

Opinions

Are you ready for Generation Z?

26 JUNE 2018 7:41 AM

The older members of Generation Z are ready to go to work, and this generation is much different from millennials. Are you ready for them?



By **Judy King**

Just when we thought we were understanding millennials, here comes the next generational wave, Generation Z! But, take heart, hoteliers, there is a lot of good news about this generation!

GENERATION TIMELINE				
1928-1945	1946-1964	1965-1980	1981-1996	1997-2011
Traditionalists	Baby Boomers	Gen X	Millennials	Gen Z
<i>Ages: 90-73</i>	<i>Ages: 72-54</i>	<i>Ages: 53-38</i>	<i>Ages: 37-22</i>	<i>Ages: 21-7</i>

Born between 1997 and 2011, Gen Zs are 7-21 years old, and they are hitting the workforce and becoming substantive consumers. They are quite different than millennials. Jonah Stillman, 18, says in the book he and his father wrote, “Gen Z @ Work: How the Next Generation Is Transforming the Workplace,” “If you try to treat us like millennials, it will backfire big time.”

While Gen Z is still young, and we have limited experience with Gen Zs in the workplace, the research results and predictions are encouraging. Time will tell! All of us are molded and shaped by the significant events, breakthroughs and trends that were evident during our formative years. Because of similar types of generational influencers, Gen Z has been compared to the hard-working, reliable post-Depression era traditionalists. Gen Zs:

- Have borne the consequences of great volatility in financial markets and company upsets and have seen their parents or friends’ parents struggle and perhaps lose their jobs or home;
- Have become accustomed to big banking being portrayed as a public enemy, and corporate greed and scandals being prevalent;
- Have known millennial siblings and friends who have difficulty finding desirable jobs, paying off student debt, living on their own and becoming financially independent;
- Have experienced more terrorist acts and school shootings here at home than any previous generation, the rise of ISIS, and volatile and dangerous leadership in other countries, such as Syria and North Korea;
- Are part of the most diverse generation in U.S. history (according to U.S. Census data from July 2015: 49% non-white population);
- Are the most technologically innate generation (they have an eight-second filter and can quickly sort through and assess enormous amounts of information);
- Have witnessed a lot of millennials tarnishing their personal brands on social media;
- Have seen astonishing scientific achievements (cloning human stem cells, private space exploration); and
- Are prone to being entrepreneurial (the 2014 “High School Careers Study” found 72% of high school students and 64% of college students want to start a business someday).

Is it any wonder many Gen Zs exhibit these characteristics?

- Value authenticity
- Transparent, yet private
- Inclusion-oriented
- Future-focused

Save more, spend less
Low trust in brands
Prioritize organizations with social causes aligned with their own
Persistent, driven
Independent
Pragmatic
Ambitious realists, willing to work for success
Risk-averse
Ultra-competitive
Innovative
Activist-oriented
Crave immediate validation

Unfortunately, key issues for this notoriously overscheduled generation are unusually early experience with, and awareness of, stress, anxiety, depression and sleep issues. According to the “Generation Nation” study conducted by 747 Insights and Collaborata, 68% of Gen Zs feel the U.S. is headed in the wrong direction; 12% said they were “optimistic.” Accordingly, there are a significant number of activists among this generation, as they want to make a difference and create a better future.

What Gen Zs want at work

Purposeful work
Professional development
Flexibility in schedule
Authenticity and transparency
Maximization of technology
Structure and order; efficiency
Inclusion and respect
Frequent feedback
Face-to-face interaction
Linkage of hard work with reward and recognition

Here are a few tips for engaging Gen Z.

Orienting

Remember the eight-second filter; front load what is important and have information available for further review electronically.

Tap into the employee’s desire to work hard and create stability/security; emphasize expectations, benefits of loyalty and the opportunity to realize personal goals.

Developing

Apply micro-learning, not training sessions of many hours.

Online learning is second nature and expected. Reserve in-person training for skills that can best be learned through human interaction.

Concentrate on interpersonal skills; many Gen Zs recognize the top skill to ensure success is the ability to communicate clearly in person, specifically with older adults.

Gen Z could be considered to have a better work ethic than millennials. Beware of burning out this generation because of their eagerness to excel in the workplace and applying themselves.

Mentoring

While this generation is tech savvy, they recognize the value of learning from others with more experience and a broader set of talents and skills.

Blending personal attention and guiding them to valuable resources and experiences is effective.

Generation Z holds great promise, provided we recognize them for who they are and what motivates them. Treating them the same as millennials will not be effective, which merely poses the opportunity to customize our approach when interacting with members of this generation, just like we customize service for our guests.

The degree to which we demonstrate flexibility and respect for this generation will determine our future success in the increasingly challenging labor marketplace.

Welcome Generation Z, we’re happy to have you!

Judy Z. King, ISHC, is the founder and principal of Quality Management Services. Since 1988, she has been focusing on the fundamentals and assisting clients to achieve excellence by connecting people and performance. judy@qmsresults.com 615.414.3648

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