

WORKPLACE CULTURE: How Gen Z Will Shape the Workplace



Photo by Dylan Gillis on Unsplash

Gen Z is the first digitally native generation, meaning that they have grown up with technology. This will naturally impact their expectations of work+workpace.

Gen Z has officially entered the workforce and they come with their own set of expectations.

The workplace lifecycle continues to evolve as new generations enter the workforce and older workers retire. For the past few years, the focus of workplace dialog has been centered around Millennial likes, dislikes, and how they compare to the generation that came before them.

Open office design, weekly happy hours, flexible schedules, bold furniture, and casual attire were the result of Millennials entering the workforce and demanding a different style of work.

Gen Z is the first digitally native generation, meaning that they have grown up with technology. Smartphones, social media, on-line shopping, and instant messaging have been a part of Gen Z's daily lives since they were born. Naturally, this will impact their expectations of work and the workplace.

THE GEN Z MIND SET

Gen Z will collaborate and communicate differently, given their general upbringing. In-person meetings and sessions to learn physically, audibly, and digitally will defer to more electronic channels.

WORKPLACE CULTURE: How Gen Z Will Shape the Workplace

This generation tends to wear their hearts on their sleeves and believe in the work they produce & the value that their generation adds to a company.

Gen Z are much more comfortable with expressing their emotions, since they grew up in a time of radical individualism where expressing their personalities and emotions is more important to them.

This generation tends to wear their hearts on their sleeves and believe in the work they produce and the value that their generation can add to a company.

The Millennial generation empowers Gen Z teammates and guides them in best practices for what has worked in the past and helps them understand the power in “we” vs. “me”.

DIGITAL DYNAMICS

How will digital communications impact workplace design and workplace dynamics?

Gen Z was born with technology in their hands. They held smartphones from a young age, knowing the internet can provide anything they need. They watched their direct family members fluidly rely on technology as if it had always existed.

Creating a workplace that works for those who still like a break from technology and use more concrete, physical tools like paper, markers, and of course face-to-face meetings is easy; it’s balancing it with individuals who know no life outside of technology that creates the challenge.

TECHNOLOGY EXPECTATIONS

Gen Z is tech savvy and tech driven and will want better ways to connect with each other digitally such as:

- Video chatting from home
- More efficient access to work-sharing
- Social media within the workplace for info sharing

Gen Z will also look to more innovative, experiential processes and methods to share information with clients:

- VR (Virtual Reality)
- Creating videos more than printed presentations
- Physical mockups will become more available

WORKPLACE CULTURE: How Gen Z Will Shape the Workplace

Gen Z is competitive, a little thicker-skinned and very digitally resourceful. They are used to figuring things out themselves.

Gen Z will want whomever they're working for – be it clients, or a larger company, or their own company internally – to have their work's recipients truly experience it before they buy into it.

RESIMERCIAL STYLING

While Millennials were very comfortable going back and forth between working at their desks and working in a more social, open area, we find that Gen Z is more interested in staying far away from their desks – but still in isolation.

Gen Z relies on technology to communicate more than anything else – this doesn't make them antisocial; in fact, they're the most social generation to date. But they don't want the illusion of typical office life, they want to see:

- Fluidity between work and home
- Every space speaks to wellness and respite
- Designed with the nuances of home

WORKPLACE DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

Gen Z is competitive, a little thicker-skinned and very digitally resourceful compared with those who came before them. They are used to figuring things out themselves, without adult direction. They know how to find the answers they need.

Hybrid workspace design is all about adapting to change, and that includes the changing workplace culture. As you welcome the fresh faces of change into the workforce, these are the things to make them feel connected:

Design Aesthetics

The workplaces that Gen Z find aesthetically pleasing will be places they have grown up with that have become icons of destination design:

- Brand immersion retail environments like Apple
- Colorful tech environments like Google
- Sophisticated flexible work environments like WeWork

Pay close attention to decor details like having art on the walls, and creating spaces with lots of natural light, and access to terrace workspaces to satisfy their love of spending time outside to accommodate their shifting preferences.

WORKPLACE CULTURE: How Gen Z Will Shape the Workplace

Gen Z, are expected to continue supporting brands that take a strong, authentic stance on environmental and other social causes. This will carry over to the organizations they choose to align with.

Health & Wellness

Young people today are coming into the workforce with more of an awareness about how lack of exercise and bad food can impact their bodies and their minds. The time is coming when we may end up looking back at the 8-5 work culture when people just sat for eight or nine hours at a time and think it's inhumane. Gen Z expectations include:

- Biophilic design & flexible terrace workspaces
- Healthy food in-house or nearby
- Amenities like privacy pods & meditation rooms

Flexibility

Given Gen Z's independent and resourceful nature, it's likely they may try to work something out on their own before asking an authority figure for help. They grew up in an era of speed and convenience so it comes as no surprise that many young people have little tolerance for things that slow them down.

- Hot desking and flexible seating considerations
- Standing desk options
- Benching with privacy options
- Phone booths

Exceeding Sustainability

A rise in activist marketing campaigns from the likes of Nike and Patagonia has led to further changes in buying behavior, in particular, among younger consumers. Gen Z, are expected to continue supporting brands that take a strong, authentic stance on environmental and other social causes.

This attitude is likely to tick over into how they choose the organizations they want to work for. Companies will need to go beyond treating sustainability as the mere buzzword it's become, and push the boundaries of innovation if they want to stand out and attract Gen Z talent. Set aggressive targets beyond LEED for:

- Net-zero energy buildings
- Water conservation technology
- Self-shading exteriors
- Urban farming+rooftop gardens

WORKPLACE CULTURE: How Gen Z Will Shape the Workplace

Connectedness

To increase the appeal of physical workplaces, companies are already carefully designing and programming spaces to bring people together outside of the usual communal spaces and conference rooms.

- In-house cafe collaborative spaces
- Outdoor terraces
- After hours bars complete with weekly happy hours

SUMMARY

The *hybrid workspace* model brought most of the Gen Z esthetic forward in office design ahead of the next generation coming on board. The return to work from two years of working offsite should have primed your business for these changes, as we all had to adjust to a new normal.

Office designers and furniture manufacturers have been staying ahead of this curve for several years. Our team of *space planners and designers* is ready to help you seize the moment for these changes.

This article utilizes content previously published by Allwork.Space and Workspaces