# UNDERSTANDING THE GENERATION Z: THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

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# UNDERSTANDING THE GENERATION Z: THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

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## Abstract

*Generation Z is born and raised with the social web, they are digital centric and technology is their identity. This generation will be entering in the companies in the coming years but little is known of this generation about their characteristics, needs, attributes and work style. They seem to have different attitudes towards work then the previous generations. Without proper understanding of this generation, organizations will find difficulties to hire and retain them for the sustainable growth of the organizations. By understanding them, the companies can determine what can impact their recruitment and retention success through paying attention to what this generation tick in the workplace. This paper examines the characteristics and preferences of the Generation Z from the existing literature so that organizations can foresee and build work place suitable for them which in turn will impact the organizational performances.*

**Keywords:** Generation Z, Characteristics, Preferences, Workplace.

## Introduction

While employers are finding hard to identify and realize the needs of the Generation X and Y in the 21$^{st}$ century, now they have completely new generation i.e., the Generation Z to work on with. The challenges of the organizations are not only to serve the Generations X and Y, but also to foresee the workplace needs of the rising Generation Z so that groups comprising of different generations can work effectively (Knoll, 2014). Researchers have demonstrated that each generation has different attitudes towards work and workplace (CIPD, 2008; Harber J., 2011). But little is known of this Generation Z about their characteristics, needs, attributes and work style. Therefore employers and HR managers should anticipate workplace needs and change their strategy for recruiting, motivating and retaining these emerging young workers who will be arriving very soon. It is crucial to understand them to keep talent from the newest generation and realize their benefits to sustain the growth of the company. By understanding the characteristics and the preferences of the Generation Z, recruiters will be able to attract and connect them in order to groom them to become the future leaders of the company. Without this proper understanding, companies will find difficulties in recruiting and retaining the best talented candidates of the Generation Z and will also fail to motivate and inspire them which in turn will impact the organizational performances.

## 1. Generation Z

Generations born in the 1990's and raised in the 2000s during the most profound changes in the century who exists in a world with web, internet, smart phones, laptops, freely available networks and digital media are considered as the Generation Z (Bascha, 2011; Brue Tulgan & Rain maker Inc., 2013). Generations Z is raised with the social web, they are digital centric and technology is their identity. They are also referred as Generation I, Gen Tech, Digital natives, Gen Wii etc. They are born and raised in the digital world and what distinguishes them from other generation is that their existence is more connected to electronics and digital world.

## 2. Characteristics of Generation Z

According to the Institute for Emerging Issues (2012), the Generation Z is the most ethnically diverse and technologically sophisticated generation. Generation Z has a informal, individual and straight way of communicating, and social networking is a vital part of their lives. They are a Do-It-Yourself generation. In the study conducted by Dan Schawbel (2014), Generation Z tend to be more entrepreneurial, trustworthy, tolerant and less motivated by money than Gen Y. They

are more realistic about their work expectation and optimistic about the future. Based on the findings of Generational White Paper (2011), Generation Z tends to be impatient, instant-minded, lacking the ambitions of previous generations, have acquired attention deficit disorder with a high dependency on the technology and a low attention span, individualistic, self-directed, most demanding, acquisitive, materialistic and entitled generation so far. Max Mihelich. (2013) describes that the Generation Z are very concerned with environmental issues, very conscious of looming shortages and water shortages which indicates that they have a high sense of responsibility towards the natural resources. Amanda Slavin (2015) finds the Generation Z wants to be heard irrespective of their young age. Technology is a part of their identity and they are tech savvy but lack problem-solving skills and have not demonstrated the ability to look at a situation, put in context, analyze it and make a decision (Joseph Coombs, 2013). They also appear to be less inclined toward voting and to participating in their communities than earlier generations (Institute for emerging issues, 2015).

## 3. Preferences of Generation Z at the Workplace:

As preferences of work and workplace are different for different generations, it is crucial to understand the preferences of the Generation Z so that proper channel of communication is established and good environment is created in the organization. It is also important to understand what motivates them for the organizational productivity. The preferences of generation Z based on the available literatures are as follows:

(a) Based on the study of Bascha (2011), they prefer transparency, self-reliance, flexibility and personal freedom are non-negotiable aspects of Generation Z work ethics and ignoring them could result to frustration among peers, reduced productivity, low morale and a lack of employee engagement. They expect to be informed, to be allowed to be responded, and to have their responses heard and acknowledged.

(b) Max Mihelich (2013) stated that they must have enough independence to prove themselves and earn immediate recognition. Also as this generation has never lived in a world without a smart phone or an iPad, they expect not to lose all these gadgets when going to the office.

(c) According to the study of Dan Schawbel (2014), they prefer in-person or face to face communication and want to take them seriously. They desire the managers to listen to their ideas and value their opinions. It indicates that the workplace should be less about age and more about ideas and contributions. Also they want to work for an honest leader

and want them to be open and do not hide information from them because of their young age or title

**(d)** According to Teresa Bridges (2015), they prefer work environment that cultivate mentoring, learning and professional development opportunities as they believe their education has not given the required skills to deal with the real life problems. Work place that encourages their entrepreneurial skills, work environment which is friendly and allowance for flexible schedules are the attributes that the Generation Z looks for a job. Technology is their integral part of their lives and prefers organizations that are at the forefront of workplace that supports and allow them to communicate, edit documents and advance work regardless of geographies or time zone barriers.

**(e)** They prefer office workplace that is easy to adjust within. They value arrangement and certainty in the workplace and find complex planning layout undesirable (Knoll, 2014).

**(f)** They prefer to work for a leader with honesty and integrity (Robert Half, 2015).

**(g)** They prefer to work for an organization that demonstrate genuine ties with community and social responsibility (Nicola Middlemiss, 2015)

## 4. Conclusion:

Generations Z seems to have different requirements and motivating factors then the earlier generations. This generation will stir its own unique needs upon the workplace as they enter the organizations. It is important for the organization to discover what's important to the Generation Z beforehand to boost attractiveness within and outside the industry in order to establish a corporate culture and workplace to gain a distinctive advantage in the hunt for top talent employees from the Generation Z which in turn will sustain the organizational growth and remain a winning organization throughout.

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