



better work, better life



Generation Z vs. Millennials

By 2019, Generation Z will make up over 20% of the workforce, making now a critical time for companies to understand how to best lead, work with and support Generation Z as they begin their careers.



In an effort to provide context around Generation Z (those born after 1995), we conducted a survey among 1,001 U.S. students that are currently in college or recently graduated and within the ages of 18-24. Out of the respondents, 444 were Generation Z and 557 were Millennials (born between 1980 and 1995). The survey indicates key differences between Generation Z and Millennials that are beginning to take shape and will soon play into the job market.

The Survey Questions

Connected and Social

How much time did you/will you spend doing each of the following during your Spring Break?

Students surveyed responded that they would spend more time on activities other than job searching over spring break, such as spending time with family and friends, watching television or streaming TV shows, and spending time on social media. Responses indicated that over 90% of participants would spend time on the aforementioned activities before allocating time for their job search. However, over half (61%) did indicate that they would spend time looking for jobs. The average time spent on the job search is 2.1 hours, compared to 7.6 hours with friends and family, 6 hours of watching/streaming television shows and movies, and 4.5 hours on social media.

Only 16% of students responded that they would be spending over 5 hours on their job search. On the other end of the spectrum, 39% responded that they would not be spending any time on their job search over Spring Break.

What this means for you

In hiring stages, respond to the Generation Z trend of using social media and begin recruiting on social media platforms more – as long as it speaks well to your company culture and doesn't sacrifice the level of professionalism that you aim to achieve.

In the workplace, employers and hiring managers shouldn't be too surprised to learn that Generation Z takes the Millennial tendency to multi-task to a new level. Generation Z is the most social-media savvy generation today and they are constantly connected to their broader community through a variety of social media channels. While this may appear to cause much distraction, don't be too quick to write off their tendency to stay connected.

Many Gen Z'ers use social media for professional purposes and allowing them to access their broader community via social media may enable them to approach their career in a more dynamic way.

Gen Z, like Millennials, are likely to waste more time than their older generations (much of this time being spent on social media); however, they are also more likely to execute on projects rapidly when they do “disconnect” from social media. It is fair to expect that many Gen Z employees may wait longer than most to tackle an assignment – but once they do, they will be wrapping it up more quickly than you might expect.

Find ways to tap into their ability to use social media. If your business is client-based, this type of activity can be encouraged to drive results. If business is project or team-based, don't be surprised if Gen Z employees instigate sub-groups using social media accounts to share information with team mates and colleagues. This type of collaboration is helpful as they tend to be more independent and often prefer to work with others using a technology aid.

If any projects or business-related material is designed solely for internal purposes, be sure to remind Gen Z new hires about any existing privacy policies; in a more connected world, it's easier for information to make rounds.

Action Items

- Use social media to recruit Generation Z
- Allow Generation Z to use social media for team-based projects
- Encourage social media use that drives business
- Determine what information doesn't belong on social media and set expectations

Searching for Jobs

What tool do you use the most to aid in your job search?

Survey respondents indicated that their job search tools of choice are online job boards (31%) followed by university career centers, at 29%. Gen Z is still likely to use their social savvy to seek out opportunities, though, and 28% of Gen Z respondents reported that they would use personal connections – compared to just 20% of Millennials, who are also more likely to use job boards online.

What this means for you

When it comes to hiring strategically, be sure to organize your content through universities that typically boast programs specific to your company's industry in particular and be sure to do outreach through job boards online. Be sure to proliferate the job market – you never know where a Gen Z candidate will find the information they are looking for, and it doesn't hurt to test different outlets, including social media.

Action Items

- Work with universities to post job openings on their job boards
- Cast a broad recruiting net: online listings, university job boards, social media, etc.
- Use social media to portray company culture



Optimistic and Eager

How long do you expect it will take for you to find a job once you graduate?

79% of respondents believed or felt optimistic that they would find a job within 5 months of graduation. A notable 42% of students even felt that they would find a job in less than 3 months. Overall, soon-to-be-graduates seem to maintain a level of optimism when considering their entrance into the job market. This could be due to the gradual repair of the job market over time, or to the Gen Z entrepreneurial tendency, which indicates a level of self-confidence and tenacity among the generation.

When thinking about your job search, which word do you identify with the most?

When thinking about their job search, half of respondents feel determined or optimistic (50%) while only 6% feel defeated.

What this means for you

When dealing with optimistic candidates in a hiring process, you may encounter a confidence that translates into push-back on salary negotiation or the possibility of a candidate floating a few job offers or interviews at once. However, this optimism doesn't necessarily reflect the reality of the job market. Tap into this optimism as Gen Z hires enter the workplace and give them room to do something creative in the first six months. Their fresh perspective, while still amateur in many ways, can serve as an asset or fresh insight for many undertakings. The very small percentage of Gen Z that feels 'defeated' is a strong indicator that this generation will be able to bring a lot of energy to the workplace.

Action Items

- Activate Generation Z's enthusiasm and energy early in their career
- Show Generation Z employees the potential within the company
- Clearly articulate growth opportunities within the organization

Using Soft Skills

What do you think is more important in the interview process — soft skills or hard skills?

Overall, respondents ranked the importance of "soft skills" higher over "hard skills" in the interview process (57% compared to 43%). This indicates that perhaps students are realizing there's more to landing a job than just their hard skills.

It is also worth noting that male respondents ranked the skill sets equally (50% each) while their female counterparts ranked soft skills (63%) as more important in the interview process than hard skills (37%).

What this means for you

Gen Z is familiar with the idea that ‘who you know’ and the way that one carries oneself holds weight in the professional world. They’ve witnessed that prepared and qualified Millennials haven’t always had the best luck when breaking into the job market, so they know that soft skills are critical on an individual level and in the short-term hiring process. Take some time to prepare questions that might yield a better read on the candidate’s soft skills and be sure to dig deep when it comes to any questions related job role requirements. Gen Z candidates may rely too heavily on soft skills and finding the right fit for your company might require more pressure when it comes to technical or skill-based questions.



Action Items

- Take time to get to know the candidate behind their ‘interview persona’
- Incorporate questions about their work style and strengths to determine self-awareness
- Ask specific questions related to technical or skill-based aspects of the job requirements

Personal and Social Concerns

Which of the following are you most concerned about? Which do you believe your generation/peers are most concerned about?

Ability to find a job
 Cost of education
 Financial health
 Affording a place to live after college
 Applying to graduate school

Graduating college
 The economy
 Moving back in with parents after graduation
 Health insurance offered from my employers

Respondents indicated that the ability to find a job was the number one concern for themselves (32%) and that they believed it was the number one concern for their peers (38%). Gen Z indicated that the cost of education fell in as the second concern for both themselves individually and for their peers. Overall, each question rendered the same ranking for Gen Z and for their peers, but more respondents believed their peers to be more concerned about the same issues than they were personally.

What this means for you

Gen Z is highly focused on finding a job – likely more so than Millennials in terms of finding one more quickly after graduation. This is due in part to watching Millennials before them struggle to find a job and to pay student loans. Gen Z expects the combination of concerns around the burden of student debt and finding a job will underscore the pressures felt post-graduation. When determining fair salary, be aware that many entrants into the job market will be looking for a number that allows them to live on their own and pay down student debt in a reasonable manner. For the first few years of their careers, Gen Z’ers will likely have student debt top of mind.

Whose opinions have the biggest influence on decisions you make about the future?

Respondents reported that they possessed the greatest influence on their own decisions and at a close second was their parents (47% and 38%, respectively). These two influencing categories far outweighed other influences, which included siblings, friends, professors, mentors, and 'other.'

What this means for you

Gen Z is very independent, so you may notice a reluctance to participate in team projects on certain levels. They possess confidence and are likely more self-reliant than Millennials because they've seen the challenges that Millennials faced upon entering the job market after the Great Recession. Gen Z is prepared to take on tasks individually, but they also remain closely tied to their parents and continue to seek advice and mentorship from them.

Action Items

- Institute a mentorship program in your organization to provide professional guidance
- Be prepared to negotiate with Generation Z about salary
- If flexibility around salary isn't an option, consider non-traditional benefits that will entice Generation Z

Perspectives on first jobs

How long should someone stay at their first job?

The majority of 18-24 year olds indicated that they believe you should stay at your first job for 3 years or less. However, we can break this down even further. More than a quarter (27%) believe that you should stay at your first job for 1 year or less and finally, more than half (56%) believe you should stay your first job for 2-3 years.

What this means for you

Employers or hiring managers may be looking at these numbers (none of which exceed 3 years time) and feeling discouraged by the up-front investments required to bring on a new hire for such a short time. There are a few ways to approach this data point as an employer or from a company-wide perspective.

This 3-year (or less) estimate from Gen Z indicates a tendency to keep moving and progressing their careers. The job market has evolved rapidly and is now in a place where most professionals – particularly those under the age of 40 – assume that they will not work for one company for their whole life. In fact, they probably assume they will work for a number of companies in their lifetime.

Overall, the need to move on underscores the entrepreneurial edge that many Gen Z'ers have, and that built-in proclivity can be satisfied easily enough by companies that allow for project-based work to be the norm. Gen Z candidates are more likely to stay on longer with a company if they see room for growth and a clear trajectory that allows them to anticipate next steps, use structure to their benefit/growth, and find new ways to gain rewards and recognition along the way. As soon as a job becomes stale or another opportunity begins to look more appealing, Gen Z will consider moving on and may even be continuously looking at other options, as they are far more connected and in touch with what others do for their work through social media in particular.

Action Items

- Show Generation Z that the company culture is flexible and their impact can go a long way
- Explain how a few of their predecessors have grown within the company – use examples
- Establish a clear path for growth and prove that your company makes investments in people



Preparing for the world of work

In what areas do you believe your college/university is failing at in preparing you for a job?

30% of respondents feel their college or university has failed at teaching them applicable 'real life' business skills and 32% of respondents feel that their college/university is doing a good job at preparing them for a career.

What this means for you

Respondents indicated a mixture of sentiments towards their university's preparation for real world jobs. Because many current students believe that they need more real-life business skills, be sure to create opportunities for them to learn even if they are soft-skill learning opportunities. Gen Z is socially aware and eager to fit in and thrive in the business world, so creating these opportunities will build up mutual investment. Be open minded to teaching a Gen Z candidate or hire new skills, because they do show to be entrepreneurial and independent – and their ability to learn is supported by innumerable resources made possible by technology.

Action Items

- Provide learning opportunities outside of the 9-5 schedule
- Create a forum for employees to request courses or resources they need
- Let Generation Z introduce new technological resources when possible

Job Trajectory and Expectations

How many professional jobs/internships have you had or will you have before college graduation, five years after graduation and in your professional career altogether?

79% of respondents indicated that they have had or will have a professional job or internship before graduation and 88% indicated that they would have a job or internship in the five years after graduation. 92% indicated that they would likely have between 1-4 jobs in their career.

What this means for you

Gen Z approaches the job market with fairly high expectations for finding a job, and their likelihood at finding one is increased by their foresight as they obtain internships prior to graduation. Expect many Gen Z candidates to have prior experience in a professional setting. Although this experience may not always translate directly in terms of hard skills, the exposure to the workplace early on will prove to be highly beneficial as they enter the workforce post-graduation.

How much do you expect to make in your first job annually?

Most notable, 73% of respondents expect to make up to \$55,000 annually in their first job. In certain areas across the country, this salary wouldn't accommodate living expenses and an assumed student loan debt, but as an average should indicate the amount needed to maintain basic living expenses, loan debt, and some spending.

What this means for you

Gen Z will look for financial rewards and appreciate companies that are explicit around policies relating to bonuses and raises. Their concern for financial health is top of mind, so they will constantly be seeking out ways to ensure a healthy trajectory for their salary.

Which of the following is most important for your first professional job?

36% of respondents indicated that the opportunity for growth is the most important factor in their first professional job. This data point reaffirms their concern around financial health as well as their entrepreneurial tendencies. The advancements made in technology throughout the lifetime of a Gen Z candidate thus far has encouraged them to expect things to move quickly and they apply this mentality to the work they do as well. Gen Z will look for opportunities and/or rewards to keep them moving constantly.

Which job do you prefer?

Perhaps surprisingly, 70% of respondents noted that finding a stable and secure job without a high level of emotional investment or passion would be preferred over a job with lots of passion that lacks security and stability.

What this means for you

Although Gen Z is often grouped together with Millennials as an idealistic generation with sky-high expectations for their own successes and "dream jobs," Gen Z has responded in ways that indicate they are much more tempered in their expectations for post-college life. Millennials hope to find financial stability, own their own home, and feel secure in their job.

Action Items

- Understand that stability and security are a top priority for Millennials – meet them in the middle to address any concerns
- Establish a structured path for job opportunities within the company
- Find ways to reward or let Generation Z employees lead early in their career – it's important to them that they sense the value they bring to the table



Greatest Aspirations

We asked respondents to consider their greatest aspirations for their lives post-graduation. Their responses shed light on the values that Gen Z holds in high regard, providing a roadmap for understanding the more deeply rooted motivations that Gen Z possesses when making professional decisions.

In the next 10 years, what is your greatest aspiration?

Overall, the top three greatest aspirations in the next 10 years are financial responsibility (69%), being in a dream job (62%), and getting married (36%). Starting a family is among the top three greatest aspirations within the next 10 years for 28% of males versus only 20% of females. Traveling was among the top three greatest aspirations for the next 10 years for 38% of women but only 26% of men.

Being in their dream job is the greatest aspiration for 32% of Gen Z vs. 24% of Millennials. 34% of Millennials vs. 29% of Gen Z noted financial stability is their greatest aspiration.

What does this mean for you?

Millennials favor a stable job over a passion-filled job, but they still aspire to find fulfilling work (so long as it doesn't compromise their financial health). Your conversations with Millennials and Gen Z are going to differ tremendously, and you'll need to know what's important to each of them to attract and retain talent.

Action Items

- Help employees establish a clear view for their growth both financially and professionally
- Over-communicate growth opportunities and tie successes to financial rewards
- Create learning opportunities for employees to grow through company-sponsored courses, lectures, clubs and networking events

Sources:

Adecco 2015 Way to Work Survey

<http://www.taproofoundation.org/about-probono/blog/generation-z-entering-workforce-your-company-ready>