# How Employers Can Meet The Needs Of Gen-Z Workers

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*I write actionable interview, career and salary advice.*

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0                                              Nov 17, 2023, 08:00am EST

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Gen-Zers desire flexible and remote work arrangements, demand a higher quality of life with a solid ... [+]  GETTY

One of the next big changes in the workforce will be the ascendancy of Gen-Z. This cohort is projected to make up nearly 30% of the labor force by 2025, according to the World Economic Forum. There will be significant changes in the workplace as their labor

participation continues to grow. Gen-Zers desire flexible and remote work arrangements, demand a higher quality of life with a solid work-life balance and priority on mental health, and want to work for a company that shares similar values regarding ethics, social causes and diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I).

Errol Gardner, EY global vice chair of consulting who leads one of the firm's largest service lines and advises some of the world's most prominent organizations, is passionate about the next generation of the workforce. In a Zoom interview, he discusses the transforming workplace and how organizations can keep up with seismic shifts in the office.

As this shift continues at scale, businesses must take the time and energy to understand how this generation differs from the ones before and how they can appropriately meet the needs of Gen-Z employees. This will call for companies to adapt cultural changes, leadership and communication styles to meet the needs and priorities of Zoomers.

## Inclusive Environments And Shared Values

Gen-Z is more racially and ethnically diverse (48%) than any other generation that came before it, according to the Pew Research Center. Analysis revealed that Gen-Zers, similar to Millennials, value the growing racial and ethnic diversity in the United States.

A survey by Gallup found that an unprecedented number of Gen-Z identify as LGBTQ+. Nearly one in six reported they are either transgender or queer.

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For Gen-Z, organizations need to create an inclusive environment that mirrors their workforce and aligns with these values, especially as the EY Belonging Barometer 3.0 found that 63% of workers would choose a company that prioritizes DE&I over one that doesn't.

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"Gen-Z is a generation that expects equity, inclusion and a sense of belonging as a minimum," said Gardner. "And they'll determine this not by any public declarations but by examining whether leadership teams reflect the communities the organizations operate in. Being able to reflect, represent and understand your diverse workforce doesn't just empower teams and make them feel included, but also benefits organizations and the customers and communities they serve. Different perspectives encourage creativity, innovation, enable debate, better problem-solving and ultimately generate stronger outcomes."

This group of young adults tends to focus on the integrity of work as it fits into their personal value system. They are a more socially

conscious generation as the first two decades of their lives were shaped by Sept. 11, gun violence in schools, a recession and a global pandemic.

They often examine whether or not their workplace aligns with their personal values and empowers employees.

## Problem Areas For These Digital Natives

Gen-Zs are digital natives who cannot recall life before the proliferation of smartphones and social media. A continued emphasis on blending physical and digital identities for this generation has become an expectation.

According to Tara Salinas, a professor of business ethics at the University of San Diego, Gen-Z's native digital skills may have come at the cost of in-person communication and interpersonal relationships. "Gen-Z are digital natives and they've always communicated online, so their interpersonal skills—or soft skills—have suffered," said Salinas.

Zoomers are finding it challenging to communicate effectively in the workplace. They have difficulty asking for help and struggle to navigate collaborative processes with their colleagues.

A good chunk of Gen-Z's work life has taken place during the pandemic era, when remote work had become commonplace for white-collar workers. Stacie Haller, ResumeBuilder's chief career advisor, attributes this to why Gen-Z may have fallen behind in the workforce.

"As a result of Covid-19 and remote education, it's possible that Gen-Zers lack the foundation to be more successful than older generations in entry-level positions," Haller said.

"We know that with remote work and education, communication skills do not develop as well and people tend to work more independently," she continued. "Hiring managers need to be cognizant of this when interviewing Gen-Zers for positions. This generation may need more training when it comes to professional skills."

Gardner holds a contrarian view to the claim that Gen-Z's interpersonal and communication skills have come at the cost of growing up online. Instead, he sees that the format has changed for everyone, as technology has become ubiquitous in our lives, stating, "In the modern world, we all rely on new ways of building relationships across screens, through social media, and using digital tools." Gardner added, "For leaders, this adds another dimension for training and development and ensures that our multi-generational workforces have opportunities to understand how to use technology to enhance interpersonal communication and solve challenges communicating across time zones and cultures. This is a skill that we all will continue to develop as new technologies create more channels and opportunities for contact."

## Different Work–Life Expectations

Recent EY data unveils that more than a third of employees expect to switch jobs in the next 12 months.

This cohort holds different expectations about work than older generations. Gen-Z is more apt to openly discuss personal satisfaction with life and career choices, as well as psychological wellbeing in the workplace. Most young adults value enjoying their work above all other criteria, including compensation, according to EY's 2023 Gen-Z Segmentation Study.

"For Gen-Z, personal sacrifice does not equate to professional value," Gardner stated.

Zoomers are more likely to value transparency, fairness, authenticity and flexibility. If they are not finding these things in their current job, they are more likely to look for a new job. *Follow me on [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#). Check out my [website](#) or some of my other work [here](#).*

**Jack Kelly**

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