

Generation Z: Addressing the Leadership Challenge

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After Millennials, now it is time to shift the focus of leadership studies to Generation Z, particularly those who are joining the workforce today. This generation populate a world where change is occurring at a rapid pace, and hence it is imperative for leaders to focus on these uncertainties and provide meaning, clarity, and direction.

Generational differences affect all aspects of organizational behavior and leadership, from organizational culture to employee motivation and performance. Sooner rather than later, Gen Z will replace Baby Boomers and Generation X in the workforce and will become the majority. Managers need to adjust their leadership style to the characteristics of this generation now in order to assure future business success.

To succeed in leading Gen Z teams, it is important to understand the driving factors and values these teams have, and the context in which their values have developed.

Embrace the technology and build trust

Generation Z is the first generation born into technology. Understanding this characteristic is a key factor for a successful business leader today. Rapid technological shift led to a perception of technology in life and in work as a given tool for Gen Z

members. Leaders need to embrace this trend and leverage the technological fluency of Gen Z.

Collaborative communication tools and new ways of interaction, including instant messaging and collaborative platforms, became a part of work routine with Millennials. However, with Gen Z these are the basics and must-know tools for any manager, but this is no longer enough to lead and develop teams. Latest studies highlight Gen Z preference for a face-to-face communication style with authority figures. [Research conducted by Robert Half](#) reveals the inclination for face-to-face communications on the job, and interest in collaborating with a small group as opposed to working autonomously or off-site. Gen Z employees are looking for individual and complete connection and feedback from their leaders. [Study carried out by Randstad](#) shows the importance Gen Z give to mentorship, highlighting it as a best way to interact with them at a workplace.

Leading Gen Z teams requires managers to be at ease with latest technology as much as with developing direct connections with individuals to establish trust. With Gen Z entering the workforce, the relationships between manager and employee will be more important than ever.

Provide an opportunity to grow and make an impact

Gen Z employees are ambitious and driven, and as [research](#) shows, expect fast promotions. To successfully lead Gen Z teams managers should develop an

environment that encourages personal and professional growth as a foundation for promotions. Gen Z is interested in continuous development and education and willing to follow training programs and attend coaching sessions. Promoting a culture of lifelong learning can assist leaders in building meaningful connections with their teams.

Although most of the Gen Z members are still in their teens, they are already receiving the attention as a generation willing to make an impact - the generation that acts from early on. Everyone is familiar today with the work of Greta Thunberg, who at sixteen is already leading the change and inspiring the youth with her call for action. Gen Z employees are looking for an inspiration in their leaders, and they follow managers who are interested in improving the world. Contribution to society, sustainability causes, education, etc., are crucial motivational factors for Gen Z teams. Only businesses with positive social impact will be able to leverage skills of Gen Z employees successfully.

Catch up with their speed

In an age of access, digital fluency and desire to have an impact make Gen Z impatient, as they expect things to happen instantly. To meet these expectations, leaders must adapt at a faster pace in their decision-making processes and in providing information. Managers must be ready to process data at the same speed as Gen Z employees and provide answers in real time.

Forward-thinking leaders must understand and appreciate the generational differences and a need for a different leadership style when

working with Gen Z. To keep their teams motivated, leaders of today and tomorrow must be instantly available and technologically savvy. They need to show the commitment to their employees' development and be engaged in a race for making a difference in the world.

Gen Z is challenging leaders to develop an authentic business culture of recognition and social involvement that works on the front edge of technological development.