer trends and market dynamics. Not aligning with their ethos can lead to a disconnect with a substantial market segment, resulting in the loss of both clients and customers.

Financial Setbacks: Ultimately, all these factors — talent loss, recruitment struggles, stunted growth, and customer loss — translate into financial repercussions.

The cost of not adapting to Gen Z could be substantial, affecting your company's bottom line and market position.

"GEN Z JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO TAKE FEEDBACK. THEY WANT TO DISCUSS IT

RATHER THAN GO AND SIT IN THE TOILET AND CRY ABOUT IT."

– Chief of Staff, Property Development

THREE TOP TAKEAWAYS FOR EMPLOYERS

01 BUILT DIFFERENT

Gen Z aren't just another demographic; they're a potent mix of digital nativity, ethical determination, and a thirst for authentic, purposeful, well-paid work.

02 NO MORE STATUS QUO

This generation will push for flatter organisational structures, safe spaces, and clear political stances from their workplaces.

03 UNPARALLELED POTENTIAL

Embracing technology, demanding transparency, and seeking out ethical brand behaviours, Gen Z's expectations may initially present challenges to some organisations—but these come hand-in-hand with huge opportunities for those that make the effort to adapt and evolve.

GET STARTED

Adapting to Gen Z is not optional; it's a business imperative. The time to act is now. Foresight, flexibility, and a willingness to embrace change are the keys to ensuring that your business not only survives but prospers in this new era shaped by Gen Z.

FSC

Future Strategy Club is an independent creative agency using a unique lean membership model to deliver exceptional and cost effective work for global corporates and UK start-ups.

With 500+ members selected from the UK's best creative talent, we deliver a truly full service agency experience without the unnecessary costs and the usual upsell of large group agencies.

Our services cover the full spectrum of strategic and creative solutions, delivering growth for our clients through culture transformation programmes, comms strategies and global 360 campaigns, TV ads, world-leading websites, social strategies and brand communities. Clients include global corporates like Reuters, Legal & General, IBM, Zoetis, NTT Group plus Series A start-ups.

Get in touch to find out why our values, approach and commitment to our clients makes us the creative partner you are looking for in a constantly changing world.

futurestrategy.club
Peckham, London