FAQs On "Generation Z" In The Workplace

Insights
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A classic managerial mistake is to focus so much on the present that you ignore what's about to come around the corner. And what's about to come around the corner at your workplace is the next generation of American worker. What do employers need to know about Generation Z in order not to be left behind? Here are some answers to some of the most Frequently Asked Questions:

What Do We Call Them?
"Generation Z" seems to be the most common placeholder name until a consensus is reached in popular culture (much the same way that "Generation Y" was used until "Millennials" became the agreed-upon name). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has used the term "Post-Millennials;" other potential concepts include the "Homeland Generation," the "iGeneration," and "Pluralists" (given their exposure to an ever-increasing ethnic, racial, and religious diversity in the country).

Who Are They?
Another question without a clear answer. While there is not yet a precise consensus on the age range of this newest generation, most believe it includes those born between the mid-1990's and the mid-to-late 2000's. That would include current preteens to those in their early 20s, about 70 to 80 million people, comprising about a quarter of all Americans. Most importantly for employers: it has been estimated that this generation will make up about 20 percent of the country's workforce in the next five or so years.

What Influenced Them?
Sociologists and historians opine that those in Generation Z have been most influenced by the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the Great Recession of 2008, and the resulting effects of both events. These same commentators believe this has led this generation to develop an underlying feeling of unsettlement and insecurity that will mark many of their actions and decision-making.

What Defines Them?
Much like Millennials (and recognizing these characterizations involve broad, sweeping generalizations), Gen Z'ers crave flexibility, entrepreneurial opportunities, and are readily willing to accept new ideas. They might take global considerations in mind to a greater extent when taking action. At work, they will seek to make connections and will appreciate a workplace community.

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What might differentiate them from Millennials, however, is that they may crave a greater sense of stability. According to a recent survey from Monster.com, the top three workplace benefits sought by Generation Z are healthcare benefits, competitive salaries, and a boss they respect. In other words, ping-pong tables, drink fridges, and on-site spa services might be nice, but employers may need to offer more traditional perks to attract Gen Z talent.

What Do Employers Think About Them?
They are wanted. You will face stiff competition when attracting this younger cohort to your workplace. Bloomberg BNA recently reported that 78 percent of employers are actively targeting Gen Z workers for their companies, and a May 2017 survey by Challenger, Gray & Christmas revealed that nearly 73 percent of employers will offer student loan assistance as a recruitment tool.

Can I Text Them?
LOL yes. A recent report from Yello showed that 86 percent of younger workers feel positively about using text messages during the recruiting and interviewing process, and a similar survey from HeyWire revealed that 67 percent of employees use text messages for business-related communications. These numbers will only increase as Gen Z'ers – many of whom have lived with text messaging their entire lives – flood the workforce in the coming decade.

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