

Guide to Understanding Gen Z Job Seekers

Gen Z Has Arrived on the Scene

On January 3, 2022, 25-year-old Maxwell Frost made history, becoming [the first Gen Z member of Congress](#). Frost, a Democrat and the son of Cuban immigrants, won in Florida's 10th congressional district.

Frost's resume is somewhat different from your typical Freshman congressperson, but wholly Gen Z. Frost never finished college, opting instead to focus on social justice initiatives and community activism through his early adulthood and embracing gig work—Uber driving—to pay his rent while on the campaign trail.

It's not just congress where Gen Z are making professional inroads. Understanding what Gen Z values and wants out of employment will soon be critical to employers across all industries. Gen Z will comprise nearly 30% of our workforce by 2025 and, at 61 million members, is a larger generation than either Millennials or Gen Xers.

[Gen Z is the future of work.](#)

In this guide, we will cover:

- Who is Gen Z?
- What Do Gen Zers Value?
 - What Gen Zers Look for in Careers
 - What Gen Zers Want from the Job Application Process

Who is Gen Z?

Gen Zers were born between 1997 and 2015. In 2023, Gen Zers will be 8 to 26 years old and will comprise 30% of the U.S. workforce by 2025.

It's important to note that more than half of Gen Z are still in grade or high school, while many are still in college, so the insights we're sharing here are bound to shift in the future—65% of elementary-school-aged students will end up working jobs that don't exist yet!

A key Gen Z trait is that they are the first generation of digital natives. Gen Z never had a life without the internet, social media, smartphones, apps, or touch screens. They're a highly visual generation who are hyper online and expect companies to lead with technology. Most Gen Zers have strong technical skills and adapt well to new tech platforms and innovations.

Only 4 in 10 Gen Zers believe their education has prepared them for the working world—mentorship and professional development will appeal to these younger job seekers.

What Gen Z Job Seekers Value

To attract and retain qualified Gen Z employees, employers must understand two aspects of what drives them:

- **What Gen Zers Look for in Their Careers:** We'll look at what Gen Z values: what drives them, what engages them, and what they seek to accomplish with their careers. Employers should use this to market to Gen Z job seekers and help drive your company culture.
- **What Gen Zers Want From the Job Application Process:** We'll discuss what Gen Z'ers want out of the job application process—you could impress Gen Z job seekers all you want with your career page and job posting, but 92% of online job seekers who click “apply” don't ever end up submitting their application! Both are crucial for creating a solid pipeline of Gen Z talent.

What Gen Zers Look for in Careers

When it comes to their careers, Gen Z values:

- Sustained Relationships.
- Hybrid Work
- An Acceptance of Hustle Culture
- Cutting-Edge Technology
- Career Growth and Professional Development
- Environmental Concerns
- Meaningful DEI

Sustained Relationships

Despite the glued-to-their-phones stereotypes, Gen Z is incredibly relationship-driven and prefers face-to-face contact (meanwhile, Millennials often prefer email or text interactions). 45% of professionals under 24 say personal relationships keep them in their current roles.

Additionally, once hired, 83% of Gen Z prefer communicating with their manager in person—that means you might need to give remote candidates extra assurance of check-ins and connection building.

Hybrid Work

While more and more millennials want to work entirely remotely, members of Gen Z are often apprehensive about remote work. Despite being digital natives, 61% of Gen Z remote workers say they've had problems connecting with co-workers, versus only 12% of in-person Gen Z workers. While Gen Z likes remote work, they tend to prefer hybrid models.

Acceptance of “Hustle” Culture

While Millennials have started to turn against “hustle culture”—embracing wellness in the workplace and a healthy work/life balance — many Gen Zers not only expect to work several gigs at one time but expect their primary place of work to accept and accommodate their preference for side hustles and gig work.

- 62% of Gen Z says they have started or intend to start their own business.

- 48% of Gen Z has numerous side hustles, ranging from gig work like Lyft driving to burgeoning influencer careers.
- Gen Z Tik Tok users are twice as likely to have side hustles as those who don't.

In years past, organizations could hope for employees to devote all their efforts to their primary job. That's not the case with Gen Zers.

Microsoft's data shows 91% of Gen Z entrepreneurs work unconventional hours, and 81% say they work on vacation, compared to 62% of business owners overall. Burnout is a real problem, and something forward-thinking employees might want to consider concerning their Gen Z talent.

Cutting-Edge Technology

Gen Z grew up with technology and thus wants to work in a technologically-forward world. 80% of Gen Z want to work with cutting-edge technology, and 91% are attracted to technologically-forward organizations. Organizations should highlight their technological advances to attract Gen Z candidates and use technology like video interviews and pre-employment testing in their interviews.

Career Growth and Professional Development

61% of Gen Z say opportunities for career growth are the most critical factor when considering job offers. Additionally, 54% find transitioning from school (college or high school) to work difficult and thus require professional development.

Environmental Concerns

Environmental causes—recycling, sustainability, combating global warming—haven't been super pressing workplace issues with other generations, yet this is somewhere else Gen Z is leading the change. 68% of Gen Zers are anxious about environmental issues. 31% would turn down roles in companies with poor environmental practices, and 52% say they'd stay longer at organizations committed to environmental causes.

Meaningful DEI

88% of Gen Z agree that workplace diversity is essential, and 78% of Gen Z would consider getting a new job if their employers don't demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).



A Conversation With Gen Z Consultant and Entrepreneur Celine Chai About What Gen Z Job Seekers Value

After graduating in 2020 into a global pandemic, Gen Zer Celine Chai had no job openings in sight, so she created her own opportunity. She and five fellow Loyola Marymount University students co-founded NinetyEight, a creative agency with the

mission to help brands speak to and with Gen Z audiences. We talked to Chai about what Gen Z looks for in careers. You can find the transcribed conversation below. In the next section of this guide, we'll include the second part of our conversation with Chai about the job application process.

What does Gen Z value in a job?

CC: At the core of it, Gen Zers seek a job that provides them value. However, how Gen Zers define 'value' varies based on the individual. For some, financial stability is the number #1 priority, while for others, interesting work/industry and a flexible work environment are the key indicators of value.

Nonetheless, across the board, we're seeing more and more Gen Zers value autonomy and choice. The choice to WFH (if the job permits), the choice to explore tasks and departments beyond their role that interest them, the choice to pursue side hustles. A big differentiator between Gen Zers and previous generations is that Gen Zers want work to be integrated as one part of their life, and not the only thing they live for.

I think Gen Zers value supportive and transparent work environments. We're a generation that cares deeply about our personal values and again, dissimilar to previous generations, are less driven by the idea of loyalty and commitment to one workplace. If we don't feel supported by our teams or the company mission doesn't align with our moral compass, we're unafraid to quit and find a job/team that does. And, if there isn't one out there, Gen Zers are likely to create their own jobs!

What would make you, as a member of Gen Z, apply for a specific role in a company? What might deter you from applying?

CC: From a recruiter's POV—one that actively recruits Gen Z talent—I try to make the job description as descriptive as possible. It's a no-fluff situation, I

try to get to the point of what we are looking for in a candidate, what the job entails, and what the salary range looks like for this position. Bottom Line: Gen Zers want companies who can be transparent, honest and efficient. We pride ourselves in having relatively efficient interviews + interview time frames and always reply to those who reach out. We've all been ghosted by recruiters before, and it's a terrible feeling, so I try to avoid that at all costs.

If I was actively seeking employment, something that would deter me from applying is if the job description used vague language. Within 5 minutes of reading a description, I should have a decent inkling of a) is this role for me b) I know what I'll be doing/getting into c) do my skills match their requirement.

Additionally, there is a rising number of conversations surrounding the idea of more innovative recruiting methods such as creative portfolios, prompts, videos, etc. — ways that Gen Zs can best express their skill sets. I rarely read cover letters as a recruiter and spend about a minute glancing at a resume. More often than not, looking at the layout and structure of the resume gives me a sense of the type of person who is applying rather than the individual accolades.

What Gen Zers Want from the Job Application Process

When it comes to job applications, Gen Z wants:

- A Mobile-Friendly Experience
- Facetime
- A Quick Process
- Inclusivity
- Salary Transparency
- Cutting-Edge Technology

A Mobile-Friendly Experience

The [latest data](#) on the subject found that 95% of 13-17-year-olds had access to a smartphone in 2018. The older members of this demographic are the members of Gen Z currently entering the workforce.

Additionally, [73.4% of Gen Z](#) prefer their smartphone's messaging app over the phone functionality, and [74% of Gen Z](#) spend their free time online (and [60% of job applications](#) last year across generations were over mobile). Gen Z spends their free and work time on their phones, so ensure that your job postings and application processes are mobile-friendly.

Facetime

While Gen Z spends most of their free time online, they still value face-to-face interaction, differentiating them from Millennials, who often prefer remote work and text message interactions to face time.

[51% of Gen Z job seekers](#) prefer face-to-face communication and want to feel a connection with the people doing the hiring.

57% of Gen Z also want feedback several times a week or more, which can also be helpful in terms of building a recruiting strategy—ensure you're providing candidate feedback to develop your employee brand and discuss how they'd like that feedback to look during the interview process.

A Quick Process

Gen Z grew up with technology and expect results quickly. Moving fast will net the most qualified Gen Z job candidates, while drawing things out can make them think you're a technologically out-of-date organization.

60% of Gen Z say job applications should take less than 15 minutes, and 17% of Gen Z job seekers expect job offers to come less than a week after the first interview.

Inclusivity

Gen Z is the most diverse generation, and they expect companies to prioritize inclusivity—83% of Gen Z job candidates told Monster.com that a company's commitment to DEI is essential when choosing an employer.

- 75% of Gen Z said they'd reconsider their job application if they weren't satisfied with the DEI efforts they experienced.
- Gen Z approaches diversity differently than prior generations, going beyond age, religion, gender, race, and physical ability, to encompass what they call cognitive diversity—how different points of view are accepted and valued, diversity in identities, ideas, and opinions, and diversity in the way individuals process information.
- 60% of Gen Z believe job application forms should include more genders than “man” or “woman” and feel comfortable using gender-neutral pronouns.

Salary Transparency

A higher salary is the top motivating factor for younger workers to switch roles—35% of Gen Z job seekers said salary and benefits is the leading factor they consider in new positions. Gen Z has grown up in an environment where it isn't taboo to talk about money, salary included, and expect companies to be transparent about it from the get-go—they don't want to waste their time applying for roles that don't fit their financial goals and consider a lack of transparency a red flag.

Cutting-Edge Technology

Gen Z never knew a world without the internet or smartphones and grew up during an era of rapid technological advancement. 54% of Gen Z won't complete a job application if the recruiting methods are outdated, and 26% agree that a lack of tech throughout the hiring process would deter them from accepting a job.

A Continuation of Our Conversation With Gen Z Consultant and Entrepreneur Celine Chai On the Preferred Gen Z Candidate Experience

We started a conversation above with Gen Zer Celine Chai, co-founder of [NinetyEight](#), a creative agency with the mission to help brands speak to and with Gen Z audiences. *You can find the first part of that conversation on page 7 of this guide.* Below, we chatted with Chai about what Gen Z likes out of the candidate experience.

What stands out to you as a good job candidate experience?

What should companies avoid doing during the interview process?

CC: I love applications with portfolio links—even if you don't consider yourself a “creative” by trait. I think a portfolio or some supplementary document or link that tells the recruiter a bit more about who you are as a person vs. a worker can go a long way. At the end of the day, when you're recruiting, you're not only recruiting for skills and “can you do this job,” but you're also recruiting for “can you fit the team?” It's really hard to check the team box if all you have to go off is a resume in the initial process.

Companies can avoid ghosting candidates who apply for the position. Even if they didn't make it through to the first round, at the very least, send an automated rejection email. It's the worst feeling pouring your heart and soul into an application and never hearing back. A ‘no’ is better than a ‘no answer’. I think companies should also consider the time length of an interview process. If you interview a candidate and don't offer them the position until 3-4 weeks later, you can't expect them to give you a response within 24-48 hours. Give us time to consider your offer, just as you've taken your time deliberating on the candidate!

What's the number one tip you could give organizations looking to market their open roles to Gen Z candidates?

CC: As an organization, just remember: even though you are technically interviewing a Gen Z candidate and evaluating their skills and attributes, they, too, are evaluating if you are a right fit. I think the hiring process needs to shift from a one-way narrative to a two-way conversation. It should still be a professional and respectful interview, but bottom line, both parties should have a chance to speak and listen.