

## Generation Z – The Face of our Future Workforce

*They're smarter than Boomers, and way more ambitious than Millennials. Analyzing characteristics of the latest generation to hit the job market and international business biosphere.*

**Manika Kapur**

*B.Sc (Hons), CHRL Candidate*

**Edited by:**

**Marcel Faggioni**

*B.A. (Hons), M.I.R., CHRL, Q. Med.*

*Member of Law Society of Canada*

Generation Z (also known as iGeneration, Post-Millennials, Plurals or the Homeland Generation in the United States) is the demographic cohort after the Millennials. While dispute rages over parameters, Gen Z are loosely defined as those born after 1995 and who are now 20 and under. It's a big group: two (2) billion worldwide, and one-quarter of the North American population.

Like a flock of plovers, a host of high school- and college-aged students will be leaving the familiar environs of their educational institutions to join the workforce as part of job market. As a result of the social media and technology they are accustomed to and well-prepared for a global business environment. Gen Z kids will grow up with a highly sophisticated media and computer environment and will be more Internet savvy and expert than their Gen Y forerunners. Another important note to point out is Generation Z no longer wants just a job: they seek more than that. They want a feeling of fulfillment and excitement in their job that helps move the world forward. Generation Z is eager to be involved in their community and their futures. Before college, Generation Z is already out in their world searching how to take advantage of relevant professional opportunities that will give them experience for the future.

In a slide-presentation produced by New York City advertising agency Sparks & Honey; it was found

that 60 per cent of Gen Zers want jobs that have a social impact, compared with 31 per cent of Gen Ys. It deemed them “entrepreneurial” (72 per cent want to start their own businesses), community-oriented (26 per cent already volunteer) and prudent (56 per cent said they were savers, not spenders).<sup>[1]</sup>

Gen Z is also seen to be more tolerant than Gen Y of racial, sexual and generational diversity, and less likely to subscribe to traditional gender roles. “This is the first time in history kids know more than adults about something really important to society—maybe the most important thing,” says Tapscott, Chancellor of Trent University. “[It’s] a formula for fear.” Despite this tension—or perhaps because of it—expectations for a generation have never been higher. Forbes has dubbed Gen Z “Rebels with a cause.” The Financial Times posed the question: “Generation Z, the world’s saviours?” Tapscott says Gen Z doesn’t have a choice: “My generation is leaving them with a mess. These kids are going to have to save the world literally.”<sup>[2]</sup>

People ages five to 20-ish currently make up 25% of the population, which makes Gen Z bigger than both boomers and millennials. In the next few years, that figure grows to 33%.<sup>[3]</sup> And they’ve begun to enter the work force. The group has two (2) distinguishing characteristics. The first is their birth into a totally wired world. Unlike boomers or millennials, who had a before-and-after relationship with the Internet, Gen Z kids have only ever known the immediacy of communication and information the Internet provides. That changes their life experience in every way, from learning and forming relationships to employment and consumer choices. (And then there’s the expectation that those consumer choices will be delivered to the front door, pronto.) The other characteristic that marks this population demographic is that they have inherited a post-9/11 world. On-going terrorist activity around the globe, in combination with the recession of 2008, means that Gen Z kids have

grown up in a world of political and financial insecurity.

As more data is collected, what we are beginning to see is not so much a continuation of the trends we saw with Millennials, but the introduction of a new cohort with their own priorities, beliefs and abilities. With yet another generation (for a total of five!) entering the workforce, it's important to understand what makes them tick so that we can better understand how to make the most of them. They're not lazy, but they might be bored. As such, they are experts at quickly and routinely switching tasks to concentrate on some new task. That makes them ideal for positions which require engaging in multiple issues. However, this non-stop stimulation may make engaging in longer, less immediate rewarding tasks more difficult. At their very core, they want to be respected by their colleagues. That may be challenging in companies that have an old school approach to onboarding entry-level employees. However, contrary to some portrayals, Gen Z is hungry to learn and what they want more than anything from their leaders is honesty.

Why does any of this matter? Gen Z has fantastic economic clout. Then there's the generally held hope that Gen Z could prove to be the next truly great generation — a smart, global, industrious group capable of righting the wrongs of the previous generations. In the end, most employees are looking for the same thing: meaningful and challenging work that makes the world a better place. That's why.

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<sup>[1]</sup> <http://www.macleans.ca/society/life/get-ready-for-generation-z/>

<sup>[2]</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/sheryl-boswell/millennials-workplace\\_b\\_10401382.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/sheryl-boswell/millennials-workplace_b_10401382.html)

<sup>[3]</sup> <http://www.torontosun.com/2017/07/02/make-way-for-generation-z>