EXPLORING STRATEGIC CHALLENGESIN THE GEN Z WORKFORCE IMPACTING WORKPLACE TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract: Recent research reports from the United States conceal that a whopping 61 million members of Gen Z are ready to enter the workforce at various levels in the US Workforce. They are presently the growing up, graduating high school and college who are consistently occupying the young workforce at entry levels in all kinds of organisations. This paper finds that they are very uncurious about others and are able enough to thrive alone as well as to gel well in a team when the need arises for the betterment of the organisation. Finally, they attend and get attracted to the individual and not the labelled designations. They just seek moral support and correct advice to grow as capable and young leaders as well as get supported but are concerned very much about the secured future in the workplace.

IndexTerms -- **Transformation, Strategy, Digital, Millennial, Gen Z, WorkForce**

I. INTRODUCTION

The digitally transformed workplace does require a transformation in the workforce, and it is either done systematically or evolve out of the demands of the transformed workplace, but Gen Z has been influencing the transformation, and now the new digitally transformed workplace is the most sustainable organisation culture that is pre-occupied across the world. Hence the workforce to has carved a niche in the transformed workplace; they are the Gen Z.Some of the characteristic similarities of Gen Z to their immediate senior generation like the millennials are;
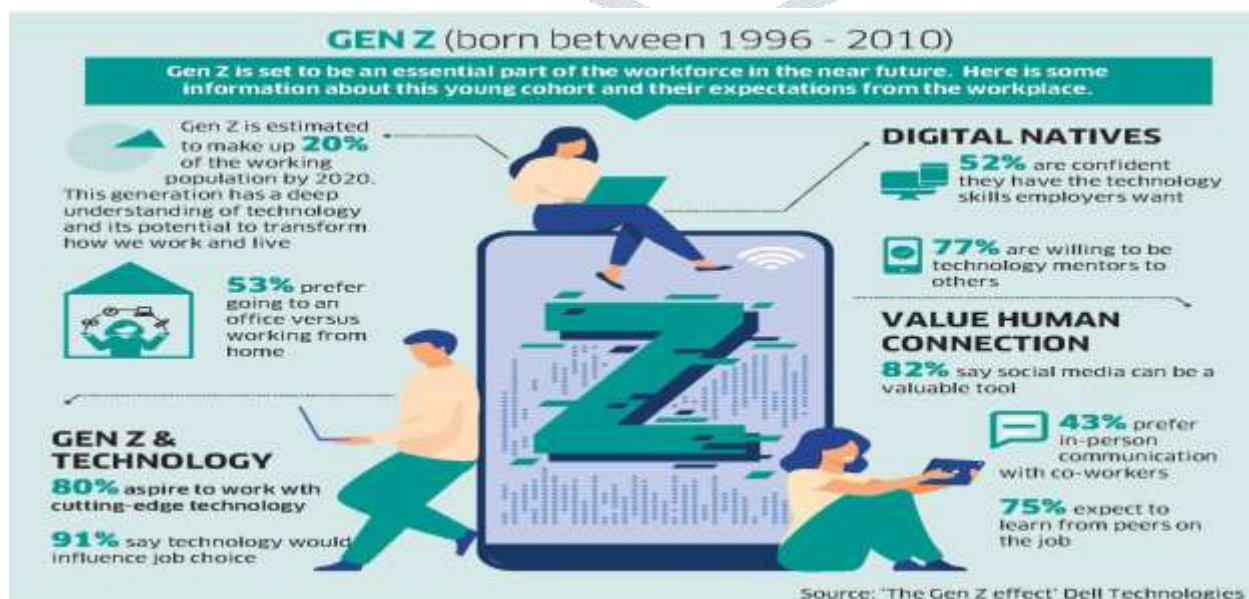

Fig:1: Conceptualising Gen Zers for understanding the characteristics. Source: The Gen Z effect Dell Technologies through google infographics. For academic understanding only.

- Workplace flexibility and adaptability to situations: Gen Z like the millennials are keen to look for workplace flexibility and are not interested to be in the cubicle sedentary life from 9 to 5 pm every day till retirement.
- Prefer flexible work schedules to have all-inclusive life.
- They do not want to build walls from work life to personal life since they prefer their way and time to work hard and yet do not like to sacrifice their family hours.
- They prefer to modernise office spaces with natural light than the artificially lit environment.
- Prefers plenty of perks rather than waiting for months for the increments.
- Innate attachments to digital devices and their technological advantages in work.
- They prefer to be inside the IoT mode of communicationas shown in the figure below:
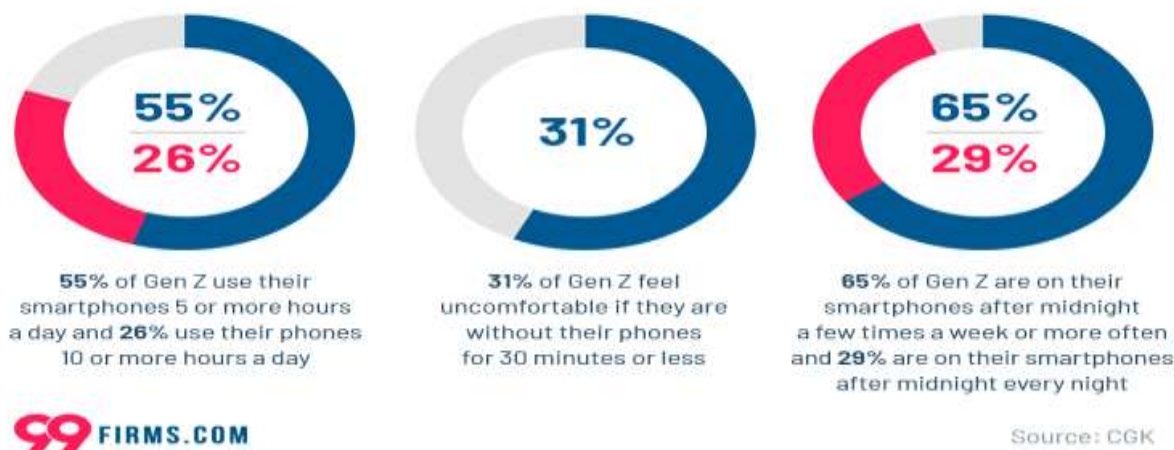

Fig: 2: Conceptualising the Gen Zers IoT mode of communicating through smartphone usage. Source: www.99firms.com through google infographics. Used for academic understanding only.

Objectives of the study:

- Explore the Challenges for the organisations due to the influence of Gen Z inthe workplace is now a pressing challenge for HR professionals across the world.
- Evaluating the Challenges starts right from attracting prospective candidates for hiring and furthering impediments to nurturing the right talent.
- Elucidating the real Challenges of keeping up the positivity and motivation levels of Gen Z and their smart strategy in influencing the workplace.
- Analysing the Challenge of understanding what fits the right strategy in making the group tick.

Recent research reports from the United States conceal that a whopping 61 million members of Gen Z are ready to enter the workforce at various levels in the US Workforce. They are presently the growing up, graduating high school and college who are consistently occupying the young workforce at entry levels in all kinds of organisations. These are the generation succeeding in the millennial workforce.Importance of smart strategies to attract and retain the top talents of Gen Z is the major strategic challenge of the organisation that this research paper tries to conceptualise.

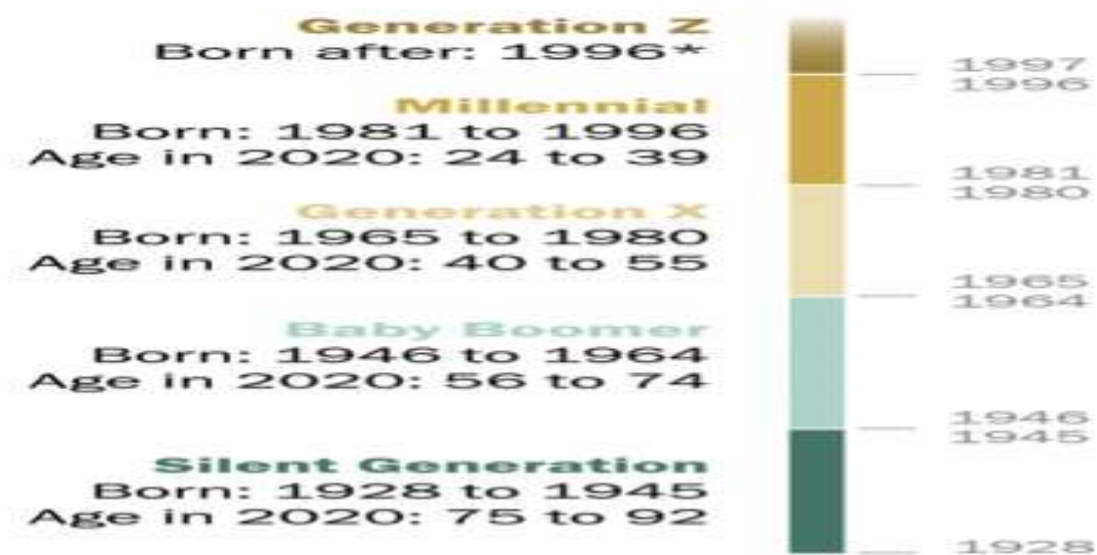Let us understand Gen Z and their characteristics

- They are individuals born after 1997.
- The cut off year shall be 2015.
- Gen Z is of 23 years hardly.
- They are known for creating disruptive trends.

Y → Z Trends from Generation Y to Z

66% → 54% Dislike of multi-tasking
68% → 59% Disinclined to work in a fast-paced environment
30% → 34% More interested in advancement at the company
38% → 27% Less motivated by money to stay at their company
56% → 61% Want their manager to listen to and value their ideas
58% → 61% Enjoy working independently

Fig: 3: Conceptual understanding of differences from Gen Y to Gen Zers. Source: Infographics. For academic purposes only.

Strategic disruption for the organisations: The strategic disruption for the digital age organisation will be to manage Gen Z effectively. Since they are tech-savvy talent entering to replace the retiring baby boomers. Hence, understanding the strategic part to accommodate Gen Z, the fresh perspectives for learning about innovative ideas, and the organizational strategies that can engage according to the attributes of the Gen Z workforce shall be the best part of the organisation's succession strategy that is slowly replacing the baby boomers to Gen Z. Since the characteristics are partially similar to the Millennials who are the immediate seniors to them, so altering the strategies according to the needs and fitments required to get the real outcome shall be the prerogatives for the HR professionals.

The generations defined

Generation Z
Born after: 1996*

Millennial
Born: 1981 to 1996
Age in 2020: 24 to 39

Generation X
Born: 1965 to 1980
Age in 2020: 40 to 55

Baby Boomer
Born: 1946 to 1964
Age in 2020: 56 to 74

Silent Generation
Born: 1928 to 1945
Age in 2020: 75 to 92

1997
1996

1981
1980

1965
1964

1946
1945

1928

*No chronological endpoint has been set for this group.
"On the Cusp of Adulthood and Facing an Uncertain Future: What We Know About Generation Z So Far"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Fig: 4: Defining the general characteristics from research done by PEW Research Centre: Source: PEW Research Centre through google infographics. Used for academic purposes only.

Understanding disruption in the workplace by Gen Z

Disruptive practices are very common in modern organisations since innovative practices in the work process and smart strategies are in place.   The foremost disruptive happening will be the following:

- (a) Flexible work policies.
- (b) Reconfigured Office spaces.
- (c) Technological upgradations.

Other behavioural disruptions shall be on the following

Gen Z calibrates them to improvise their abilities to collaborate and foster positive work culture in any place of workplace they join. Though collaborative in the work, Gen Z are very agile and competitive and thrive to push themselves beyond limits.The Gen Z takes every opportunity to push themselves more than the normal limits to set their bar of standards and try to achievethem. The behaviour perspectives of Gen Z inside an organisation are very speculative and they are always longing to be independent in personal life and looks for the same to thrive in office space as well.Their official demeanour is usually pragmatic and not sentimentally attached to the position neither in the organisation nor towards the organisation, as their emotional connection is very low compared to the previous generations. They are aware that their skill sets and consolidating their abilities are to take them to various levels, and are very clear that they cannot achieve their dreams by sticking to one organisation.Their attitude is a mere affiliation towards their job/career security than the organisation, which the organisations need to understand they are super cool as long as their jobs are secured, and they won't regret job hopping or moonlighting.
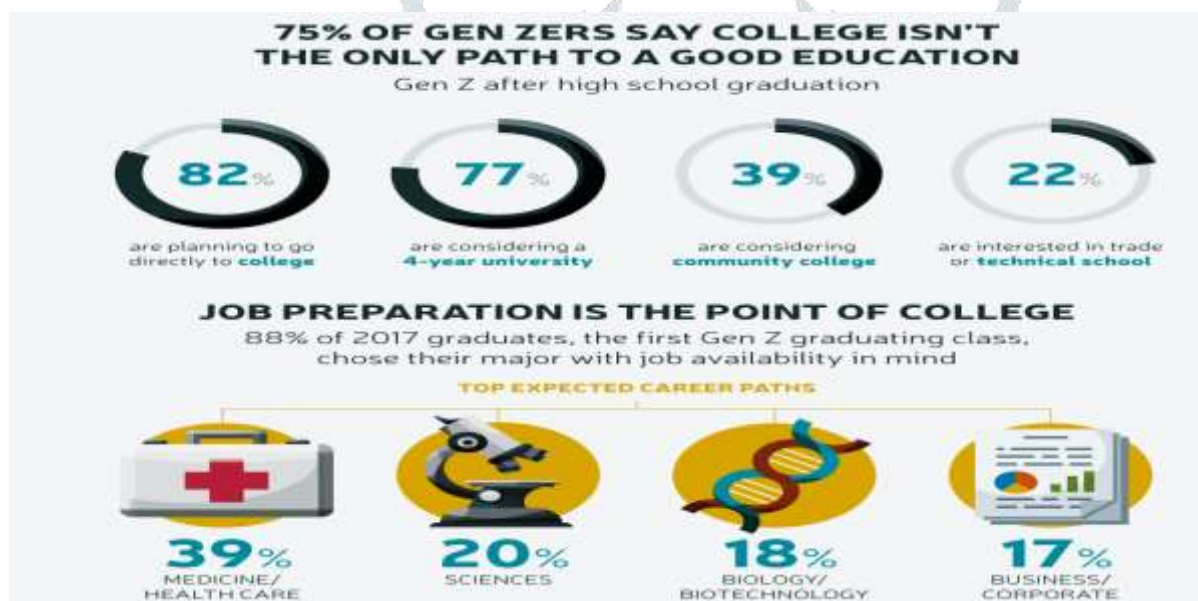

Fig: 5: General Characteristics of Gen Zers observed on the points of education and related career preferences. Source: Infographics through google. Used for academic purposes only.

Despite all the above, the priority is towards financial security and always looks for recession-proof jobs, since many of Gen Z visualised their parents undergoing the recession and the impact that was created on the psyche them and their parents. Gen Z unlike other generations are more security prone towards their job, career, financials and has the innate ability to shape their future. They have high latent potential in them to take an alternative route or take risks and that puts them on the pedestal towards a growth trajectory.Gen Z always are averse to debts and they instead show excessive interest in their work and are willing to work hard to grow up the career ladder with hard work, and they are well aware of what it means to run a life using credit cards. They prefer to work hard to earn more rather than spend in advance.The Gen Z can surprise anyone with their unconventional work methods and the unconventional route to learning higher education so that they try to avoid education loans or any other loans to keep themselves free of debts.

Gen Z also thinks about financial security, are quick learners and are always in anxiety and keep their learning curve active. Hence the elucidation in short on the characteristics shall be taken as given below:

(d) Ability to Collaborate and foster a positive work culture
(e) Highly competitive.
(f) Thrive to push themselves beyond certain limits.
(g) Liking independence in work as well as personal life.
(h) Pragmatic in behaviour.
(i) Affiliation towards more security in job/career.
(j) Financial security is always on the priority list.
(k) Looking for recession-proof jobs.
(l) Ability to shape their future.
(m) Potential to take up leadership roles.
(n) Averse to debts.
(o) Higher levels of willingness to work hard.
(p) Excessive thinking on financial security.
(q) Always on the search for unconventional ways to learn so they can avoid student loans.
(r) Quick learners always suffer from FOMO (Fear of Missing Out).
(s) The active learning curve in the career to make financial fortunes.
(t) Job hopping despite the need for financial security.

Findings and recommendations to the organisations:

The first challenge is to attract and retain, for which the research reports from various countries revolve around the following strategic moves:

- The organisations are to position themselves as a preferred employer with an ample amount of opportunities.
- Reinvigorating newer recruiting methods like the freedom to develop their long term career.
- Smart technology will be the environment the younger Gen Z will promote and seek a working culture similar to that.
- The companies need to innovate integration in the connectivity issues and most of the communication investment needs to move towards technology.
- More team projects than short and long term projects.
- The utilisation of mobile apps for better networking and increasing productivity.
- Creation of professional utility apps for free workflow.
- Decreasing the traditional mechanism for managing the work allocation and workflow.
- Creating routine tasks to automation.
- Providing online attendance trackers and tax calculators.
- Provision of more project management apps to increase the speed of the work.

Creating Space for education and skill development

- Offering free time to study online and improvise their qualifications.
- Adding skills and developing personally and professionally.
- Sponsoring for training and development programmes to increase productivity.
- Regular mentoring to improvise their performance.
- Informative videos on the professional areas to gather knowledge from across the world of work.

Intermittent feedback on professional improvisations

- Regular and professional approach in the feedback method.
- Feedback helping Gen Z to succeed is appreciated.
- The feedback on Gen Z may be freely shared only with the concerned person.
- Formal and informal feedback is required for a motivated workforce.

Creating Flexibility in work options

- Setting a work culture to make Gen Z work-life balance will improvise their motivation levels.
- Non-work or personal life and their ambitions are always with them, and they try to stay in an organisation that supports them with these options.
- Allowing them to opt for their suitable schedules then compelling ones.
- Allowing remote work options to keep them delivering to the required standards.
- Shift works are too well integrated so that it does not harm their personal life and health.

Creating positive and vibrant career planning and promotional avenues

- Career planning is to be transparent and very positive.
- Creating a secure environment is a must and the pathways are very clear.
- The movement upward for a better career needs to be visible transparently for Gen Z to trust and try in the organisation where they are present is very important for retention.
- Any stagnation in career planning or perception of stagnation will make Gen Z move away from the organisation.

So multipronged approach towards all the aspects discussed above are required to be accommodated, and the modern digitalised organisations are to go along with the Gen Z, Baby Boomers, as well as Gen Z workers including the changes influenced at a faster pace by the Gen Z.

Gen Z since 2020 is the modern generational force in the modern workplace culture.Characteristics and Personality factors of Gen Z impacting the workplace changes are:

- Gen Z comprises 1/3 rd of the workforce population.
- Born after 1996, they are known for working in multi-generational workplaces.
- They are characterised by a Generational cohort ofmillennials or post-millennials.
- iGeneration is another word for them.
- Gen Edge is also used on them.
- They are digital natives and had never seen a world without the internet.
- They possess very high technological expectations in the workplace.
- They are the generation who has experienced a great recession and also the wealth gap that contributed to the income inequality.
- Gen Z possesses higher qualifications but less work experience than the previous generations.

The Gen Z expectations

They learn about the areas of diversity, tolerance, inclusiveness, openness, respect and individuality that promote diverse ways to think and work.They like to be treated as a diverse as well as inclusive workforce.

Gen Z's views on social values include making difference:

- Gen Z views that they are allowed to make a difference as well as align their social status and values by the organisation they work.
- They feel that business organisations need to align with their social values.
- They always feel that the impact they expect the social values to be in sync with the company values.
- They are always active in participating in climate change and its top concerns across the world and are ready to work on sabbatical to contribute.
- They are aware that climate change is a global problem.
- Gen Z does have unbiased views on the issues of gender and they are personally taking the gender-neutral issues on the educative lines to contribute.
- Gen Z always likes to examine their values and policies starting with diversity issues to sustainability problems.

- Gen Z considers equality in pay and promotion, including learning and career advancement opportunities.
- They have issues with inclusion and ethical behaviour as important for building trust.
- Gen Z considersthe highest levels of ethics in their leaders and they consider the topmost quality in a leader is integrity and honesty.
- Gen Z demands the areas of:
  - Positive work culture
  - Very good compensation
  - Flexibility
  - Opportunities to learn continuously

Workplace transformation process

Nothing changes like change and workplaces are not an exception. The rate of changes that happens at workplaces. The transformation of the workplaces happens in tandem with the cultural change and the need for common values and shared desires on the part of the employees, management and shareholders including customers are required for effectively modulating the change in workplaces.Any organisation for that matter needs to be very inclusive in the matters related to work culture to make a positive and effective workplace transformation. Mere orders from the top alone cannot induce change, and leadership with grit, determination and the ability to mobilise the teams across differences are required for effective change in the working culture.The modern organisation does evaluate their priorities and measure their targets to set their workplaces to bring the desired outcome. Smart organisations are now making their organisation structures that are not only diverse but also inclusive across all levels of leadership.The organisations that can predict the future workforce requirements can stabilise their functional priorities, and they can keep inclusive cultures across the sectors to attract key Gen Z workers.

Strategic moves required for the workplace transformation

Any change brings in disruption that can be either due to various external/internal factors or at times even when the entire modalities of work changes due to exceeding expectations on the quality outcome demands such change. The post-millennial, i.e. the Gen Zers are on the offing to enter all kinds of organisations, and the organisations now need to improvise their transformation speed as well as the process and requires high octane challenges since the existing workforce comprises the Gen Y, Millennials and the older employees who had been contributing so far needs to be kept to utilise their valid experience.

Assessing their general and behavioural characteristics is the first challenge

Research reports done on various occasions in various countries found the following few of the visible characteristics are:

- They are born between 1995 to 2010.
- The oldest is at the age of 22.
- The most diverse among the generations today.
- They have their definitions on the matters of privacy, cautiousness, practical approach towards life and work and are very cautious about their future including their career path.
- They have never seen a world without digital devices.
- They place a high value on offline relationships.
- They are very sure about the security of work.
- They are very pragmatic in their approach than the millennials in the areas of work, money and benefits.
- They are very concerned about the money and benefits they would get for their work.
- Ready to work extra hours as well as to take responsibility for their career.
- They are naturally competitive and like to be judged by their merit.
- They try to improvise always on their skill development.
- Try on all methods to take self-improvement as well as try to work independently.

Gen Z and their tools of work

Gen Z prefers their work with technological tools than any other, and they view technology only as a tool and are not impressed with any of the new releases or flashy utility statements since they had been with digital devices since their birth.Very high adaptability in the technological environment, and find a social experience that can improvise their image as a very important tool to showcase their talent as well as concern for the society, which they do contribute.

HR strategies for tackling workplace challenges

Motivating Gen Z on other than routine tasks is part of the organisation. The HR of the modern organisation needs to possess the modalities on how they will clear how the individual contributions impact the overall mission of the organisation. They need to be taught where and when it shall be very authentic as well as to walk their talk, especially in the newer areas that impact organisation image like climate change including workplace equity.They are fond of the connections they shall make through individual contributions for adding value to the organisation, and that directly or indirectly impact the overall mission. They get motivated on these types of missions.

Tough questions and straightforward answers

The Gen Zers never reserves their questions within themselves, and are daring enough to throw any complicated questions to get an instant answer, and hence the HR leaders are to be prepared to get the questions.The habit of questioning the validity of the norms followed in the organisations are very normal for Gen Zers.The questions can range from what are we doing, why we are doing this and what is the outcome of doing this will always arise. The days of instant obedience are over.The HR leaders need to be prepared to answer the above questions and also must be updated on the diverse opinions that Gen Z express.Coaching on the skills sets that are required for task completion for the organisations are to be in place to engage the Gen Z, and the readiness of accepting to make radical changes as well as to communicate the purpose clearly to help engage Gen Zers are the need of the hour.

The HR leaders need to seek, understand, Influence and Inspire in times of difficulty like the recent pandemics

The HR leaders are to always be in the seeking mode on the information related to Gen Z and when situations that require moral support and emotional bonding like the recent pandemic, the HR leaders are to take care of the generational values that are required to address their concerns.

The leaders are to take the role of coaches

Directing or dictating no more sells as part of the motivational approaches in the Gen Zers, since they will move out to a place where they are free. They are just required to be coached as to what they required and the methods to collaborate and team up shall bring out the desired outcome, or else the Gen Zers are not interested to work in the kind of organisation that stress a tight fit work atmosphere.

Leaders are to be more open and personal in their communication

Gen Z though are digitally active to interact, still, they prefer face to face communication, and ask questions with an immediate response from the person they question. Hence they are more on the open-ended questioning personally than on the interactive mode that happens digitally. They prefer resolving conflicts through role-playing rather than a video and in all the areas of learning they prefer to go on the physical presence rather than virtual.

Good is not enough for the Gen Zers

Gen Zers are not satisfied with any good enough, and they prefer much better than what is good in any aspect of life, especially in their career. They always go into question on the equity and are always not settled even if the matters related to equity in the organisation arejust enough. They always try to strike the good part with much more competence to make it better or better than the best, be it even on their career prospects.

Motivational strategies with Gen Zers can never be constant

Gen Zers are always behind the newer opportunities and are always interested to challenge them and so is their motivational levels in any aspect, since they grow with the digital moves and technological rapidity, their motivation levels change faster than ever. They are always looking for inclusive larger than life issues beyond the profit-making work they do for the organisation. They look for

organisations that can contribute to good causes. Hence coaching them consistently supported with good growth opportunities can keep up their motivation intact.

Fostering curiosity as well as a passion for learning newer areas of work is the best motivator for Gen Zers.

Gen Zers are constantly improvising their ideas, owing to their access to the digital world, and they prefer soaking up information and always looking for opportunities for them to utilise them. Hence mentoring them continuouslyin the areas of their professional development can contribute greatly to their ideas.Self-realisation is part of their expectations at work: the Gen Zers are constantly looking toward progress within themself and outside. Hence they are passionate about utilising their energies to be in the mode of productivity, for them to thrive, and well as look for diverse areas to grow and find newer paths, hence providing the right directions to contribute in terms of work shall make them support the growth and development of the organisation.

Reverse mentoring is worthy for the organisation:

Younger employees too shall mentor the senior director about what is that they expect out of the organisation, its related work, policy matters and career. It can help in generating positive vibes in the mind of the Gen Z, as well as the motivation levels shall go high while they get the feeling that they are being listened to.Gen Z loves to adjust and adapt to the organisational requirements, provided they get reciprocation from the organisation. Flexibility shall be the key and leaders are to take steps to make the work-life balance possible for the younger Gen Z and they need to realise that they need to keep the career planning live and dynamic to keep up the motivation of the younger generations.

High expectations for Work-Life Balance

Gen Z is having the highest expectations regarding work-life balance and they are constantly subtly demanding that. They are not ready to sacrifice their personal life for their professional life. Flexibility is the only mantra that can work wonders with the Gen Zers to retain them.

Consistent and intermittent feedback on the performance

The Gen Zers are very passionate about regular feedback on the performance and they are very happy if it is intermittent and constant. They like to know how they perform and are keen to improve them. More than the incentives they are very curious to know the levels of their proficiency. They can be retained with regular feedback.

They are mature to understand that Results Speaks more than the face time value

The HR leaders are to improvise their insight to understand the kind of experiences that have shaped the Gen Zers and how they are looking at personal development. The KPIs and metrics that include a focus on the results are very important for the Gen Zers to be retained in the organisation. They never value face time or physical time at the desk of the organisation, rather they prefer to make it big with their results and achievements.

Gen Zers like results than the face value at work

The Gen Zers are very peculiar about the face value at work since they do not bother too much about how much time they are physically at the office, rather they are concerned more with the results. They expect the KPIs to be more focused and time relevant. They are very clear about the feedback and are smart enough to progress and succeed at work than their peers and senior workers.

Creating a scope and career path is the best way to retain Gen Zers

The Gen Zers are very clear on what they want to do and they do what they want and love, rather than accept anything on their way. They are not interested in the reward-based compensation to get motivated rather they are more intrinsic based. They love to take a journey that has challenging effects on their life and hence the organisation needs to paint a compelling vision that can provide a secure and meaningful career.

Conclusion

The findings from the Meta-analysis done from various findings of primary and secondary data research, this article finds that the Gen Zers are the most tech-savvy generation ever and are very up to date on the areas of digital and cloud services that are used at work. They have the required crucial knowledge of technological base and hence fits the modern digital organisations in the positions they deserve and express themselves to be more competitive than the erstwhile generation of workers.The findings also reveal that the organisations are to be upskilling their workers to make a strong team to be in tandem with the advancements in the techniques of work.

Use of engaging media content and critical knowledge application along with training are important to attract the Gen Zers for retention.The qualifications required are also changing rapidly social media communications, data science, digital fluency, and cyber security are additional or desirable skills in any career and Gen Zers are good at it, hence making their job market pretty easier.Retaining the Gen Zers are a huge challenge and maintaining strong mentorship at various levels and very updated career development paths are the career wants for the Gen Zers, and particularly are very concerned the consistent and a high salary with a relevant hike in time is one of the priorities of the Gen Zers.Micromanaging the Gen Zers will bring in challenges for retention, since the Gen Zers are very averse to micromanaging, and are keen on more than normal human interaction rather than digital commands.The Gen Zers seek trust and faith in themselves and their work rather than evasive praises and promotions or ranks. They are very uncurious about others and are able enough to thrive alone as well as to gel well in a team when the need arises for the betterment of the organisation.Finally they attend and get attracted to the individual and not the labelled designations. They just seek moral support and correct advice to grow as capable and young leaders as well as get supported but are concerned very much about the secured future in the workplace.

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