



## MANAGING DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

### Participant Guide



West Virginia Department of Transportation  
Division of Highways  
Training and Development  
2014

## **AGENDA**

- ***What's So Special About My Generation?***
- ***The Disconnect***
- ***Work Assignments***
- ***Is Your Workgroup Generations-Friendly?***
- ***Persuading Different Generations***
- ***Assessing Your Work Culture***
- ***Balance in Your Work Culture***
- ***How Do Others Perceive You?***

## ***What's So Special About My Generation?***

**Separate yourselves into generational smaller groups.**

**Identify the following profiles for your group:**

**How would you introduce yourself today? Where are you on your career path?**

**What was the mood of the era you grew up in? What compelling messages did you get from the media, in school, and at home?**

**How did those messages affect who you are on the job today? How did they affect your work ethic?**

## ***The Disconnect***

**In your generational groups:**

- **Think of a situation where you experienced a disconnect with someone from another generation – where no matter how hard you tried, things simply didn't click. How did you respond?**

- **How might you have responded at each of the 3 levels?**

## ***Is Your Workgroup Generations-Friendly?***

**Managing generationally diverse workgroups requires diplomacy, understanding generations, and helping them to understand each other, getting them to communicate more effectively, negotiating differences, resolving conflicts, and suggesting ways they might work together more effectively.**

***Look at your own workgroup and answer the following statements that reflect a generations-friendly workplace:***

- There's not just one type of person who's successful here.**
- When we put a project team together, we consciously include a variety of perspectives.**
- We treat employees like clients / customers.**
- We talk about – sometimes even joke about – different viewpoints.**
- We talk openly about what we want from our jobs.**
- Our policies are based on what customers and employees want.**
- We have a minimum of bureaucracy and “red tape.”**
- Our work atmosphere is relaxed and informal.**
- We have a lot of fun together.**
- We're known for being straightforward with each other.**
- The people who work here have the big picture along with specific goals and measures, and feel free to find their own best way of reaching them.**
- We expect the best from everyone here, and we treat them as if they have great things to offer and are motivated to do their best.**
- We focus on retention every day.**
- Our work assignments are broad, providing a variety and challenge, and allow each employee to develop a range of skills.**

## ***Assessing Your Work Culture***

**What words would you use to describe your work culture?**

**If you were to personify your work culture, what generation would it be a member of?**

**How does your work culture enhance or inhibit the way you serve clients?**

**Is there a generation of employee in your organization who most likely feel undervalued and/or underutilized?**

**Is a change called for in your work culture? If so, how might it be accomplished?**

## ***Balance in Your Work Culture***

**When it comes to having a satisfying, balanced life, what, besides your job, is important to you?**

**Are there important parts of your life that you feel are neglected because of your job? If yes, what are they?**

**What, specifically, could your organization do that might help you achieve a more balanced life?**

**What can you do to create more balance yourself?**

## ***How Do Others Perceive Us?***

Sometimes we need to think in terms of what we might be contributing to the miscommunication. Here are some things to think about:

If you're a WW II Generation...

And the other guy is a Baby Boomer:

- Are you coming across as too rigid?
- Do you seem "old school?"
- Might you seem unwilling to "Share the power?"
- Are you seen as moralistic?

And the other guy is GenX:

- Do you seem too corporate?
- Are you too "by the book?" not open to different approaches?
- Are you seen as suspicious of new ideas?

And the other guy is a Millennial:

- Are you out of touch?
  - Do you appear technically inept?
  - Are you closed to new ideas?
- 

If you're a Baby Boomer...

And the other guy is a WW II:

- Do you share details of your life that may seem too personal?
- Might it seem to the other person that you take him for granted?
- Do you come across as more interested in the process than results?
- Are you viewed as someone who overspends budget?

And the other guy is Gen X:

- Are you seen as overly ambitious?
- Do co-workers think you say one thing and do another?
- Do you come across as rigid?
- Do you use "corporate-speak" – too many buzzwords?
- Are you considered judgmental?

And the other person is a Millennial:

- Are you seen as too serious?
- Do you seem to be too wrapped up in your job?
- Do you appear to lecture too much?
- Do you do what someone else might think is too much reminiscing?
- Are you perceived as someone who has trouble making unpopular decisions?

---

## If you're a Gen Xer...

And the other guy is a WWII:

- Are you seen as disloyal?
- Are you considered impolite or disrespectful?
- Are you viewed as irreverent?
- Are you perceived as too casual?
- Are you seen as intolerant of regularity and routine?

And the other guy is a Boomer:

- Are you seen as not taking your job seriously?
- Are you viewed as too challenging, maybe even challenging the other's competence?
- Might you be perceived as abrupt or aloof?
- Are you seen as too independent, not a team player?
- Are you viewed as someone who neglects relationships?

And the other guy is a Millennial:

- Are you seen as cynical?
  - Does the other person feel you don't listen to his ideas because of youth and inexperience?
  - Are you considered not inclusive?
  - Are you seen as someone whose standards are unrealistically high?
- 

## If you are a Millennial...

And the other guy is a WWI:

- Are you perceived as not knowledgeable about history and tradition?
- Are you viewed as egotistical?
- Might you seem inexperienced?
- Might you come across as impatient?

And the other guy is a Boomer:

- Are you seen as inexperienced?
- Are you considered overconfident?
- Might you seem overly competitive?

And the other guy is a Gen Xer:

- Are you considered too naïve?
- Might you be perceived as overly optimistic?
- Might you seem unfocused?

# Meet Generation Z

December 5, 2012 by Adam Renfro



If you're not speaking Generation Z, it's time for a primer.

The Gen Zs are the kids born somewhere in the early to mid 1990s up through 2010. They fill the classrooms of the K-12 educators. An exact starting point and stopping point are always unclear in generational labels, but this group has the distinction of living in a world that has always had the internet. Note that the Gen Zs do have an end date, somewhere around 2010. The next group? Generation Alpha. Their distinction: Gen Zs on Red Bull.

I've pored over numerous resources and have catalogued the Gen Z characteristics into seven broad categories that encompass everything from education to socialization to commerce.

You can also see the list [here](#), but I would like to make this a living document. If you've discovered other Gen Z trends or characteristics, please comment below! I will continue to curate the list.

At a Glance

- Gen Zs were born in the early to mid-1990s though 2010.
- The Internet, technology, war, terrorism, the recession, and social media shape their lives.
- Gen Zs are tech savvy.
- Social media has connected them globally to their peers.
- The internet has connection them globally to knowledge.
- They are bright, and their IQ scores are higher than previous generations.
- They are flexible in nature and expect flexibility from institutions.
- They are accepting of diverse populations.

## Social Media

- Gen Zs are always connected in a seamless cloud-based world of friends, data, and entertainment.
- Social media and instant contact is very important to them.
- Waiting for emails has never been part of the Gen Z world.
- Social media has made it easy for them to take up social causes. They look for careers that will help the world.
- Social media has led to a sense of social justice, especially when they are bombarded with images and news of war, recession, and climate change.
- They love to “crowd source” for solutions on social media.

## Gadgets and Tools

- Gen Z has become a generation of content creators and producers with today’s web apps and digital tools.
- They consume most of their media on mobile devices.
- Gen Zs prefer media that they can interact with as opposed to passive TV or print texts.
- They want gadgets that are multi-functional (take video, reach the internet, play music).
- They prefer websites, apps, and social media outlets that let multiple features like posting pictures, videos, text, comments, rate things, etc.

## In the World of Commerce

- Gen Zs are not brand loyal. They will mix and match everything from clothes brands to philosophies.
- Gen Z teens and preteens have the biggest impact on the economy for that age group ever. Their social media “likes,” product ratings, forum feedback has companies and marketers scrambling.
- They have spend more on the economy than any generation before them at their age. This is driven by gift cards like iTunes cards that are spent online.
- They look for alternative ways to enter their professions as college costs soar.
- Gen Zs are more concerned about purchasing environmentally safe products than the generations before them.

## Socialization

- Gen Zs are always connected in a near seamless cloud-based world of friends, data, and entertainment.
- Gen Zs expect to be able to work, learn, and study wherever and whenever the what.
- Their day is filled with images and news from around the world, often describing terrorism, the world recession, and climate change.
- Due to the access to a constant barrage of global news, Gen Zs are more socially responsible than the generations before them.
- They will take their gaming lifestyle with them into adulthood.

- They are described as growing up too fast, and also not at all! They grow up fast because of their exposure to so much disturbing news, but they will remain gamers for a long time and want school and work to be fun.
- Gen Zs are closer to their parents than the previous generation because they watch the same TV shows, listen to the same music, and play the same video games.
- They have less need for direction because they have access to all the answers, especially for things they are passionate about.
- Parents tend to build too much easy-to-get self-esteem in their Gen Z kids.
- High self-esteem plus easy-to-use digital tools lead the Gen Zs to think they can do anything.
- Gen Zs completely take for granted the amount of data that they have access to and the speed in which they can access it. It's a natural part of their lives.
- Gen Zs are the most home-schooled generation in the modern public school era. Home schooling has made this group closer to their families.
- Gen Zs have become emotionally attached to their digital habits, which keep them online even longer. (Internet addiction will be classified as a disorder by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 2013.)

### Future Professionals

- 65 percent of grade school students will work in jobs that don't exist today.
- The biggest concern that Gen Zs voice (nearly 80 percent) is if they will have a job when they graduate.
- Gen Zs want to enter the professional and technical "idea economy" while the largest growth is in the service economy.
- They will be a different kind of professional, not a 40-hour week cube worker, but freelance contractors who solves problems with a particular expertise.
- They are wary of long-term plans. They are not planning on 30 year careers at one place.
- Gen Zs have the personalities of workers who back their bosses, but they will look for jobs where bosses "have their backs."
- Flexibility is important to them. Employers worry that they are so flexible that retention may be an issue.
- Gen Zs will not be as loyal to companies as generations before them. They've witnessed the lack of corporate loyalty when their own parents and older siblings lost their jobs during the recession.
- They expect quick results (promotions), and will keep their resumes handy and up-to-date.
- The recession will have them competing for jobs at all levels with much older adults.
- The Internet economy, cloud tools, and crowd-sourced funding have allowed Gen Zs to become successful online entrepreneurs, from selling their original music, video, and text content to establishing startups like [www.dispatch.io](http://www.dispatch.io).

### The Generation Z Learner

- Because Gen Z is from the digital generation, many teachers incorrectly assume that ALL are "digital citizens" and are aware of online hazards, managing personal information online, guarding intellectual property, tech savvy, and so on.
- Their brains are wired for the fast delivery of content, data, and images from computers, videogames, and the Internet.

- Educators are increasingly bringing game design and game theory into education with continuous grading, continuous feedback, clear goals, rewards, challenges, etc.
- Gen Zs are driven by graphics in learning. They comprehend complex graphics better than previous generations.
- They very much dislike lecture-test classroom.
- Gen Zs are constant multi-taskers.
- They like to have random access to information, love to explore using their own routes, need graphics, want it fun, and instant feedback.
- Their digital world can be customized. They want their education customized, too.
- Researchers say Gen Zs are smart kids and will be smart adults who can deal with a lot of data and make decisions.
- The classroom challenge is that students are digital and many teachers are analog.
- Old school teachers tend to not appreciate Gen Z digital skills or how their brains are wired.
- Old school teachers are not prepared to teach the “future content” that Gen Zs love. Future content includes software, hardware, digital, technological, social media.
- Teachers are at a disadvantage because they aren’t as comfortable with technology as their students are.
- Access to so much data makes Gen Zs go for the quick answer rather than longer problem solving.
- Gen Zs often do not take the time to determine the reliability of information.
- They must be taught to discover, curate, and manage information. This will be essential in the “idea economy” of the knowledge era.
- Fluid Intelligence (problem solving) on IQ scores has been on the rise since the 90s. Game designers like to take credit because their multi-player, problem-based games went viral at the same time.
- Creating “cheats” and hacking games are a sign of brilliance in the Gen Z world. This doesn’t reconcile with their education world. Teachers don’t reward short cuts.
- Gen Zs become incredibly more knowledgeable about their passions than the generations before them because they have access to so much more information, and they can network with peers across the globe who have the same interests.
- 43 percent prefer the digital learning and find it easiest to learn from the Internet.
- Parents are taking more responsibility in their children’s education, and they want options and choices.
- The gap between what schools are teaching and the needed skills of the future is widening.
- The Gen Z world is increasing collaborative, and their school projects need to reflect that.
- Gen Z students need to be challenged with project-based, active learning to meet the demands of the future.

### Dangers for the Gen Zs

- Recession, war, energy crisis, and climate change leave them in a world filled with uncertainties.
- Gen Zs are described as too dependent on technology.
- Cyber crimes like bullying, identity theft, intellectual property theft are a dangerous frontier that are still not policed or regulated very well.
- The cost of higher education is becoming prohibitive.
- Gen Zs need niche skills, but one-size-fits-all education is slow to catch up.
- Some Gen Zs do NOT have access to the digital world. Socioeconomic position and ZIP code play a large part in this.
- Gen Zs face health problems associated with sedentary lifestyles.

- Other generations must deal with Gen Z's' changing (or lack of) interpersonal skills that are driven by advancing technologies.

#### Resources

- The NMC Horizon Report: K-12 Edition
- Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives by John Palfrey and Urs Gasser
- Getting Smart: How Digital Learning Is Changing the World by Tom Vander Ark
- Gen Z: Digital in Their DNA from JWT Intelligence
- Consumers of Tomorrow: Insights and Observations About Generation Z from Grail Research
- Employees 3.0: Managing Generation Z from Edge Online
- Seven Skills Needed for the Future featuring Dr. Tony Wagner
- Gen Z & What It Means in Your Classroom by Sarah Fudin
- Gen Z: The Age of the Curator featuring Katherine Savitt
- Z Future Is Here! by Adam Renfro
- The Children of Cyberspace: Old Fogies by Their 20s by Brad Stone
- Generation Z: The Biggest Cheaters Since Homer by Adam Renfro
- Internet 2011 in Numbers by Pingdom
- A Day in the Internet Infographic
- Children of the Tech Revolution by Lucinda Schmidt and Peter Hawkins
- What Do Teens Think of Emails Infographic
- Generation Text: Teens and Their Texting Habits Infographic
- Teens Cruel World of Social Networking Infographic
- How American Teens Communicate Infographic
- Born Into Tech: Generation Z Infographic



### Adam Renfro

Adam was a classroom English teacher for ten years and began teaching online in 1998. He now works for the North Carolina Virtual Public School, the 2nd largest virtual school in the nation. He co-hosted the podcast series GenerationText, which explored the Generation Z learner. Adam has blogged for Getting Smart since September of 2011. His screenplay ROAD OF SOULS currently languishes in Development Purgatory. Creatives can follow Adam on Tumblr at <http://adamrenfro.tumblr.com/>. You can also follow him on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/AdamRenfro>, and you can follow his Flipboard magazine Edu-Nation at <http://flip.it/Apupn>.

## **REFERENCES**

Gravett, Linda and Throckmorton, Robin. 2007. *Bridging the Generation Gap*. Franklin Lakes, NJ;

Career Press

Lancaster, Lynne C. and Stillman, David. 2002. *When Generations Collide*. New York; Harper Collins

Raines, Claire. 2003. *Connecting Generations: The Sourcebook for a New Workplace*. Menlo Park, CA ; Crisp Publications

<http://astd2008.org/PDF/Speaker%20Handouts/ice08%20handout%20W317.pdf>

<http://www.exactingeditor.com/Training99.html>

<http://www.wutab.org/doc/3-Industrial%20Resources.ppt>