

Generation Z reshaping the world of work

 By Jacques van Wyk

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New research into the '4G Workplace' by Coleman Parkes, sponsored by Ricoh, explores what impact Generation Z will have on businesses and how well prepared they are for accommodating four very different generations under one roof. The oldest members of Generation Z are now 19 years old and making the journey from full-time education into the workplace.



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Generation Z is acutely aware of the blurring lines between work and personal life. Work is a mindset for them, not simply a set of tasks to complete or objectives to reach. In addition, most do not switch off with constant access to e-mail and the latest collaboration platforms. They are eager, digital natives with a unique approach to the concept of work.

However, while conversations about this always-on workforce have focused on the technologies involved - the separation between work and personal devices becoming increasingly rare - little attention has been given to their mentality.

4G Workplace

With retirement ages rising and the health and fitness of older people improving, many Baby Boomers are still working. Some will even have 10 years or more of active work ahead of them.

Meanwhile, younger generations shape their careers. Generation X is now typically reaching middle or senior management positions. Millennials are starting to make headway and rise through the ranks and now we have Generation Z: keen trailblazers just leaving the education system to enter the world of work.

The research shows that 65% of surveyed people believe there are clear differences in how people from different generations work. Making sure that these groups work effectively together and empowering them to thrive in their jobs is a challenge for every organisation.

It's all in the mindset

The always-on mindset is almost inherent in Generation Z. As digital natives, they are not in awe of technology like their older counterparts. They have grown up in the Internet age, with information and communication at their fingertips and this reflects in their attitudes to work and prospective employers.

This is echoed in the decisions and thoughts around their future employment choices. Three times as many Generation Z respondents are attracted to companies that offer technology to enable people to work more efficiently, compared with those from the older generations. While this might not be surprising, it highlights businesses must deploy the technology Generation Z expects if they are to attract and retain young talent. Older systems will not be tolerated.

Generation Z also has high expectations of its own positive impact on the workplace. Most of them believe they will bring new ways of working, with exceptional technology skills, bright ideas and fresh thinking. Findings suggest that businesses already struggling with Millennials face huge challenges if they fail to adopt new ways of working that complement all four generations.

What is particularly interesting is that it is Millennials who are most excited and optimistic about the potential of technology, more so than Generation Z. This perhaps shows that Generation Z is immune to the novelty of technology, having absorbed it since birth. They are accustomed to technology driving their personal and social lives, using it as the main point of all communication - and expect the same from work.

Businesses must embrace this unique mindset toward technology and the concept of work in order to harness Generation Z's natural always-on attitude. This will prove a key tactic to embracing digitisation, improving agility and adopting new collaboration platforms across the business.

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