

**READY OR NOT,
HERE COMES**





Ready or Not – Here Comes Z

During the last 100 years a new generation has formed every 15 to 20 years in American culture, shaped largely by important world events and evolving cultural trends. These are the paradigms that define values of each generation; paradigms which have been proven to influence shared attitudes and behaviors for the rest of their lives.

For several years, attention was centered on the Millennials, also known as Generation Y (1982-1995). This first generation of the Post-Industrial Era ushered in the computer age and wowed and perplexed the world as the largest, most diverse, and best educated generation in history.

Now, workforce analysts and marketers are turning their attention to Generation Z (1996-2009)—the oldest who turned 21 in 2017—to gain a better understanding of what will define and drive this next generation of workers and consumers. According to the U.S. Department of Education, there are an estimated 57 million members of Gen Z in the United States, compared to 78 million Baby Boomers (1946-1964), 48 million Gen Xers (1965-1981), and 80 million Millennials.

One thing is quite certain already: the Zs have little in common with their Millennial elders. While it may be easy to lump these two technology-driven generations together, it would be a mistake to think they are the same for two key reasons: Zs came of age during an era of disruption, and Zs were raised to compete.

XYZ University published a research paper in 2015 about this generation, and spent the past year conducting new research to update our findings and deliver the most up-to-date information about this generation of tweens, teens, and young adults. We surveyed 1,801 Zs, ages 13-21 nationwide, researched data and trends, and also brought in the insights and expertise of our own Gen Z expert. Josh Miller, 16, has been studying his generation since he became an entrepreneur at the age of 13!

This paper is the result of considerable research, and herein we identify the core characteristics that uniquely define the Zs in an effort to prepare employers and marketers for what – and who – is coming next.

Personally, I'm intrigued by this generation's influences because I have Gen Z children. Professionally, as someone who has studied generations for 16 years, Zs are unlike any other generation that has come before them.

Of course, Gen Z is known for being tech savvy, but more than technology, the members of this generation have been shaped by the crises they were born into: the rise of school shootings, climate change, terrorism and the Great Recession. These dark events have undoubtedly made this generation more cautious and pragmatic, but they have also provided this generation with the inspiration to change the world – and their grit will likely allow them to do it.

Time will tell how this generation goes down in history, but we know this generation's influence on history will be unlike any other.

Ready or not, here comes Z.

Sarah J. Sladek

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CEO, XYZ University



Disruption: The Beginning of the End

In many ways, it's symbolic that Generation Z is named after the last letter in the alphabet because their arrival marks the end of clearly defined roles, traditions, and experiences. After all, Generation Z is coming of age on the heels of what has been referred to as the most disruptive decade of the last century. America has become an increasingly changing and complex place.

Family Life

For starters, the concept of family is more diverse than ever before, with the nuclear model (two parents, married, with children) representing only 46% of American households and alternative lifestyles becoming more widely accepted.

Also, gender roles have begun to overlap. Whereas Gen X and Millennials were born into a new “career era” that saw the rise of women educationally and professionally, Zs have been born into a new “family era” in which highly involved dads help out at home.

Consider these stats from Pew Research Center:

- There are an estimated 2 million stay-at-home fathers in the United States; a number that has doubled since 1989.
- In 2017, only the father worked in 27% of the families with children younger than 18. In 1970, dads only worked in 47% of these families.
- On average, fathers are spending seven hours a week caring for their children – almost triple the 2.5 hours they spent in 1965.
- Today, fathers average nine hours a week doing household chores – up from four hours in 1965.

While the majority of Zs are the offspring of Generation X, Zs are the first generation made up of the children of three generations of parents (Boomers, Xers, and Millennials). As a result, Gen Z will be far more diverse on multiple levels than previous generations.

Since most Zs are the children of Xers, it's interesting to reflect on the Gen X style of parenting as the generation defined by its independence and anti-status quo approach to life. Xers tend to be the most cynical generation. After all, they've lived through four recessions, struggled with debt, and watched the most educated and accomplished generation of all time (Millennials) graduate into a recession saddled

with a lifetime of debt—not unlike the Xers. The result is that Xers are likely to encourage their Zs to expose themselves to varied experiences, draw their own conclusions, and find their own way.

Social and Political Influences

Every generation experiences an unforgettable, defining moment in childhood. Boomers remember when President John F. Kennedy was shot, Xers remember the Challenger explosion, and Millennials remember 9/11. For Generation Z, the political campaign of 2016 will likely be an unforgettable turning point.

Never before had the spouse of a former president become a major-party nominee, as was the case with Hillary Clinton who was also the first woman to be the presidential nominee of a major party. And Donald Trump, a real estate developer and reality TV star, with no prior experience in public service or the military, became the wealthiest and the oldest president at inauguration.

This was the first presidential election that the oldest Zs were able to vote in, and the campaign was unlike any other for a variety of additional reasons:

- In the history of the New Hampshire presidential primary, there had never been so many potential Republican presidential candidates —21— the largest field in the modern political era.
- Trump brought an unprecedented amount of attention to the first presidential primary debate. Some 24 million Americans tuned in to watch, more than most big-time sporting events.
- Early campaigning on social media had never been so intense, with candidates turning to Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to engage supporters.
- During the campaign, both candidates were placed under investigation: a federal court determined that it couldn't force the IRS to turn over Trump's tax returns and Clinton was placed under State Department investigation as the first Secretary of State to ever use a private email address to *exclusively* to conduct her business.
- Clinton and Trump were cited as the two most unpopular presidential candidates in more than 30 years of ABC News/*Washington Post* polling.

- Trump became the fifth person in U.S. history to win the presidential election while losing the popular vote. While Clinton received about 2.9 million more votes nationwide, Trump won 30 states with a total of 306 electors, or 57% of the 538 available in the Electoral College.

Long before Election Day, experts speculated about the long-term ramifications that the tumultuous and unusually nasty campaign would have on children and adolescents. In fact, a new phrase was coined during the election: The Trump Effect.

During the campaign, Donald Trump exchanged sharp words over immigration with Pope Francis and sparked outrage with comments about women, Mexican immigrants, the call for a Muslim ban, and saying he would force Mexico to build a border wall. The fact that Trump's campaign defied and disregarded most, if not all, of the modern rules, conventions, and political principles of winning an American election left many people wondering what long-term effects his campaign would inspire.

Studies have already been conducted to better understand The Trump Effect and how it influenced Generation Z. One of the most publicized studies titled *The Trump Effect: The Impact of the 2016 Presidential Election on Our Nation's Schools*, was conducted by Southern Poverty Law Center, which administered an online survey to K–12 educators from across the country. Over 10,000 teachers, counselors, administrators, and school personnel responded.

Among the survey's findings: 90% of educators reported that school climate had been negatively affected since the election, and 80% reported heightened anxiety and concern among students who were worried about the impact of the election on themselves and their families.

It will take more time to fully comprehend and measure how the presidential election influenced Generation Z, but our early analysis indicates a hacker, hero, and builder mentality will emerge – which is addressed in greater detail in this report.

Digital Influences

As the first generation to be born into a world where everything physical, from people to places to pennies, has a digital equivalent, Zs will “see” a digital layer in all they encounter. Like Google Glass minus the gear, Zs don't distinguish the physical world from the digital world but simply see them as one.

From the time they were infants, Generation Z had access to mobile technology, and scientists are just beginning to understand how this is effecting their brain development. While we can't yet fully comprehend how the digital world has influenced and transformed Gen Z, we can identify some early transitions.

- **Information-Gathering**

As Zs stare at screens, they're taking in and sifting through an incredible amount of information. In the past, students would have been working out how to do math or reading English literature, analyzing and learning one subject or skill at a time. But according to Dr. Jay Giedd, an adolescent brain expert, Gen Z's brains have the extraordinary capacity to adapt to the world around them. In a *Science Illustrated* article, Giedd referred to the Gen Z brain as being more “flexible”, trained to absorb large amounts of information, meaning Zs have become especially adept at shifting between skills and subject matter.

- **Socializing**

There are questions as to how social media is affecting the way the brain learns to socialize. From a biology standpoint, large sections of the brain are reserved for learning social skills and interacting with the world, such as how to interact with people, make friends, learn responsibility, interest in dating, and thinking about your future. However, these interactions are now being changed by technology.

Zs could have hundreds of friends they interact with via SnapChat or Instagram, but scientists aren't sure whether Zs will be able to develop the same social skills as other generations by interacting with people via technology. Some research indicates that the sectors of the brain responsible for social skill development has been delayed in Gen Z, whereas the information sectors of their brains are greatly expanded in comparison to other generations. In other words, Zs could show signs of higher intelligence at an early age, but little interest in dating or difficulty remembering fairly routine or simple tasks (social skills).



On the other hand, YouTube usage indicates that teens all over the world are watching the same video clips and laughing at the same jokes, indicating that they are part of a digital global community unlike any other generation that has come before them.

- **Self-Awareness**

An interesting side effect to the rise in social media is that Generation X and Millennial parents have hyper-documented the lives of their tots, tweens, and teens. As a result, Zs will have crystal-clear memories of sitting up for the first time at six months old because they can easily and quickly reference the photos and videos shared on social media or saved in the “cloud”.

These photographic memories will be both a blessing and a curse. Unlike previous generations who had to cobble together their youth from a limited selection of Sears portraits and camcorder videos, often wondering what happened in between, Zs will have the privilege of remembering themselves and their lives far more fully. However, while previous generations could selectively remember the past (and edit out those tender moments in middle school), Zs will have no choice but to face the good, the bad, and the ugly.

It is unknown how the ‘parent paparazzi’ will impact the lives of Gen Z in the long-run. Family photos and home videos -- of trips, holidays, and children’s sporting events and achievements -- once private are online now, uploaded and tagged, searchable and sharable. Suddenly every meal, every moment is captured.

This is nothing new: Millennials also had highly documented youths. However, the proliferation of video will help Zs truly remember just how amazing (or awkward) that moment really was. The result is a generation that will be acutely self-aware. Furthermore, Zs are heavily reliant

on visuals to form memories. Just as a Millennial forgot her BFF’s number as soon as it was stored in her cellphone, a Z may struggle to remember her Sweet 16 party if she can’t access pictures of it from the cloud.

Gen Zs work harder than other generations to manage their online personas in addition to their physical selves. Through social media (especially SnapChat and Instagram) they curate their personal brand to reflect how they want to be perceived. Unlike the Millennial generation, they only share specific stories, to specific people, on specific channels. Zs are their own brand managers, monitoring comments, likes, and views to measure brand value and success. In fact, their self-esteem depends on these metrics.

This never-ending curation process is exactly as stressful and time-consuming as it sounds, especially as they view their identity formation as a constantly evolving composition. Zs want to reflect their best values and become their best selves.

Coming of age during an era of disruption means that Zs will be driven to find their own way rather than follow a formula.

This generation will largely be responsible for confronting the aftermath of the financial crisis, high youth unemployment, the effects of climate change, energy sustainability and security issues, along with a potential demographic time bomb with many industries struggling to survive significant shifts in human capital caused by retirement waves.

Keep in mind that coming of age during disruption also means that most Zs will be comfortable with being the disruptors. This generation tends to be sincere, reflective, thick-skinned, and self-directed, and will likely approach work in much the same way.



Competition: The Making of a New Workforce

In the era following World War II, American families wanted to rebuild their communities, establish families, and enjoy an era of renewed peace and prosperity. During this time, the Baby Boomers (1946-1964) were born and eventually became the wealthiest, most prosperous generation in history. Raised to aspire for the American Dream, this very large generation moved into positions of power and influence, and served as the workforce majority for 34 years.

With the American Dream alive and well, Boomers had no reason to teach their children, mostly Millennials, about competition. Instead, they taught them to focus on academic achievement and to be team players because if everyone works hard, everyone can win.

Enter Generation X (1965-1981). In contrast to the Boomers, Xers came of age during a time when change and economic and political uncertainty began to take root. They have lived through four recessions, struggled with debt and economic decline most of their lives, and watched the best educated and accomplished generation of all time (Millennials) graduate during the Great Recession and become the most debt-ridden generation in history.

From an early age, Xers witnessed economic distress and realized that not everyone can be winners. As a result, they became defined by their independence and anti-status quo approach to life, and they have taught their Gen Z children to be competitive, believing only the best can win.

Boomers encouraged Millennials to chase their passions and dreams wherever they may lead, whereas Gen X watched the economy break down, and have chosen to raise Gen Z more practically. They have encouraged their Z children to be realists, finding something they are good at and aggressively pursuing it.

Boomers gave Millennials everything they needed to succeed. Millennials are, in fact, the most protected and provided for generation in history. Gen X, however, has been encouraging Gen Z to obtain the skills they need to succeed on their own.

Both parenting style has its pros and cons. For example:

- Boomers were one of the first generations to be friends with their children, encouraging them to pursue their dreams and supporting them throughout the process. Although Boomers tend to have close relationships with their now adult Millennial children, they have been criticized for struggling to properly launch their kids. Millennials have experienced “delayed adulthood”, struggling to be independent of their parents’

influence and manage the world on their own. In 2011, 53% of Millennials were living with their parents. In 2016, 15% of 25-to-35-year-olds still lived at home.

- Xers have raised their Zs with an intense focus on competitiveness -- in academics, sports, and other activities. Many Z children started competing in dance, hockey, karate, chess, or other activities as young as three or four years old. Xers have been criticized for placing too much pressure on their children to succeed. This competitive environment, combined with worldwide disruption and increasing access to technology, is believed to have increased depression and anxiety among Gen Z.

The generations’ different approaches to life has many implications, but one stands out in terms of business: Gen Z is likely to lead.

In recent years, Millennials created and aggressively advocated for collaborative work environments. In fact, their aversion to leadership has been so strong, some Millennials sought out companies that boasted boss-free or team-managed workplaces.

In contrast, Zs have been raised with an individualistic, realistic, and competitive nature. They have been taught the skills to successfully defy the norm. This means we’re going to see the pendulum shift away from collaborative workplaces towards a widespread demand for, and pursuit of, leadership development.

Z Facts

Ages 9-22 years old in 2018

Born after smart phones became mainstream

Have never known life without Google

Few remember September 11, but the ‘War on Terror’ has always been the norm

Most remember the Great Recession, coming of age amidst financial crisis and economic stagnation

96% own a smartphone; 68% by age 13 (Nielsen)

85% learn about new products through social media (NAPCO Research)

48% identify as exclusively heterosexual (JWT Intelligence)

48% use Snapchat (Piper Jaffray)

47% ethnic minorities (Sensis)

35% use Snapchat and Instagram “multiple times per day” (Fluent)

30% watch videos online for at least two hours a day (Fluent)

26% of the American population (Nielsen)

8 second average attention span (Popsugar)

THIS IS Z

It is easy to quickly judge Gen Z and to fall into the habit of complaining about “kids these days,” but to do this is to choose to overlook new, innovative talent. Generation Z is vastly different than other generations, but different doesn't have to be a negative quality. Gen Z may have different views, strengths and values, but if businesses take the time to understand these characteristics they can reap the benefits Gen Z has to offer them.

HACKERZ

The first generation of the 21st Century has been shaped by chaos. In contrast to Millennials, who have seen a full cycle of boom and bust, Z's have experienced only economic malaise and political and environmental disruption. Zs are a generation that has never known a time before terrorist attacks and financial crises.



Josh says:

To Gen Z, disruption is the norm. We've been exposed to global flaws and issues our entire lives, giving us the ability to understand the problems that need to be solved. We're also skeptical, challenging preconceived notions about how the world should work. This leads to innovation, problem-solving, and new ideas.

As a result, they worry about the future—the world's and their own. They fret much less about “typical” teen problems, like dating or cliques, than they do about getting a good job and becoming successful. They don't care about someone's color, religion or sexual orientation. They do care very much about honesty, sincerity and openness.

history has taught them that change – real and very significant change – is entirely possible. It's also taught them the world has many flaws. As a result, Zs have learned to think like hackers: fixing, changing, and creating new solutions and opportunities in hopes of finding a better way to do things.

The hacker concept is probably best known in tech circles. Hackathons were originally designed to be a sprint-like event in which computer programmers, graphic and interface designers, project managers, and others collaborate intensively on innovation.

However, the hackathon concept has morphed into a business strategy. A hackathon is essentially a means for quick and creative problem solving – something Generation Z is highly motivated to do.

Adam Ruins Everything is a web series starring comedian Adam Conover. Conover, 34, isn't a Gen Z, but his show is popular with Zs. In the show, Conover debunks common misconceptions backing up his points via skits, interviews, and citing references on-screen. The show's ultimate goal is to encourage critical thinking and to question what information is true. In other words, Adam is on a mission to rid the world of fake news.

Examples of Renowned Gen Z HACKERZ

- **Easton LaChappelle, 21, CEO and founder of Unlimited Tomorrow**

At age 14, Easton LaChappelle met a 7-year-old girl who had a prosthetic arm. The limb could only open and close, and yet it cost \$80,000. He thought he could do better, and do it for under \$1,000. He set to work in his bedroom, and later the family garage. In less than 3 years, he was making a prototype limb for under \$500 that was actually interfacing with the nervous system of its owner. What's more – he could have made millions on his discoveries thus far, but instead, he releases all his intellectual property to the world by making them open sourced.

- **Robby Novak, 13, Kid President**

Brad Montague and his wife came up with the idea of Kid President in 2012 – what they refer to as a “YouTube pep talks for kids”. They asked their relative, Robby Novak, to play the character of Kid President. The series became an immediate success, taking Kid President to the White House, the UN, and to meet Beyoncé. Famous Kid President quotes include: ‘Treat everybody like it's their birthday’ and ‘You can be anything that you want today, so be bold, be kind, be awesome’.

Ready or not—Gen Z wants to problem solve and create meaningful change.

How does your organization currently respond to change? How would the hacker approach influence your workplace?

CURATORZ

Gen Z isn't just consuming content; they're creating it. This is the first generation to spend more time watching YouTube than television—and also post more videos than any other generation. It's become an art to create memes, and get content across in emojis, on Instagram, or Snapchat.

Lin Manuel Miranda, creator of the Broadway hip hop musical, *Hamilton*, doesn't fall into the Gen Z age category, but he is an icon this generation celebrates.

Hamilton, a musical about Alexander Hamilton, one of America's Founding Fathers, swept Broadway ticket sales and also became a presence in classrooms for teachers. Even though *Hamilton* is a story about America then, it's told by America now using mostly hip hop and rap. As such, youth are loving it, consuming American history through theater and song. Many Zs who have yet to see the musical are obsessed with its soundtrack, which is the first album to ever earn Billboard's 5-star rating.



Josh says:

Hamilton serves as an example of the co-exist traits prominent in Gen Z. We're inclusive and accepting of differences.

Then there's the significance of the musical's cast, which consists almost entirely of people of color. Miranda wanted the imagery of black and Latino actors dressed in traditional 18th-century attire to visually re-position those who have historically been silenced and marginalized into positions of voice and power.

Interesting enough, YouTube has been referred to as the microphone for marginalized voices. The videos might not all be as educational or inspiring as *Hamilton* – but Gen Z is definitely watching them! The top 12 YouTube stars earned a combined \$70.5 million in 2017—a 23% increase from 2016. The highest-earning YouTube stars in 2017 were PewDiePie, Roman Atwood, and Lily Singh.

Examples of Renowned Gen Z CURATORZ

- **Jenk Oz, 12, founder of iCoolKid**
The youngest CEO in Britain is 12-year-old Jenk Oz, founder of iCoolKid, a digital publishing, media, consulting, and production company providing original content for Gen Z. At school, Oz finds out what music everyone is listening to, and identifies trends, then posts articles on the website. He also travels to attend and cover pop culture and gaming conferences, movie premieres, exclusive live events, and interviews backstage.
- **Deep Patel, 19, author and marketer**
At the age of 17, Deep Patel released his first book, *A Paperboy's Fable*. For the book, he interviewed 15 industry luminaries, such as former CIA director David Patraeus, university professors, and Rus Yusupov (co-founder of Vine). The book was dubbed the best business book in 2016 by *Success Magazine* and the best

book for entrepreneurs by *Entrepreneur*. Since then, Patel has become a contributing writer at *The Huffington Post*, *Forbes*, and the youngest contributor at *Entrepreneur*. Also recognized as a top 25 marketing influencer by *Forbes*, Patel has worked with VC-backed startups to Fortune 500 companies.

- **EmiSunshine, 13, musician**
Emilie Sunshine Hamilton, better known as EmiSunshine, has been referred to as a musical prodigy. Since her breakout at just nine years old, Emi has garnered a large social media following and has performed at the Grand Old Opry and on the *Today Show*. Not only is Emi a singer, she's a song-writer and multi-instrumentalist, self-producing all of her music (live and in studio). Her songs take on dark themes addressing topics such as robbery, death, and even autism.

Ready or not—Gen Z wants to consume, create, and distribute meaningful content.

How will your organization need to evolve to allow for more creativity, learning, and information-sharing?



Zs are geeks – and not in a bad way. Gen Z grew up in an era in which societal standards began to shift dramatically. Norms were flipped upside down: “gay” was no longer taboo, diversity was mainstream, and bullying became uncool. Suddenly, the nerds were the popular ones, and describing yourself as a “geek” — especially passionate about your favorite hobby, class, or subject matter — was considered cool.



Josh says:

Our school system has taught us from the onset that we aren't necessarily at school to learn, but rather to get good grades and chase points. The rise of ultra-competitive youth sports and the stereotypical soccer mom and baseball dad have helped lead to this Gen Z mindset.

While it's rare for Millennials or other generations to willingly post anything that makes them look strange, Zs revel in their individuality. They prefer to be offbeat and quirky in a way no other generation has. Not surprising, this is the first generation to ignore branding, marketing, and trends. They aren't followers. Rather, they take great pride in being unique individuals and they are very self-assured.

While the Millennial generation was raised as the most protected, supervised generation in history – the Z generation has been raised to be the most competitive. Today's sports teams, music, and dance programs enroll students as young as three and four and there's intense pressure to commit to these activities and to achieve.

Television programming has fed into the compete and achieve messaging, as well. Reality and competition-focused shows like American Idol, Survivor, Top Chef, and America's Got Talent started broadcasting in the early 2000s, meaning they have been prevalent throughout Gen Z's childhood. In 2016, 68 of the top 200 shows on television were reality shows.

As a result of all these competitive influences, most Zs aren't afraid to pursue their dreams or to show their passion for something. In other words, they aren't afraid to let their inner Geek come out.

Alongside the Geekz movement, something else has evolved: Fandom. Fandom is the result of having easy access to movies and entertainment via the Internet and Netflix or Amazon, which allows people to binge-watch their favorite shows or watch the same shows over and over. It's also born out of the desire to escape reality, which for Zs has been pretty heavy considering they were raised during the most disruptive decade in history. And because Zs are Geekz, meaning they aren't embarrassed to admit their passion for a movie or show, fandom has become prevalent.

Over its four-and-a-half decade-plus history, Comic-Con International has continually presented comic books and comic art to a growing audience. Comic-Con recently experienced a surge in popularity among Gen Z fans –and sometimes their parents– who tend to love science fiction and fantasy comic books, movies, and games.

Karina Garcia, 23, is a former waitress from California who is now known as the “Slime Queen” and her YouTube channel is very popular among Gen Z youth. More than 5.7 million people subscribe to watch her turn glue, food coloring, Cheetos, Starbursts, and other ingredients into ooey, gooey slime. Garcia's most popular video so far, 100 Pounds of Slime!, has nearly 18 million views.



Josh says:

Our generation doesn't follow trends. We create them. From pop-sockets to fidget spinners, there are Gen Z fads all the time. And we find ways to make money off of them.

According to New York Times, Garcia doesn't have to sell any of the slime she makes. She makes a full-time living (up to \$200,000 per month) from corporate advertisers and sponsorship deals with companies including Coca-Cola and Disney. So in the world of Z, even being passionate about slime can have its perks.

Ready or not—Gen Zs revel in their individuality and are often described as intense, driven, or passionate individuals.

How will those traits change your work environment?

ENTREPRENEURZ

Hackerz, Curatorz, and Geekz. Perhaps because they're comfortable pushing their creations, opinions, and solutions out into the world, Gen Z is also entrepreneurial.

In 2011, Gallup research discovered that 77% of students in grades 5-12 wanted to be their own boss. Moreover, the students scored exceptionally high on entrepreneurial traits: 91% said they weren't afraid to take risks even if they would fail; 91% agreed with the statement "my mind never stops"; and 85% said they never give up.

This data likely points back to their competitive, chaotic upbringing, which has taught Gen Z to take control of their destinies. After all, they grew up during the recession. They saw their parents lose jobs or savings. They know, all too well, how the recession impacted the Millennial generation. Not surprising, they think about money, hope to control their destinies, and place high expectations on themselves. As a generation, they tend to be realists and approach their futures with sincerity.

Shark Tank, the Emmy® Award-winning business-themed reality show, premiered in 2009 – shortly after the Great Recession rocked the nation—and we can't overlook the show's influence on Gen Z children. The show has often

been used as part of school curriculum and adapted in various forms including school events, apprenticeships, and competitions to teach students financial concepts and entrepreneurship or introduce them to local business owners.

As a result, Zs are learning critical thinking. They have learned that every aspect of a business is the result of a choice that the

owner made. In addition, they are learning innovation; how to bring ideas to life, create a brand, devise marketing strategies, plan budgets, and make a formal presentation.



Josh says:

Shows like Shark Tank and The Profit have inspired Gen Z. Many Zs are also enamored with the Stock Market. And the rising popularity of cryptocurrencies, such as bitcoin, is also very intriguing to us.

Examples of Renowned Gen Z ENTREPRENEURZ

- **Noa Mintz, 17, founder of Nannies by Noa**

Noa Mintz launched the New York nanny agency at age 12 and was reportedly making over \$300,000 per year. At the age of 15, she hired her first CEO because she was working 40 hours a week while juggling an 8th grade course load.

- **Moziah Mo Bridges, founder of Mo's Bows**

This 15-year-old's company just entered what may become a seven-figure licensing partnership with the NBA. He began his bowtie company at the age of 9.

- **LeiLei Secor, 21, founder of Designed by Lei**

In just three years, Secor used her artistry, marketing abilities, and time-management skills to generate \$100,000 on Etsy selling handmade jewelry. She did it partly for a creative escape

from schoolwork and partly to help pay for college. Because of her achievements, Secor received the National Federation of Independent Businesses' Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

- **Mikaila Ulmer, 13, founder of Me & the Bees**

When she was just four years old, Ulmer's family encouraged her to make a product for a children's business competition. She used her grandmother's recipe for flaxseed lemonade and proposed to invest a portion of the profits to organizations fighting to save the honey bees. Today, the award-winning lemonade is featured at Whole Foods Market and Ulmer is leading workshops on how to save the honeybees and participating in social entrepreneurship panels.

Ready or not—Zs have learned to be strategic, innovative, and competitive. They aren't afraid to speak up or to fail.

Will they be given the opportunity to bring these talents and tendencies to your organization—or will they be dismissed for being too young and inexperienced?

Another outcome of the recent flip in societal norms was acceptance, and the pursuit to create a more peaceful, productive society. Interesting enough, Zs were raised amidst numerous references in pop culture and media to heroes. From Harry Potter to Avengers and the Hunger Games, Zs were surrounded by and gravitated towards the hero storyline.

Similar to the heroes, Gen Z shuns social conformity and wants to make a difference in the world. Yet, Zs are realists. They are least likely of any generation to believe in the American Dream. This hero-pragmatic mix has shaped Zs. According to CMO, 60% want their jobs to impact the world, 26% of 16- to 19-year-olds currently volunteer, and 76% are concerned about humanity's impact on the planet.



Josh says:

During the next 10-15 years, I'm confident that Gen Z will shape what the new American Dream looks like. And with the evolution of social media, we have the ability to interact with and be closer to our heroes than ever before.

While philanthropically minded companies have been successful marketing to Millennials, Zs will hold their feet to the fire, expecting brands to change the world in innovative and measurable ways. Because of Gen Z's fluency with digital tools and platforms, they have learned to be advocates and to express themselves in creative ways, and they want to use those skills to make an impact.

Brothers Craig and Marc Kielburger are social entrepreneurs and co-founders of a family of organizations dedicated to the power of WE, a movement of people coming together to change the world. Their goal is to lift people out of poverty, and they empower and educate students in this cause. WE Day brings world-renowned speakers and A-list performers together with tens of thousands of young people to celebrate their contributions and kick-start another year of inspiration.

You can't buy a ticket to WE Day. Students earn their tickets by taking one local and one global action through WE Schools – a yearlong educational program in 10,000 schools. Some students collect food for homeless shelters. Others raise money to build classrooms overseas. WE Day has evolved into a series of 19 stadium-sized events held across the United States, Canada, the UK and the Caribbean. This past year, 200,000 students attended WE Day.

Examples of Renowned Gen Z HEROEZ

- **Malala Yousafzai, 20, founder of the Malala Fund**

Perhaps the most renowned hero to Generation Z is Malala. After the Taliban began attacking girls' schools, Malala gave a speech in Pakistan in September 2008, then began blogging for the BBC about living under the Taliban's threats to deny her an education. In 2012, she was riding a bus home from school, when a masked gunman boarded the bus and fired at her. Though she would require multiple surgeries—including repair of a facial nerve to fix the paralyzed left side of her face—she had suffered no major brain damage. With a growing public platform, Malala continued to speak out about her right, and the right of all women, to an education. She gave a speech at the United Nations on her 16th birthday.

At age 17, she became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2017, she was appointed a U.N. Messenger of Peace, the highest honor given by the United Nations.

- **Joshua Williams, 15, founder of Joshua's Heart Foundation**

Through the Joshua's Heart Foundation, Joshua Williams has recruited more than 12,500 youth volunteers and helped raise more than \$550,000 to help feed hungry individuals and families around the world. Having developed a passion for helping the hungry when he was just four-and-a-half, he uses his website and social media to encourage people of all ages to join in the cause.

Ready or not—with the Hero mentality in mind, organizations will be expected to develop creative, nontraditional, world-changing campaigns rooted in results and which engage Gen Z in the process.

Will your organization be ready for and open to their style of advocacy?

BUILDERZ

The generation that came of age shortly after the last turn of the century were referred to by many names: Greatest Generation, G.I. Generation, Silent Generation, Traditionalists, and the Builders. The similarities between Generation Z and this generation of their great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents is quite similar.

Both came of age at a time of disruption, chiefly characterized by war and recession. Sociologists have identified there's an inclination to challenge status quo in times of lesser volatility. However, in tough times there is a great urge to build and conserve. Here we are nearly 100 years later, and Gen Z is exhibiting those same 'build and conserve' behaviors as the generation that came of age shortly after the turn of the 20th century.



Josh says:

Gen Z doesn't understand what normal is. What we do understand is that the world is constantly changing and it's something our generation can influence and build.

The only difference is technology. Zs are definitely driven to build – businesses, campaigns, communities – and at the same time they are conserving. Not only do they seek to conserve resources to prevent climate change, they seek to conserve time (preferring to communicate via technology), and to

conserve their identities (avoiding peer pressure and demonstrating strong moral values).

They are also more likely to save their money than previous generations, preferring DIY projects and coupon apps, and scrutinizing price and value prior to any purchase. This Build-Conserve continuum hasn't been in practice for 100 years, and will certainly influence consumerism and participation in dramatic ways.

Examples of Renowned Gen Z BUILDERZ

- **Gillian Espina, 13, Life Hacks for Kids**
Dubbed an "expert life hacker", Gillian, host of the popular YouTube show, Life Hacks for Kids, shows the under-13 age group Do-It-Yourself projects to make cool stuff out of ordinary things at home. Want to create a harmonica with popsicle sticks? Turn a t-shirt into a tote bag? Make a lantern out of a sports drink? Gillian will teach you how! Build and Conserve.
- **Maya Penn, 17, founder of Maya's Ideas**
At 13, Maya Penn had already joined the ranks of some of the world's most prominent thinkers

and doers. She is the CEO of her own clothing company which recycles and reuses materials. As an eight-year-old, she started selling headbands made out of recycled materials online. Since then she's become an award-winning eco-designer, environmental activist, author, computer programmer, animated film producer, and motivational speaker who's given three TED Talks. By the age of 16, she'd made enough money for her college education, and hired seven employees.

Ready or not—Gen Z likes to build and conserve.

Is your organization committed to doing both?

So this is Generation Z

They have learned to think like hackers; fixing, changing, and creating new solutions and opportunities in hopes of finding a better way to do things.

They are **Curatorz**; not just consuming content, but creating it.

They aren't followers. They are **Geekz**, preferring to be offbeat and quirky in a way no other generation has.

They are **Entrepreneurz**, starting up businesses, or at minimum demonstrating a strong work ethic and a 'can-do' attitude.

They are **Heroez**, shunning social conformity and seeking to make a difference in the world.

And they are **Builderz**, driven to build businesses, campaigns, communities – while also seeking to conserve resources.

What does this mean for business?

Here are some of the workplace shifts likely to evolve alongside the arrival of Gen Z workers, and tips on what your organization should be thinking about and doing to prepare for their arrival.

Dedicated Problem-Solvers

Due to the Great Recession, Gen Z has become more socially aware and concerned than any previous generation. Stereotypes of Gen Z make them out to be a selfish, self-centered group, but that is not the case. The Hackerz, Builderz, and Entrepreneurz traits indicate that Zs won't be content just standing by. Rather, they will seek jobs that give them an opportunity to continually contribute, create, lead, and learn. Zs will likely become bored with routine and mundane tasks. Their "flexible" brains will crave knowledge and challenge, and their competitive upbringing will give them the drive and commitment to see things through.

Stressful Workforce

According to the American Psychological Association, the ability to manage stress and achieve healthy lifestyles has been decreasing with each generation. Gen Z has been referred to as the most stressed out generation in history – but, that is not surprising considering they have been surrounded by competition their whole lives. In the aftermath of the Recession, only the best and the brightest might land a job, so they feel pressured to achieve that 4.0 GPA and pad their resumes. Reality shows have taught Gen Z that everything – from finding talent to finding love – is a fierce competition, and online activities rank everything people do from gaming to the number friends, likes, and shares.

Employers will need to recognize that Gen Zs will likely crave structure, goals, challenges, and a way to measure their progress. After all, the road to success has been mapped out for them their entire lives. But it's also important that employers are aware of employer burnout, incorporating fun and breaks into the work environment and providing access to healthy escapes focused on relaxation and stress relief.

Skill Analysis

Society's shift over the past few decades to become more open and accepting of diversity is a good thing, but it has had one unexpected consequence – it has left Gen Z unable to define themselves. Past generations have defined themselves by gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation, but Zs feel it's politically incorrect to use those qualities as the defining characteristics of a person. This isn't only challenging Gen Z on a personal level, but on a business level. Many teens struggle to fill out a résumé because they don't understand themselves enough to label their strengths, weaknesses, likes or dislikes.

Employers will need to understand this hurdle, recognizing that Zs are multi-faceted, avoiding clearly defined labels or linear thinking. Communicate with them via photos and videos, and avoid positioning products, services, and jobs with considerable detail and definition.

Creativity

Gen Z is exceptionally creative. For this generation, both literally and figuratively, the sky is not the limit. For previous generations, stories illustrated the "future" as a time when people used jet packs, people lived on Mars, and robots roamed. Well, jet packs are now being sold, in 2013 a group looking for volunteers to be the first colony on Mars received 200,000 applications, and robots are so commonplace that there is an International Federation of Robotics. The future is literally happening right now, and Gen Z interprets all this innovation as inspiration.

Another reason Gen Z is so creative is because they have a world of information at their fingertips. Unlike generations past, Gen Z does not have to waste time searching for information; they can find much of what they need to know in a matter of minutes and use the rest of their time to analyze the information and create solutions.

Employers will need to give Gen Z the time and freedom to come up with innovative ideas, and they will have to accept that despite their young age, Zs have valuable insights and skills to offer.

Ready or not, here comes Z.

Survey Findings

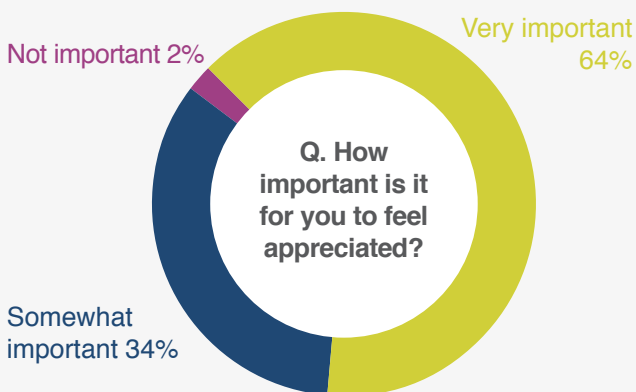
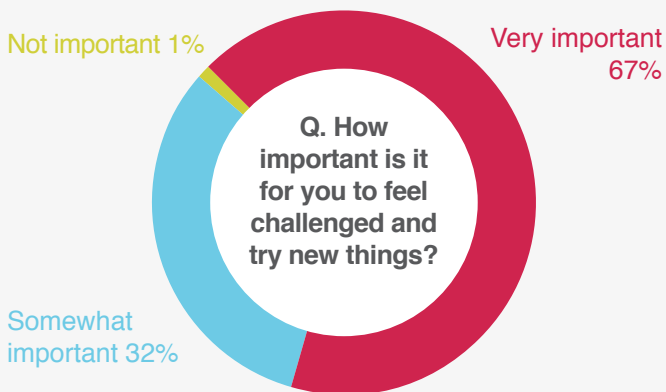
Little research has been done on Generation Z (1996-2009), the generation poised to enter the workforce during the next 14 years. The oldest Zs turned 21 in 2017 and XYZ University wanted to equip associations, employers, and marketers with a better understanding of what will define and drive this next generation.

What does Gen Z want from work? What changes will they introduce? What will it take to recruit and retain their participation?

XYZ University surveyed 1,801 Gen Zs, ages 13-21, globally and here's what we found out.

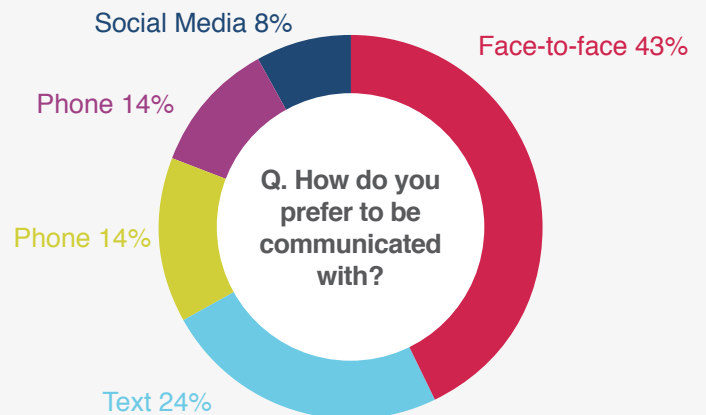
Gen Z wants to be challenged.

Both Millennials and Generation Z place a very high value on feeling challenged and appreciated. However, our survey results exhibited a slight difference between the two generations. Prior surveys revealed that Millennials want appreciation slightly more than they want a challenge. Gen Zs, however, are the opposite. They exhibit a slightly higher need for challenge than for appreciation.



Generation Z prefers face-to-face communication.

Zs might be glued to their laptops and mobile phones, updating their Snapchat streaks or watching the latest YouTube videos. But contrary to popular belief, Zs primarily rely on their devices for entertainment. When it comes to communication, they seek authenticity and honesty, which is best achieved in-person.



Gen Z is entrepreneurial.

Raised during the most disruptive era in history thus far, Zs tend to like the idea of being in control of their destinies. Furthermore, they have grown up watching people make money creating YouTube videos. They feel responsible for creating change in the world, and they were raised to be competitive. Not surprising, this generation exhibits entrepreneurial tendencies.

58%
WANT TO START
THEIR OWN BUSINESS

14%
ALREADY OWN THEIR
OWN BUSINESS

Gen Z is career-focused.

In comparison to Millennials, who have been criticized for their “delayed adulthood”, Gen Z is showing signs of “early adulthood”. Educators and parents often describe this generation as being more serious and contemplative about the world and their role in it. As a result, Zs are thinking about their career paths and exposing themselves to career training at an earlier age than Millennials did. It’s probable that some of this early onset of adulthood is being caused by parents, who are pressuring children to be competitive and successful and to avoid the debt that plagued both the Gen Xers and Millennials.



Q. Have you participated in any of the following?

- Took a class at school focused on my career interest 51%
- Joined an extracurricular program (team, club) based on my career interest 40%
- Enrolled in a class or workshop outside of school focused on my career interest 36%
- Worked in a job focused on my career interest 33%
- Attended a camp focused on my career interest 29%
- Asked someone working in my career interest to be my mentor 26%
- Enrolled in an internship focused on my career interest 26%
- Conducted an informational interview with someone working within my career interest 20%
- None of the Above 7%

Q. Who is influencing your career decisions?

- Parents or Relatives 55%
- Teachers 33%
- College Recruiters 15%
- School Counselors 9%
- All of the Above 19%
- None of the Above 16%

Gen Z is team-oriented yet also wants to lead.

This ability to transition between team-player and leader is likely the result of Gen Z’s competitive upbringing. While they are accustomed to being on teams and in collaborative environments, they have also focused on and measured their own progress, constantly contemplating what it takes to succeed. Furthermore, Zs have been raised during an era of disruption and feel personally inspired – and in some cases responsible – to lead a change initiative.

64%
PREFER TO WORK IN TEAMS RATHER THAN BY THEMSELVES

76%
WANT TO MANAGE OTHER PEOPLE IN THEIR FUTURE CAREER

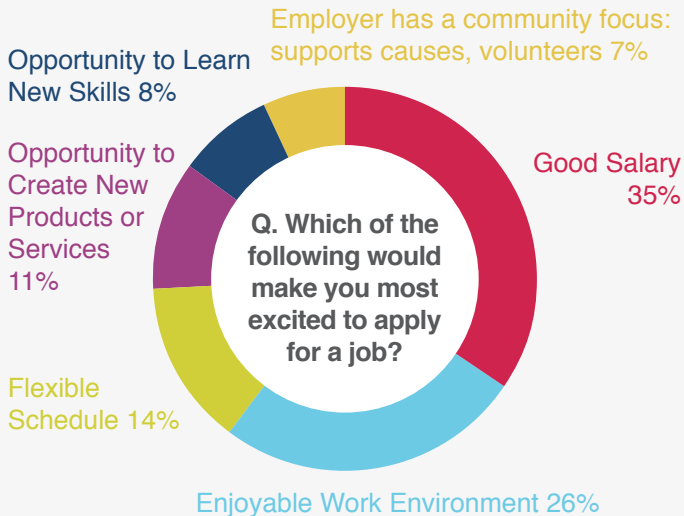
Gen Zs are interactive learners.

From how we educate to how we engage employees or plan events, this is a key insight. Zs do not learn by listening. Brain development research proves they acquire knowledge very quickly, and prefer to obtain knowledge in highly interactive or visual ways.



Gen Z is seeking financial security.

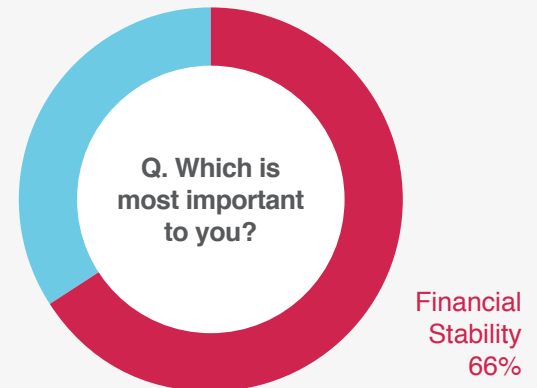
Zs have been shaped by the aftermath of the Great Recession. They watched Millennials become the most debt-ridden generation in history and they are concerned about falling into their same trap. As a result, Zs value financial stability and have already started working.



71%

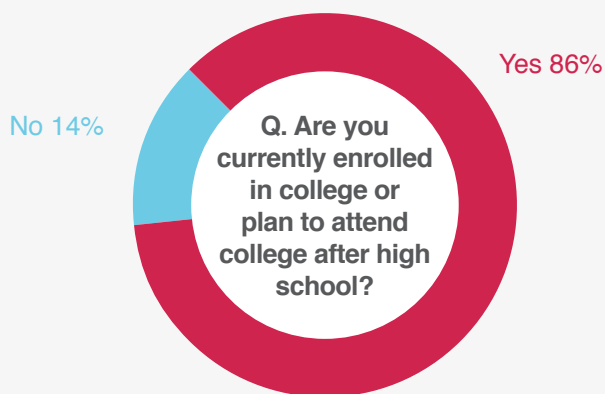
CURRENTLY HAVE A JOB FOR WHICH THEY ARE PAID

Doing Something You Enjoy 34%



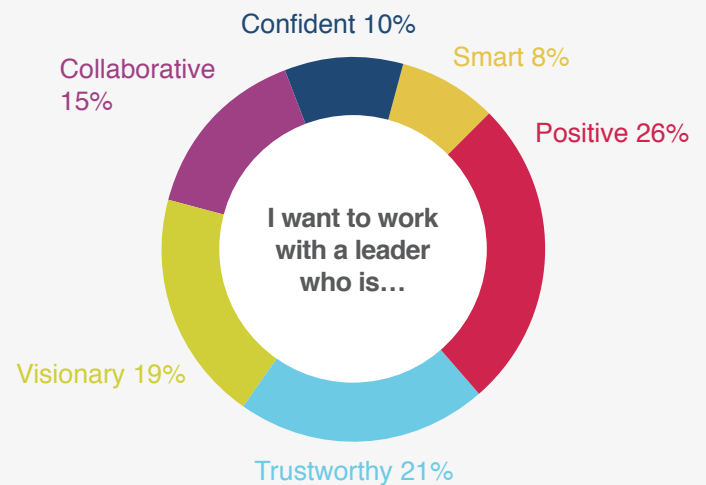
Gen Z is college bound.

Zs might be glued to their laptops and mobile phones, Although there's been greater emphasis in recent years on seeking alternatives to post-secondary education, such as taking a gap year or moving into apprenticeship programs, most Zs are still planning to pursue a college degree.



Gen Z values leaders who are positive and trustworthy.

This differs slightly from the outcomes of Millennial research. While Millennials and Gen Zs both value trust in a leader, Millennials usually cite collaboration and vision as most important. In other words, Millennials focus on the outcomes leaders inspire, whereas Zs are more likely to consider leaders' attitudes and personalities. To Z, what leaders encourage others to do isn't as valuable as how they make them feel.



Gen Z describes success as both happiness and hard work.

The survey offered an optional last question, which asked people to type in a word they would use to describe success. Out of 1,395 responses, the most frequently used words were **happiness** and **hard work**. This points to the realistic, practical approach of Gen Zs. Coming of age during the most disruptive decade in history has taught them that personal fulfillment is important and attainable, but it's also taught them the unexpected can happen and they will have to apply themselves to make their dreams come true.

Authors & Researchers



Sarah Sladek
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Sarah Sladek is a best-selling author, speaker, and CEO. Since 2002, her life's work has been dedicated to helping organizations engage future generations of members and talent. As a leading researcher of generational insights, she has authored five books and several research papers. Her latest book, *Talent Generation: How Visionary Organizations are Redefining Work and Achieving Greater Success* (2017), identifies the core strategies essential to engaging today's talent. As the founder and CEO of XYZ University, Sarah has grown a future-focused company comprised of researchers, presenters, and strategists helping organizations worldwide engage younger generations of members and talent.



Josh Miller
Director of Gen Z Studies, XYZ University

Josh Miller, 16, is a passionate and informed advocate for his generation—Gen Z. He started speaking on national stages at the age of 13 and his list of accolades include being an award-winning entrepreneur, television show co-anchor, and thought-leader who has been mentored by several notable business leaders. Miller is an integral part of the XYZ University team, educating clients through keynote presentations and workshops which draw on his experiences as both a high school student and consultant to Fortune 500 companies.

ABOUT XYZ UNIVERSITY: Struggling to engage younger employees? Challenged with membership decline? Wondering how you're going to appeal to the next generation of consumers? We're here to help! XYZ University's speaking, training, research, and strategy services will give your organization the guidance it needs to succeed in this era of disruption. Our clients know what (and who) is coming next. As a result, they successfully engage in human capital, stay ahead of the curve, and build relevant, growing organizations.

For more information, please contact Brad at: bsladek@xyzuniversity.com