

Gen Z: Difficult to Manage Or Just Different Than You?



October 3, 2024

With Dr. Paul White

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A little about me — professionally:

- Psychologist, Author, Researcher
- Workplace culture expert
- Sold 600,000+ books
- Published research on generational differences
- Straightforward, practical
- “Mirror of reality” approach

Note: Slide deck will be sent to all attendees

Common Errors When Forming An Opinion About Others:

- Relying primarily on the reports from others
- Basing generalizations on few data points, not having any personal interaction with them yourself)
- Using a homogeneous (non-representative) group to form your opinion
- Forming an initial opinion, then ignoring new, differing information
- Assuming the characteristics are static, and won't change over time



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Important Considerations: Evaluating Sources Regarding Generational Differences

- The generation of the observer
- Based on self-report vs. behavioral observations
- Reports conclusions vs. specific behaviors
- Information from a single source (or study) vs. multiple sources



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Key Question: Do generational differences really exist?



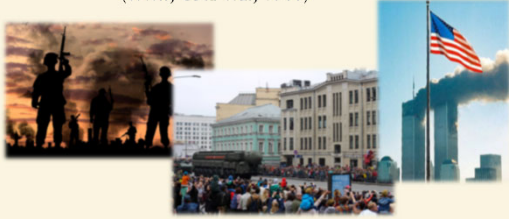
Generational Differences? Or Life Stage Differences?



Both / And

What Causes Generational Differences?

Past belief: Shared cultural experiences
(WWII, Cold War, 9/11)



What Causes Generational Differences?

Current Evidence: Technological Advances

Individualization
Independence



Downline Consequences of Increased Individualization and Independence

- More options and choices
- Increased focus on individual desires
- Increased use of technology
- Less face-to-face social interaction
- Reduced social understanding
- Increased social anxiety
- Decreased emphasis on collaboration and lower value on teamwork
- Greater sense of disconnectedness from others



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Initial Observations About Gen Z: Deeply Held Values

- Highly value flexibility in their jobs (“Work-Life Balance”)
- Key: looking for meaning in their work
→ seeing how their job helps others
- Not afraid of job hopping
- Expect to give their input and observations
- Informality is the norm
- Desire regular, *positive* feedback

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Differences between Gen Z and Other Generations

- Work is not their #1 priority.
- Work is primarily to meet short-term financial needs.
- Loyalty / Commitment to employers is lower.
- High technological aptitude.
- Don't believe they need to earn the right to be heard.
- Have short-term perspective on ‘moving up’, getting raises, being put into leadership positions
- General lack of trust for institutions and authority
- Emotional frailty, lack of resilience, social anxiety

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POLL

Which of the following characteristics do you think will cause the most challenges in managing Gen Z's?

- Work is not their #1 priority
- Work is primarily to meet short-term financial needs
- Loyalty/Commitment to employers is lower
- Don't believe they need to earn the right to be heard
- Have short-term perspective on ‘moving up’, getting raises, put into leadership positions
- General lack of trust for institutions and authority
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Similarities Across Generations

- Human (physical, social, psychological, spiritual needs)
Report higher levels of loneliness than older workers
45% of 18-25 year olds vs 33% 26-43 year olds
22% 44-57 year olds
15% 58-64 year olds
- Common life stages (but different timing)
- Don't feel valued or appreciated at work
61% report not feeling recognized enough
59% state they have never had a supervisor who's appreciated them

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Keys for Showing Appreciation to Gen Z's

- Words of Affirmation (40%) - Be specific and timely!
- Quality Time (38%)
 - The younger the employee, the more likely they value Quality Time
 - BUT they desire time with peers, not YOU!
- The best gift you can give them is time off (or flexible scheduling)



www.appreciationatwork.com

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Implications for Leading Gen Z Employees

- Expect them to make different decisions than you would
Worldview → Values → Priorities → Decisions → Results
- Overtly show how their job helps others / improves the world
- Filter procedures through what serves the customer best, not "that's the way we've done it"
- Need to create ways to build peer/collegial relationships
- Use time flexibility as a benefit
- Communicate clear expectations regarding raises and promotions
- Expect to need to provide more support and encouragement
- Withhold judgment

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KEY IDEAS

- What are 1-2 core concepts you want to take from today's session?
- What is an initial action step you can take as a result?

Q & A

Questions?

Conclusion

We're so much more alike than we are different. At the core of it all, we're all feeling the same feelings of fear and sadness and loneliness and happiness and love.

– Olivia Rodrigo