



**REIMAGINE**  
TALENT CO.



# What Employers Need to Know About Gen Z

Insights and Strategies to  
Support the Next-Gen Workforce

September 2023



When I launched Reimagine Talent (formerly College Code) in 2018, after a decade of working on Wall Street, my sole mission was to better support young professionals in preparing for careers and navigating the workplace. By putting students and graduates at the center, I modernized the approach to early career development and added an equity and inclusion lens.

My vision came from vast experience leading early career recruiting & development for one of the most esteemed investment firms in the world. During that life-changing role, I supported a national recruitment program to ensure greater racial, gender, and socio-economic representation. This included designing an early career development (grad) program, forging higher-ed and non-profit partnerships, and embedding diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) strategies.

Through my work, I witnessed what has become today's workplace reality—a values shift and perspective change by young professionals of Generation Z—in how they view work, engage with work, and balance work amid other life demands and interests.

Did you know by 2030, 30 percent of the workforce will be Generation Z? (Pew Research)


This paper now has a deeper relevancy and urgency simply given today's demographic realities. It will provide insights needed to engage, develop, and retain the Gen Z workforce. You will find a wealth of knowledge curated from the Reimagine Talent team of workforce consultants, esteemed industry experts, seasoned people managers, and, most importantly, Generation Z themselves.

Throughout my career, I have seen the transformative power of generational shifts, social justice movements, technological advancements, and changes in values and expectations at work. This paper will help you create workplaces that truly resonate with the values of Gen Z, benefiting your workforce strategies and positioning you to effectively engage with them as both employees and the crucial consumer base of the future.

*Chelsea C. Williams*

Chelsea C. Williams  
Founder and CEO of Reimagine Talent Co.





In an era defined by rapid technological advancements, unprecedented access to information, and evolving societal norms, Generation Z stands at the forefront of reshaping our work landscape. As HR leaders, managers, and company executives, it's crucial to recognize the profound impact this generation will have on your workplace culture, career pathways, and overall success.

This white paper dives into the rising influence of Generation Z and offers strategies to help you better understand, manage, and utilize the skills and talents of the largest, most educated, and culturally diverse generation in our history. In this paper, we'll explore the following topics:



## **Defining the Gen Z Workforce**

Generation Z, defined by their distinct values, digital fluency, and commitment to inclusivity, is already reshaping modern work environments. This generational cohort seeks more than just jobs; they seek alignment—a convergence of values, work-life balance, inclusivity, and recognition. This paper will help you uncover strategies that enable your organization to harness Gen Z's unique strengths while addressing their needs.

## **Understanding the Gen Z Mindset**

However, their journey is not without its challenges. Generation Z struggles with introducing change, overcoming imposter syndrome, balancing work with purpose, and demanding the respect and dignity they rightfully deserve. These challenges do not need to be roadblocks, rather they can be catalysts for change in your organization, inspiring new strategies that nurture both individuals and the collective whole.

## **Supporting Gen Z's Financial Challenges**

To engage and retain Generation Z talent, understanding their financial concerns and reality is crucial. By addressing these issues head-on, you can create an environment where financial well-being and education are woven into their career growth. Look for practical tips to help managers and HR leaders better prepare for these conversations.

## **Creating a Gen Z-Centric Work Experience**

Open communication, mentorship opportunities, and consistent follow-through are key when creating a workplace for Gen Z. Read our special sidebar with tips for Millennials managing Gen Z workers and get started with our Gen Z-Centric Workplace Action Plan.

## **Navigating Accessibility and Inclusivity for All**

The Gen Z workforce is grounded in a commitment to inclusivity. Explore how to create an accessible and inclusive work environment that not only resonates with Gen Z but also fosters collaboration for all generations and workers.

## The Gen Z Workforce Landscape

To fully grasp the impact Generation Z is about to make on the workforce, it's important to understand their demographics. Born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s, Generation Z represents the first digitally native cohort, growing up in an era of rapid technological advancements and unparalleled access to information.

Generation Z comprises 26% of the global population (Branka) making it the largest generation to date. In the United States alone, Gen Z accounts for around 24.3% of the population (Betts, Gomez, Mawhinney) surpassing the Millennial generation. Their sheer numbers hold the promise of influencing industries, economies, and societal norms. Moreover, this generation is characterized by its cultural diversity, with around 48% belonging to racial or ethnic minority groups in the United States (Rodriguez).

**48%** of Gen Z belong to a racial or ethnic minority  
Rodriguez

Finally, an intergenerational transfer of wealth is happening that dwarfs any of the past, according to the New York Times (Smith). Of the \$84 trillion expected to transition from Baby Boomers to their children and grandchildren, \$16 trillion will be transferred in the next decade (Smith). While the extent of this transfer to Gen Z is still largely unknown, its meaning is clear: Gen Z is not just your future workforce, it's your future consumer. Building a Gen Z-centric organization now will set you up for success as an employer and a business.

### Tech-Savvy Natives

Raised in the digital age, Generation Z is inherently tech-savvy. A staggering "98% of Gen Z own a smartphone and 26% use their smartphone for over 10 hours a day" (Demirsoy), making them highly connected and accustomed to digital interactions. Their digital literacy influences how they learn, communicate, and work. This generation is known for its ability to multitask across various devices. Their early tech savviness shaped their preferences for remote work, virtual communication, and tech-enabled collaboration.

### Socially Conscious and Globally Aware

Generation Z is known for its social consciousness and knowledge of global issues. Around 83% of Gen Z individuals stated an employer's commitment to diversity and inclusion is significant when choosing where to work (Rodriguez). Gen Z's emphasis on purpose-driven work and social impact is reshaping corporate values and workplace expectations. With unprecedented access to information, Gen Z is acutely aware of global challenges, and they expect their employers to prioritize ethical practices and corporate social responsibility.

## CONTINUED – The Gen Z Workforce Landscape

**Quest for Flexibility in Everything**

The quest for flexibility drives many Gen Z individuals into the gig economy and entrepreneurship, leveraging their businesses to attain the work-life balance they desire. Keona Campbell, a senior workforce development consultant at Reimagine Talent, points out the challenge this presents to organizations rooted in traditional employment structures.

“There’s been more interest in entrepreneurship for the flexibility of it,” Campbell says. “I talk to students who already have successful businesses in college and some of them aren’t focused on the career piece at all. They’re waiting until senior year to decide if they even want to pursue traditional career paths.”

While flexibility is king for Gen Z, 2023 has seen a backlash to remote work opportunities. Keith Roseboro, workforce development consultant at Reimagine Talent, shares the hard realities of today’s hiring landscape.

“A lot of companies are going back to in-person and hybrid schedules, and taking away remote work options,” Roseboro says. “I’ve had Gen Z candidates decline great job offers solely because remote work wasn’t an option. They need flexibility in their day, schedule, and job and they’re very vocal about it.”

**“I’ve had Gen Z candidates decline great job offers solely because remote work wasn’t an option.”**



Keith Roseboro  
Workforce Development Consultant  
at Reimagine Talent

**Prepped for Remote Work, Worried about Skills**

Lauren Delance, a workforce development consultant for Reimagine Talent, shares her experience working with members of Gen Z. “The pandemic forced us all to look at how work needs to be done and it felt permanent,” she says. “The group impacted the most was Gen Z, many of whom were still in their formative years.”

**“The pandemic forced us all to look at how work needs to be done and it felt permanent.”**



Lauren Delance, MPA, CCMC  
Workforce Development Consultant  
at Reimagine Talent

Delance says many Gen Zers experienced high school or college during the pandemic’s onset, proving their adaptability in succeeding with remote work environments. She identifies other critical factors, including the pandemic’s effect on their mental health, and new fears about how automation and artificial intelligence (AI) are changing the skillsets needed to succeed.

“With AI, there are so many skillsets that are going to become extinct,” Delance says. “So, Gen Zs are forced to think on an elevated level about the skills they need – things not even being taught in the traditional university setting. They’re already tapping into job programs to be able to compete in the 21st-century workforce.”



## CONTINUED – The Gen Z Workforce Landscape

**Committed to Mental Health**

For Gen Z, mental health is a top priority of discussion and decision making. “Members of Gen Z want transparency around their mental health needs,” says Dr. Shaakira Haywood Stewart, Ph.D., licensed psychologist and business consultant. “That means transparency in communicating about it. They want to know your organization is openly talking about and prioritizing mental health.”

Open conversations, particularly during mental health awareness events, communicate an organization’s genuine commitment to employee well-being. Offering tangible support mechanisms, such as dedicated mental health days or free access to mental health apps, further proves your commitment to providing a supportive culture.

**“Members of Gen Z want transparency around their mental health needs.”**



Dr. Shaakira Haywood Stewart, PhD  
Licensed psychologist and  
business consultant



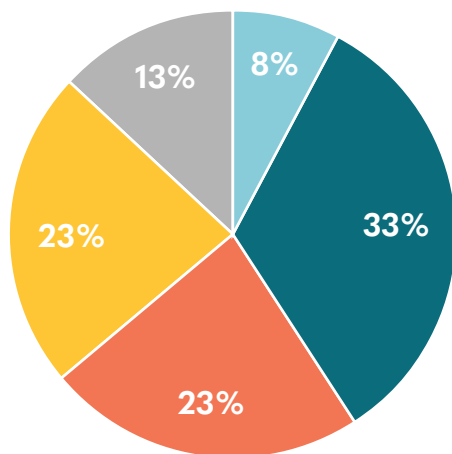
## Understanding the Gen Z Mindset

In modern work environments, it is not just about what employers want from employees, but what employees, particularly Generation Z, expect from their employers. As the charts below show, there is a striking contrast between what Gen Z wants from employers and what those employers are struggling with regarding their Gen Z workforce.

The first chart shows a snapshot from a recent Reimagine Talent workshop of 100 Gen Zers' top work priorities. For them, it's not about a paycheck; it's about the alignment of values, the promise of work-life balance, and an environment that fosters personal growth.

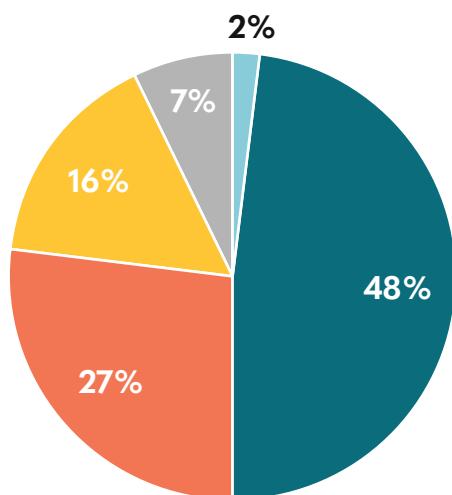
Now compare that to the candid insights about their Gen Z employees shared by managers at a Reimagine Talent workshop.

These charts paint a strikingly different picture. There's a deep divide between Gen Z's expectations of their employers and their employers' expectations of them. Right now, this clash is creating perceived difficulties in engaging and developing the Gen Z workforce.



### Gen Z's Value-Driven Employer Preferences

- Encourage meaningful work and growth
- Support and understand me
- Align with my purpose
- Align with my values
- Strong organizational foundation



### Managers Top Challenges Working with Gen Z

- I can't provide the training they want
- I don't think they are interested in our work
- I don't understand them
- I don't understand their unique challenges
- I don't know how to retain them



## CONTINUED – Understanding the Gen Z Mindset

**Quitting Is an Option**

It is not unusual for Campbell, who works closely with Gen Zers to help prepare them for careers, to be handed strategic plans for career progression. She says Gen Z's proactive approach can be surprising and difficult for some organizations to manage. When companies are not prepared for these conversations, Gen Z employees lose interest in their jobs and the organization.

"More managers and leaders need to realize that Gen Z will quit if they are not getting what they want," Campbell says. "They are coming into the workforce with a plan, and they want to be promoted within 1 to 2 years. They even put monthly career conversation meetings on their manager's calendars to ensure this is a top priority for the organization."

**"More managers and leaders need to realize that Gen Z will quit if they are not getting what they want."**



Keona Campbell  
Senior Workforce Development  
Consultant at Reimagine Talent

To keep Gen Z interested, organizations and managers must provide active listening, genuine engagement, and channels for them to express their opinions, Campbell says. Establish a space for venting, communication, and development, where Gen Z's voices are genuinely heard.

"Don't overpromise, but listen to Gen Z talent, whether through focus groups or open office hours," she says. "Let them ask you anything. They really want to vent and be heard. It's important to them. If they don't feel heard, they will quit."





## CONTINUED – Understanding the Gen Z Mindset

**New Approach to ‘Work-Life’ Balance**

Another top priority for this generation is living their life outside of their career and job identities. Leonna Luc, workforce development consultant for Reimagine Talent, says Generation Z prioritizes work-life balance and preserving their mental health. This shift is very different from previous generations’ approach to work and can be difficult for older managers and co-workers to understand and accept.

“During the last couple of years, a lot of us had an awakening,” Luc says. “We never know when life is going to be taken away from us. Work is not life. We don’t live to work. People are trying to find that new balance of not having their career and work be their main identity. It will be interesting to see how the workplace, as it relates to engagement and retention for talent, adapts to this idea.”

**“People are trying to find that new balance of not having their career and work be their main identity.”**



Leonna Luc  
Workforce Development Consultant  
at Reimagine Talent

One fact is certain: Organizations must recognize and accommodate these evolving values to retain Gen Z talent. Acknowledging and addressing the desire for flexibility and work-life harmony will be key to creating a thriving and sustainable work environment.



## Financial Challenges of Gen Z

Generation Z faces a unique set of financial challenges and expectations as they enter the workforce. This section offers insights into the economic uncertainties they encounter and provides tips for managers to offer meaningful support.

Cindy Zuniga-Sanchez, author, speaker, lawyer, and founder, Zero-Based Budget Coaching, explains that Gen Z's entry into the workforce is marked by uncertainty.

"Our economy and our world have shifted in a very dramatic way that I haven't seen in my generation," Zuniga-Sanchez explains.

Gen Z faces a tumultuous economy, destabilized after the pandemic, and now exacerbated by rising inflation. Housing costs are a huge issue for Gen Z—who now want to live on their own or with a roommate—but because of high costs, find themselves forced to live with multiple roommates in lower-quality housing.

The challenges continue with student loans. The pandemic-induced pause on student loan repayments has ended and is creating more financial strain as repayments and interest rates resume. Much of Gen Z is now adding significant expenses to their already over-stretched budgets.

"Gen Z is overwhelmed by their student loans," she says. "And employers absolutely need to be sensitive to that."

In addition, the job market was heavily affected by the loss of 1 million lives during the pandemic, creating a shift in the types of jobs deemed important and needed. Gen Z is struggling to fit into job openings they might not be trained to do, while others are still looking for their first entry-level jobs that weren't available when they graduated during the pandemic. Finally, the rise in interest rates has made debt much more expensive. To sum it all up, Zuniga-Sanchez says, there's a lot of uncertainty and worry.

**"Gen Z is overwhelmed by their student loans. And employers absolutely need to be sensitive to that."**



Cindy Zuniga-Sanchez  
Author, Speaker, Lawyer, and Founder,  
Zero-Based Budget Coaching

## CONTINUED – Financial Challenges of Gen Z

**Employer Support: A Crucial Role**

Employers can play a crucial role in alleviating the financial stress faced by Gen Z employees. Proactive measures can begin during onboarding and continue throughout an employee's journey.

Understanding that employees have varying levels of financial literacy is paramount, Zuniga-Sanchez says. Providing comprehensive education on benefits, such as retirement plans, flexible spending accounts, and health care costs, creates a safe place to learn. Employees should feel empowered to ask questions and seek guidance, especially if they lack a financial background.

"Many employers assume all employees are on the same playing field – that they're college educated and have parents who invested for them and set up accounts," Zuniga-Sanchez says. "But that is not the case. When dealing with a diverse workforce, you must be proactive and understand not everyone has a background in financial literacy."

She suggests that managers work with benefits programs and retirement account managers to provide their Gen Z employees with a clear understanding of their financial options. Offering workshops or presentations on budgeting, credit management, and debt repayment creates a supportive environment, too.

Here are more ways for managers and employers to provide meaningful financial education:

**1. Establish Wellness Series and Programming**

Create a series of wellness programs that cover various aspects of employees' lives, including personal finance, mental health, and physical well-being. Offering dedicated sessions to address financial concerns, budgeting, and debt management can equip Gen Z employees with essential skills to navigate their financial journey.

**2. Recognize Cultural Heritage Months**

During cultural heritage months, seek out financial experts from diverse backgrounds so employees can hear and learn from people who are familiar with their backgrounds and circumstances.

**3. Offer Accessible Financial Tools**

Provide Gen Z employees with access to budgeting apps, financial courses, and online calculators to help them make informed financial decisions.

**4. Foster Open Conversations**

Create a safe space where employees can openly discuss their financial concerns and seek guidance without fear of judgment. Managers should initiate conversations about financial well-being during check-ins and performance reviews.

**5. Tailor Programs to Employee Needs**

Take the time to understand the specific financial challenges and goals of Gen Z employees. Tailor wellness programs and resources to address their needs, whether it's managing student loans, building credit, or saving for major life events.



## Providing Career Development and Growth Opportunities

While finances will be a concern for most Gen Z employees, it is far from their only worry. Reimagine Talent polled a group of 100 Gen Z participants at a 2023 workshop about their biggest concerns in preparing for a career. Some had financial worries, but the majority were more inwardly focused on finding the right job, overcoming self-doubt, and having the skills needed to grow in their career.

### Coaching on Essential Skills

Debbie Smith, MHRM, CFLE, CMCS, associate director of corporate engagement at Year Up, remembers early on in her career hearing phrases like, “Your network determines your net worth.” and “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” She says those phrases stuck with her and prompted her to make networking a part of her professional development.

But networking is often cited as a skill many Gen Zers lack and need help with, she says. Managers should actively coach younger workers about essential skills like networking, communicating, managing their emotions, working as a team, and solving problems.

“We stress hard skills and technical skills and those are definitely needed and will get you in the door,” Smith says. “But it’s those essential skills that keep you growing in your career.”

Smith says these skills can even the playing field for the opportunity gap, referring to the fact that certain zip codes or pedigrees have access to opportunities that other people do not. Coaching young people on these skills can open new doors of opportunity.

**“It’s those essential skills that keep you growing in your career.”**



Debbie Smith, MHRM, CFLE, CMCS  
Associate Director of Corporate  
Engagement at Year Up

## PERSPECTIVES

### Gen Z’s Top Concerns about Preparing for a Career

Reimagine Talent supports workforce development program operators with early career development, including curriculum design and programmatic facilitation. Just this year, we’ve supported over 500 Gen Z students and professionals, gleaned important perspectives for today’s employers to keep top of mind.

#### How Do I Find the Right Job?

- Will I be passionate in a corporate job?
- Will I have advocates who get me?
- How do I find good leadership and great co-workers?

#### Overcoming Self-Doubt

- Am I living up to my full potential?
- Do I know enough to do the work?
- Will I be good enough?
- Will I be respected?

#### Having the Right Skills

- Does my resume reflect who I am?
- Do companies understand what I can offer?
- Will I be stuck with a career I hate?
- How do I figure out what I’m good at?

## CONTINUED – Providing Career Development and Growth Opportunities

**Boosting Gen Z's Confidence**

Give Gen Z a voice at your company to help build their confidence. Adanta Ahanonu, chief program officer at COOP Careers, suggests that Gen Z's innate understanding of digital platforms makes them powerful brand ambassadors. Granting them creative freedom and entrusting them with social media strategies will improve your organization's brand presence, and boost their skills.

"Trust their creativity, innovation, and their understanding of how to embrace the broader community, whether internally or externally," Ahanonu says. "They're on it. And they're excited for opportunities to be creative and innovative. So let them provide that for your organization."

**"Trust Gen Z's creativity, innovation, and their understanding of how to embrace the broader community."**



Adanta Ahanonu  
Chief Program Officer at COOP Careers

**INSIGHTS****Insights from a Debutante Program**

Tiara Moore, MSA  
Program Director of Distinctively Debutantes, The Potter's House of Dallas

Tiara Moore, MSA, program director of Distinctively Debutantes at The Potter's House of Dallas, works closely with Gen Z young women. She believes there is an opportunity to help this generation learn business professionalism but also vital soft skills, like stress management and communication. By addressing these needs early on, organizations can help Gen Z's smooth transition into the workforce while equipping them to navigate the pressures of professional life.

"At the beginning of each program year, we have a mandatory interview process for all new incoming debutantes," Moore says. "During the interview, I always ask the same question: 'What do you believe is your biggest struggle?' Unfortunately, over 80% of our debutantes said that they struggled with their mental health and being open to talking about it."

She suggests that managers of Gen Z employees focus on helping them develop these skills:

- Stress management
- Emotional intelligence
- Time management
- Financial literacy
- Communication
- Self-care

## Crafting a Generation Z-Centric Work Experience

To create a Generation Z-centric work experience, you'll need to focus on communication and leadership strategies that answer the needs and expectations of this generation and those that came before them.

Creating spaces for open dialogue is crucial, but the follow-up is equally vital, says Reimagine Talent's Roseboro. Addressing Gen Z's feedback and outlining actionable steps will show you're listening and committed to making positive changes. Establishing a communication plan that closes the loop on feedback is key to maintaining a culture of improvement and engagement.

"Folks do a great job of creating spaces for Gen Z to be heard or to listen to their feedback," Roseboro says, "but it's the follow-up that's lacking. Now that you have this information, what are you doing with it? They want to know."

### Connecting Wisdom with Ambition

Generation Z values mentorship that aligns with their aspirations and daily challenges. They seek mentors who understand their career paths and can also guide them through life's complexities. In a world of quick interactions, Gen Z prefers mentors who offer practical advice through virtual channels, respecting their fast-paced lives.

Kaylee Ranck, Ph.D., research director at the Center for Women, The American College of Financial Services, offers insights into the vital role of mentorship, advocacy, and multi-generational collaboration.

"For this generation coming in, the opportunity for mentorship is huge," Ranck says. "It's an opportunity for advocacy, to champion the growth of individuals, and it gives a structure and purpose for people who have tenure with younger individuals coming in. And while that's existed for a really long time, it's become more important, especially as we have a more diverse workforce."

Mentoring benefits not only Gen Z but also older colleagues. Sharing experiences across generations brings fresh perspectives and keeps everyone updated on emerging trends. As older mentors guide Gen Z, they gain insights into new technologies and evolving work dynamics, fostering a culture of continuous learning. This benefits the entire organization.

**"For this generation coming in, the opportunity for mentorship is huge."**



Kaylee Ranck, Ph.D.  
Research Director, Center for Women,  
The American College of Financial Services

Co-mentorship, a rising trend, highlights the synergy between generations. Both sides contribute strengths: Gen Z offers insights into digital trends, while older mentors provide experience and industry wisdom. This dynamic exchange creates mutual learning and collaboration.

In short, effective mentorship programs for Generation Z unite ambition and experience. They foster growth, understanding, and innovation, creating an environment where mentors and mentees thrive together.



## CONTINUED – Crafting a Generation Z-Centric Work Experience

**Tips for Millennials Who Manage Gen Z**

Millennials and Gen Zers have a lot in common, says Dr. Ciera Graham-Graves, education practitioner and career coach. To gain trust from Gen Z, managers need to have transparent communication, show work-life balance, and promote a growth-oriented work culture.

“Millennials and Gen Zers desire workplaces that have open communication. It’s important to foster a policy where employees can freely engage with you without fear or intimidation,” Graham shares. “Reinforce open communication by having open door policies or ways in which employees can leave feedback about the company or your performance as a manager.”

**“Millennials and Gen Zers desire workplaces that have open communication.”**

Dr. Ciera Graham-Graves  
Education Practitioner  
and Career Coach

In addition, Millennials and Gen Zers both dislike hierarchical cultures so provide opportunities for direct reports to inform company decisions, she says. Similarly, Millennial managers should model good work-life balance, such as not sending emails after 5 p.m., being flexible with start and end times, and stressing that it’s less about the number of hours you work and more about the work getting done.

Graham suggests that managers implement a “no meeting day” to ensure employees have flexibility and autonomy to structure the workday as they please.

Another commonality? Millennials and Gen Z are both focused on growth and advancement, especially in an economy with high inflation. “We must constantly search for ways to maximize our income,” Graham says. “When hiring Gen Zers, be sure to talk about how the company conceptualizes and promotes growth within the organization, and

what the skills and experiences needed to advance in the company. This transparency at the time of hire will be very enticing to Gen Zers who want to work in a company where there is constant upward mobility.”

Finally, Graham says it’s most important for Millennials and Gen Zers to unite around how they experience their lives. They have shared economic experience—both saddled with student loan debt, struggling to accumulate wealth and financial security, and trying to manage life with rapid inflation. “In many ways, we’re more allies, than opponents,” she says.

**ACTION PLAN****Creating a Gen Z-Centric Workplace**

- Honor the importance of inclusivity.
- Promote inclusive communication and behavior.
- Elevate diverse voices and recognize the power of diverse perspectives.
- Support career growth and financial stability.
- Create mentoring and networking opportunities.
- Tailor benefits and incentives to align with their expectations.
- Embrace flexibility and customization.
- Cultivate a collaborative work environment.
- Encourage open and transparent communication.
- Facilitate meaningful career development.

## Navigating Accessibility and Inclusivity for All Workers

Generation Z's commitment to inclusivity provides a huge opportunity for organizations to address the needs of all employees, including disabled workers. Catarina Rivera, MEd, MPH, CPACC, a disability public speaker and DEIB consultant at Blindish Latina, shares insights about expanding DEIB policies, remote work opportunities, and suggestions for managers of disabled employees.

First, Rivera emphasizes the importance of recognizing disability as a fundamental facet of DEIB. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 20% of people with disabilities are employed (Reilly), and fewer than 5% of U.S. employees voluntarily reported that they have a disability (Dhue & Epperson).

Rivera maintains that focusing on building a universally inclusive environment is far more impactful than trying to increase disclosure rates. According to the CDC, "27 percent of U.S. adults have some type of disability." The first step is to acknowledge the prevalence of disabilities—ranging from physical, mental, and neurodivergent—in today's workforce. Recognizing these disabilities can improve inclusion across your processes, programs, and environments.

Moreover, Rivera advises managers to engage in open dialogue and address microaggressions affecting Gen Z and all workers. Listening and learning about their needs and challenges will improve your understanding and their work experience. Champion a learning-centered approach, so your organization builds a culture where disabled employees feel valued, respected, and understood.

Rivera also highlights the positive impact of remote and hybrid work environments on disabled employees. This flexibility is critical for enabling disabled individuals to contribute their talents without the constraints of traditional office spaces. As proof, she points out the disability employment rate increased during the pandemic due to the availability of remote work.

### REAL TALK

#### The Real Truth about Disabilities

Rivera shares a few essential truths about employees with disabilities that every manager should know:

##### 1. Unique Talents and Insights

Disabled individuals possess unique insights and talents that enrich teams and organizations.

##### 2. Reframing Disability

Disabled individuals don't necessarily view their disabilities as inherently negative. Managers should be mindful of their language and adopt an approach aligned with Disability Pride.

##### 3. Navigating Inaccessibility

Disabled employees work diligently to adapt to inaccessibility on top of their job responsibilities. Managers can support these individuals by alleviating this burden and fostering an environment of inclusivity.

Only **20%** of people with disabilities are employed  
Reilly

**27%** of U.S. adults have some type of disability  
CDC

## CONTINUED – Navigating Accessibility and Inclusivity for All Workers

**Creating Accessible and Inclusive Spaces**

Rivera defines accessibility as ensuring equitable participation and shared information. Practical accessibility practices include providing screen reader and keyboard navigation compatibility for websites, providing closed captions and ASL interpreters, using readable fonts, and employing open communication without assumptions.

“Many managers don’t know what to say when someone discloses a disability to them,” she says. “They don’t know what the reasonable accommodations process is or how to support it. And many employees are using offensive language without realizing it. These are foundational places to start.”

In closing, Rivera urges managers to embrace Disability Pride and amplify the voices of multiply marginalized disabled individuals. By elevating these voices and engaging in open dialogue, organizations can create an inclusive environment that empowers every member of the workforce.

**“Many managers don’t know what to say when someone discloses a disability to them.”**



Catarina Rivera MEd, MPH, CPACC  
Disability Public Speaker and DEIA Consultant,  
Blindish Latina





## Conclusion

As Generation Z takes center stage in the workforce, organizations must proactively attract, engage, and retain this emerging cohort. Reimagine Talent stands as a guide for managers and organizations to navigate this journey and create a supportive, inclusive environment for all.

Williams says recruiting Gen Z requires a holistic approach, aligning individual roles with the organizational mission. Sharing the “why” behind their tasks fosters a sense of purpose for younger workers looking for meaning.

“Sometimes sharing your ‘why’ is as simple as explaining ‘here’s where our business is, here’s what we need to do, and here’s how you can help,’ ” she says. “Take time to connect them to your goals and your organization’s overall mission and purpose.”

As this generation ushers in a workplace revolution, Williams says forward-thinking companies will recognize the importance of harnessing Gen Z’s energy and innovation for future growth. Their digital intelligence, hunger for purpose, and demand for transparency can only improve and reshape the workplace and enable businesses to grow and succeed in the decades to come.

“Inclusivity, mentorship, and continuous learning are not buzzwords; they are the pillars on which successful organizations are built,” she says. “By embodying these values, you can create a culture where Gen Z feels valued, heard, and empowered to make meaningful contributions.”



Jessica Leigh Dow, MA, EdS  
Strategist and Career Coach  
at General Assembly

### TRENDS WATCH

Looking at 2024, organizations must be mindful of trends that will reshape the work landscape. Jessica Leigh Dow, MA, EdS, career strategist, career coach at General Assembly, shares her lists of current and emerging workplace trends for managers to watch and prepare for:

#### Current Trends

- **Remote and Flexible Work**  
Gen Z appreciates work-life balance and values flexibility. Continue to offer remote work arrangements.
- **Focus on Mental Health and Well-Being**  
Become more conscious of employee mental health. This benefits Gen Z’s desire for holistic well-being and a healthy work environment.
- **Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives**  
Make efforts to foster diverse and inclusive workplaces. This resonates with Gen Z’s values and desire for equitable opportunities.

#### Emerging Trends

- **Automation and Job Disruption**  
The rise of automation and artificial intelligence (AI) may disrupt certain job markets. Help Gen Z stay ahead with skills training that complements automation.
- **Increased Gig Economy**  
The gig economy is growing, offering flexibility, but also poses challenges in terms of stability and benefits. Prepare to help Gen Z navigate it.
- **Continuous Learning and Upskilling**  
To stay competitive, Gen Z needs to embrace lifelong learning. Proactively offer opportunities to upskill and re-skill throughout their careers.
- **Workplace Burnout**  
With a growing emphasis on productivity and performance, Gen Z should be aware of the potential for burnout. Help them set boundaries and manage stress.



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## About Reimagine Talent Co.

A WBEC and NMSDC certified  
workforce and talent development firm

Reimagine Talent is an award-winning national workforce and talent development firm on a mission to educate the next generation workforce and empower organizations to build workplaces of belonging. We deliver career and talent development solutions to organizations seeking to support today's multi-generational employee-base.

People leaders trust us to address the biggest workforce and workplace challenges impacting the generations. Our pioneering solutions help organizations mitigate disparities, while identifying impactful opportunities to support the future workforce and evolving workplace.

If you found value in our white paper, Reimagine Talent can provide support to your organization in several ways:

1. We are trusted partners to workforce program operators in designing and administering career and work-based learning solutions for students and emerging professionals. From education institutions to national non-profits, we are the go-to programmatic incubator for modernized career development that empowers underrepresented talent segments. Our signature workforce solutions include:
  - Student Career Exploration & Development
  - Early Career Program Design
  - Early Career Coaching & Development

2. We are trusted partners for talent engagement & transformation to meet workplace demands with intention, agility, and accountability. HR and diversity leaders trust us to design and facilitate workplace learning and development that empowers people managers and leaders. Our talent development solutions are rooted in DEIB as both a marketplace driver and employee retention tool. Our signature talent development solutions include:

- Manager Learning & Coaching
- High Potential Development
- DEI Leader Development & Community Programming

Additionally, to book Chelsea C. Williams, founder & CEO, for an upcoming event, contact SHRM Speakers Bureau: <https://speakers.shrm.org/speaker/chelsea-c-williams/>.

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