

Productive Leaders

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When Generation Z Hits the Workplace



We all know a [Baby Boomer](#) refers to people born between about 1946 to 1964. [Millennials](#) were born between 1981 and 1997.

Get ready for Generation Z.

Generation Z?

Generation Z'ers were born between 1997 and 2010. A quick math check tells you that many people in this group are mostly too young to be in the workforce, or they are just now getting out of high school or college to enter the workforce. So why all the concern about Generation Z now?

Generation Z workers currently make up about 7 percent of the current U.S. workforce. No big deal, right? However, estimates predict Generation Z employees will number 30 million by 2019. That's a whole lot of young people thrown into employers' already mixed bag of Greatest Generation, Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials. How do business leaders assimilate these new Gen Z workers into the workplace? What kind of leadership will Gen Z require? How do leaders develop the best potential of Gen Z?

To understand what kind of leadership works best for Generation Z, leaders need to understand who the Gen Z workers are. Those born during the Generation Z years grew up in the post-9/11 world. Their world is one of uncertainty characterized by wars, terrorism, an economic downturn, a mortgage crisis, and a world divided.

When asked, Gen Z employees characterize themselves as being creative, accepting, open-minded, and receptive to new ideas.

What Generation Z Expects

Generation Z were babies who could work a smartphone before they could walk. Many knew how to use apps before they could tie their shoes. Then they realized shoes could come with Velcro, and they didn't need to learn to tie their shoes.

The presence of the internet is a simple fact of life in their world. They expect and demand information that is always available. They may grow impatient when answers are not forthcoming in a timely manner.

In the workplace, Gen Z look to management to provide immediate access to information they need. Generation Z workers give a new urgency to the concept of instant gratification. This characteristic can be an advantage in the workplace.

[Gen Z is focused and driven](#) and they want to be financially stable. They hold an image of a "dream job" and they are looking for it. According to [Fortune](#), 32 percent of surveyed Gen Z respondents have a goal of working their dream job within 10 years of beginning their careers. They aren't so naïve as to think that finding a job will be easy and they realize the job market is competitive. With their overall goal of a dream job, they will tend to be more focused on growth opportunities than salary with their early jobs. They want managers who take an interest in helping them achieve both their personal and professional goals.

Working with Generation Z

Generation Z workers may seem demanding and high maintenance, but their potential to grow into excellent employees is even higher. The major attributes they're looking for in management is honesty and hard work, and they will give the same in return. They crave conversation and dialogue. They want responsibility and will look to management for guidance.

To incorporate this generation into your business and help them grow in your company, consider the following suggestions:

- **Small groups with dynamic leadership.** Gen Z works well in small groups with highly defined goals. A strong peer leader with a clear chain of command will help bring out the best in them.
- **Training is time well-spent.** Gen Z workers may need some training in interpersonal and communication skills. Remember, they grew up communicating in emojis and 140 character snippets. Use role-playing exercises to improve interpersonal behavior and communication skills.
- **What gets rewarded gets repeated.** Gen Z grew up with the "participation trophy" mentality still in full bloom. While they are not fooled by the meaning of a participation trophy, they nevertheless like to be recognized. They like rewards, even for small accomplishments. They like feeling motivated. Organizations with viable rewards programs will meet expectations and encourage growth in performance. Make sure to praise effort, and reward actual results.
- **Offer opportunities for advancement.** These employees will thrive on opportunity, which may lead to frequent job changes. To retain your Gen Z workers, show them where, when, and how their dream position is attainable within your company. Give them a goal to strive for, and give them the guidance to be successful.

Why leading Gen Z will be great for leaders

Gen Z are listeners. Leaders need to know that the insatiable curiosity of Gen Z also means Gen Z workers hear their leaders, even when the leaders don't realize that they are being heard. Leaders need to talk the talk and walk the walk. Gen Z is watching and learning.

Leaders should feel optimistic about their future Gen Z workforce. Gen Z will embrace change (it is all they have ever known) and can handle large amounts of information. They are less concerned about privacy and more concerned about being part of a bigger cause. They are not afraid to work, and they don't see the need to distinguish between work and a personal life. For them, work they love and their life can blend together.

Gen Z are resourceful and creative, and they will often find unique solutions. Leaders need to listen to Gen Z inputs and consider using their suggestions.

Gen Z workers have also watched the Millennials, and many Gen Z workers want to differentiate themselves from their Millennial peers.

Leading the Gen Z workers means being flexible, providing more feedback, and making sure the internet works.

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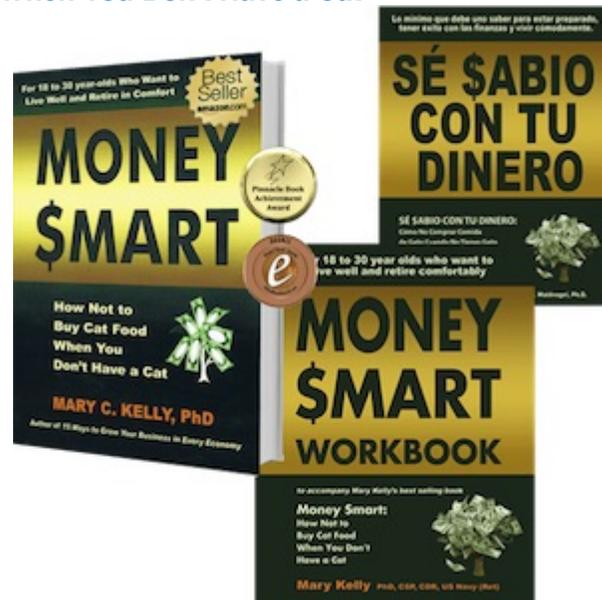
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