4 Ways to Get to Know Generation Z

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Just when you thought you had finally figured out the Millennial generation, there’s another young cohort of professionals entering the workforce. Meet Generation Z. Sure, they’ve got some similarities to tech-focused Millennials but they have plenty of their own attitudes and opinions about money, relationships and, of course, work.

Generation Z was raised in a post-9/11 world, following the dot-com boom and bust and during the midst of the Great Recession. Gen Z is a large cohort of about 72.8 million people and about 25% of the population. It’s a generation that you’ll need to understand to create meaningful relationships. There’s no doubt that these world events have colored the way they think and the way they work. Here’s what you need to know.

1. **Gen Z’ers are true digital natives**

Generation Z was born between the 1995 and 2010, which makes them the first truly digital native generation. By the time they were heading off to kindergarten, the internet had reached mainstream popularity and Mark Zuckerberg had already launched Facebook across college campuses.

Like many of us, Generation Z is rarely without their phones. But unlike their older colleagues, Gen Z may be more connected than ever.

They document their days on Instagram Stories and Snapchat, and messaging friends by text and other messaging platforms. However, they’re also a relatively private bunch. Rather than broadcasting their lives on Facebook (like their parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents), they favor networks that allow for privacy. Snapchat snaps disappear, as do Instagram Stories. Gen Z also gravitates towards apps like Whisper, an anonymous social network for sharing secrets.

Here’s the takeaway for HR pros: Rather than seeing their need for privacy as a barrier to communication, look at it as an opportunity. Try using text message reminders for open enrollment deadlines, or creating a Slack channel for benefits communication, in addition to email and paper updates.

2. **Gen Z’ers seek financial security**

Generation Z grew up during the Great Recession, during which they may have seen their parents lose their jobs or deal with serious financial hardships. Because of this, Gen Z is focused on financial stability.
Unfortunately, many Gen Z’ers may join your company drowning in student loan debt from college. Consider offering benefits that help them get out of debt and begin saving for the future. Student loan debt repayment benefits with platforms like SoFi or Gradifi provide appealing avenues to pay off debt faster. You can also promote tax-deferred savings programs such as a 401(k) or Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) to minimize their tax liability and maximize savings opportunities. These benefits may also appeal to Millennials struggling with student loan debt and the prospect of saving for retirement—all while they start families.

Financial wellness benefits are attractive to all of your employees—Gen Z included. Consider partnering with local banks or credit unions to provide other savings options and financial education. Make this education appealing to everyone by providing it in different formats—in-person for anyone to attend, as well as on-demand webinars or Skype meetings for those who appreciate a more interactive experience.

3. Gen Z’ers want to actively participate
Generation Z is the most connected generation yet—they’re used to Googling an answer before you can finish your question or chatting with their friends throughout each day.

This hyper-connectedness lends itself to more interactive workplace meetings. Keep your Gen Z employees engaged and garner feedback by incorporating polls into your meetings, or creating recordings and presenting to computers and smartphones using a platform like Zeetings, Presentain or Mentimeter.

Whereas Millennials were known for their interest in collaborating with each other, Gen Z wants to own their work a little bit more and compete against colleagues. Use this to your advantage to introduce gamification into your programs. Platforms such as Kahoot can not only help you create some fun competition, but it can improve information retention.

4. Gen Z’s surprising communication preference
We’ve established that Generation Z is a hyper-connected cohort. But research uncovered one surprise about this generation’s preference for feedback—they prefer to be in-person. Use this knowledge to mentor your managers who will deliver feedback, and use it to make your benefits more appealing, too. For example, a confidential employee advocacy program with phone, email and chat options can be a great source for Gen Z’ers who want more information on their benefits.

While not everyone in this age group will conform to these attitudes and feelings, it can be helpful to pull back the curtain and understand how this generation could be different from Millennials, Gen Xers and Baby Boomers.

Get ready, HR.

1 SHRM.org, ”Move Over, Millennials; Generation Z Is Here”
2 Ibid.

For more information, please call 1.877.426.7779