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The Zen art of cultivating a resilient Gen Z workforce

Preface

Decoding Gen Z:
The workforce revolution that no one saw coming

Workforce synonyms

Demanding · Difficult · Disinterested ·
Radical · Uncooperative · Skeptical
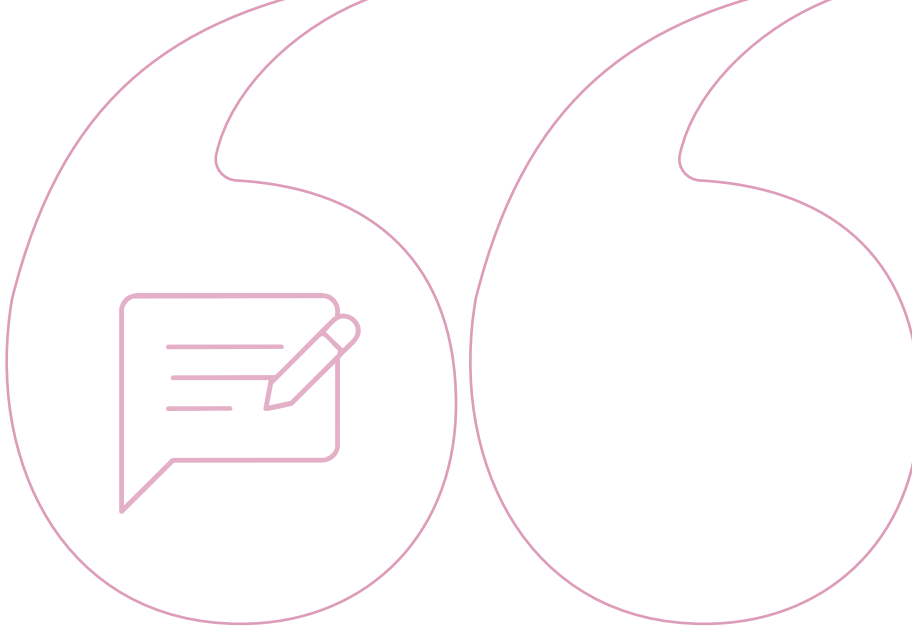
Tech-savvy to the extent that they

Instantaneously fact-check your corporate narrative

Crowdsource career advice in real-time

Walk away from a job with the same ease as swiping left on a dating app

Welcome to the world of Gen Z Workforce – a generation that has made workplace culture all about transparency, purpose and **personal values.**

In August 2024, Intelligent.com conducted a **study** on 966 business leaders tasked with hiring the recent batch of Gen Z.
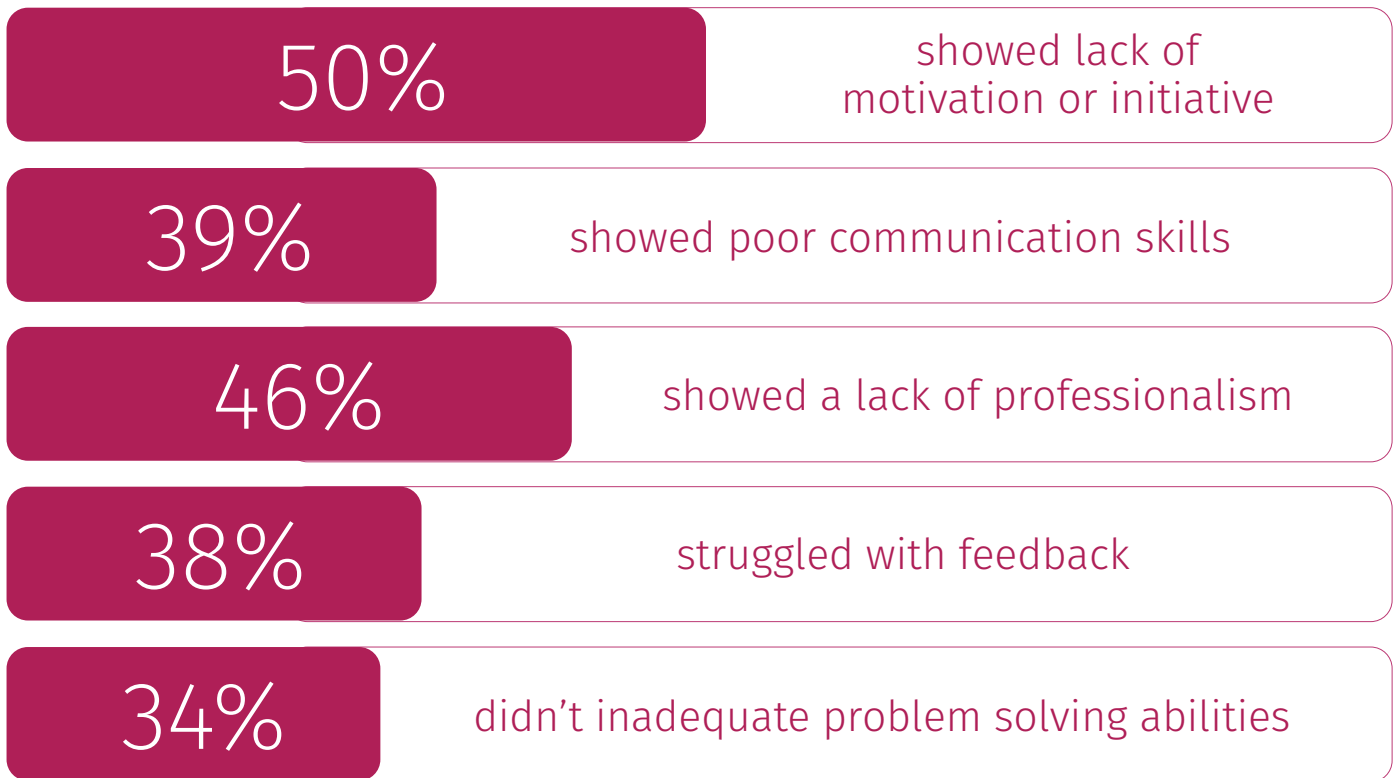
Their findings?

0.6 in 10 companies had to fire their Gen Z hires this year.

Out of 94% companies involved in hiring Gen Z pass-outs, only **25%** employees worked out well.

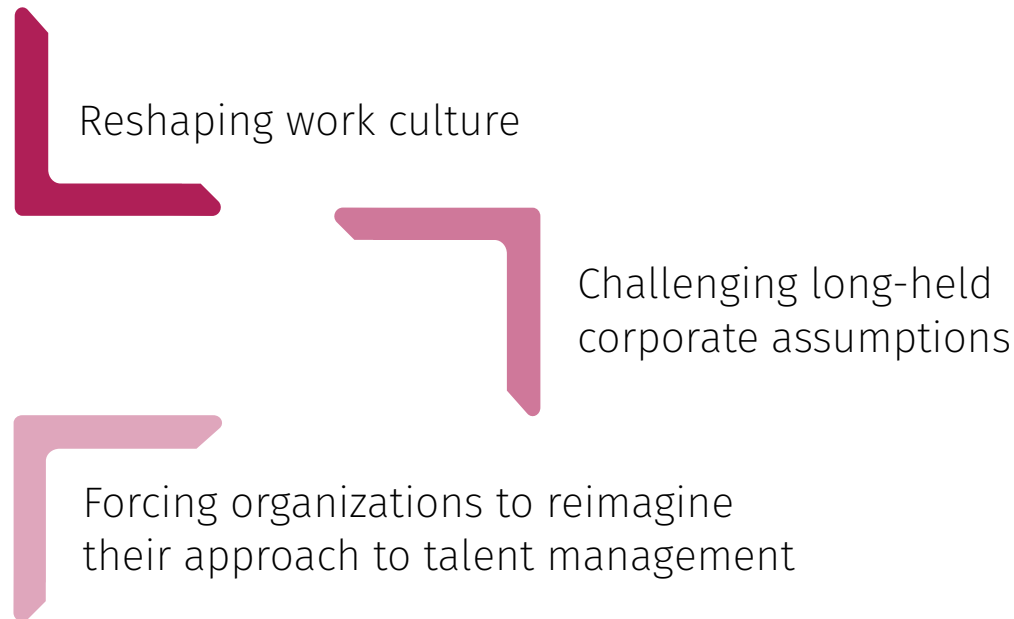The most frequently cited reasons for why these hires didn't work out were:

50%	showed lack of motivation or initiative
39%	showed poor communication skills
46%	showed a lack of professionalism
38%	struggled with feedback
34%	didn't inadequate problem solving abilities

Now, let's take a look from the opposite side of the table.

Ask any Gen Z employee why they seem to **"lack motivation"** or aren't putting in the "extra hours" like their predecessors, and they'll educate you about work-life balance.

Their little acts of defiance may seem like they're:

Reshaping work culture

Challenging long-held corporate assumptions

Forcing organizations to reimagine their approach to talent management

Their motivations are both complex and refreshingly simple. Unlike their predecessors, Gen Z doesn't view work as a mere transactional exchange of time for money. They want to have **meaningful experiences** immediate impact and seek a connection between their personal values and organizational mission.

Simply put, they want to know that their work matters — not just to the bottom line, but to the world.

Gen Z is also the most connected yet the most isolated generation – a paradox that has most HR executives and leaders scratching their heads.

They are hyper-digital yet craving authentic human connections; incredibly skilled yet wrestling with unprecedented levels of workplace anxiety.

They can collaborate globally in seconds but struggle with face-to-face communication nuances.

Their workforce bloopers are legendary- just look at their viral TikTok videos documenting unprofessional workplace behaviours (see pics below) to mass exodus trends like "quiet quitting" and "bare minimum Mondays".
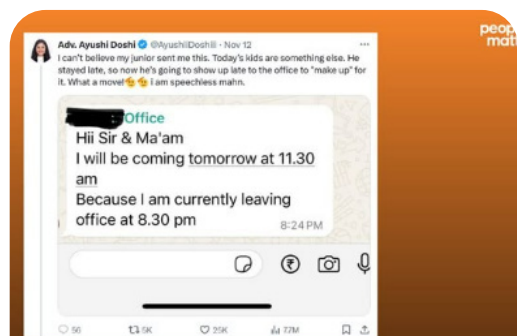
A senior lawyer shared on X how her Gen Z junior informed her they'd arrive at 11:30 am instead of 10 am after working late to meet a deadline.
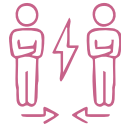
Gen Z employees have epitomized workplace rebellion - ghosting job interviews, live-streaming their resignation, and then networking their way into a more aligned opportunity—all before lunch.

It seems there's nothing that they fear. Wrong again! Their fears are deep & legitimate.

Climate change

Global political tensions

Economic uncertainty

Technological disruption

Their fears drive their behaviour, making them view stability as a negotiable concept.

Their anxieties are rooted in **real-world experiences** like watching their parents cut through multiple recessions and the fragility of pursuing traditional career paths. Understanding these experiences has made their survival instinct prioritize adaptability over loyalty.

On the flip side, even with the same challenges, Gen Z is thriving in the entrepreneurial world. A recent article from Forbes highlights some key trends among Gen Z business owners:

80% have launched their business online or have a mobile component

46% started with a physical location

45% are using their own savings to get their business on the ground

39% have five or more employees

So, why the discrepancy? Why are Gen Zers more successful and satisfied being an entrepreneur and suck at working as employees in the corporate world?

When did you decide to start your own business/side hustle?

68%
I want to be my own boss/ escape the traditional 9-5

41%
I want to increase my income/ have financial stability

**27%**
I want a greater work-life balance

22%
I want a work environment that allowed to be my authentic self

19%
I am passionate about business life

Dave Liniger, a serial entrepreneur himself and founder of global real estate franchise RE/MAX, shares his insight:

Many Gen Zers and younger audiences are looking toward **entrepreneurial opportunities** as a more attractive career path. This generation values independence and flexibility in their work life, often prioritizing work-life balance and the ability to control their own schedules.
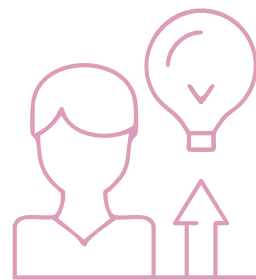
Does that mean that we, as employers, have fallen short on ways to work cohesively with them? Rather than pronouncing them as a problematic workforce, what if Gen Z represents an unprecedented opportunity for organizational transformation?

Here's some food for thought

Instead of trying to control or attempting to significantly change GenZers, what if we spend time in understanding, empowering, and strategically guiding them.

Instead of the traditional management method, they need leadership that speaks their language of purpose, authenticity, and continuous growth.

They require frameworks that prioritize learning over hierarchical structures, mental wellness over endless productivity, and meaningful contributions over mundane task completion.

This generation doesn't just want a job—they want a platform to create, innovate, and make a tangible difference. They are not just looking to climb the corporate ladder; they're formulating entirely new blueprints of professional success. For organizations willing to listen, adapt, and co-create, Gen Z represents more than a workforce demographic. They are the precursors of a more agile, purpose-driven, and technologically integrated future of work.

In the pages that follow, we'll provide strategic insights, practical frameworks, and transformative approaches to not just manage, but trigger exceptional potential of this remarkable generation.

Like it or not, by 2030, Gen Z will account for **36%** of the Indian workforce. So let's make you Gen Z ready!
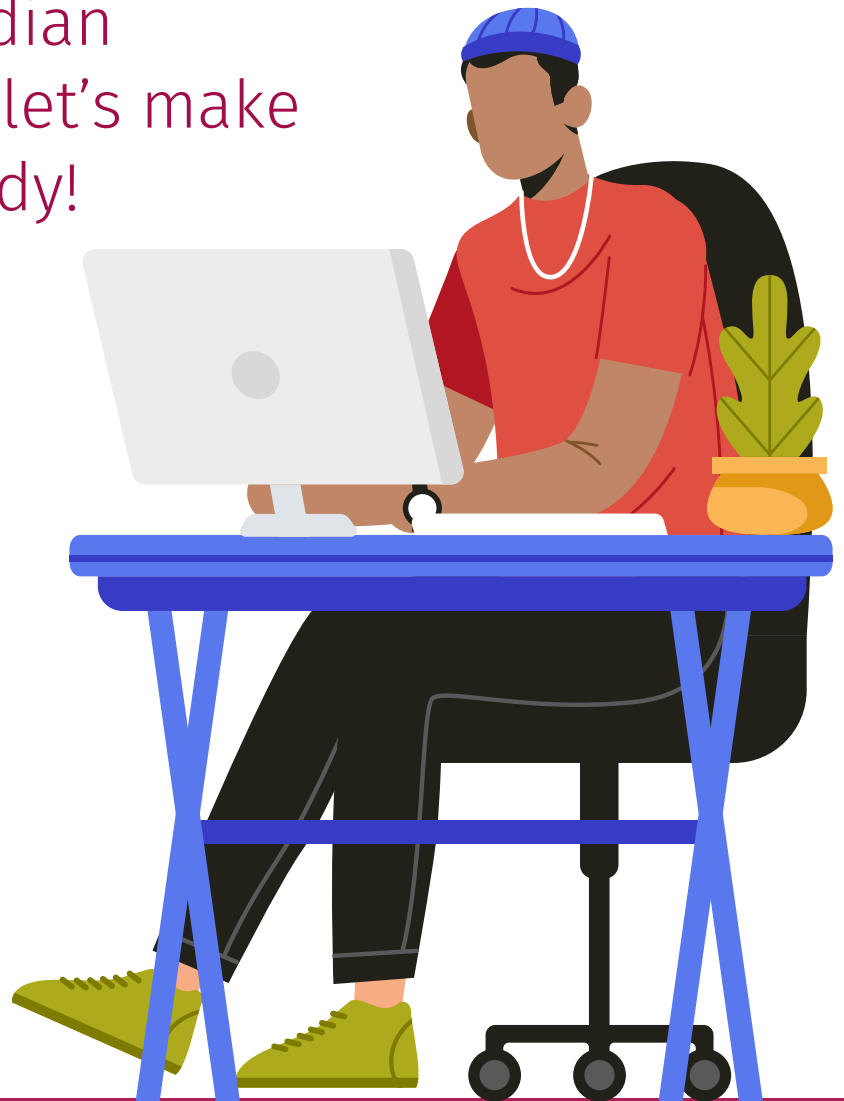
Chapter 1

Why Gen Z job hopping
is the new norm:
A deep dive into their
motivations and
expectations

In an office humming with the steady drone of AC pushing stale recycled air, an employee opens a little window beside his desk. Some of his colleagues look up with wonder, others with irritation – both with surprise. But the employee that opened the window? He broke the monotonous stupor in the office. That's Gen Z for you - unconventionally fond of taking the road not travelled, not only for their careers but in their personal lives too.

This small act of defiance – choosing fresh air over climate control – mirrors a larger pattern in how Gen Z approaches work: questioning established norms even at the risk of raising eyebrows. But does this tendency to challenge conventions make them unreliable employees?

Is Gen Z being unjustly stereotyped as **job hoppers**? Are millennials (the generation before Gen Z) any better at retaining their jobs?
Is Gen Z truly compromised as far as employee loyalty is concerned?
Let's find out!

The numbers tell a story

If you take a look at this recent Reddit thread, discussions are rife about employees who have worked for 30, 40, some even 50 years in a single firm – mostly the one they joined at the start of their careers. While the wonder and awe are palpable in these examples, they will be considered as extreme by most of us. Mostly because in the current corporate world it is nearly impossible to find an employee that has stayed that long at their workplace.

At the other end of the spectrum is the job-hopping trend of Gen Z.

According to a survey by CareerBuilder, Millennials and Gen Zers spend a significantly shorter amount of time in their jobs than their older generations. Gen Z's average length of time spent at a job is **2 years and 3 months**. For millennials, it is 2 years and 9 months, while Gen Xers were at a job for an average of 5 years and 2 months, and baby boomers spent 8 years and 3 months at a job.

And while the urge to shift the blame on to the Gen Z generation – classified as eccentric, unconventional, carefree – is strong, data suggests that Gen Z is **highly focused** and are clear about their expectations from their workplace.

Understanding the reasons for Gen Z's job hopping

Gen Z's job tenure pattern and their clarity is the culmination of various life-changing global events that reshaped their work-life priorities -

PANDEMIC'S LEGACY

Millions of people lost their jobs during the pandemic. Urban India's unemployment more than doubled to 20.9% in April-June 2020, leaving one in five urban Indians suddenly jobless.

The Indian workforce, especially in tech, saw a million resignations in 2021 due to salary cuts, long hours, commuting challenges, rapid tech adaptation, toxic work culture, layoffs, and limited growth opportunities post-pandemic.

The pandemic pushed the world to find innovative ways to continue operating. Remote work became the norm and work-life balance took priority; job security relied heavily on skills and remote work gave rise to unprecedented job opportunities beyond geographical constraints.

Gen Z - having witnessed this - developed a **skill-focused mindset**, making them more likely to switch jobs.

ECONOMIC REALITY AND FINANCIAL MOTIVATION

Gen Z has seen the pandemic, global unrest and economic volatility up close. Half of this generation has seen someone in their close proximity being laid off or getting a pay cut as a direct effect of the pandemic.

As a result, Gen Z has developed a **realistic approach to financial security**. While the older generations sought stability through loyalty to one employer, Gen Z prefers to capitalize on strategic job changes that lead to:

Job changes typically offer 10–20% higher salary growth and benefits than internal promotions.

More opportunities for skill development

Increased personal market value in their industry
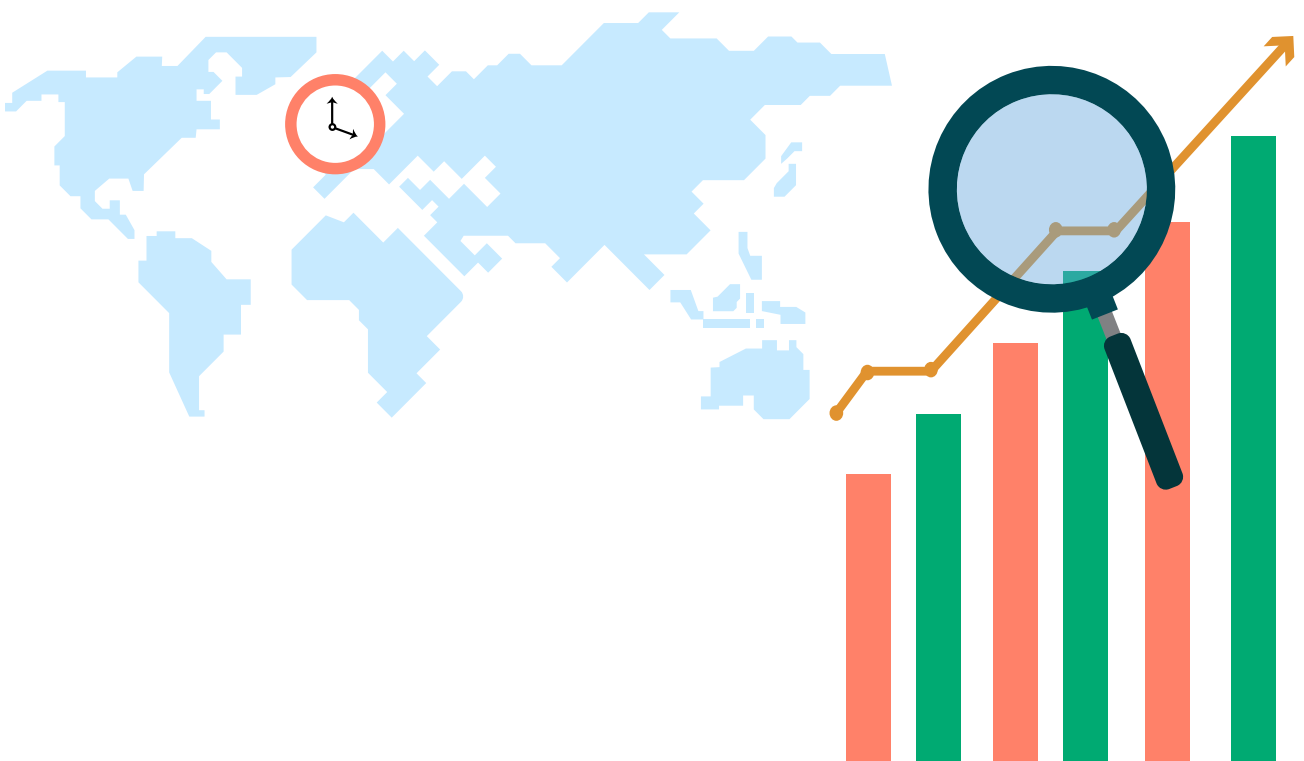
THE iGEN ADVANTAGE

Gen Z is the first truly digital native, internet generation (iGen) – they haven't seen the world sans the internet. From maps to adverts, making friends, dating, healthcare tips, reviewing prospective employers – **they look (up) to the internet for everything.**
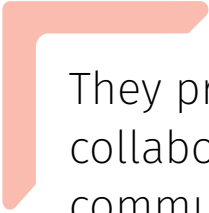
This inherent comfort of technology has given them an extra edge –

They are leveraging digital platforms including social media to gain access to job opportunities.

Tech has made them highly adaptive, making job transitions less daunting and more opportunistic, even across industries.

They prefer remote work and digital collaboration, and leverage the time saved on commuting to create better work-life balance, pursue their hobbies or indulge in a side-gig.

The tech advantage allows them to work from anywhere, in turn saving them money on costly accommodation and rentals.

LEVERAGING THE HUMAN CHAIN

Tech-savvy Gen Z stays **hyper-connected**, expanding their networks from a few people to hundreds.

While millennials relied on formal and onsite events to network, Gen Z is busy building human-chains across continents for career advancement.

These human-channels double up as referrals giving them early access to unofficial job openings and also offer an insider's view of the company culture.

THE INTERNET-FIRST MINDSET

To make any decision, big or small, Gen Z relies on the internet. This **'check everything online'** attitude has turned into a habit that ripples down to their career as well. Something as trivial as a LinkedIn post or a great glassdoor review can trigger a passive job hunt even when they are satisfied with their current role.

And the internet doesn't disappoint them; whether to analyse their current company's growth trajectory, review prospective company's employee experiences, compare compensation or fact check the company's vision and values - they get access to the tiniest of information.

This constant need to verify and validate online has deeply ingrained into Gen Z's behavioral pattern. Like checking social media first thing in the morning or googling a restaurant before dining, researching career moves online has become an automatic response for Gen Z.

This habit is so deeply embedded in their decision-making process that not doing so feels incomplete, almost like a mistake.

It's a psychological loop:
A trigger (like a colleague's job change announcement)

Leads to an automatic response
(checking online for similar opportunities)

Which gives an incentive
(potential opportunity)
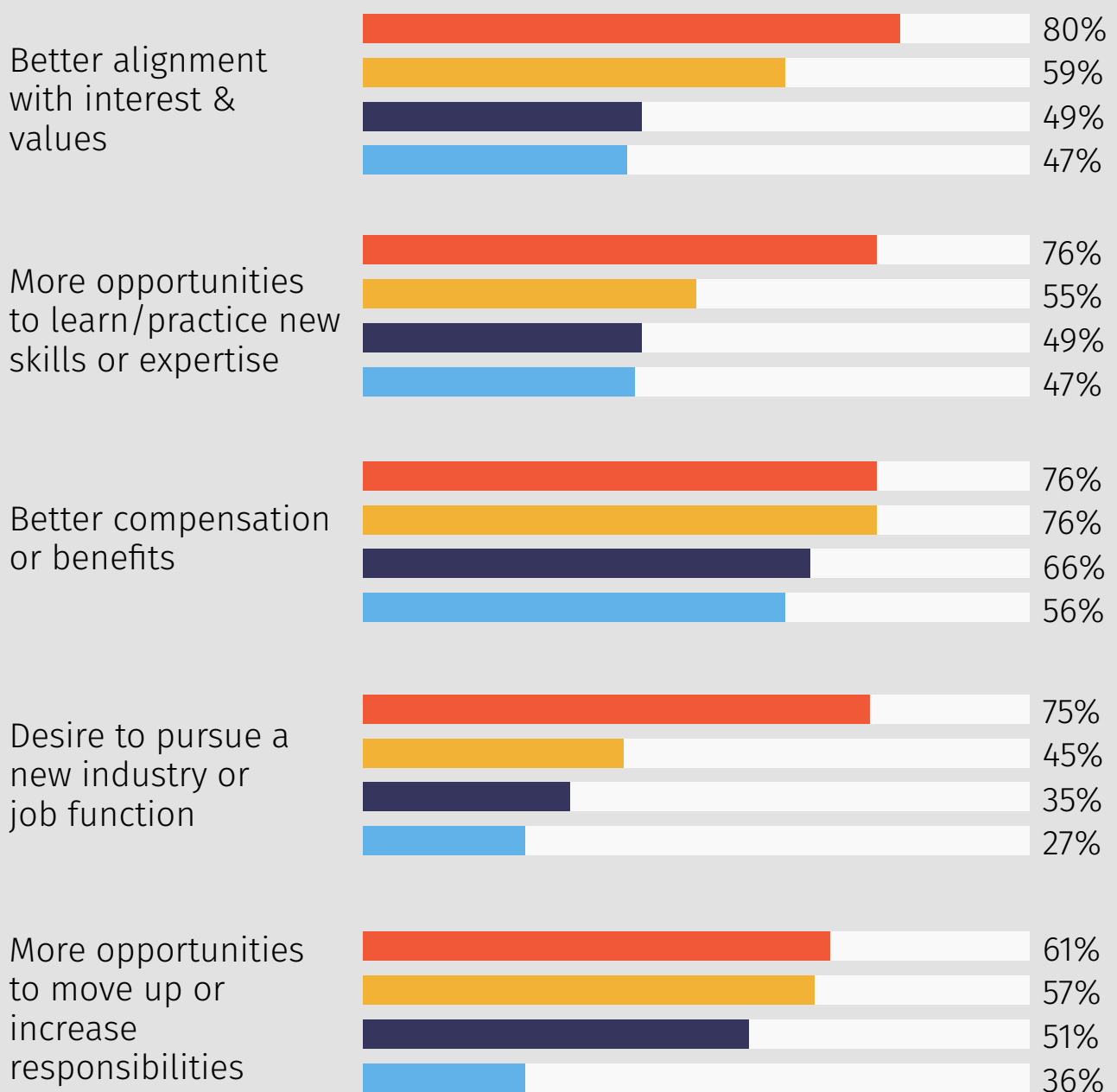
Reinforcing the behavior for
future situations

The loop is so normalized that they often engage in passive job searching without conscious intent, simply because the technology and habit are always present.

CHANGING WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS: THE BEYOND SALARY MINDSET

While it helps to understand the reasons why Gen Z looks for a job switch more often, it is equally important to understand their workplace expectations.

GenZ is aiming high

Better alignment with interest & values
- GenZ: 80%
- Millenials: 59%
- GenX: 49%
- Baby Boomers: 47%

More opportunities to learn/practice new skills or expertise
- GenZ: 76%
- Millenials: 55%
- GenX: 49%
- Baby Boomers: 47%

Better compensation or benefits
- GenZ: 76%
- Millenials: 76%
- GenX: 66%
- Baby Boomers: 56%

Desire to pursue a new industry or job function
- GenZ: 75%
- Millenials: 45%
- GenX: 35%
- Baby Boomers: 27%

More opportunities to move up or increase responsibilities
- GenZ: 61%
- Millenials: 57%
- GenX: 51%
- Baby Boomers: 36%

Legend: GenZ · Millenials · GenX · Baby Boomers

VALUES-DRIVEN CAREER CHOICES

The pandemic and global unrest have also taught Gen Z to be values-driven. Securing a good paycheck isn't enough. They'd rather work in organizations that reflect their **values and aspirations**, have sustainable initiatives, and care about employee mental health and climate change. They place a premium on personal values and workplace culture alignment.

Which means they're more likely to leave organisations that:

Don't align with their personal values

A Gen Z employee who values responsible marketing will not be willing to work for a business aggressively marketing unhealthy products to children

Isn't diverse and inclusive

An organisation not having enough female representation in the decision-making seats, or lacking inclusive benefits like parental leaves for all types of families will not be preferred by a Gen Z employee

Don't focus on sustainability

A Gen Z employee who values responsible marketing will not be willing to work for a business aggressively marketing unhealthy products to children

Lack commitment to social responsibility

A company that treats the local communities poorly where they operate and has no initiatives to give back is a no-go for Gen Z

CONTINUOUS LEARNING AS A CAREER STRATEGY

With businesses getting disrupted in a blink due to advancement in tech, Gen Z have understood the importance of continuous learning the hard way. Their choices are limited - upskill or get replaced.

And if their current workplace doesn't give them the opportunities to grow- within their roles or in cross functional environments - they tend to change their workplace.

For Gen Z, job hopping is a means for accelerated learning and skill acquisition. Each new role provides:

Exposure to different systems and methodologies

A push to get out of their comfort zones

Opportunities to work with diverse teams

New challenges that cultivate rapid skill development

Broader industry perspective

Razorpay's Chitbhanu Nagri shares the sentiment. He says, "We focus on **pioneering cutting-edge technologies** to build the financial nerve centre for India and beyond, offering teams a sense of fulfillment and a chance to work on what few have mastered in the country today."

Gen Z believes that a portfolio of experiences is the only way to future-proof their careers as opposed to a linear progression within one organization.

THE DIGITAL REPUTATION FACTOR

Gen Z's professional identity is intrinsically linked to their online presence. This generation believes that personal and professional brands are inseparable. The internet's perception of their employer holds significant weight in their career decisions.They seek employers whose reputation and market presence can amplify their own professional narrative. This is amplified by:

Actively sharing their workplace achievements on professional networks

Prefer companies with strong market recognition that adds credibility to their portfolio

They look for organizations that encourage employees to be brand ambassadors

Value workplaces that provide opportunities for thought leadership and public speaking

Gen Z's job-hopping behaviour is largely driven by better pay and opportunities for skills development, closely followed with great workplace culture, flexible work hours – including ease of commute, remote and hybrid work models, transparent communication and a robust employee mental health program.

The role of company culture

While the Millennials considered 'workplace culture' as just a buzzword, for Gen Z, it's top priority.

To attract and retain this talented pool of workers, companies need to differentiate themselves by establishing their unique 'employer brand' that attunes with Gen Z preferences:

Focus on employee's mental and physical well-being

Gen Z prefers working for organisations that have concrete physical and mental health policies. Flexible working hours, recreational activities, clear boundaries between work and personal time, are just a few pointers.

Let's take the example of Deloitte: To meet Gen Z expectations it has created a chief happiness officer role and established the Happiness Office to nurture employee-centricity. Flexible working arrangements and hybrid models are supported by their strategically placed offices, reducing commute times.

Transparency in communication and decision-making

Gen Z is pro sharing real-time updates, be it financial performance, strategy pivots, or company decisions. Setting clear criterias for promotion and having open salary bands, conducting regular open houses where difficult questions are answered by the leadership transparently - a few points that attracts Gen Z for potential employment.

Authentic leadership and genuine relationships

Practice what you preach. This testament is key to Gen Z's expectations of leadership. Gen Z expects leaders to be accessible, genuine, and willing to show vulnerability. They expect executives to take clear stands on social issues, acknowledge mistakes, and demonstrate personal investment in employee growth. This means moving beyond formal hierarchies to create opportunities for direct interaction with leadership.

Something similar to Deloitte's 'Mics not Muted' program that aims for unfiltered dialogue between employees and leaders, nurtures a flat and open culture and builds genuine connections.

Recognition and feedback systems

Rather than having annual reviews, Gen Z prefers immediate, specific feedback and values recognition that goes beyond monetary rewards. They seek organizations with structured mentorship programs, clear growth pathways, and regular check-ins that focus on both professional development and personal goals.

Companies are finding different methodologies to recognise employee efforts: Razorpay has integrated this into their culture in a unique way.
"We call it folklore. Any significant event, whether client interaction or internal escalation, is transformed into a story that reflects our company's **values**. This has become a powerful tool to communicate our culture," says Chitbhanu Nagri.

Inclusive and diverse work environments

Diversity and inclusivity matters to Gen Z through many dimensions - not just isolated to race and gender but also related to identity and orientation. This includes having enough female (or diverse) representation in the leadership positions, parental leave and family-building benefits regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, gender neutral restrooms, conducting hiring initiatives for women from different scales of society through targeted training and mentorship.

Some organisations that walk the talk are:

They have initiatives aimed at empowering individuals across gender, age, and abilities and specific policies supporting women and LGBTQIA+ employees.

Launched "Infyability," an Employee Resource Group supporting employees with disabilities in recruitment, development, and retention.

The company has moved beyond being an equal opportunity employer to specifically hiring LGBTQ+ individuals, showcasing a commitment to diverse hiring practices.

Recognized as one of the best companies for women in India, Dow India celebrates leadership and initiatives that create an inclusive environment where all talent can thrive.

Last word

As pointed out by Deloitte's Chief People and Experience Officer, Deepti Sagar, "Today, talent is asking us **why** they should join Deloitte rather than us asking why they want to work here"!
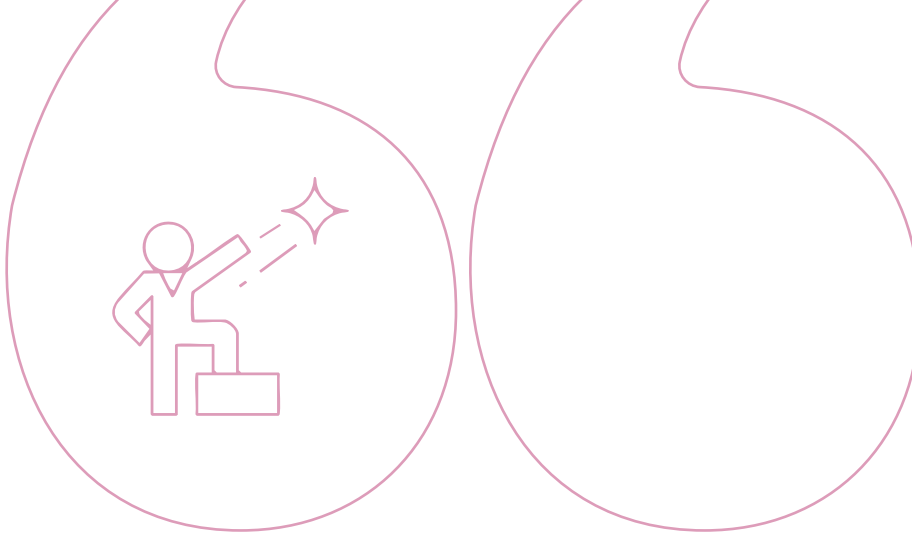
Gen Z is slowly reshaping the perception around work. Rather than work being the end, Gen Z practices work as a means to an end.

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Chapter 2

Adapting leadership
styles for Gen Z:
Building connections
across generations

Each generation tends to believe that the ones before them had it easier and the ones after them don't have enough experience. This generational bias influences the way workplaces function, particularly when it comes to **leadership**. Leaders often rely on styles that worked for them, assuming they will continue to be effective.

But, like we have already established - Gen Z brings a new set of expectations and values that necessitates a change in our leadership approach – a methodology that's dynamic and adaptive.

While Gen Z is yet to reach leadership positions in large numbers, they form a significant portion of the workforce today. The onus is largely on millennials—who now hold mid-to-senior leadership roles—to understand and evolve their leadership styles to engage and retain this new generation effectively.

The leadership evolution

Historically, leadership styles have evolved alongside economic & technological changes:

THE PRE-1990s

era leadership was hierarchical, command-and-control driven, and transactional, suited to government-driven and public-sector workforces. The focus was on **stability and compliance** rather than innovation. Indian PSUs like ONGC and SAIL thrived in this era with established hierarchies, clear reporting structures, and limited autonomy.

THE 1990s-2010

was dominated by **Globalization** with the emergence of multinational companies (MNCs) and competitive private sector enterprises. This was the time when transformational leadership gained momentum; leaders began focusing on vision, motivation, and organizational change.

An era that saw **Narayana Murthy of Infosys** championing the people-first approach, mentoring talent and promoting ethical leadership and Ratan Tata expanding Tata Group into international markets while maintaining an ethical, employee-centric approach.

THE 2010-2020

decade was driven by digital technology and evolving workplace dynamics. Professionals, having worked with MNCs, began shaping new leadership structures where traditional hierarchies gave way to flatter, more agile organizations. While this transformation, particularly in new-age startups, reduced corporate bureaucracy, it also introduced challenges.

The rise of remote team management and digital collaboration tools blurred the boundaries between professional and personal spaces - a trend intensified during the pandemic, resulting in more flexible but often unpredictable working hours.

Leaders like **Satya Nadella at Microsoft** led with empathy and collaboration, focusing on cultural transformation rather than just business outcomes and Anand Mahindra leveraging social media to engage with employees and customers directly, broke the traditional leadership barriers.

The business world had stumbled upon a new way of leading teams; redefining not just how we work, but also changing the fundamental relationship between leaders, teams, and work-life integration.

Now, with Gen Z comprising 36% of the Indian workforce by 2030, another shift is underway. The corporate world needs leadership that matches the new age multi-generational workforce. A leadership that is collaborative, flexible, and mentorship-based and aligns with Gen Z's expectations for continuous learning, **purpose-driven work**, and autonomy.
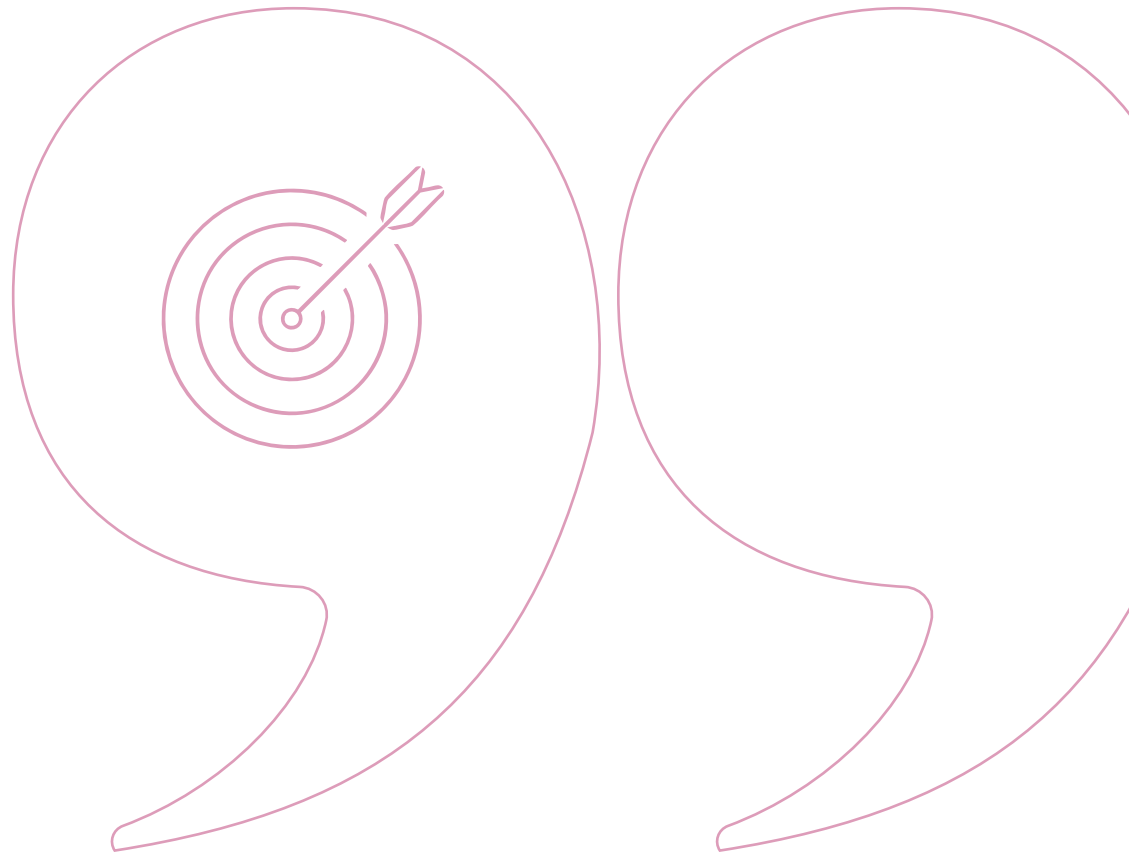
Why traditional leadership models won't work for Gen Z

Even though fundamental values like honesty, hard work, and ownership remain unchanged, there's a subtle shift in the corporate culture with the Gen Z workforce at its core. This new generation values qualities like purpose, technology integration, flexibility, and inclusivity in addition to the basic ones.

While the previous generations didn't mind micromanagement, Gen Z prefers to work under guidance with minimal interference. They value the learnings and consider them as a skill enhancement exercise that gives rise to more premium career opportunities.

Loyalty for them is a two-way street. They want to work for organisations where employee's health and wellbeing is a priority, where productivity takes precedence over working hours. Flexibility and technology are their weapons of choice – you are more likely to get a project update on your company's slack community than on the email.

With this inherent change in workplace culture, it makes sense for the corporates to **augment past leadership wisdom** while adapting to the changing expectations.

Adapting leadership for Gen Z: Key changes

DITCH THE COMMAND-AND-CONTROL

The traditional hierarchical setup where rules and orders drizzled downwards with strict adherence doesn't gel well with the new generation. Not only will this leadership drag you down, as a company, but will make you unpopular among your employees.

Instead

Switch to Collaborative Leadership
where instead of being authoritative, you use influence to achieve common goals. A leadership where teamwork, cooperation and voluntary leadership takes centrestage.

Initiate open-ended discussions
that lead to the team members volunteering suggestions, share responsibilities, take decisions unanimously or even lead a project. Once the project is complete, this is followed by a 'no holds barred' feedback session to analyse what worked and what tanked along with the expected vs generated results of the project.

Here leaders work alongside their teammates as facilitators and influencers rather than being the cardboard cut-outs of authoritarian figures.This approach works best because it's based on the values Gen Z swears by.

For the leadership to be **effective** with this generation it must be participatory, emphasizing on mentorship and knowledge-sharing. A great example of this is of industrialist Sir Ratan Tata and his long-time friend Shantanu Naidu. Theirs is a new-age leadership that overlaps friendship, shared collaboration, innovation and open communication.

Capitalize on technology

Gen Z has grown up in a **digital-first world;** they have apps to hydrate themselves and count their calories. Expecting seamless technology integration at their workplace is a no brainer here.

You are more likely to get a reply from them on a slack community than on official changes. **Leveraging AI, automation, and data analytics** to enhance productivity and communication has become mandatory for you as a leader.

Tobi Lütke at Shopify didn't just **adapt** to digital he built his entire workplace around it.

He knew that his team is spread across time zones and sending emails and hoping for responses isn't going to cut it.

So he engineered the concept of "digital by default" workplace culture. He implemented sophisticated internal communication tools and project management systems that allowed Shopify's teams to work asynchronously across time zones.

He also used data analytics to measure team productivity and engagement so that managers could identify and address collaboration challenges in real-time.

OFFER MENTORSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT OVER MICROMANAGEMENT

Unlike previous generations that valued linear career progressions and micromanagement, Gen Z gets apprehensive of being micromanaged. They seek continuous learning and mentorship for professional growth. They want leaders to act as mentors, providing opportunities for upskilling rather than just setting targets.

They expect their leaders to be held to the same level of scrutiny as they are, with accountability and transparency being the key leadership factors. Instead of simply being evaluated as employees, Gen Z believes that leadership effectiveness should be assessed based on how well managers mentor, guide, and create opportunities for growth.

To match these expectations, leaders can:

Establish mentorship programs that pair senior employees with younger professionals.

Create internal learning platforms with skill development courses.

Support external certifications and cross-functional learning opportunities

Let's take a look at how Wipro does this: The company formally tracks leadership training and scores managers and executives on 12 leadership measures. The top leaders are **reviewed** by Wipro's chairman, and the company creates a development plan for each candidate.

OFFER FLEXIBILITY WITHOUT LOSING STRUCTURE

We all agree that structure provides clarity. But excessive rigidity can stifle creativity and motivation. Gen Z values autonomy and flexibility in work arrangements, including remote work options and non-traditional work hours.

To ensure this quality is embedded in their work culture, several companies like Deloitte, Colgate-Palmolive, Coca-Cola, Nestle, KPMG India and Tech Mahindra have opted for the hybrid work model giving the employees the much needed flexibility and autonomy.

INTEGRATE CSR AND PURPOSE IN LEADERSHIP

Gen Z is highly conscious of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and expects organizations to contribute meaningfully to society. They want to work for organisations that go beyond profit-making and contribute meaningfully to social causes. This is an integral part of Gen Z's workplace expectation. And as a Gen Z leader you would have to integrate purpose into corporate strategies to nurture engagement and loyalty.

This can take the form of:

CSR initiatives positioned strategically into work routines, such as a monthly volunteering day.

Promoting workplace mental health and diversity programs.

Establishing and following sustainability goals and communicating progress transparently.

A great example of this is the tech giant HCL. It encourages its employees to participate in social impact projects, dedicating workdays to **CSR initiatives**.

BUILDING MULTI-GENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Recently, BPCL's senior managers encountered a unique dynamic: young leaders were entrusted to lead teams composed of seasoned professionals, many with decades of experience and institutional knowledge; individuals who have progressed through the ranks over many years. The young leaders had to gain the trust and respect of more experienced team members, who might question their judgment due to the age and experience gap.

And this is not a one-off situation. Let's face it: In the following years, every organisation will have a multi-generational workforce working together where situations like these are encountered on a daily-basis.

However, the road to building an effective leadership strategy that can lead people from across the late 90s to Gen Z **isn't going to be easy**.

To close the gap most effectively, leaders need to:

Cultivate emotional intelligence to understand and motivate diverse employees.

Encourage decentralized decision-making to strengthen teams.

Maintain transparent communication to build trust and encourage engagement across all levels.

Support inclusivity to create diverse, equitable workplaces.

Provide resources for continuous learning and opportunities for skill enhancement to keep up with technological and cultural shifts.

Challenges and solutions with practical examples

At enParadigm, we are known for providing strategic solutions to out-of-the-box problems in the most engaging manner. Our clients often come to us with unique problems that while being common often hamper team productivity and create unnecessary chaos.

Here are the most common problems we have seen today's leaders face with their Gen Z team and their solutions:

CHALLENGE 1: Bridging the generational communication gap

PROBLEM

Millennial leaders and Gen Z employees often have different communication styles, leading to misunderstandings.

We advise

Create a culture of direct, constructive feedback. Implement training on intergenerational workplace dynamics with interactive games, both - online and offline.

A great example of this is Microsoft's "Reverse Mentoring" Program where senior executives were paired with Gen Z employees for monthly sessions. The young employees taught leaders about emerging digital trends, social media, and modern communication preferences helping them bridge the generational gap.

CHALLENGE 2: Retaining Gen Z talent in a job-hopping era

PROBLEM

Gen Z is likely to leave at the drop of a hat in pursuit of better opportunities.

We suggest

Provide rapid career progression through upskilling programs, transparent growth paths, and mentorship to maintain engagement.

Try implementing a "Choose Your Own Adventure" career path program where team members get to select projects based on their interests and gain new skills every quarter. For instance, a junior copywriter interested in data analytics would be allowed to split his time: 70% on core responsibilities and 30% learning and working on data-driven marketing projects.

CHALLENGE 3: Balancing remote work and collaboration

PROBLEM

While Gen Z values remote work, collaboration can suffer.

Try this

Introduce structured team check-ins, virtual collaboration tools, and in-person team-building sessions.

Did you know? Spotify successfully implemented a hybrid model they call "Work From Anywhere." They maintain team cohesion by organizing annual in-person team meets for intensive collaboration and relationship building.

CHALLENGE 4: Aligning corporate goals with employee expectations

PROBLEM

Gen Z seeks purpose-driven work, while corporations focus on profits

Tip

Leaders must integrate purpose into business models, making CSR and ethical practices core to corporate missions.

Seems difficult? Patagonia has successfully integrated CSR and ethical practices into daily work life. It engages its Gen Z employees by directly involving them in the company's environmental mission. The employees take paid time off for environmental activism while junior employees can participate in their "1% for the Planet" initiative.

CHALLENGE 5: Bridging multi-generational gap in teams

PROBLEM

Gen Z might feel ignored or side-stepped in a multi-generational team

We suggest

Create flexible systems that accommodate different work styles. Implement reverse mentoring programs where Gen Z can share insights on technology and modern workplace trends with senior employees. Leaders can establish open forums where all employees, regardless of experience level, can voice opinions and contribute ideas.
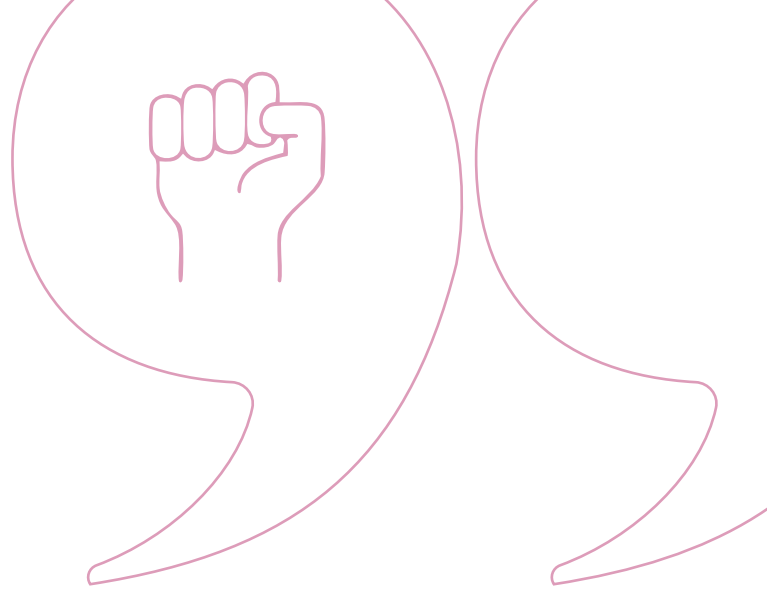
Last word

The **workplace revolution** led by Gen Z is less about accommodating a new generation and more about evolving leadership practices for a fundamentally different world. Gen Z is reshaping the workforce with its emphasis on collaboration, technology, purpose, and flexibility.

While the core values of integrity, accountability, and perseverance remain the same, leaders need to adapt to the changing expectations of each new generation. Taking inspiration from industry leaders like Ratan Tata, Narayana Murthy, and Anand Mahindra—who show us the right way to lead and adapt in these changing times while staying true to leadership principles—new age leaders need to adapt to the new set of requirements. Quite often, leaders also need to upskill their methodologies from expert L&D pioneers in adjusting the finer nuances of leading a diverse team.

Understanding each generation's unique characteristics, fears, and motivations can help today's team-leaders form the framework of sustainable leadership that transcends generations, creating environments where each employee thrives.

The change is here.
The question is:
Are you ready to **lead** it?

Chapter 3

Building resilience
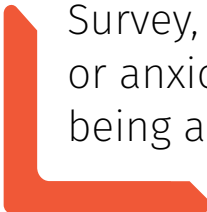# & perseverance
in Gen Z through L&D

If leaders were granted one skill as a wish for their team, they would choose RESILIENCE.

Resilience, especially in today's dynamic business world, is more than just an add-on skill—it's unarguably the highest competency for organizational survival. And with Gen Z already heading into the corporate world in the largest numbers yet, team leaders and C-suite executives face the unique challenge of cultivating resilience in a generation that has grown up in a drastically different environment than their predecessors.

Let's help you with some strategies, tips, practical examples and ways to determine your progress in this guide.

WHY GEN Z NEEDS RESILIENCE TRAINING NOW

Born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z has entered adulthood with global pandemics, economic uncertainty, and rapidly evolving business norms constantly buzzing in the background. This white noise initiated the remote work culture - a place where they are constantly connected online and yet personally disconnected.

> According to Deloitte's 2023 Global Gen Z and Millennial Survey, 48% of Gen Z respondents reported feeling stressed or anxious most of the time, with workplace pressures being a significant contributor.

A 2022 Microsoft Work Trend Index found that 58% of Gen Z workers considered changing employers in the past year, with workplace flexibility and well-being support cited as key factors.

Gallup's 2023 workplace data shows that in 2022 only 33% of Gen Z employees report feeling engaged at work, the lowest of any generation. This rose only by a margin to 35% in 2023.

Young workers feeling greater drop in engagement than other generations

Engaged Actively Disengaged

— Baby boomers — GenX – – Older millenials – – GenZ & Young millenials
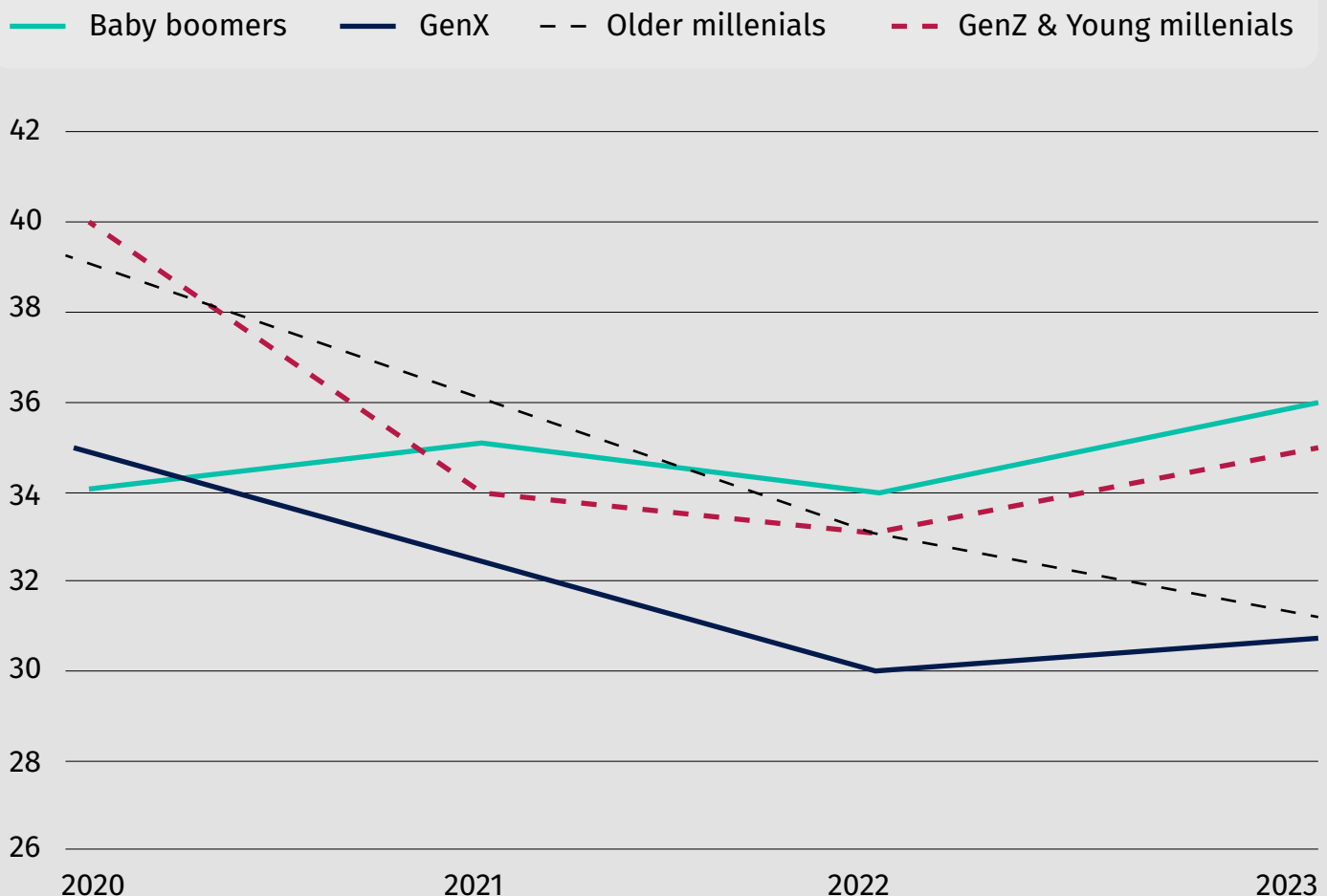
But, at the same time, Gen Z's 'need-for-speed' approach to career advancement is evident:

LinkedIn's 2022 Workplace Learning Report found that 76% of Gen Z believes learning is key to career advancement, but they expect development to happen more rapidly than previous generations.

According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2023, the half-life of professional skills has dropped from 10-15 years to approximately 5 years, creating legitimate pressure for continuous development.

All these researches reinforce the need for building resilience in the Gen Z workforce. Without it, businesses will have to face tangible consequences:

IBM's Institute for Business Value found that Gen Z workers are 2x more likely than other generations to leave a job if it doesn't provide adequate growth or purpose.

The American Psychological Association's 2022 Work and Well-being Survey found that 81% of Gen Z reported work-related stress impacting their job performance.

According to Gartner's 2023 HR research, organizations that provide structured resilience training report 21% higher retention rates among early-career employees.

This isn't a generational criticism but a development opportunity. Gen Z brings significant strengths identified in Deloitte's research: digital proficiency, ethical decision-making, and innovative problem-solving. However, as organizational psychologist Adam Grant has noted in his bestselling book "Think Again" (2021), their limited exposure to professional setbacks creates a developmental gap that can be addressed through targeted training.

This generation brings tremendous digital fluency and creative problem-solving abilities. However, they often struggle with setbacks in professional settings, especially with in-person feedback and ambiguous situations that require persistence within the uncertainty.

The challenge isn't their capability for resilience but rather providing structured opportunities to develop this essential skill in today's complex workplace environment.
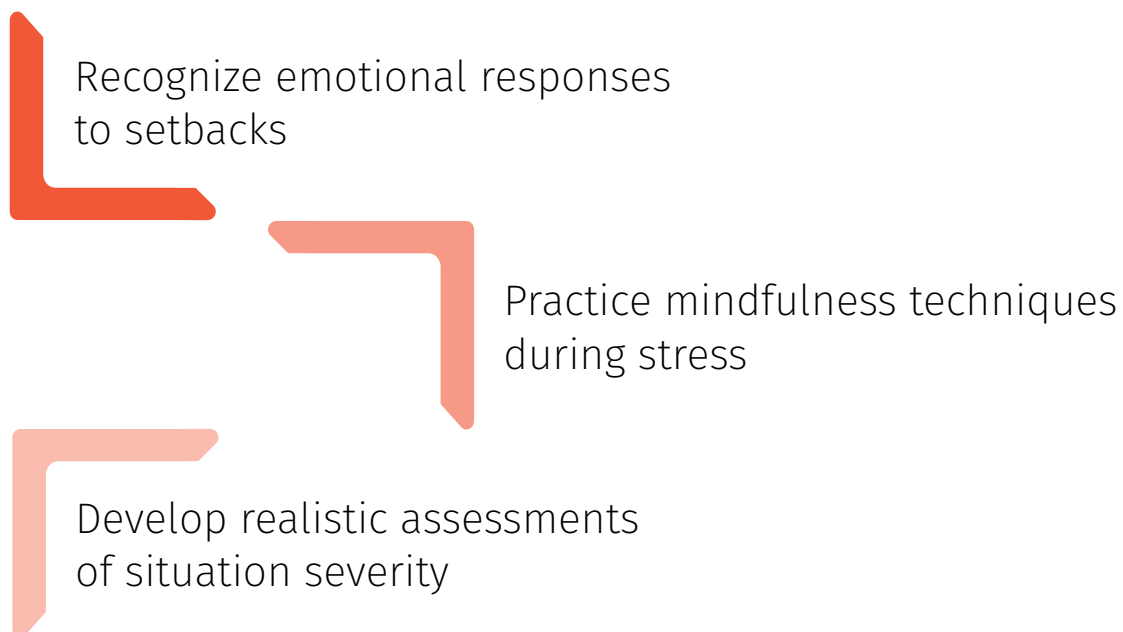
THE ABC FRAMEWORK FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE

Effective resilience training goes beyond the motivational speeches and the feel good advice. enParadigm's ABC Framework— Accept, Balance, Connect—is an ideal way to build resilience in teams. It focuses on a structured approach that resonates with Gen Z's preference for clear frameworks and measurable progress.

Accept

The first component focuses on the initial reaction to setbacks. Most Gen Z professionals struggle with perfectionism and catastrophizing when things don't go as planned. Training in this area helps them:

Recognize emotional responses to setbacks

Practice mindfulness techniques during stress

Develop realistic assessments of situation severity

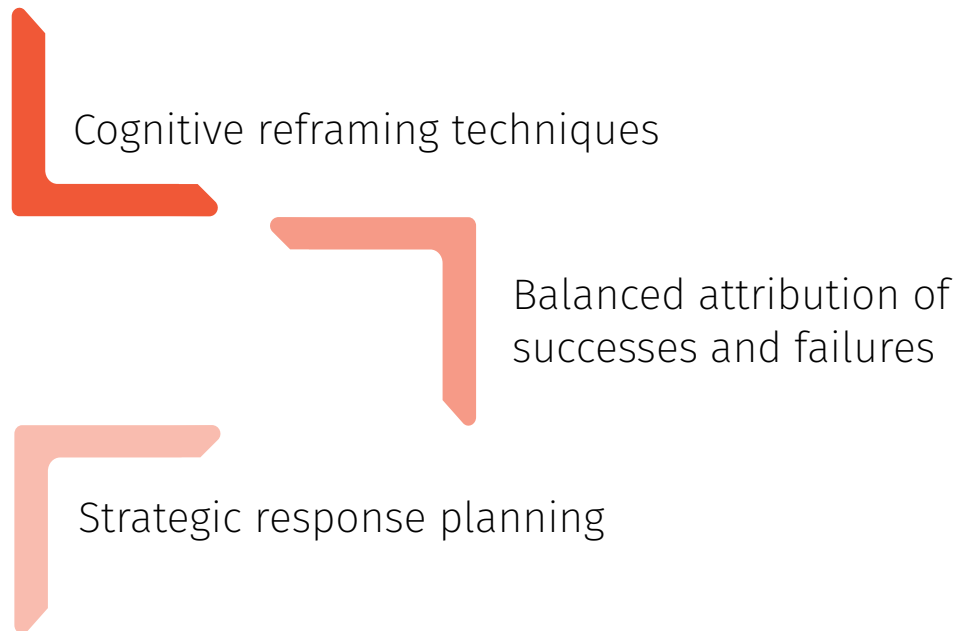Here, acceptance doesn't mean resignation. It's about accepting the validity of the situation and taking responsibility for it.

Balance

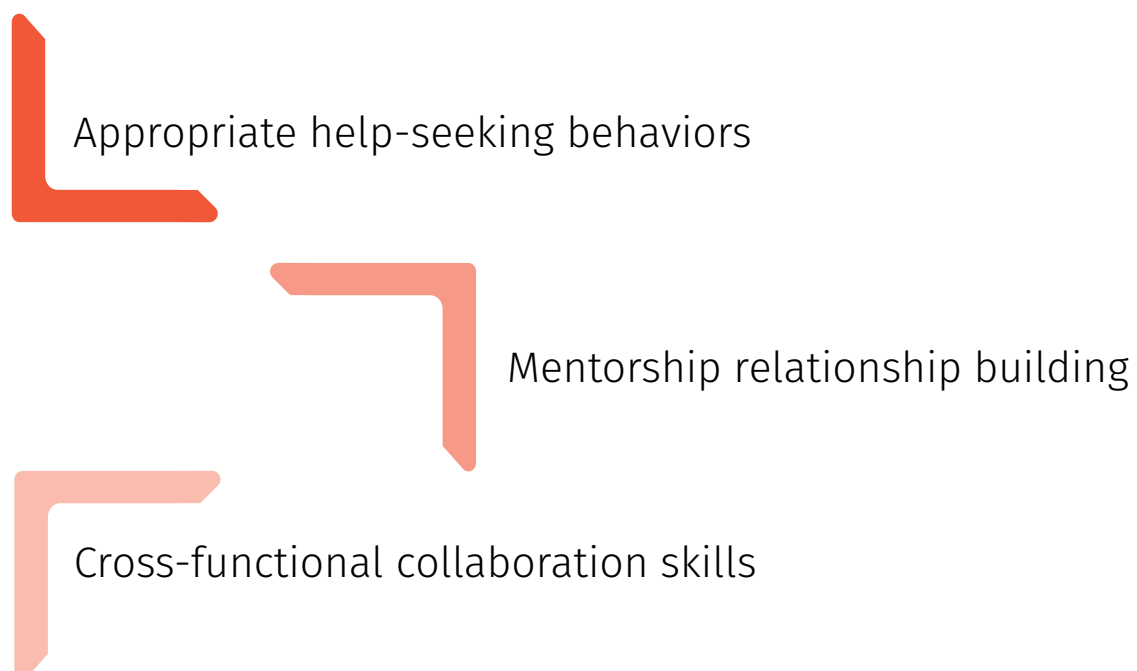The second component addresses cognitive processing and perspective-taking during challenges:

Cognitive reframing techniques

Balanced attribution of successes and failures

Strategic response planning

With practice, employees learn not to catastrophize the schedule impact or dismiss client concerns. They develop more effective solutions that preserve both relationships and deliverables.

Connect

The final component focuses on building and leveraging support networks:

Appropriate help-seeking behaviors

Mentorship relationship building

Cross-functional collaboration skills

DEVELOPING A GROWTH MINDSET THROUGH INTERACTIVE LEARNING

Interactive learning approaches develop this mindset by:

Providing safe spaces to fail and learn

Offering immediate, behavior-specific feedback

Creating opportunities to apply new strategies

Measuring improvement over time

Resilience and growth mindset are **deeply interconnected**. As Carol Dweck, the psychologist who pioneered growth mindset research, explains: "In a growth mindset, challenges are exciting rather than threatening. So rather than thinking, 'Oh, I'm going to reveal my weaknesses,' you say, 'Wow, here's a chance to grow.'"

The most effective programs combine simulation experiences with structured reflection and application planning. This combination helps bridge the knowing-doing gap that plagues many development initiatives.

SIMULATION-BASED LEARNING AS AN ACCELERANT FOR RESILIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Traditional resilience training often doesn't yield desired results because it's theoretical. On the other hand, learning practically isn't viable because of the risks involved – of losing clients, not being able to deliver on time, and the biggest of all, loss of revenue.

This is where simulation-based learning comes into play. Simulation bridges the gap by creating safe spaces for employees to experience setbacks and practice recovery strategies in realistic scenarios.

Like enParadigm's resilience simulation. It gives the participants real-world scenarios with increasingly complex workplace challenges that specifically test resilience. For example:
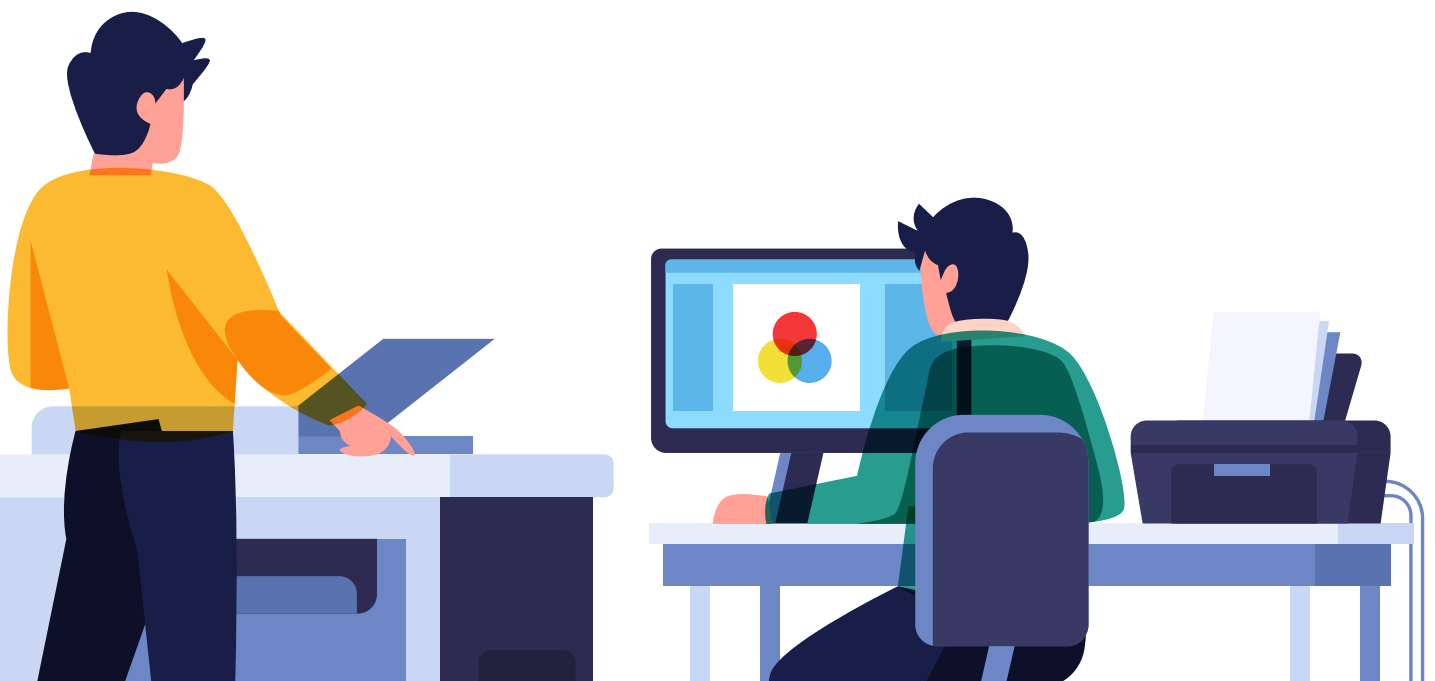
Scenario 1

Client Disappointment Management Participants navigate a situation where a client expresses disappointment with progress while copying their manager. The simulation tracks whether participants:

Take accountability

Develop balanced recovery plans

Communicate effectively under pressure

Appropriately leverage manager support

In January 2021, Slack experienced a major service disruption that affected thousands of customers. Their response?

Slack's CEO Stewart Butterfield immediately acknowledged the issue on Twitter without deflecting blame or making excuses

Taking accountability

Developing balanced recovery plans

Their engineering team communicated realistic timelines for resolution while their customer success teams provided workarounds

Senior leadership became visibly involved in the response, showing customers this was a top organizational priority

Leveraging manager support

Communicating under pressure

Slack maintained transparent status updates every 30 minutes even when they had limited new information, which customers appreciated

Scenario 2

Team Management During Personal Emergencies Participants learn to balance project deadlines against a team member's legitimate personal emergency. Their decisions reveal whether they:

Maintain composure during unexpected changes

Display flexibility in planning

Communicate transparently with stakeholders

Support team members while maintaining delivery standards

A great example of this is the regional grocery chain, H-E-B. The retailer faced significant operational challenges when Hurricane Harvey struck Texas in 2017. Amidst the crisis, the company prioritized the well-being of its employees, many of whom were personally affected by the disaster.

H-E-B utilized its emergency communication system to identify team members in need and those available to assist.

This approach made it possible for the company to balance the immediate personal emergencies of employees with the necessity to maintain operations.

A great case-study in flexibility, transparent communication, and support for their team while upholding service standards.

Scenario 3

Peer Relationship Management Participants work with a challenging peer who takes credit for their work. The simulation evaluates their ability to:

Manage emotional reactions

Establish clear boundaries

Build productive relationships despite challenges

Focus on outcomes over ego

These scenarios mirror real workplace challenges while providing immediate feedback on resilience behaviors. The simulation also measures participants' "Bounce Score" across the ABC framework, giving both individuals and organizations concrete metrics to track improvement.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

To implement a comprehensive resilience development program for Gen Z employees, consider this 12-month timeline:

Assessment and planning **Month 1-2**	Conduct organizational resilience assessment
	Identify resilience gaps among Gen Z employees
	Establish baseline metrics for success
	Select appropriate training methodologies

Pilot program development **Month 3-4**	Customize simulation scenarios to your industry
	Develop supporting materials and resources
	Train facilitators and managers
	Select pilot group of participants

Pilot implementation	Conduct initial training sessions
	Gather immediate feedback
Month 5-6	Provide 1:1 coaching based on simulation results
	Revise program based on early results

Full implementation	Roll out program to all targeted employees
	Implement manager support training
Month 7-9	Establish ongoing practice opportunities
	Create peer learning communities

Full implementation	Conduct follow-up assessments
	Implement "resilience challenges" in daily work
Month 10-12	Celebrate and recognize resilience wins
	Measure impact on business metrics
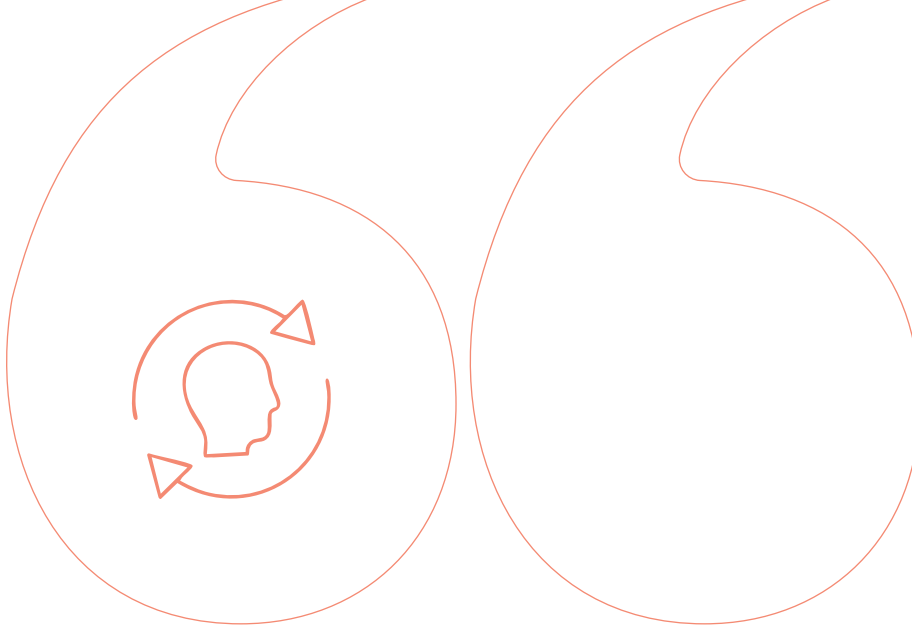
"The most effective development programs aren't one-and-done events," notes Josh Bersin, global industry analyst. "They create systems of reinforcement that turn new behaviors into **habits** over time."

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR EFFORTS ARE PAYING OFF?

You have a plan in place and you've drawn out the timeline to implement it. You are conducting upskilling initiatives, providing 1:1 feedback and reinforcing the learnings.
But how do you know if it's working?

There has to be clear connections between development investments and business results for you to evaluate the impact of your efforts. Here's how you can track the effectiveness of your resilience programs at different levels:

Reaction & planning

Participant engagement scores

Behavior change intentions

Knowledge acquisition measures

Behaviour change

Manager observations of resilient behaviours

Peer feedback on collaboration

Self-assessment of resilience responses

Business Iimpact

Reduced turnover among Gen Z employees

Improved project recovery metrics; Decreased time to resolution in challenging situations

Enhanced client satisfaction scores

Organizations implementing structured resilience programs report higher retention rates among early-career employees and faster recovery from project setbacks, according to recent research from McKinsey.

BRIDGING COMPETITIVE GAPS IN RESILIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Most existing approaches to resilience training fall short in several key areas:

Generic vs. Generation-Specific Approaches

Many programs apply one-size-fits-all approaches that fail to address Gen Z's unique challenges and strengths. Effective programs recognize their digital fluency while addressing specific gaps in real-time adaptation and in-person feedback processing.

Theory vs. Practice

Most resilience content remains theoretical, offering concepts without application opportunities. Simulation-based approaches bridge this gap by creating safe spaces to practice resilience in realistic scenarios.

Event vs. Process

Many organizations treat resilience as a workshop topic rather than a developmental journey. The most effective programs establish 6-12 month development pathways with regular practice opportunities.

Individual vs. Systemic

True resilience development requires both individual skill-building and organizational systems that support resilient responses. This includes manager training, feedback systems, and recognition of resilient behaviors.

HOW LEADERS CAN APPLY THESE PRACTICALLY

While comprehensive programs require thoughtful implementation, leaders can take immediate actions to start building resilience:

Model Resilient Responses Share your own experiences with setbacks and recovery. As Brené Brown notes, "We don't have to be perfect, just engaged and committed to aligning values with actions."

Reframe Failure Conversations Shift from "What went wrong?" to "What did we learn, and how will we apply it?" This simple reframing builds psychological safety and encourages a growth mindset.

Create Reflection Rituals Implement structured team discussions about challenges and responses. Weekly "bounce back" conversations normalize setbacks while highlighting recovery strategies.

Recognize Resilience in Action Actively identify and celebrate instances of effective resilience. This reinforces that resilience is valued within your culture.
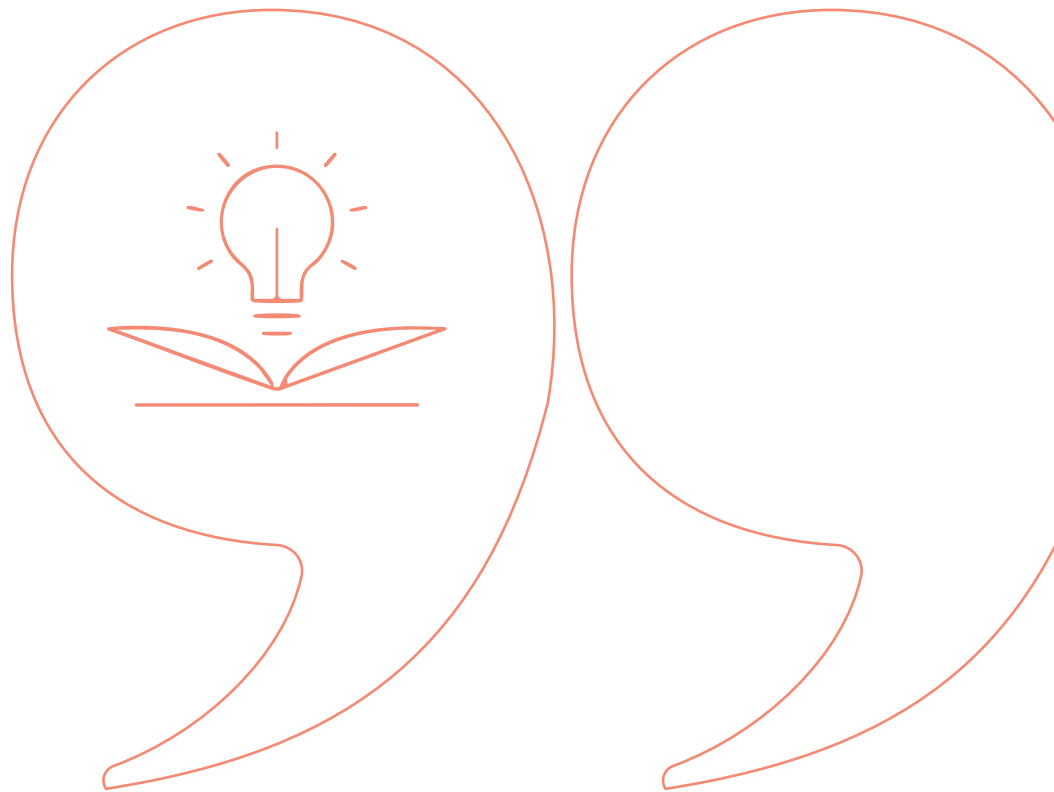
Final word: The competitive advantage of resilient teams

Let's not forget that **disruption is the new norm** and in the face of continuous disruption, organizations with resilient teams gain significant competitive advantage. They recover faster from market shifts, adapt more quickly to changing customer needs, and retain valuable talent through challenging periods.

Building resilience in Gen Z teams requires cultivating a **learn-it-all culture**, something that seems challenging but is achievable with persistence. While employee motivations like growth, remuneration, upskilling, remain constant across generations and the fundamentals of team building haven't changed, it's the implementation that must evolve.

For Gen Z professionals, structured resilience development offers a **critical pathway to career success**. Leaders can implement comprehensive programs that combine the ABC framework with simulation-based learning so that organisations can transform potential vulnerability into remarkable strength. But they also need to acknowledge that meaningful change takes time and commitment.

As Satya Nadella, Microsoft CEO, observed during the company's transformation: "The **learn-it-all** does better than the know-it-all."

enparadigm

The Zen art of cultivating a
resilient Gen Z workforce