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TALENT CO.



Coaching for Career:

**Infusing Future-Proof Skills
into the Gen Z Workforce**

April 2024



We're witnessing a remarkable time when the very concept of jobs is evolving. It's exciting and a little overwhelming to realize that today's careers will look very different in just five or ten years and that tomorrow's top professions likely don't exist today.

No one feels this more than emerging Gen Z professionals and students, who have great ambition and potential but feel ill-prepared to navigate the uncharted territories of future careers.

We cannot ignore what early career professionals tell us: They don't have the necessary skills to thrive in the changing workplace.

In candid conversations with Gen Z students and professionals, the Reimagine Talent team is hearing frustrations and worries about facing the uncertainties ahead. They already recognize a disconnect between the skills they're learning and what skills they're being told they will need for the future.

I want to address a question for all of us, as educators, employers, program

operators, mentors, and leaders: **Who bears the responsibility of coaching the next generation workforce for jobs that may not exist today?**

The traditional path of education, once the foundation of career preparedness, is now perceived to be falling short. I'm not critiquing educational institutions but recognizing that the monumental task of preparing the next generation cannot rest solely on one set of shoulders.

Our whitepaper collects experiences, insights, and ideas from Gen Z professionals and their educators, mentors, managers, leaders, and parents. We wanted to understand the challenges and provide actionable steps to share responsibility for shaping the future workforce. In these pages, we explore real-life strategies for coaching Gen Z professionals and acknowledge the evolving nature of workplaces and the undeniable truth that organizations must address diversity in socioeconomic status, race, gender, ability, and more for greater impact.

Together, we can prepare the next generation with future-proof skills and ensure they step into the workforce with confidence, competence, and a profound sense of purpose!

Chelsea C. Williams

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

Elevating Gen Z Voices: Spotlight on Four Emerging Leaders

Born between 1996 and the early 2010s, Gen Z is known as the digital natives, the first generation of humanity born within the digital age. While the oldest members have been in the workforce for nearly a decade, the very youngest are surviving the awkwardness of middle school.

Thousands of articles have defined Gen Z as highly diverse, realistic, independent, prone to anxiety, heavy social media users, travel enthusiasts, online gamers, socially conscious, early technology adopters, etc.

We read the research, thought about our experiences with this generation, and decided that any paper providing insights about the skills needed for future jobs had to begin with Gen Z voices.

The Reimagine Talent team works with thousands of students and early career professionals each year. We interviewed four of them—one first-year college student, two career professionals, and one entrepreneur—to capture their thoughts and insights for this conversation.

Theron says technology has not made her generation lazy; instead, it's allowing them to do bigger things than previous generations could. Kelsey wants to break the myth that Gen Z is not loyal; she's celebrating her fifth anniversary at her first employer. Ariel defines Gen Z entrepreneurialism; she started a financial empowerment and creative agency for the unseen and underrepresented. Julia continually seeks connections and new credentials for her resume, already experiencing the technological expectations placed on her generation.

When you get to know these remarkable young women, you'll understand Gen Z's challenges, fears, goals, pet peeves, and expectations for your organization.

Mastering New Technologies

As a first-year college student majoring in Journalism at the University of Iowa, Theron Luett said she wasn't prepared for the transition to higher education. "In high school, there was always time to turn in assignments late or to retake

tests you didn't do well on," she said. "It taught us that we never had to worry about it. But then you get to college, and it's a punch in the face. There are no second chances. It would have been a smoother transition if high school had instilled more consequences and expectations."

Time management, work ethic, and organization are other skills Luett needed. She struggled with social dynamics, particularly the stigma surrounding loneliness. "It's an unspoken rule that you don't talk about how lonely you are," she said.

Despite these challenges, she's enjoying college life and gaining experience and knowledge about her future profession, journalism, particularly with integrating new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI). She acknowledged the role of AI as a tool to enhance journalistic practices rather than a threat to job security. She shares her professor's perspective: "AI is a tool we must adapt to and work with to produce better news for our audiences," she said.

She believes Gen Z's adeptness with technology gives them a competitive advantage over previous generations, positioning them as leaders in embracing innovative tools for career advancement.

Luett wants to bust the Gen Z myth that technology makes her generation lazy. While she understands why other generations say that, she said what looks like shortcuts and lazy paths to get work done are an entirely new skill set that her generation has mastered and is continuing to master. "We're not lazy just because we use new technology to do things," she said. "We're just taking a different path to get things done and often to do things better."

"We're just taking a different path to get things done and often to do things better."



Theron Luett
First-Year Student
at University of Iowa

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Forging Connections and Creating Impact

Kelsey Gonsalves graduated from Seton Hall University with a major in Communications. She deliberately chose a field with many opportunities to avoid being trapped in one career. “What scares me the most is getting stuck. I don’t want to pigeonhole myself into something specific for the rest of my life. That scares me so much,” she said.

“I don’t want to pigeonhole myself into something specific for the rest of my life.”



Kelsey Gonsalves
Program Manager
Luminary

Currently serving as Program Manager at Luminary, a prominent gender-inclusive professional education and networking program headquartered in New York City, Gonsalves entered the organization as a part-time employee right after graduation. Her decision stemmed from a deep appreciation for Luminary’s mission and a determination to contribute in any way possible. “I started as a part-time receptionist because I knew I wanted to work for them and was willing to do anything,” she explained. “I love their mission and knew Luminary would help me build an incredible network.”

One of her proudest achievements was the successful planning and execution of a community networking event, “Radiant Connections: A Luminary x Glowbar Galentine’s Soiree” in February 2024. The event showcased local businesses and raised funds for the YAI Arts initiative while providing the community with complimentary facials, cupcakes, and drinks. Recalling the experience, Gonsalves said, “The best part was I got to do it all—from coming up with the idea to executing it.”

Looking ahead, Gonsalves plans to further her education by pursuing a master’s degree. “I want to keep going up the ladder and make sure there’s room for others like me to follow along.” She

wants to debunk the stereotype surrounding Gen Z’s supposed lack of job loyalty. Reflecting on her five years with her first employer, she advised, “You can’t ask for loyalty and not give loyalty. I trust Luminary, and Luminary trusts me. That’s how loyalty is created.”

Empowering Others

At just 25 years old, Ariel Laura Metayer is the Founder of The Luminous Lab, a groundbreaking financial empowerment and creative agency. She’s also a St. John’s University graduate and a former Fulbright Fellow with the U.S. Department of State.

Reflecting on her journey so far, Metayer said she did not take the path she’d always planned for. “All my life, I wanted to be an orthopedic surgeon,” she said. However, she failed a course two semesters into a Biomed major and was seriously unhappy. A pivotal moment came when she won a series of prestigious pitch competitions. “It awakened something in me,” she said. “I was good at public speaking, but I’d always been so fixated on becoming a doctor that I didn’t recognize my gift.”

Switching her major to Government and Politics with minors in African Studies and French, she pursued her passion for empowering others. Her Fulbright Fellowship enabled her to teach impoverished African girls English, fostering their entrepreneurial spirit.

Following her fellowship and a harrowing near-death experience with malaria, Metayer returned to the U.S. and worked for luxury fashion brand Chanel. “It was such an incredible experience to work with people who looked like me,” she said. “It was such a diverse place.” Despite the excitement of the fashion industry, she felt a calling to elevate her part-time social impact work into a full-time venture. Soon, things started to fall into place for Metayer. She was offered a brand partnership with Microsoft. Next, the first minority-owned and minority-lead private real estate funding group offered her mentorship and free office space in Brooklyn. In the spring of 2024, she was invited to the biggest tech conference in the world, Viva Tech, in Paris.

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“It was such an incredible experience to work with people who looked like me.”



Ariel Laura Metayer
Founder
The Luminous Lab

Today, The Luminous Lab is a beacon of hope, financially empowering the unseen and underrepresented. Metayer shared this advice with her peers: “My encouragement for other young people is to be ambitious and audacious about what you’ve been called to do.” Through her work, she hopes to honor her mother’s financial investment in her education and inspire others to make a meaningful impact.

Living Up to Expectations

Julia Moreno graduated from the University of Florida in 2020 amidst the disruptions of COVID-19 and met an uncertain job market. She was concerned her education had not given her all the skills needed to compete. “I felt like there was going to be some point in my future where someone was going to ask me to code something,” she joked, highlighting the tech skill expectations from older generations.

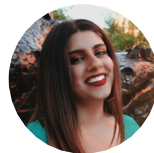
Driven by that need to upskill her digital prowess, Moreno identified a cultural expectation unique to Gen Z. “It’s a new expectation for our generation to know everything about new technologies and how to use them,” she said. “My older brother is a Millennial, and people don’t have that expectation for him.”

Finding her first job was difficult, but she received an offer from Jennifer Brown Consulting and was hired as a part-time virtual event producer. Moreno quickly immersed herself in the company’s mission, and within three months, she was promoted to a full-time position, Client Services Manager.

Although she had the needed skills, she thought she lacked credibility for further promotions. So, in 2022, Moreno pursued further credentials through Harvard Business School Online to boost her credibility. Today, as Senior Director of Operations, she appreciates the purpose-driven work and flexibility her fully remote role offers.

Moreno debunked the stereotype of Gen Z job-hopping, emphasizing her generation’s loyalty to organizations that foster trust and appreciation. “When we value the connections and people at your company, you’re going to have us for a very long time,” she said.

“When we value the connections and people at your company, you’re going to have us for a very long time.”



Julia Moreno
Senior Director of Operations
Jennifer Brown Consulting

The Current Situation: Gen Z Is at a Crossroads



With insights from Gen Z at the forefront of this conversation, we now want to explore the broader issues shaping the experiences of today's students and early career professionals.

In the current environment, we're witnessing a shift in educational goals, with a decline in traditional four-year degrees and a surge in vocational education opportunities. This trend, coupled with skyrocketing student loan debt, underemployment, entrepreneurship, and a sharp focus on mental health needs, further emphasizes why organizations must address the needs of Gen Z in the workforce.

Decline in 4-Year Enrollment

Once filled with ambitious high school graduates, some formal colleges and universities are witnessing declining admission numbers. After peaking in 2010, undergraduate enrollment dropped from roughly 18.1 million students that year to about 15.4 million in 2021 (O'Connell-Domemeh). It is becoming harder for people to justify spending the time and money on four-year degrees that may not give them the skills they need to compete and thrive in the workforce.

Rise of Vocational Education

Simultaneously, there is a rise in students opting for trade schools over traditional universities. The appeal of hands-on, practical skills is reshaping the educational landscape. Enrollment at community college rose 2.6% in 2023, outpacing small increases at public and private four-year schools (Cachero). Specialized vocational training, often

taught in cooperation with future employers, challenges the traditional notion that a four-year degree is the only path to success.

Skyrocketing Student Loan Debt

As younger generations begin their careers, they often carry substantial educational debts. Aligning education with tangible, future-ready skills becomes imperative for a generation seeking financial stability. In 2024, student loan borrowers in the U.S. owe a collective \$1.74 trillion in federal and private student loan debt (Haverstock and Helhoski).

Looming Shadow of Underemployment

With degrees in hand, Gen Z faces the stark reality of being overqualified for entry-level positions yet lacking the experience for higher roles. The traditional avenues seem mismatched with their career goals, creating the need for adaptable, cross-disciplinary skills that can help them avoid the underemployment challenge. In a recent McKinsey & Co report, Gen Z workers are likely to have multiple jobs and do independent, freelance, or gig work. Still, the majority (56%) said they would prefer to work as a permanent or noncontract employee. Gen Z is less financially secure: 45% are concerned about the stability of their employment and are less likely to be able to cover their living expense for more than two months if faced with job loss.

Focus on Mental Health and Well-being

Mental health and well-being have taken center stage. Early career professionals are seeking environments that prioritize their well-being and personal development. The conversation surrounding mental health in the workforce is gaining fast momentum, with more than half (57%) of all American workers stating they were experiencing at least moderate levels of burnout in 2023 (Aflac).

Increase of the Entrepreneurial Spirit

Corporate stability is losing its luster as Gen Zers increasingly choose entrepreneurial pursuits over salaried roles. The gig economy is booming with

CONTINUED – Lower College Enrollment, Gig Economy, and Unengaged Workers: The Current Situation

young minds eager to be influencers, creators, and captains of their destinies. An astounding 50% of Gen Z want to become entrepreneurs or start a business (Samsung). It will soon challenge corporate America to woo them from their entrepreneurial paths to the entry-level jobs that need to be filled.

Resignations and Disengaged Workers

Managers of early career professionals often worry about what they perceive to be unengaged and dissatisfied workers who resign quickly from traditional corporate roles at an alarming rate. In a Gallup at Work poll, 54% of Gen Z workers were disengaged, and 68% reported feeling stressed

often (Pendell and Vander Helm). Burnout is forcing many organizations to understand why emerging talent is quitting and what they need from employers.

Gen Z is at a crossroads. It is time to redefine how we approach career preparation and development. In the following section, we'll hear from Kelly Harper Lee, the Director of Community Impact at the WNBA's Atlanta Dream. Her experience shows resilience, creativity, and a deep commitment to empowering the next generation. Through her work, you'll see strategies and insights that resonate with Gen Z professionals' goals, offering a hopeful look at the future.

CHALLENGES

Addressing Two Barriers: Student Connectivity and Relatability

Patrick Phillips, Chief Executive Officer, R.I.S.E. Opportunity Foundation in Chicago, offered a candid view of the hurdles he and his leadership staff have encountered when bridging the gap between their Generation X-style leadership and the Gen Z students they serve. With a mission to educate and expose underrepresented students to financial literacy and careers in business and insurance, Phillips shed light on two significant barriers when coaching Gen Z students: connectivity and relatability.

"While the leadership of R.I.S.E. looks like, and comes from similar socio-economic backgrounds as our students, the inherent generational gap between us can pose some immediate challenges, starting with technology, culture, and communication," Phillips said.

For R.I.S.E. and other Gen X and Baby Boomer leaders and managers, partnering with an organization like Reimagine Talent Co. helps them think through effective, innovative

strategies and activities to accomplish their mission while engaging and positively impacting their Gen Z student audience.

Reimagine Talent provides R.I.S.E. with human capital and other resources to ensure that R.I.S.E. activities and interactions boost student self-esteem, foster positive and meaningful mentor/mentee relationships, and empower scholars with the confidence and ability to think critically about their career choices.

"Trust is the key to long-term success for all of us involved in these diverse workforce development initiatives, including students, parents, mentors, teachers, and external allies," Phillips said. "Reimagine Talent is the important link in this ecosystem that provides us with the tools and resources to best uplift and empower our young, underrepresented talent."



Patrick Phillips
Chief Executive Officer
R.I.S.E. Opportunity Foundation

Embracing Gen Z's Socially Conscious Nature



As a former public school teacher turned McKinsey & Company researcher and now Director of Community Impact at the WNBA-Atlanta Dream, Kelly Harper Lee has been involved with Gen Z throughout their formative years and early careers. This transition from teaching them as elementary students to overseeing them as emerging professionals has given her valuable insights into their unique characteristics and needs.

Reflecting on her experiences, Harper Lee emphasized that Gen Z are true digital natives, having grown up using technology as their default setting from an early age. She stresses the importance of being intentional about understanding their worldview, shaped significantly by their upbringing in a digital environment.

"In my experience, Gen Z cares deeply about having personal relationships with their leadership," Harper Lee said. "They are more open and transparent about their challenges, whether it's a bad day, a mental health issue, or feelings of frustration. And they're not afraid to speak their minds and advocate for what they believe in."

Furthermore, Harper Lee observed that Gen Z's passion extends far beyond organizational interests; they genuinely care about the values and practices of the companies they associate with. As someone deeply entrenched in the intersection of sports and community impact, Harper Lee actively collaborates with Gen Z on various initiatives aimed at social change.

An inspiring example of this collaboration is Harper Lee's involvement in an annual program that educates and empowers 50 young women in partnership with The King Center. Sharing an impactful essay she read from one of the participants, Harper Lee shared, "'Gen Z isn't the future. Gen Z is now.' This sentiment resonated deeply because it emphasizes the urgency of incorporating this generation's perspectives and talents into our initiatives."

While acknowledging Gen Z's enthusiasm and passion, Harper Lee underscored the need for mentorship in developing their soft skills, such as building trust, receiving and implementing feedback, and understanding the importance of dependability in the workplace.

Harper Lee offers practical advice for engaging with Gen Z, including meeting them on platforms like TikTok. She encourages managers to actively participate in these spaces, seek out relevant content, and learn from Gen Z's preferred modes of communication.

"By immersing yourself in platforms like TikTok, you can gain valuable insights into Gen Z's interests and preferences," she said. "This fosters a deeper understanding of your team and demonstrates your commitment to meeting them where they are and supporting them in their professional development."

"By immersing yourself in platforms like TikTok, you can gain valuable Gen Z insights."



Kelly Harper Lee
Director of Community Impact
WNBA-Atlanta Dream

RECRUITING

Competing Priorities for Students’ Attention

Tori Phillips, Program Director, The American College Center for Economic Empowerment and Equality, said today’s students juggle many responsibilities, including extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, family commitments, and coursework. “We face the initial hurdle of recruiting and convincing students to prioritize our program,” she said. “Once enrolled, we encounter the next challenge of equipping them with skills for the rapidly evolving workforce.”

Phillips desired a partner to help their students feel empowered, confident, and well-informed about how to market themselves professionally to secure the perfect opportunity – whether it’s an internship or first job. “My greatest desire was for the students to realize they have a place in the financial services industry and beyond,” she said.

Reimagine Talent presented a compelling curriculum, demonstrating why major institutions trust the team to provide talent and workforce solutions. “As a new client

of Reimagine Talent, I’m impressed by their exceptional level of service, warmth, and collaborative approach,” she said. “This partnership will allow our Center to enhance the learning experience of our next-gen students, and I’m thrilled by the positive impact this collaboration will have on our program.”

Phillips said techniques and strategies that worked five years ago are not as relevant today, and the workforce is changing culturally and technologically. To thrive, students must understand the dynamics of both elements. Organizations and professionals with years of experience must also upskill and grow to keep up with the pace of change. “We are all in this together, learning and growing in this new workforce,” she said.



Tori Phillips
Program Director
The American College Center for
Economic Empowerment and Equality

Strategies for Engaging and Developing Gen Z

As we discuss coaching strategies for Gen Z, it is vital to understand their unique characteristics and tailor your engagement to resonate with their values and experiences.

Based on insights from industry experts and firsthand experiences shared by Gen Z students and early career professionals, we've created a list of strategies to nurture Gen Z's professional development and support your organization's future growth. We organize these strategies into five core themes to help showcase the vital lenses necessary to intentionally support Gen Z today:

INCORPORATE A SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) LENS

Socio-emotional learning helps Gen Z professionals learn and apply social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviors, and values that set them up for success in the workplace. These skills help initiate and form relationships and understand how to respond to others.



Monete Johnson
Senior Program Manager
Summer Teaching Fellows Program,
Uncommon Schools

1 Addressing Stress Management and Critical Thinking

Monete Johnson, Senior Program Manager at the Summer Teaching Fellows Program, Uncommon Schools, observed Gen Z's challenges in navigating fast-paced work environments. To equip them for success, it's essential to cultivate stress management techniques that help activate their critical thinking skills, especially within interpersonal relationships. Johnson emphasized the need to build trust and foster open dialogue. "Lack of trust is a deterrent to Gen Z joining and persisting at an organization. They see red flags and shut down," Johnson said. "They're thinking, 'Nope, this is not for me. I don't feel safe here and don't know how to process this.' And they leave."

2 Embracing a Community Mindset

Understanding Gen Z's inherent inclination toward community is crucial for effective management. Johnson of Uncommon Schools said that organizations can cultivate a sense of belonging and purpose among Gen Z individuals by giving them skills and tools to build communities so they feel empowered to ask for support and take action. "In our training program, we focus on leadership development because they want to make a huge impact NOW," she said.



Leonna Luc
Workforce Consultant
Reimagine Talent

3 Fostering Meaningful Conversations

Leonna Luc, a Workforce Consultant at Reimagine Talent, emphasized the importance of having meaningful discussions with Gen Z. Adopting a curious mindset and actively listening to their perspectives fosters engagement and collaboration, helping them to feel valued and contribute meaningfully. Luc advocated for a culture of openness, where questions like "Can you tell me more?" invite genuine participation.

4 Imparting Soft Skills

Harper Lee of the WNBA-Atlanta Dream underscored the importance of soft skills development, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact and the switch to remote work and school environments. Providing opportunities for Gen Z to hone interpersonal communication and problem-solving skills in a supportive setting is essential for their professional growth. Harper Lee said, "Allow early career professionals to practice these skills in a safe place, without fear of repercussions if they make mistakes during meetings."



Jessica Leigh Dow
Senior Career Coach and ERG Lead
General Assembly



Keith Roseboro
Workforce Consultant
Reimagine Talent

5 Cultivating Communities of Change

Jessica Leigh Dow, Senior Career Coach and ERG Lead at General Assembly, praised initiatives like Ashoka's Change-Making Institutions and Devpost.com, which empower young people to address societal issues collaboratively. Dow emphasized the importance of breaking down disciplinary silos to foster innovation and inclusivity. "These programs provide life-altering experiences for Gen Z, shaping their belief in their potential."



Anthony Tuttle
Social Impact Program Manager
Palo Alto Networks

6 Providing Critical Thinking Skills

Anthony Tuttle, Social Impact Program Manager at Palo Alto Networks, stressed the significance of equipping Gen Z with critical thinking skills to navigate complex systems and discern information effectively. Tuttle advocated for a holistic understanding of interconnected dynamics to drive informed decision-making. "A big part of my job is demystifying the career paths into technology and cybersecurity and helping to diversify the cyber and tech workforce," he said. "It's important to help young people understand capitalism and the profit motive behind everything. They need to understand basic business models to help bring about changes."

7 Coaching for Stress Management and Organization Skills

Keith Roseboro, a Workforce Consultant with Reimagine Talent, highlighted the importance of coaching Gen Z in stress management and organization. Encouraging work-life balance and implementing time management techniques are crucial for promoting well-being and productivity. He urged managers to help Gen Z set boundaries between work and personal life, such as unplugging from devices during off-hours, to prevent burnout and promote overall well-being. For organization skills, Roseboro suggested implementing time management tools and apps like the Pomodoro Technique to help them prioritize tasks, manage deadlines, and stay organized. "Advise them to set a timer for 25 minutes and focus on a single task until the timer rings," he said.

8 Breaking Down Big Projects

Roseboro of Reimagine Talent also recommended introducing Gen Z professionals to visual planning tools like Kanban boards and Gantt charts to facilitate project management. Setting milestones and celebrating small wins are essential for maintaining motivation and momentum. "Breaking down projects into manageable tasks empowers Gen Z to navigate complex endeavors confidently," he said.

ADDRESS PROFESSIONAL NORMS AND CONDUCT

These skills encompass the unwritten rules and expectations of today's global workplace, including office decorum and etiquette, communication guardrails, leadership, and personal empowerment within the professional environment.

9 Guiding Through Office Protocols

Navigating office protocols and hierarchical structures can be daunting for Gen Z individuals entering the professional realm. Harper Lee of the Atlanta Dream believes in the importance of empowering early career professionals to understand and navigate unspoken business rules. She implemented role-reversal exercises where senior leaders deliberately step back during meetings, allowing junior colleagues to take the lead. Harper Lee emphasized, "Empowering Gen Z to feel heard, supported, and capable of contributing creates a work environment where they can thrive and grow."

10 Empowering the Next Wave of Leaders

Atlanta Dream's Harper Lee also focuses on nurturing the leadership potential of Gen Z colleagues. She advocates for providing them with opportunities to assume ownership and leadership roles within the organization. Organizations can instill confidence and leadership skills in emerging talent by allowing them to lead meetings, engage with senior professionals, and shape meaningful agendas. Harper Lee said, "It's about teaching them how to show up and demonstrate that they're leaders."

11 Mentoring and Supporting

Dow of General Assembly emphasized the importance of accessible and supportive mentorship programs for emerging professionals. She highlighted platforms like ADPlist.org, which pairs mentors with talent worldwide, breaking down barriers and fostering growth opportunities. She suggested, "We must make mentorship easily

accessible and digestible. It's time to break down barriers for those with limited resources or professional networks."

12 Teaching Basic Economics

Tuttle of Palo Alto Networks stressed the significance of equipping early career professionals with a foundational understanding of basic economic principles. He believes that educating Gen Z about the role of technology in societal progress is essential for preparing them for the workforce. Tuttle said, "Our goal is to prepare young people to contribute meaningfully to a tech-driven future while ensuring their skills and knowledge will impact the world positively."

13 Coaching on Workplace Commitment

With the unique experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Gen Z individuals have exhibited a reluctance to show up for work or commit to long-term employment. Niki Childers, Sr. Director of Strategic Growth and Corporate Initiative at Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG), emphasized the need to instill the value of staying at a job for several years, fostering a mindset of investment and dedication to one's work.

14 Embracing Challenges and System Navigation

Gen Z appreciates transparency about potential challenges early in their application process. Johnson of Uncommon Schools noted the importance of acknowledging Gen Z's desire for fast change and coaching them on how to navigate existing systems that can be slow to change. Uncommon Schools teaches students how to work within culturally biased systems while also giving them tools and resources to help them make an immediate impact. Johnson said that managers can be instrumental in helping Gen Z navigate, understand, and succeed with these dual truths.

15 Offering Step-by-Step Instruction

Gonsalves of Luminary appreciates when a manager gives her a guide and takes the time to walk her step-by-step through it. Good instruction also means pausing frequently to ensure she understands what they're teaching her. "It's great when they pause during a meeting to ask if I have questions," she said. "If there's no pause or moment to ask, I'm never going to speak up." Managers and experienced employees should also assume that Gen Z does not understand industry acronyms and terminology. "I love when a leader stops and asks, 'Does everyone know what that means?' because that's my cue to raise my hand and shout out, 'I don't!'" she said.



Laureen Delance
Workforce Consultant
Reimagine Talent

16 Articulating Skills, Instead of Degrees

Laureen Delance, a Workforce Development Consultant at Reimagine Talent, said many employers are beginning to steer away from solely looking at degree attainment and more at skills attainment. This prioritizes the need for Gen Z professionals to highlight the value and importance of micro-credentials, smaller certification attainment, and on-demand skills. "For those entering the workforce, they really need to look beyond articulating that they have a degree from this college and instead talk about the certifications they've earned and share a portfolio that backs it up."

ENCOURAGE CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND UPSKILLING

These strategies empower Gen Z professionals to stay competitive in the changing job market by acquiring new skills, enhancing their organizational capabilities, and fostering professional and personal growth.

17 Encouraging Credentials and Certifications

Childers of JAG highlighted the importance of credentials and certifications in enhancing early career professionals' employability. JAG collaborates with companies to establish skills academies tailored to specific industries, providing opportunities for students to obtain valuable credentials. Childers said, "For instance, our students can earn hospitality badges to better position themselves for employment in the hospitality sector. We've also partnered with home improvement brands to offer skills-based initiatives that align with their hiring needs."

18 Practicing Executive Function Skills

Johnson of Uncommon Schools emphasized the significance of executive function skills, especially for Gen Z, who may have experienced the pandemic during their formative years, when many would have practiced these skills in school and in person. Johnson said managers should focus on skills like communication, follow-up, organization, and project planning early in training.

19 Prioritizing Career Mapping

Johnson implemented a career mapping approach at Uncommon Schools to guide Gen Z students toward their career aspirations. During orientation, students engage in a visioning activity where they envision their lives ten years into the future. This process helps them identify the skills, credentials, and experiences necessary for their desired career paths. Johnson explained, "They develop a narrative around their aspirations, envisioning how they want to feel and what their future looks like. We then break it down into actionable steps, providing them with a clear roadmap to success."



Keonna Campbell
Senior Workforce Consultant
Reimagine Talent

20 Celebrating Extra Certifications and Skills

Keonna Campbell, Senior Workforce Consultant at Reimagine Talent, said it's important to recognize early career professionals who go above and beyond to enhance their skill sets outside the classroom. Campbell works with students who actively seek out free certification classes from Google and Microsoft to improve their proficiencies. She suggested, "Organizations should explore partnerships between colleges and companies to facilitate students in acquiring these certifications and skills."

21 Encouraging Continuous Learning

Roseboro of Reimagine Talent advocates for continuous learning opportunities to empower Gen Z individuals and maintain their enthusiasm for growth. He recommended leveraging learning management systems to provide access to online courses and resources tailored to Gen Z's preferences for self-directed learning. Roseboro said, "Break down learning materials into interactive modules that Gen Z can consume on the go, catering to their shorter attention spans. Allocate dedicated time and resources for Gen Z to engage in learning activities, demonstrating your organization's commitment to their development."

MASTER TECHNOLOGICAL PROFICIENCY

Cultivate Gen Z's natural aptitude for technology while also helping them navigate the guardrails of new technologies. These strategies apply more to managers than to Gen Z professionals.

22 Discussing Emerging Technologies Honestly

Luc of Reimagine Talent stressed the importance of open discussions about emerging technologies, particularly artificial

intelligence (AI). Luc shared her conversations with students who pondered the societal implications of AI-generated work. "We explored the future of industries heavily reliant on technology and whether professions in those fields will diminish in importance," Luc recalled. She highlighted the significance of nurturing human-centric skills like communication and behavioral aptitude alongside technological literacy.

23 Tailoring Training for Modern Attention Spans

Reimagine Talent's Luc works with many early career professionals and suggested that today's organizations need to quickly adapt their training methods to cater to Gen Z's evolving attention spans and preferences for technology. "Learning modules should be quick, scrollable, and easily accessible," she said. "Consider video training, too. Think bite-sized content over long-form manuals." Luc advised managers to quickly align training programs with Gen Z's digital preferences and behaviors in order to maximize their engagement and productivity.

24 Embracing Versatility in Roles

Campbell of Reimagine Talent noted Gen Z's preference for exploring many different roles and gaining versatile skills within their organizations. Campbell has observed a shift in employers' expectations, now preferring transferable skills over strict technical qualifications. "Students with diverse academic backgrounds can excel in unexpected roles," Campbell said. She stressed the importance of cultivating roles and writing job descriptions that prioritize a well-rounded skill set valued by Gen Z. "Make it clear to them that you value different skills and encourage learning new skills," she said. "They're looking for opportunities to continually grow, learn, and be challenged."

25 Providing Tech-Savvy Leadership

According to Dow of General Assembly, managers and educators must stay ahead of technological advancements to equip Gen Z and Gen Alpha with cutting-edge technological skills through AI, programming, and data analytics workshops. “Empowering them to navigate the digital landscape fosters a mindset that views technology as a catalyst for innovation,” Dow said.

26 Building Relationships with Higher Ed

Delance of Reimagine Talent works with college students on career counseling. She wants more employers to build relationships with colleges and universities, not just tier 1 and tier 2 schools but also with nearby smaller universities and community colleges. “Connect with the career services team at your local learning institutions and work with professors to incorporate the skills you are looking for,” Delance said. Employers also need to market the emerging and new skills they need to help direct early career professionals to the appropriate academic plan to help them become more employable.

CENTER PURPOSE-DRIVEN WORK

These strategies aim to unleash the passion of Gen Z professionals for purpose-driven work, empowering them to make a meaningful impact and contribute to causes they deeply care about.

27 Making an Impact

For Gonsalves of Luminary, her top priority was working for an organization that positively impacted the world. She wanted an employer whose mission and values aligned with hers and allowed her to change the world. She also looked at the diversity of the workforce before accepting the job. “I didn’t want to work somewhere where I was the ‘one and only,’” she said. “I didn’t want to be the only woman or person of color.”

28 Empowering Meaningful Social Contributions

Metayer, who started The Luminous Lab, credits Chanel with giving her the support and freedom to create her role as a social commitment associate. “It was so incredible,” she said. “I was always focused on the good I could do that led straight back to the community.” Much of her work was researching and supporting nonprofit organizations. She appreciated the “all hands on deck” attitude of the leadership team and being given decision-making authority to try new ideas. She also noted the importance of working at a diverse company. “It was an incredible experience to work with such a diverse team of people who looked like me,” Metayer said.

29 Creating a Diverse Workforce

Delance of Reimagine Talent said many organizations discuss the diversity gap, but few do much to create a diverse workforce. “If you truly care about diverse perspectives and intelligence, work with institutions outside your purview of the tier 1 and Ivy League schools. Connect with their career services office and build a strong pipeline of diverse applicants,” Delance said.

30 Having a Strong Mission

BriAnna Walker, Talent Program Lead, Research Institute, works for an organization focused on improving the quality of life globally. “People really connect with our mission. It’s a mission that has a true impact on people,” she said. Walker said many of today’s undergraduate and graduate students attend school to make a difference. They want to ally with an organization to change lives and be a part of that mission. “Our candidates know their work at the institute, regardless of their title or internship function is impacting someone’s life because it’s our collective mission. We all play a part in that.”

31 Exploring and Introducing Diversity

Allow curiosity at your organization for Gen Z early career professionals (and other generations) to explore and experience different roles and teams, said Campbell of Reimagine Talent. Job shadowing provides new perspectives on different areas of your organization, and brings together people who might not have opportunities to interact or socialize. Campbell once experienced a six-week job-shadowing program where she explored different career paths and departments. “It was so insightful for me to meet other people in the company and get familiar with different sides of the business,” she said. “Plus, they had the opportunity to learn about me and my perspectives.”

32 Offering Diversity Among Managers

Looking ahead, Luett, at the University of Iowa, envisions a workplace characterized by diversity and inclusivity, with a strong female boss representing marginalized communities such as LGBTQIA+, Black, or Hispanic. “I want my future bosses to be as diverse as possible,” she said. “I don’t want to relate to her in every aspect because I think that makes me too comfortable, and I want to be challenged in my worldview. I also think it’s very inspirational to see different people in positions of power.” She emphasized the importance of exposure to diverse perspectives in shaping her worldview and career goals.

MENTAL HEALTH

Addressing Mental Health at the YMCA

Kate Gross grew up in Ohio and spent 15 years attending the local YMCA Resident Camp. “I found so much value in learning with my peers and with leaders who were not much older than me,” she said. Gross, Association Director of Teen and Family Engagement at YMCA of the Triangle, now designs and develops programs for 15,000 North Carolina youth and 2,000 teen staff members.

She partnered with Reimagine Talent to learn how to better support Gen Z, especially their mental health and well-being, and to provide leadership development to begin building a pipeline for future counselors.

“We don’t have the recipe, but I think we know the ingredients,” she said. “We haven’t fully baked what we’re delivering. It’s holding our organization’s expectations for higher quality while supporting mental health needs.”

The YMCA of the Triangle is pioneering new programs like partnerships with mental health professionals to teach their staff how to identify when a camper needs peer support and when they need professional help.

“Part of my responsibility is leading our civic engagement efforts. This generation cares about social issues and they care about one another in a way that other generations haven’t,” Gross said. “There’s awareness about inclusion and bullying. I see a generation that wants better and is challenging the hierarchy that we’ve put into place.”



Kate Gross
Association Director of Teen and Family Engagement at YMCA of the Triangle

Success Story: The Village Behind Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG)



Niki Childers
Sr. Director of Strategic Growth and
Corporate Initiatives, Jobs for America's
Graduates (JAG)

This success story begins with recognizing that today's workforce demands a fresh approach that exceeds traditional education boundaries. Reimagine Talent met scholars and leaders of Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) at a 2023 conference by the Society for Human Resource Management. The team led a compelling session on leveraging internships as a pipeline for workforce development.

Niki Childers is helping to drive transformative career development opportunities through JAG's programs. Founded four decades ago, JAG was created to respond to Delaware's high school dropout crisis. Today, it is a nationwide testament to the power of collaboration and competency-based training in shaping the future workforce.

"Forty-three years ago, the workforce looked very different," Childers, JAG's Sr. Director of Strategic Growth and Corporate Initiatives, said. "It was very industrialized from the beginning. So how do we rinse and repeat, but do it in a way that these students can make a living wage?"

JAG's commitment to competency-based training is at the core of its success. The program focuses on fundamental skills in writing and math, as well as understanding and cultivating employability and leadership skills. This holistic approach empowers emerging talent with the essential skills needed to thrive in the workforce after high school.



Collaboration with Corporate Stakeholders

A recent addition and massive success for the program has been forming strategic partnerships with corporate stakeholders who intimately understand the skills needed for the workforce. By aligning employability skills with industry needs and staying abreast of emerging trends, JAG ensures that its students are academically prepared and equipped with the skills that will make them valuable contributors to the workforce.

JAG also embraced project-based learning, trauma-informed care, and employer engagement. This approach provides a full circle of support, from social and emotional services to graduation and post-graduation needs for an entire year after graduation.

"I have a whole Rolodex of young people that call me out of the blue and say, 'Miss Niki, do you still have that resume that we did in class?' Or, 'I need a job, Miss Niki; I don't know if college is for me.' JAG is there to support them at those critical times," Childers said.

She emphasized the importance of a collaborative ecosystem that involves national and state governments, corporate sponsors, educators, and specialists working cohesively. The JAG community, from local classrooms to national events, shows the power of collective effort.

Corporate sponsors actively participate in classroom visits, judge state and national competitions, provide keynote speeches, and engage in workshops, creating a seamless career pipeline from the classroom to the workforce.

Data-Driven Success

JAG's success is not anecdotal but backed by data. Post-secondary placement, full-time employment, and graduation rates far exceed national averages, a testament to the effectiveness of their approach. Their commitment to being data-driven showcases their impact and helps secure crucial state and federal funds to sustain their mission.

The mantra driving JAG’s efforts is clear: “Elevate and innovate.” Every initiative ensures that students and early career professionals are equipped with the most up-to-date technology and workplace trends, thus creating a culture of continuous learning and adaptability.

With JAG as a success story, it becomes evident that preparing the next generation for

the workforce requires more than traditional education. It demands a collaborative and dynamic approach, where educators, corporate partners, government entities, and specialists come together to create an ecosystem that nurtures the talents of the emerging workforce.

LEADERSHIP

Preparing the Next Generation of Women, Transgender, and Nonbinary Leaders



Julia Hvoslef
Director, Gender and Sexuality Student Programs,
Division of Student Affairs at Bentley University

Leading a diversity-focused program in a college setting comes with its own set of unique highlights and challenges. Julia Hvoslef, Director, Gender and Sexuality Student Programs, Division of Student Affairs at Bentley University, oversees the Women’s Leadership Program—a scholarship-based, four-year leadership development program for women, transgender, and nonbinary students.

“The primary challenges we’ve noticed with these undergraduate populations are a sense of urgency to accomplish goals, which sometimes does not create space for intentionality, in addition to a real or perceived need to overcommit, which leads to burnout,” Hvoslef said.

Bentley University is combating these challenges in a few different ways. They recently introduced a workshop for first-year and senior students that centers on mindfulness and mindfulness techniques. By creating a space for students to pause,

reflect, and be intentional, they gain these skills and can bring them into spaces they enter. Second, Hvoslef and her team worked to provide flexibility within the program with multiple opportunities to complete tasks and program requirements. Finally, they encourage and practice frequent communication. “We aim to lead by example and showcase to students that communication is crucial to success in the workplace,” she said.

Reimagine Talent provides advocacy training during the Professional Spaces Workshop that is provided for the Women’s Leadership Program students in their junior year. This work ensures the next generation of women, transgender, and nonbinary leaders better understand what it means to self-advocate.

“Reimagine Talent provides space for students to reflect on their own identities and, therefore, better understand the intricacies of workplace dynamics, in addition to the value and importance of engaging with diverse colleagues,” Hvoslef said.

How to Build a Culture That Attracts Gen Z Talent



BriAnna Walker
Talent Program Lead, Research Institute

When navigating the coaching landscape for Gen Z, traditional approaches must give way to innovative strategies tailored to their unique traits and goals. From skills-based competitions to virtual career exploration, the coaching journey is evolving to meet the needs of a generation shaped by technology, social consciousness, and a desire for meaningful connections.

BriAnna Walker, Talent Program Lead, Research Institute, said employers must focus on what will benefit their organization and set early career professionals up for success once hired. The candidate-to-employee experience starts with that first engagement with your organization. Instead of meeting through a formal interview where there's pressure on both parties, Walker hosts informal "engagement events" to get to know potential job candidates and build genuine relationships with them.

"They're really trying to figure out, 'Can I see myself at this organization?' They're focused on the right fit. It's not just about getting a job," she said. Emerging talent wants to know if your organization aligns with their goals and values, how you show employees they're valued and cared for, and the complete compensation package, including monetary compensation and health and wellness benefits. "In a typical interview, you can't really get the full detail of information that you're looking for about a potential employer," Walker said. "So invite them to an informal discussion, so they're comfortable asking those questions."



Another tip from Walker is to provide follow-up information that helps early career professionals feel more connected to the potential opportunity they're interested in.

Finally, she advised organizations to create transition plans for integrating Gen Z professionals into the organization. Outline skill milestones you want them to be able to perform independently by specific dates. "It's about focusing on the transition from candidate to employee, so you set them up for success," she said.

Integration or transition plans help Gen Z feel empowered. They want to understand the information and knowledge needed to be successful in the role and when they will be fully integrated into the team to be effective and make an impact.

"There are going to be some skill sets specific to your team or the project that this recent college graduate didn't receive in the classroom," Walker said. "A transition plan gives them a skills and expectations roadmap to understand when they'll actually start making an impact."

The future of coaching Gen Z promises exciting opportunities for growth, collaboration, and the emergence of resilient, well-rounded leaders.

Educators, program directors, parents, mentors, and leaders must work together and commit to continuously learning and changing to adapt to new technology and society. Together, we can nurture the leaders of tomorrow so they are equipped with the insights and strategies to propel them and all of us to success.

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National Case Studies: Reimagine Talent Supports Early Talent Development

Building Employability Skills with the R.I.S.E. Opportunity Foundation

At Reimagine Talent, we believe in the power of experiential learning and early exposure to careers. We are proud to partner with the R.I.S.E. Opportunity Foundation in Chicago, a private foundation dedicated to helping students explore and prepare for careers in the insurance industry.

Through our multi-site development program in Chicago and Nashville, we support college and high school students in building employability skills through career exposure and preparing for summer internship interviews. Over a semester, students participate in a comprehensive curriculum to introduce them to various career paths within the insurance industry. This includes career assessments, hands-on activities, and mentorship opportunities to help students explore their interests and aspirations.

One highlight of our high school partnership is the student capstone project experience, where students dive deeper into a career of their choice and present their findings in a formal presentation. Led by our engaging Workforce Consultant, Keith Roseboro, these capstone projects showcase the student's knowledge and skills and provide valuable real-world experience.

Reimagine Talent recognizes the importance of investing in the future workforce and providing opportunities for young talent to thrive. If your organization wants to implement a similar program to support early career development, we encourage you to contact us. Together, we can thoughtfully drive meaningful impact for the next generation of professionals!

Supporting Industry Exposure & Building Social Capital with The American College of Finance Center for Economic Empowerment and Equality

Reimagine Talent supports the American College of Finance Center for Economic Empowerment and Equality, which aims to support Black college students' career development journey. The American College of Finance is committed to

providing students with opportunities to attend industry conferences and gain exposure to leading companies, mentors, and high-growth industries, particularly in the financial services sector.

As a talent development partner, our program will guide students attending Historically Black Colleges & Universities, in building essential skills for career success, including relationship building, networking, and effective personal branding. Our collaborative effort involves facilitating a comprehensive three-part program for approximately 50 students who will be attending a conference this summer in Atlanta.

The program begins with a workshop to prepare students for success at the conference. We cover navigating the conference effectively and making meaningful connections. During the conference, we will host a program focused on future skills and personal branding, empowering students to stand out in a competitive job market.

After the conference, our support continues as we guide students on effective follow-up strategies and mentorship cultivation. We understand that networking and relationship building can be daunting for emerging professionals, so we are committed to providing practical guidance and support every step of the way.

This partnership underscores our commitment to diversity and equity in career development and diversifying talent pipelines into fast-growing industries. We recognize the barriers for underrepresented groups in industries like finance, and our goal is to provide equitable opportunities for all students to thrive. If your organization is interested in partnering with us to support the career development of early career talent, we invite you to reach out to us.

Facilitating Work Readiness Programming at Bentley University's Gender and Sexuality Student Programs

Reimagine Talent proudly collaborates with Bentley University's Gender and Sexuality Student Programs, Division of Student Affairs, to support its women's leadership program. Bentley University is renowned for its commitment to empowering young women through full-ride scholarships and comprehensive leadership development initiatives.

As part of our partnership, we work closely with Bentley's Gender and Sexuality Programs team to facilitate a work readiness program throughout the academic year. Our hybrid workshops focus on helping young women build essential skills to advocate for themselves in work environments.

We aim to address the challenges highlighted by the "broken rung" phenomenon, where women face barriers to advancement early in their careers. Through our workshops, we empower early career women to elevate their voices, identify their career values, and confidently pursue opportunities for growth and advancement.

By providing early career coaching and support resources, we can equip young women with the tools and confidence they need to succeed in our future workplace – on their own terms!

Partner with Reimagine Talent Co.

If your organization is interested in providing powerful early career development and expanding diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, we invite you to contact us. Together, we can create impactful programs that empower the next generation of emerging leaders to thrive in their careers.



Scan the QVR code to visit our contact page and set up an exploratory call with Reimagine Talent Co.

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