

Characteristics of Gen Z and how to retain them in the workforce



Whilst Global Partnerships Executive Solutions focusses on identifying and developing “C”-Suite leaders, we have had many discussions about emerging leaders classified as Generation Z (aka Gen Z). Gen Z, the newest generation, and the generation after Millennials are typically individuals born from 1995-2015 who are currently 4-24 years old. Concurrent with our insights and research, Gen Z are hardworking, smart, agile and classified as digital natives. 96% own a smartphoneⁱ, and have always had technology in their lives, allowing them to be effective multitaskers and efficient with technical devices.

Further, our research infers Gen Z will use 5 devices on average per day, such as; smartphone, TV, laptop, desktop, and iPod or iPadⁱⁱ, and it is estimated that more than half spend at least 10-hours a day on an electronic deviceⁱⁱⁱ.

Additionally, typical of Gen Z is a short attention span, combined with the need to commit to an Organisation that provides them with a sense of purpose, and one who understands them. Gen Z are found to be akin to their Grandparents - cautious, practical, and mindful of the future^{iv}. This is made more complex in that Gen Z, also require gratification re their sense of urgency to achieve their life and career goals.

Employers of Gen Z will need to provide a sense of purpose combined with a strong corporate social responsibility. Organisations around the world will be required to appeal to an individual who is deemed a Gen Z. This appeal will need to include a values alignment and a strong policy linked to corporate and social responsibility. Gen Z employees are concerned about the world they live in, they worry about climate extremities and social justice and their work environment needs to reflect this to retain them. Given their effective use of technology, Gen Z will reach out to social media contacts and keep abreast of developments and they will have numerous options from a work perspective. More importantly, a Gen Z employee will not stay with an employer if suitable conditions are not met.

Unlike a Generation X, who typically worked hard, earned the right and endured all types of leadership styles to climb the corporate ladder, a Gen Z will not. They want an emotionally intelligent leader who can mentor them and coach them to be even better version of themselves. Often a Gen Z will promote a Portfolio Career or incorporate a business in their 20's. A Portfolio Career is defined as the art of juggling two, three or more positions, and can be fulfilling and rewarding replacing one traditional full-time role. Portfolio Careers are becoming more common as people seek to improve their work-life balance and increase overall career and job satisfaction^v.

Consequently, companies may need to review their resources before starting the Gen Z hiring process. These resources include, timely communication via a medium that is acceptable to a Gen Z, such as SMS or using WhatsApp, Slack, Zoom etc. This feedback will include, meeting updates, news headlines and even performance review feedback. Gen Z's need to have an emotionally intelligent Leader who can manage their sense of urgency and respond with clear communication, structure and goals, without being directive or abrasive. Additionally, Organisations need to be proactive about their social and corporate responsibility. Philanthropy, charity work and outward support in areas of interest will retain a Gen Z. A Gen Z feels strongly about the world they live in and making a difference to make it a better place is their currency. Being cognisant of "side shuffling" is also important. A Gen Z will work hard and look to drive their own career success. However, they have other interests outside of their work environment and to retain their services, employers need to be respectful of their "side shuffling".

Our research illustrates, 76% of Gen Z describe themselves as responsible for driving their own career^{vi} and 58% say they'd work nights and weekends for higher pay^{vii}. The concern a Gen Z will have is that given their digital environment, they worry about social interaction and hence face to face interaction and coaching is essential for building a sustainable culture.

Global Partnerships helpful tips to retain a Gen Z:

- **Run a quick, honest and transparent recruitment process:** Allow Gen Z to share their insights from their own network about an Organisation. They are connected via social media and will use these insights for their research. If your role is not advertised online, a Gen Z will not find it.
- **Work-life balance:** This generation has a different view of work-life balance and will have other side interests that have to be appreciated and endorsed, if you want to retain them. Having flexibility and being able to work remotely is a given for retention. A Gen Z will work hard and as a digital native, the use of technology for remote and working from home is considered the norm. Technology is a tool for their trade, and they expect to have these tools at their disposal.
- **Provide a sense of purpose:** This generation has a need to understand why a Company does what it does and how their role contributes to its success. Gen Z need a clear sense of purpose and how they can make a difference to your Organisation, for themselves and for the world. They want to feel purpose, more so than any other generation. We need to show them how work provides this purpose.
- **Help them make a difference:** As an employer you need to assist a Gen Z to be the best version of themselves at work and in life. Our role is to help them to make a difference to each other and to their communities.
- **Incorporate Franchise arrangement:** Incorporate a franchise model to retain a Gen Z, if they have an entrepreneurial spirit. In this fashion, you can retain their services and make it profitable for all. Gen Z is driven by security and our research has shown that they want to save for their superannuation and to be the master of their careers^{viii}. This model may prove a win-win for all.
- **Culture is king:** To retain a Gen Z, you need to build a sustainable and transparent culture that rewards best practice and celebrates the individual and their work contribution and how they make our world better. Talk, share, communicate and be present and show the Gen Z that they matter, given their contribution, digital prowess and insights.

We will all need to retain our future leaders. Gen Z's are driven by several factors. Companies who are prepared to deliver a positive and rewarding work experience with a strong leadership/culture and a clear sense of social and corporate responsibility will be equipped to harness the talent of our future cohort, the Gen Z.

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