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Gen Z and the Future of Safety
Protecting the New Generation Worker

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Introduction to Gen Z

Redefining the New Workforce

BABY BOOMERS	Born 1946-1964

Optimistic | Competitive | Workaholic | Team-Oriented

Shaped by: Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, Watergate

Motivated by: Company loyalty, teamwork, duty

Communication style: Whatever is most efficient, including phone calls and face-to-face

Worldview: Achievement comes after paying one's dues; sacrifice for success

GENERATION X	Born 1965-1980

Flexible | Informal | Skeptical | Independent

Shaped by: The AIDS epidemic, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dot-com boom

Motivated by: Diversity, work-life balance, their personal-professional interests rather than the company's interests

Communication style: Whatever is most efficient, including phone calls and face-to-face

Worldview: Favoring diversity; quick to move on if their employer fails to meet their needs; resistant to change at work if it affects their personal lives

MILLENNIALS	Born 1981-1996

Competitive | Civic- and Open-Minded | Achievement-Oriented

Shaped by: Columbine, 9/11, the internet

Motivated by: Responsibility, the quality of their manager, unique work experiences

Communication style: IMs, texts, and email

Worldview: Seeking challenge, growth, and development; a fun work life and work-life balance; likely to leave an organization if they don't like change

GENERATION Z	Born 1997-2012

Global | Entrepreneurial | Progressive | Less Focused

Shaped by: Life after 9/11, the Great Recession, access to technology from a young age

Motivated by: Diversity, personalization, individuality, creativity

Communication style: Social media, texts, IMs

Worldview: Self-identify as digital device addicts; value independence and individuality; prefer to work with Millennial managers, innovative coworkers, and new technologies

- **Demographics and Characteristics:** Gen Z individuals range from ages 12 to 27. This generation is highly diverse, with significant representation from different ethnic backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances.

- **Work Values:** Gen Z values authenticity and purpose-driven work and seeks employers who prioritize social and environmental responsibility. They expect their work to make a difference in society.

- **Context of Growing Up:** Gen Z has grown up in a climate of rapid technological advancement, social media proliferation, and heightened awareness of global issues such as climate change and inequality, which has shaped their worldview extensively.

- **Tech Savvy:** Gen Z has grown up in a climate of rapid technological advancement, social media proliferation, and heightened information awareness, which has shaped their worldview extensively. Early adopters of technology they care about.

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FROM PARTICIPATION TO PARTNERSHIP

A JOURNEY TO SAFETY AT THE FRONT LINE

SCOTT GADDIS

"Millennials and Generation Z will become the majority of the workforce in a few years, bringing different workplace safety, health, and well-being expectations. These younger generations will demand more from their organizations, seeking physical safety, mental health support, work-life balance, and a commitment to sustainability characterized by the pillars of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) measures. Their influence will catalyze a prominent shift toward more holistic approaches to safety and health that consider the worker's whole person and place within the broader ecosystem."

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Social Media Captions

A Glimpse in Understanding Gen Z

QUIZ TIME

Match my vibe?	**Be at peace, let life do it's thing**
Catchin' Flights	**When you would rather travel than catch feelings for someone**
NPC	**Non-Playable Character - you are in my background**
OK Boomer	**Reply to a suggestion from an older generation person**
Stay Woke	**Understand the "Real" World**

Be Yourself | You are Enough | Gen Z Mindset

Do What Makes You Happy | Can't Keep Up With the DMs

Views for Days | Reppin' the Fam | Sheesh!

So Boujee | They Got Rizz

Cheugy | They Are The Best. Periodt

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Based on Research

How Should We Think About The Typical Gen Zer?

In summary, a typical Gen Zer is a self-driver who deeply cares about others, strives for a diverse community, is highly collaborative and social, values flexibility, relevance, authenticity and non-hierarchical leadership, and, while dismayed about inherited issues like climate change, has a pragmatic attitude about the work that has to be done to address those issues.
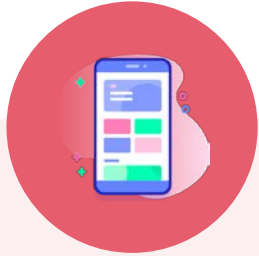
Roberta Katz, Senior Research Scholar
Stanford University
Advanced Behavioral Sciences

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3 (of Many) Differences That Makes Gen Z Dissimilar From Other Generations

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Cultural and Technological Shifts

Impact of Gen Z on Workplace Safety

Digital Fluency
Gen Z expects seamless tech integration, demanding AI-driven safety platforms and wearable devices for hazard reporting.

Efficiency & Real-Time Data
Prioritizes systems offering real-time data and instant feedback, avoiding slow or outdated safety procedures.

Innovation and Adaptability
Challenges traditional practices, pushing for the adoption of IoT devices, robotic assistance, and other cutting-edge safety technologies.

For Gen Zers, the "norm" they experienced as children was a world that operated at speed, scale and scope. They have developed an early facility with powerful digital tools that allow them to be self-reliant as well as collaborative.

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Values and Expectations

Gen Z's Impact on Workplace Safety

Focus on Well-being
Gen Z emphasizes mental, emotional, and physical health, expecting employers to support holistic well-being through safety programs.

Purpose-Driven Work
Seeks alignment between personal values and company practices, with a strong focus on ethics, social responsibility, and sustainability.

Ethical and Transparent Practices
Expects transparency in safety protocols, valuing ethical behavior and fairness in organizational practices.

For Gen Z, safety at work goes beyond physical protection; they value holistic well-being, transparency, and inclusivity. Gen Z prioritizes equity in safety programs, linking them to broader social and environmental responsibility. They also expect workplaces to promote mental health, work-life balance, and fair treatment for all employees.

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Workplace Diversity and Inclusion

Gen Z's Expectations in Safety Practices

Demand for Inclusion
Gen Z, the most diverse generation, expects safety programs to be inclusive of all identities and backgrounds.

Addressing Bias in Safety
Gen Z demands that organizations proactively eliminate biases in safety protocols, ensuring fairness and accessibility.

Cultural Sensitivity
They value culturally sensitive communication in safety materials, tailored to diverse audiences.

Because Gen Z has learned about people and cultures around the globe from an early age, they developed a greater appreciation for diversity and the importance of finding their own unique identities.

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How Organizations Need to Respond

What are we going to do about it?

Mental Health Awareness: A Priority for Gen Z

Establishing Workplace Well-Being

Mental Well-being
Gen Z considers mental health as integral to overall well-being. They expect employers to support mental health initiatives and provide access to resources and counseling.

Stress Management
Open discussions and workshops on managing stress are essential, aligning with their holistic view of health that merges physical and mental wellness.

Support Systems
Creating structures for peer support can lead to enhanced emotional resilience. Gen Z benefits from community aspects that integrate support into workplace culture.

Reducing Stigma
Proactively addressing mental health stigma encourages conversations around stress and contributes to a healthier workplace environment.

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Employer Responsibilities: Meeting Expectations

Frameworks for Empowering Employees

Assessing Risks
Regular risk assessments ensure that workplace environments remain up-to-date with safety standards, readily identifying areas for improvement or concern.

Proactive Policies
Creating proactive safety and mental health policies indicates an organization's commitment to employee welfare, resonating strongly with Gen Z's expectations.

Employee Training
Comprehensive training programs are essential in equipping employees with knowledge and resources, enabling their assurance in workplace safety protocols.

Regular Assessments
Engaging in routine evaluations of safety measures ensures responsiveness to the evolving needs of a diverse workforce, including Gen Z.

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Feedback Loops: Ensuring Continuous Improvement

Adaptive Strategies for Growth

Importance of Feedback
Establishing robust feedback channels allows for understanding employee perceptions and experiences, vital for fostering a positive workplace culture.

Surveys and Assessments
Conducting regular surveys ensure employees feel heard, creating opportunities for necessary adjustments to safety and well-being protocols.

Adapting to Change
Organizations must be agile in their processes, utilizing feedback to iterate and refine safety measures that cater specifically to the needs of Gen Z.

HR Strategies
Human Resource strategies should embed feedback into their overall framework, allowing a continuous dialogue to flourish alongside organizational development.

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Challenges: Bridging the Generation Gap

Understanding Differences
Recognizing the distinct workplace perspectives of multiple generations fosters better collaboration and reduces potential conflict.

Addressing Misconceptions
Challenging stereotypes about Gen Z helps improve intergenerational dynamics and fosters an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

Training Leaders
Equipping leaders with the necessary tools to manage and motivate a multi-generational workforce is crucial for overall workplace cohesion and effectiveness.

Conflict Resolution
Implementing clear conflict resolution strategies can help mitigate tensions arising from generational differences, emphasizing open dialogue and compromise.

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Conclusion: Key Takeaways and Future Outlook

Gen Z Expects Change
They have a tremendous appetite for seeing improvement. Can you show them the path from where we are today to where you want to go tomorrow?

Gen Z is Pragmatic
Be ready to not be viewed as the EHS expert. Can you realign your conversations to be bi-directional and be ready to change if they offer a better answer?

Gen Z wants to Make a Difference
They are inheriting a set of complex problems – from climate change to inequality to racial injustice, to name but a few – and want to fix it. Can you provide a workplace that they believe is doing good in the world?

Gen Z values Collaboration and Teamwork
The digital world helped shape their identity, they found groups and subcultures to connect and interact with. Can you create activities in EHS that are centered around a shared, common interests?

Gen Z wants Servant Leaders
They prefer "collaborative leadership," in which people from across the organization participate in decision-making and problem-solving. Can you change your leadership style to serve the needs of your workers?

Gen Z Thinks Differently about Loyalty
Because Gen Z grew up amid so much change, Gen Z has a different perspective on loyalty. They grew up with parents working for organizations not being very loyal to their employees. What can your organization do to change this issue?

Gen Z Looks for Trust and Authenticity
Words and actions need to match, honesty and openness are important. Can you adjust to hearing new ideas and even deploying suggestions made by an 18–27-year-old?

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