Generation Z in the Workplace
As Baby Boomers retire and Gen Xers and Millennials (aka Gen Y) move up the corporate ladder, the next in line as the dominant workforce are members of Gen Z. 20% of the workforce will be Gen Z by 2020. Gen Zers have different needs and preferences than their predecessors (of course!) and understanding their career goals and expectations will help you understand what makes this self-motivated group tick.

With potentially four groups of employees with distinctly different outlooks on their careers, misunderstandings are inevitable. But understanding that one approach does not fit all can help keep the generation gap from becoming a war zone.
Who is Gen Z?

Born between 1996 and 2010 and comprising nearly 73 million people, Gen Zers are beginning to enter the workforce now. They are the first true digital natives who, for the most part, have never known a world without the Internet or a phone that wasn’t smart. They grew up during the Great Recession and, like those who grew up in the Great Depression, are more resourceful and pragmatic than previous generations.

They expect to have to work hard to climb their way up the corporate ladder, but they’re accelerating the rate at which they expect the rewards.
What’s in it for me?

According to a report by Robert Half®, Gen Z workers rank career opportunities (64%) as their main consideration for a full-time job, but those opportunities must align with their personal goals and beliefs. It’s not just what they can do for your company; being the pragmatists they are, they weigh an opportunity by what it can do for them.

Gen Zers are also looking for authenticity, so promises made in a job description or job offer better materialize or they’ll move on quickly.
Gimmicks are gone–return to the real

The Millennial stereotype conjures up images of an idealistic do-gooder who is less materialistic than cynical Gen Xers or Boomers, and for whom beer-thirty, free snacks and ping pong tournaments are perks of employment. But having grown up with economic uncertainty, Zers are looking for financial security and job stability over a cool corporate culture.

Opportunities for career growth (64%), generous pay (44%), having a positive impact on society (40%), and a structured/stable work environment (38%) are the top priorities for job-seeking Zers.
Give a little RESPECT

Being the youngest generation in the workforce, Gen Zers worry about having their views or opinions taken seriously, especially by Boomers. They want managers and coworkers to listen to their ideas and value their opinions. In fact, they have been raised to be constant learners and are eager for bosses who are honest and forthcoming with feedback. They also prefer ongoing mentoring and constant feedback over once-annual reviews.

Surprisingly, Zers also prefer communicating by traditional means like talking face-to-face over texting, email or social media.
Survival of the Fittest

Gen Zers are more cynical and pragmatic than the Millennial generation—they realize all that glitters is not gold. Many saw their parents lose wealth or struggle financially in the aftermath of the Great Recession. To achieve their college dreams in the face of skyrocketing costs, many had to fight for grants and scholarships. They take this competitive spirit to the workplace, where they expect to be judged on merit, not factors like the amount of time they’ve been in the job. Good news for employers—they are willing to put in the hard work to achieve their career goals. But they’re also highly ambitious and not likely to stick around if they don’t see a clear path upward.

A study by Robert Half® found that 32% of Zers expect to be managing or supervising employees in a corporate environment by the time they are 5 years out of college.
DIY—they want to customize their jobs

According to David Stillman, writing for the Society for Human Resource Management, Gen Z “has only known a world where they can download their own playlists, design their own Nike shoes and create a customized college degree. For Gen Z, everything has always been about standing out from the crowd. Therefore, it will be important that each Gen Z recruit feel that the job being offered to them is unique.”
Generation Z:
The DIY Generation

As Generation Z enters the workforce, managers will have to adapt the way they train, mentor and reward this next generation of employees. In many ways, Gen Zers have old-school values—such as loyalty and drive—coupled with cutting-edge skills. By taking into consideration the DIY spirit, pragmatism and ambitiousness of Gen Z, organizations will be better prepared to attract talented Zers and guide them towards success.

“Gen Zers are eager to contribute and make their mark. The key is to respect them, nurture them, and help focus their energy and enthusiasm. Companies that embrace Gen Zers and step up retention efforts will be rewarded with their hard work, good ideas and passionate engagement.”

- Robert Half®

SOURCES:
“Move Over, Millennials; Generation Z is Here.” David Stillman and Jonah Stillman, Society for Human Resource Management, Apr. 11, 2017
Randstad and Enactus report, “Gen Z and Millennials collide at work.”
Robert Half® and Enactus report, “Get Ready for Generation Z.”