November, 2025

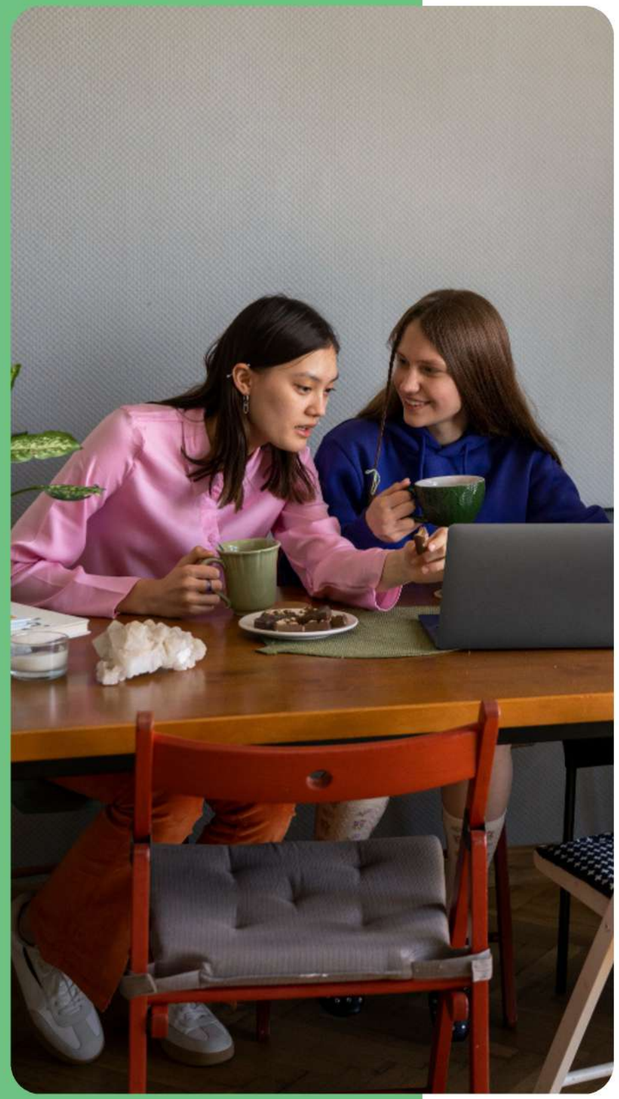
kilpatrick EXECUTIVE



GEN Z UNFILTERED

How Companies Are (Not Yet) Ready for the Next Generation of Work

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Introduction

Understanding the Generational Shift Reshaping Organizations

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The Age of Misunderstanding: Rethinking How Generations Work Together

A new generation has entered the workplace, and it is changing everything.
The arrival of Generation Z is not just a demographic shift but a cultural turning point that is reshaping how organizations think, lead, and communicate. Gen Z brings ambition, adaptability, and digital fluency, but also a deep need for authenticity, purpose, and psychological safety. Their approach to work challenges long-established rules, and not every organization is ready for it.

Our 2025 Global Survey, featuring more than 1,300 professionals across six regions, reveals a striking paradox. Seventy-two percent of respondents consider the generational gap a significant challenge for collaboration and performance, yet only one in five companies has implemented a structured plan to integrate younger generations into their workforce. Awareness is high, but action remains slow and fragmented.

This gap reflects more than a difference in style, it exposes a difference in mindset. For decades, the workplace has been shaped by hierarchical leadership, long-term loyalty, and linear career progression. Gen Z, instead, grew up in a context of disruption and choice, in a world defined by rapid technological shifts and social complexity [1]. They see work as a platform for growth, not ownership, for impact, not permanence [1]. They are not rejecting work, they are redefining it. And while many companies still interpret this as a lack of commitment, what Gen Z is truly asking for is meaning, flexibility, and transparency [2].

From Kilpatrick Executive's perspective as a global headhunter, the tension is palpable in every conversation with clients and candidates alike. Companies seek agile and innovative young leaders, but continue to evaluate them through traditional lenses. They expect adaptability, but offer rigid systems. They promote innovation, yet hesitate to listen when new voices challenge the status quo. Meanwhile, Gen Z talent expects trust to be earned both ways. They want feedback, not micromanagement, freedom, not detachment, and leadership that listens before it speaks.

Across markets, some organizations are taking bold steps, launching reverse mentoring programs, building cross-generational teams, and rethinking how knowledge and culture are shared. Others, however, remain caught in observation mode, aware of the change but reluctant to act. Too often, the generational debate is reduced to labels such as "entitled," "difficult," or "impatient," which obscure the real question: are companies evolving as fast as their people?

Bridging this divide requires more than adapting HR policies, it demands a cultural redesign. Integrating Gen Z is not about offering beanbags, hybrid work, or social-media-friendly perks. It is about re-engineering trust, redefining growth, and creating workplaces where differences become assets rather than barriers. It is about moving from multigenerational coexistence to cross-generational collaboration [3].

At Kilpatrick Executive, we see that the companies which succeed are those that embrace diversity of experience as a strategic advantage. The future of leadership will not be about age or tenure, but about connection, about how effectively leaders can unite people who grew up in different worlds but share a common goal [4].

Because ultimately, progress happens when generations do not compete for space, but build the future together.

1. The Deloitte 2025 Gen Z and Millennial Survey reports that only 6% of Gen Z and millennial respondents say their primary career goal is to reach a leadership position; this underscores their redefinition of growth. Deloitte

2. According to Deloitte, more than 23,000 Gen Z and millennial respondents across 44 countries were surveyed for their 2025 study. Deloitte

3. Projections suggest that by 2030, Gen Z and Millennials will together comprise 74% of the global workforce. EPALE - European Commission

4. A World Economic Forum / Randstad analysis shows that entry-level job postings have declined by 29 percentage points since January 2024, intensifying the pressure on Gen Z to find footholds in the workforce. World Economic Forum

Three Forces Shaping the Gen Z Workplace

1. Integrating Generations: From Coexistence to Collaboration

According to our survey, **72%** of professionals consider the generational gap a real challenge for collaboration and performance, while only **22%** say their organizations have structured initiatives to support Gen Z integration. Most rely on occasional programs or informal actions that lack continuity and measurable impact. This limited response suggests that many companies still see the generational gap as a cultural issue rather than a strategic one.

Successful integration requires an intentional redesign of work dynamics, where knowledge transfer and cross-generational learning become everyday practices. Reverse mentoring, cross-functional projects, and shared leadership models are powerful tools that can turn diversity into innovation. In an era where experience and adaptability are equally valuable, collaboration across generations should not be the exception, but the foundation of organizational growth [1].

2. Retaining Gen Z: Trust as the New Currency

Retention is emerging as the most critical challenge of the next decade. Nearly **80%** of our respondents believe that keeping Gen Z talent engaged is harder than with previous generations. This difficulty is not about performance or ambition—it is about expectations. Gen Z professionals seek clarity, feedback, and purpose, and they are less tolerant of environments that do not offer growth or inclusion.

Companies that still rely on traditional retention levers such as seniority or fixed benefits risk losing their youngest employees within months. Instead, the key to retention lies in trust. Transparent leadership, opportunities for skill development, and psychological safety foster a sense of belonging that transcends short-term incentives. When people feel trusted and heard, they stay not because they must, but because they believe they can make a difference [2].

3. Redefining Engagement: Flexibility, Balance, and Meaning

When asked what best attracts and retains Gen Z talent, **76%** of professionals in our survey cited *flexibility and work-life balance* as the most effective driver, followed by *economic benefits (30%)*, *career clarity (23%)*, and *inclusive culture (15%)*. These priorities mark a profound cultural shift. Engagement is no longer about loyalty to the company but about alignment between personal values and organizational purpose.

Gen Z expects work to fit into life, not the other way around. They value autonomy, continuous learning, and leadership that empowers rather than controls. For employers, this means building environments where hybrid work, well-being, and inclusion coexist as part of a coherent strategy. Engagement today is not a program to be launched but a relationship to be nurtured [3].



1. Kilpatrick Executive, Gen Z 2025 Global Survey. Conducted across six regions with 1,379 respondents. Findings show that 72% perceive the generational gap as a relevant challenge, while only 22% of companies have structured integration initiatives.

2. Kilpatrick Executive, Gen Z 2025 Global Survey. 80% of respondents believe retaining Gen Z talent is more difficult than retaining previous generations.

3. Kilpatrick Executive, Gen Z 2025 Global Survey. 76% identify flexibility and work-life balance as the top factors for engagement; other priorities include economic benefits (30%), clear career paths (23%), and inclusive culture (15%).

Work Habits Are the Main Source of Friction
Key Data at a Glance

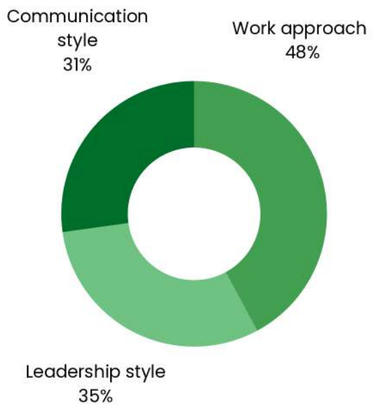
A snapshot of how global organizations perceive, integrate, and engage Generation Z in today's multigenerational workplace.

1. The Generational Gap Is Real

72% of professionals say the generational divide is a relevant or very relevant challenge for collaboration and performance.
Yet only 8% believe it's "not relevant."

Insight: The gap is widely acknowledged, but few companies are acting fast enough.

48% point to differences in work approach — flexibility, balance, and priorities — as the biggest disconnect between Gen Z and other generations. Followed by leadership style (35%) and communication style (31%).



Insight: The way we work — not what we do — is where the clash begins.

2. Integration Efforts Remain Fragmented

22%

Only **22%** of companies have *structured initiatives* to integrate Gen Z.

42%

Another **42%** do so *occasionally*, and **19%** have *no initiatives at all.*

Insight: Inclusion without structure remains wishful thinking

3. Retention Is the Hardest Battle

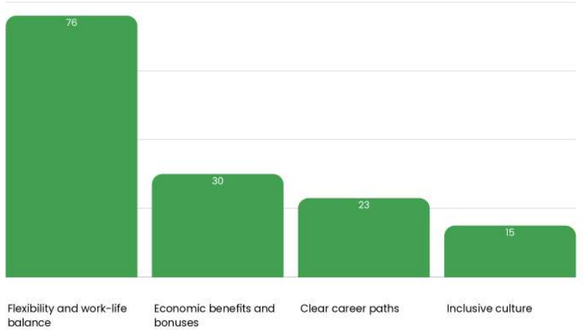
80% of respondents say retaining Gen Z is *more or much more difficult* than retaining other generations.

Insight: The challenge is not attraction — it's keeping them engaged once they arrive.

4. What Gen Z Values Most

76% of respondents say *flexibility and work-life balance* are the top drivers of engagement.
Followed by *economic benefits (30%)*, *clear career paths (23%)*, and *inclusive culture (15%)*.

Insight: Freedom and purpose outweigh hierarchy and status.



5. The Future Impact

59% expect Gen Z's impact on organizations to be progressive but manageable

42% Another **42%** do so *occasionally*, and **19%** have *no initiatives at all.*

Insight: Inclusion without structure remains wishful thinking

Emergence of Generation Z: Rewriting the Global Workforce Playbook

As organizations worldwide navigate one of the most significant demographic shifts of our time, Generation Z is stepping into the spotlight—not just as newcomers to the workforce, but as a transformative force changing how we work, lead, and succeed. Globally, Gen Z already represents around 27 percent of the labor force, and projections estimate that by 2035 they will be the largest generation in the workplace. [1][2]

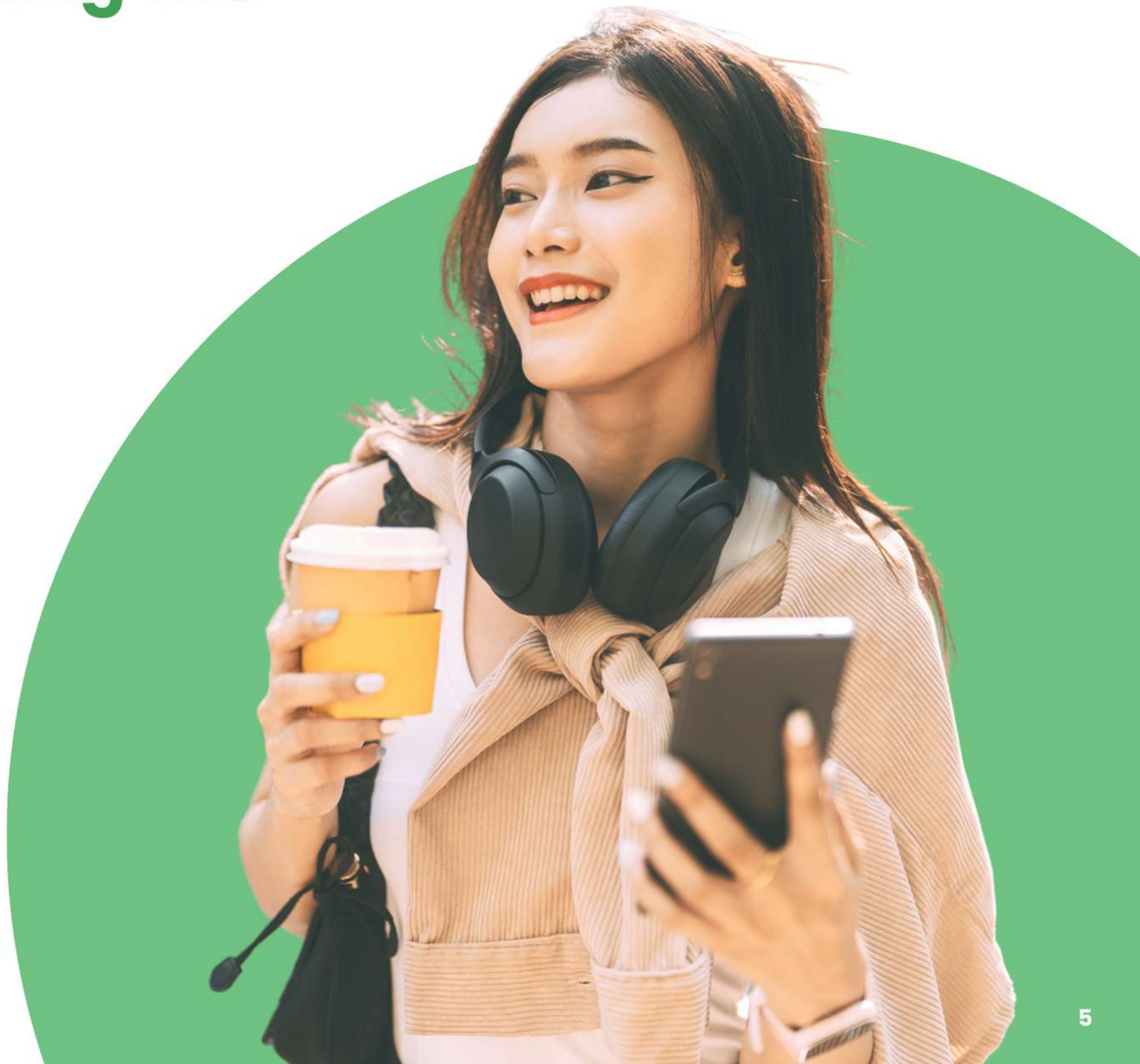
This shift matters because it signals a change not only in numbers, but in underlying assumptions. Where previous generations may have viewed roles, careers, and leadership through the lens of tenure, hierarchy, and stability, Gen Z brings a different mindset: one shaped by rapid change, digital fluency, and values-oriented work. The traditional social contract—stay long, climb steadily, and stay loyal—is being replaced by one that asks: What impact can I make today? What will I learn? How does this align with who I am?

From a cultural standpoint, this means companies must rethink their systems of leadership, communication, and performance. Leadership is less about command and more about connection; teamwork is less about age-based deference and more about contribution; and performance is less about hours served and more about value created. The entry of Gen Z raises three implication streams: firstly, how work is organized; secondly, how culture is shared across generations; and thirdly, how companies measure and reward outcomes in a faster, more fluid environment.

For global leaders and HR teams, the question is no longer if Gen Z will matter—but how fast they will change the game. As the youngest workforce cohort scales up, those organizations that remain locked in yesterday's model risk being outpaced by those prepared to embrace the new dynamic.

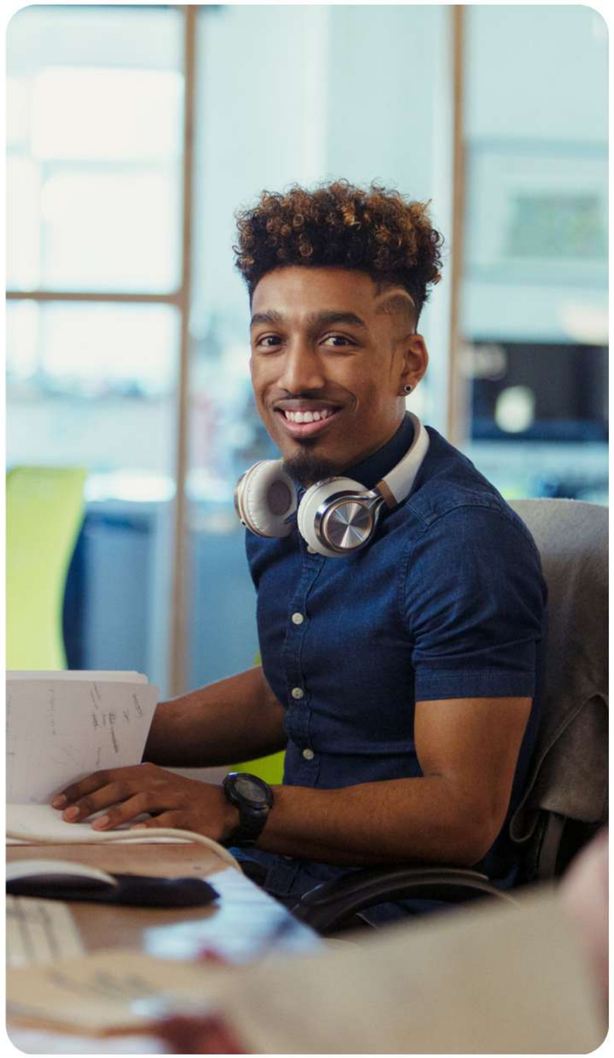
Data Points

- Generation Z currently accounts for approximately 27 % of the labor force globally, and they are projected to become the largest generation in the workplace by 2035. [1]
- By 2030, Gen Z and Millennials together are expected to comprise nearly 74 % of the global workforce, making their collective values and behaviors central to organizational strategy. [2]



1. Zurich Insurance article: *"Generation Z accounts for 27 percent of the labor force and is poised to be the largest generation in the workplace by 2035."* Source

2. EPALE / Deloitte summary: By 2030, Generation Z (born 1995–2006) and Millennials (born 1983–1994) will comprise 74 % of the global workforce. Source



The arrival of Gen Z is not a generational change, it's a cultural reset.

Culture: From hierarchy to inclusion

Gen Z values authenticity, diversity, and open communication. For them, inclusion is not a statement but a daily experience, reflected in how people are heard and trusted.
Organizations once defined by rigid hierarchies are learning to build cultures based on belonging and transparency, where purpose drives connection.
According to Deloitte (2024), 69% of Gen Z professionals consider inclusion and openness decisive when choosing an employer [1]. In our Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, 48% identified the "work approach" — flexibility and balance — as the main generational divide, confirming that culture is now the core of collaboration.
The future of culture is inclusive, participatory, and driven by dialogue rather than hierarchy.

Performance: From measurement to meaning

For Gen Z, performance is no longer just about output — it's about purpose, learning, and growth. They prioritize impact over presence and motivation over metrics.
Organizations that link results with meaning foster stronger engagement and creativity across generations. According to the Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, 76% identify flexibility and balance as key drivers of engagement, while 59% of leaders view Gen Z's influence as "progressive but manageable." As Deloitte (2024) reports, purpose-driven performance models deliver 30% higher engagement, proving that the future of performance lies in connection — where achievement and fulfillment advance together.

Leadership: From control to connection

Leadership is shifting from authority to empathy. Traditional command-and-control styles are giving way to connection-based models that value trust, collaboration, and authenticity. Gen Z expects purpose-driven leaders who guide rather than supervise, emphasizing transparency, feedback, and emotional intelligence. Research from McKinsey (2024) shows that companies embedding empathy and adaptability in leadership are 1.6 times more likely to outperform peers. As revealed in the Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, influence today is earned through listening, inclusion, and meaningful action — proving that the future of leadership is built on connection, not control.

> **"Work is no longer a place you go, it's an experience you shape."**

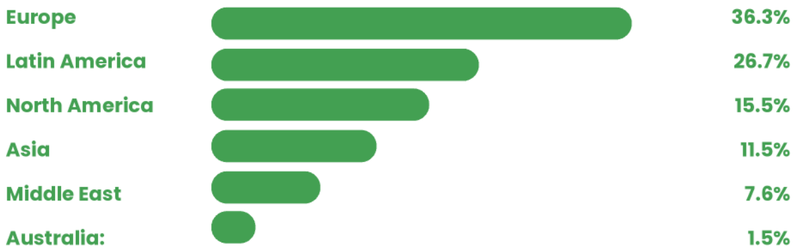
1. The Deloitte 2025 Gen Z and Millennial Survey reports that only 6% of Gen Z and millennial respondents say their primary career goal is to reach a leadership position; this underscores their redefinition of growth. Deloitte

[2] McKinsey & Company (2024). The Human Edge: Redefining Leadership in the Age of Empathy.
Kilpatrick Executive (2025). Gen Z Global Survey 2025.

Inside the Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025

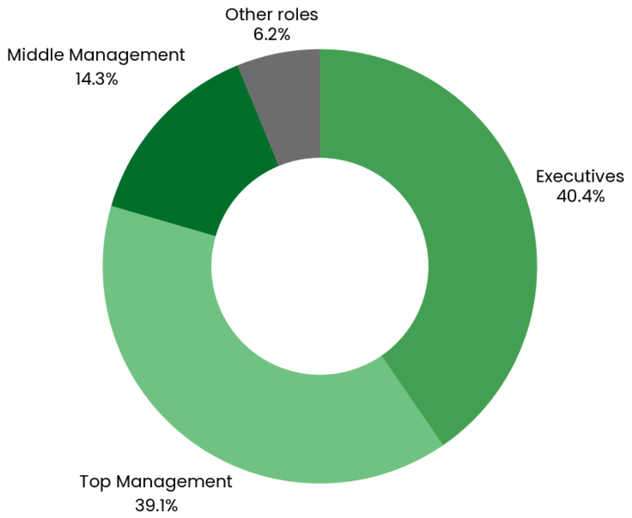
The Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025 was designed to capture how organizations across the world perceive and manage generational dynamics within their leadership structures. Conducted between June and September 2025, the survey collected 1,379 validated responses from Kilpatrick's international network of executives, clients, and senior candidates. This methodology ensured a robust mix of corporate and talent-side perspectives, reflecting the voices of professionals directly involved in shaping modern organizational culture and leadership.

Methodological Details:



(n = 1,379)
(Source: Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025)

Professional Breakdown



Survey Design
Type: Quantitative survey with closed-ended questions and optional qualitative insights.
Platform: Conducted through Typeform Professional Survey Suite, ensuring consistency, anonymity, and high response accuracy.
Sampling: Non-probabilistic but stratified by leadership level and region, guaranteeing balanced representation across Kilpatrick's core markets.
Collection Period: June – September 2025.
Validation Process: All responses were manually verified to remove duplicates and incomplete submissions.
Reliability: The survey has an estimated margin of error of ±2.5% at a 95% confidence level, confirming statistical robustness.

This combination of methodological rigor, digital quality assurance, and respondent diversity makes the survey results both credible and representative of the global leadership landscape.

Respondent Source
All participants are part of Kilpatrick Executive's global professional ecosystem, which includes clients, senior executives, and business leaders connected through ongoing executive search and leadership advisory projects. This network-based sampling allowed for high-quality data grounded in real business experience and strategic decision-making contexts.

Objective
To explore how organizations worldwide perceive the integration, retention, and engagement of Generation Z, and to uncover the regional and sectoral patterns that are reshaping the future of leadership and workforce performance.

"Data collected through Kilpatrick's global network of leaders, clients, and candidates — a perspective rooted in real organizational experience."



Results Unlocked

What Gen Z Reveals About the Future of Work

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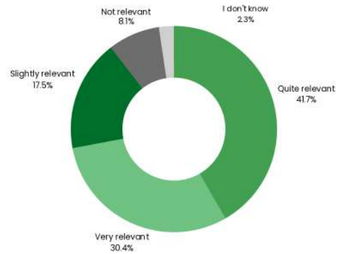
How Relevant Is the Generational Gap as a Challenge?

Our 2025 Gen Z Global Survey reveals that the generational gap is not just a talking point, but a tangible challenge within organizations. 72% of respondents consider it "very" or "quite relevant" for collaboration and performance, while only 8% regard it as irrelevant (Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025). This strong majority indicates that leaders across industries perceive the gap as a real organizational tension rather than a cultural cliché. Beyond statistics, the finding mirrors a global reality: while companies have advanced in diversity, equity, and inclusion, generational diversity remains an underexplored frontier. According to the World Economic Forum, multigenerational workforces are now the norm in most advanced economies, yet fewer than 30% of organizations have formal strategies to manage generational inclusion.

The gap, therefore, is not merely demographic but structural — shaping how decisions are made, how feedback circulates, and how innovation flows within teams. In many organizations, collaboration is hindered not by conflict, but by the absence of a shared language and mutual understanding between age groups. This silent friction can erode trust, limit creativity, and obstruct alignment on common goals. The data suggest that intergenerational collaboration remains one of the most underestimated yet powerful levers of cultural performance in today's workplace, and unlocking it will be key to building cohesive, future-ready organizations.

In your company context, how much is the generational gap perceived as a real challenge to collaboration and performance?

1377 out of 1379 answered



Short conclusions

- The generational divide affects how teams collaborate, not whether they can.
- Misalignment often stems from expectations, not competence.
- Awareness is high, but structured responses remain limited

Insight: Inside most organizations, the generational gap is seen less as a conflict and more as an unspoken tension, widely recognized, yet rarely addressed.

1. World Economic Forum (2024). The Future of Jobs Report. The report notes that although most global workforces now include four generations, fewer than 30% of organizations have dedicated multigenerational strategies. Source

Bridging generations starts with empathy. Understanding differences is not enough: they must be turned into collaboration tools.



Why Does the Gap Feel So Wide?

Behind the perceived distance between generations lies a deeper mix of **values, work styles, and language.**
Each generation brings its own logic of success: Baby Boomers value loyalty, Gen X efficiency, Millennials adaptability, and Gen Z authenticity and balance.
When these priorities clash, trust and performance suffer.

Subsection: The Roots of Perception

- Values – Gen Z seeks purpose and inclusion, while senior leaders may emphasize stability and legacy.
- Styles – Differences in communication speed, feedback expectations, and digital habits often create friction.
- Language – Generations literally "speak" differently: tone, informality, and vocabulary can signal distance or misunderstanding.

Situation	Tension	How to Bridge It
Feedback culture	Gen Z expects constant feedback; senior leaders may see it as impatience.	Implement structured, transparent feedback loops (monthly check-ins instead of annual reviews).
Work-life priorities	Younger employees seek balance and flexibility; older leaders equate presence with commitment	Shift evaluation from hours to outcomes; embrace flexible trust-based performance systems.
Communication tone	Gen Z prefers direct and digital interaction; senior leaders value formality and hierarchy.	Promote *cross-mentoring* and communication workshops to foster mutual adaptation.

1. World Economic Forum (2024). The Future of Jobs Report. The report notes that although most global workforces now include four generations, fewer than 30% of organizations have dedicated multigenerational strategies. Source

Where Does the Generational Gap Manifest Itself Most Clearly?

When asked which aspects reveal the greatest differences between generations, respondents highlighted three key dimensions that shape everyday collaboration. According to the *Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025*, nearly **48%** of professionals identified work approach as the most significant source of contrast between generations, followed by leadership style (**34.6%**) and communication style (**31.2%**). Other areas such as decision-making, motivation, and expectations of growth were also mentioned but with lower intensity.

This distribution reveals that the gap is not primarily about skills or performance, but about how people interpret work, its rhythm, its meaning, and its relationship to life beyond the office. The workplace has become a mirror of generational identities, where attitudes toward flexibility, authority, and interaction can either collide or complement each other, depending on how organizations respond.

At a deeper level, these differences reflect contrasting views of what work represents in modern life. For older generations, it remains a space of duty and recognition, while younger professionals see it as an extension of self-expression and balance. The collision between structure and fluidity, between hierarchy and inclusion, defines much of today's organizational tension. Yet, when effectively understood and managed, these differences can become the foundation for creative collaboration and a more adaptive corporate culture.

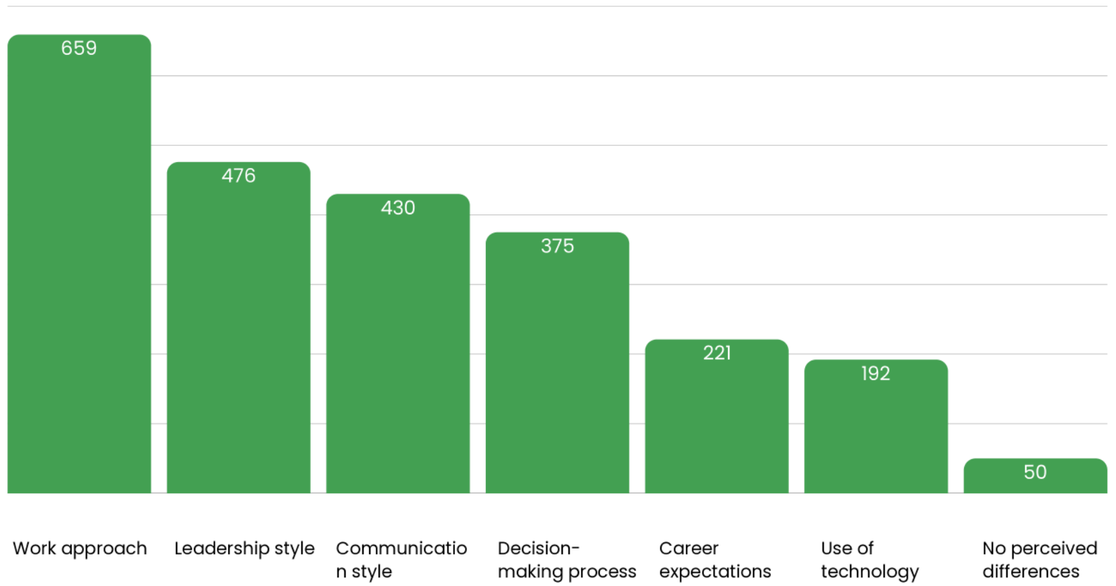
Short conclusions

- The generational gap is less about what people do and more about how they do it.
- Flexibility, purpose, and authenticity define the new standard of collaboration.
- Bridging these differences requires adaptive leadership and open dialogue across age groups.

Insight: The top three dimensions—work approach, leadership, and communication—together account for over 70% of all perceived intergenerational differences.

Which aspects show the greatest differences between Gen Z and other generations in the workplace?

1377 out of 1379 answered



Redefining Work, Leadership, and Communication in the Gen Z Era

> **The generational gap is not a problem to fix but a dialogue to nurture. Where organizations create space for mutual learning, difference becomes a source of innovation**

Work Approach: Redefining Balance and Commitment

For 47.9% of leaders, the most visible difference lies in how Gen Z approaches work. The new generation blurs the line between professional and personal life, seeking flexibility, mental well-being, and alignment with personal values. Unlike older generations who equated long hours with dedication, Gen Z associates productivity with balance and meaning. Their work philosophy challenges organizations to evolve from presenteeism to performance-based trust, where outcomes matter more than hours. The shift is not about working less, but working differently, with autonomy, adaptability, and purpose.

Leadership Style: From Authority to Empathy

34.6% of respondents perceive a strong gap in leadership style. Traditional leadership, built on control and seniority, no longer resonates with a generation raised in collaborative, fast-moving digital ecosystems. Gen Z seeks leaders who listen, mentor, and inspire rather than direct. This change demands a new leadership mindset, one that values emotional intelligence and transparency as much as strategic vision. Effective leaders are now cultural translators, bridging generations through empathy and shared accountability. When empathy replaces hierarchy, teams innovate faster and trust deepens.

Communication Style: From Formality to Connection

With 31.2% citing communication as a point of friction, tone and medium have become defining markers of generational identity. Gen Z's digital fluency drives a preference for immediacy, informality, and visual language, while older generations often associate professionalism with structure and distance. Misalignment in communication expectations can lead to misunderstandings that erode collaboration. Organizations that encourage cross-generational communication training or reverse mentoring reduce these barriers, fostering inclusive dialogue that respects both clarity and authenticity.



From Awareness to Action: How Companies Are (Not Yet) Integrating Gen Z

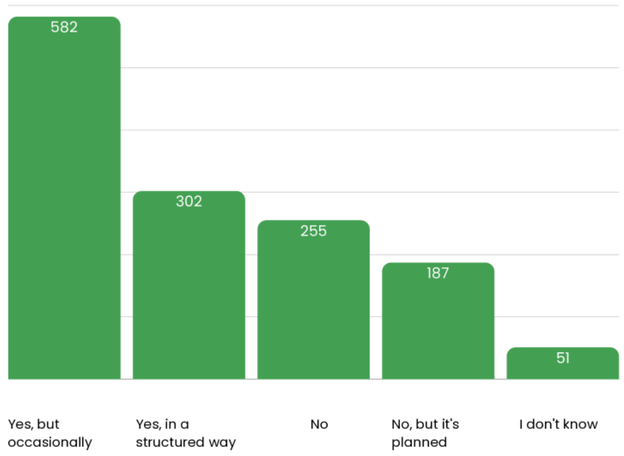
Our 2025 Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey shows that while most companies acknowledge the importance of integrating younger generations into their workforce, few have turned that awareness into structured action. Only 21.9% of respondents report having formal programs in place to integrate Gen Z employees, while 42.3% state that their organizations act only occasionally or informally. A striking 35.8% admit that their companies have no initiatives at all (Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025) [1].

This pattern highlights a persistent gap between recognition and readiness. Although leaders recognize the need to bridge generational differences, many organizations still treat integration as a soft HR matter rather than a strategic business driver. In practice, this means that initiatives remain episodic, disconnected from long-term talent strategies, and often led by individuals rather than embedded within corporate culture. As a result, the potential of generational synergy, where fresh perspectives meet experience and institutional knowledge, remains largely untapped [2].

The challenge, therefore, is not awareness but action. True integration requires moving from reactive engagement to proactive design, where inclusion, mentorship, and shared learning are built into the organizational DNA. Companies that succeed in doing so will not only close the generational gap, but also strengthen adaptability and innovation across all levels of leadership [3].

Has your company implemented any initiatives specifically aimed at supporting the integration of Gen Z into a multigenerational workplace?

1377 out of 1379 answered



Short conclusions

- Integration of Gen Z is widely discussed, but rarely institutionalized.
- Many companies underestimate its potential as a cultural and competitive advantage.
- The organizations that act early are already redesigning collaboration and innovation models around generational inclusion.

Insight: Awareness is widespread, yet execution remains limited. Only 21.9% of organizations have formal integration programs, while most act sporadically or not at all. The gap is clear: companies recognize the challenge, but few translate awareness into action.

1. Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, conducted between June and September 2025 across six global regions, n = 1,379.

2. World Economic Forum (2024). The Future of Jobs Report 2024: Building Inclusive and Multigenerational Workforces.

3. Deloitte (2024). Global Human Capital Trends: Leadership and the Power of Connection.

Bridging the Gap Between Awareness and Action



The gap between awareness and concrete action is not a matter of intent, but of perception. Many organizations genuinely recognize the importance of generational balance, yet still interpret it through an HR-centric lens — as a question of onboarding, retention, or engagement — rather than as a strategic transformation process that directly shapes performance, innovation, and leadership continuity.

This narrow framing limits impact. When integration is seen as an HR responsibility, it becomes reactive, short-term, and disconnected from the company's broader vision. However, when viewed as a business imperative, generational inclusion turns into a strong driver of adaptability and creativity. According to Deloitte's Human Capital Trends Report (2024), companies that have implemented structured generational collaboration programs are 35% more likely to report above-average financial performance.

Similarly, a World Economic Forum study found that organizations fostering cross-generational collaboration experience higher levels of innovation and resilience in times of disruption. The evidence is clear: inclusion across age groups is not only about fairness or culture — it's about competitiveness. When generations learn from one another, they accelerate digital transformation, strengthen decision-making, and ensure leadership continuity.

Conversely, when companies fail to integrate new generational perspectives, they risk cultural stagnation and loss of relevance in fast-changing markets. From Kilpatrick Executive's perspective, this is where the real opportunity lies. Integration should not be reduced to HR initiatives; it must be embedded into leadership development, succession planning, and strategic design. In a world where talent is the ultimate differentiator, bridging generations means building future-ready organizations.

Why the Gap Persists

Short-Term Focus: Many organizations prioritize immediate productivity over long-term capability building, delaying investment in generational integration.
Cultural Inertia: Leadership often assumes that younger generations will adapt to existing systems rather than the reverse.
Misaligned Metrics: Success is still measured through retention and satisfaction, not innovation or cross-generational collaboration outcomes.

From HR Initiative to Competitive Advantage

The most progressive companies are reimagining integration as an engine for adaptability and growth.

They use cross-generational collaboration to:

- Foster reverse mentoring, allowing senior leaders to learn from digital-native Gen Z talent.
- Build cross-gen project teams to blend experience and innovation.
- Embed inclusion metrics into leadership KPIs, turning generational diversity into measurable performance.

As a result, these organizations not only retain young talent but also strengthen leadership pipelines and cultural agility.

The future of talent management lies in connection, not correction. Integrating generations is not an HR duty, it's a strategic decision that defines who leads tomorrow.

1. Deloitte (2024). Global Human Capital Trends Report 2024: Leadership and the Power of Connection.

2. World Economic Forum (2024). The Future of Jobs Report 2024: Building Inclusive and Multigenerational Workforces.

Bridging Experience and Innovation: How Companies Transfer Knowledge Across Generations

The Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025 reveals that organizations are beginning to act on generational collaboration, but progress remains uneven. When asked whether their companies have structured knowledge transfer programs, 42.1% of respondents said yes, while 28.6% stated that such initiatives are currently in development. This is a positive sign of growing awareness, yet also evidence that nearly one in three organizations still lack a formal mechanism to ensure leadership continuity and intergenerational learning (Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025) [1].

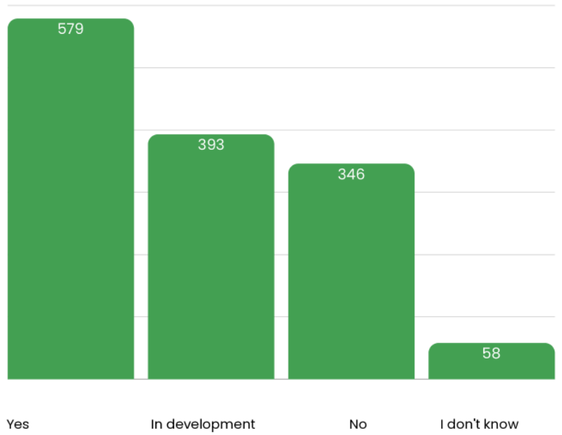
Knowledge transfer is no longer optional, it is an organizational resilience factor. In today's volatile markets, the loss of institutional know-how due to retirements or turnover can critically impact performance and decision-making speed. According to the World Economic Forum (2024), over 60% of global executives identify knowledge continuity as a top-three risk to organizational performance in the next five years [2], while Baby Boomers are retiring at a rate of 10,000 per day in the U.S. alone [3]. This makes structured intergenerational exchange not only beneficial but essential.

Effective transfer requires intentional design, not just informal mentoring but integrated systems that balance experience with innovation and tradition with transformation. Leading organizations are now implementing reverse mentoring, rotational programs, and cross-generational learning ecosystems to facilitate two-way knowledge flows. As Deloitte's Human Capital Trends Report (2024) notes, companies with structured collaboration frameworks report 30% higher leadership readiness and stronger innovation capacity [4].

When knowledge flows freely across generations, organizations safeguard their legacy and accelerate their evolution. What was once a retention tactic has become a strategic lever for competitiveness, agility, and sustainable growth.

Are there active programs in your company to support knowledge transfer between generations? (e.g., reverse mentoring, shadowing, cross-gen teams)

1376 out of 1379 answered



Short conclusions

- Knowledge transfer is emerging as a key HR and business priority.
- Without it, organizations risk losing critical expertise faster than they can rebuild it.
- The most successful companies transform knowledge sharing into a continuous, two-way learning ecosystem.

Insight: A majority of companies recognize the urgency of cross-generational learning, but implementation remains fragmented and largely uncoordinated.

1. Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, conducted between June and September 2025 across six global regions, n = 1,379.

2. World Economic Forum (2024). The Future of Jobs Report 2024: Building Inclusive and Multigenerational Workforces.

3. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024). Labor Force Demographics: Baby Boomer Retirement Trends.

4. Deloitte (2024). Global Human Capital Trends: Leadership and the Power of Connection.

From Knowledge Transfer to Cross-Generational Learning: Building Value Both Ways

True knowledge transfer is not top-down, it is reciprocal. Senior professionals bring strategic vision and experience, while younger generations contribute digital fluency, creativity, and awareness of emerging trends. When structured intentionally, this exchange creates a continuous learning loop that drives both leadership development and innovation.

According to the Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, the most effective practices are reverse mentoring, shadowing, and cross-generational project teams. Reverse mentoring helps senior leaders understand new technologies and mindsets, while shadowing gives young professionals insight into leadership complexity and decision-making. Together, these initiatives build mutual respect and trust across levels.

Organizations that embed such programs report stronger engagement, faster innovation, and more resilient leadership pipelines. Research from Harvard Business Review (2024) shows that companies with cross-generational learning programs see a 20 percent rise in innovation and a 15 percent increase in retention [1]. From Kilpatrick Executive's perspective, knowledge transfer is not just a retention tool, but a strategic advantage that connects experience with transformation.

Practice	Description	Outcome
Reverse Mentoring	Senior executives are paired with Gen Z employees to exchange insights on technology, communication, and emerging cultural trends.	Enhances digital literacy and mutual trust; builds empathy across seniority levels.
Cross-Generational Teams	Task forces combining multiple age groups for innovation projects or client initiatives.	Accelerates creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability.
Job Shadowing Programs	Gen Z employees accompany senior leaders in daily decision-making contexts.	Strengthens understanding of leadership dynamics and strategic reasoning.
Generational Dialogues	Regular internal sessions discussing expectations, language, and work culture.	Reduces friction, reinforces belonging, and improves engagement.

Deep Dive: What Works and Why

From an HR and leadership perspective, knowledge transfer succeeds when it is integrated into corporate learning strategy, not treated as a voluntary initiative. The most advanced companies are moving from mentorship to "co-mentorship," where learning flows both ways, transforming generational diversity into a source of innovation. A study by Harvard Business Review found that firms with active reverse mentoring programs experience up to 20% higher engagement levels among younger employees and stronger innovation outcomes [1]. From Kilpatrick Executive's perspective, such initiatives also reinforce employer branding, showing that the organization values both legacy and evolution, two key drivers for attracting next-generation leaders.

Key Takeaways

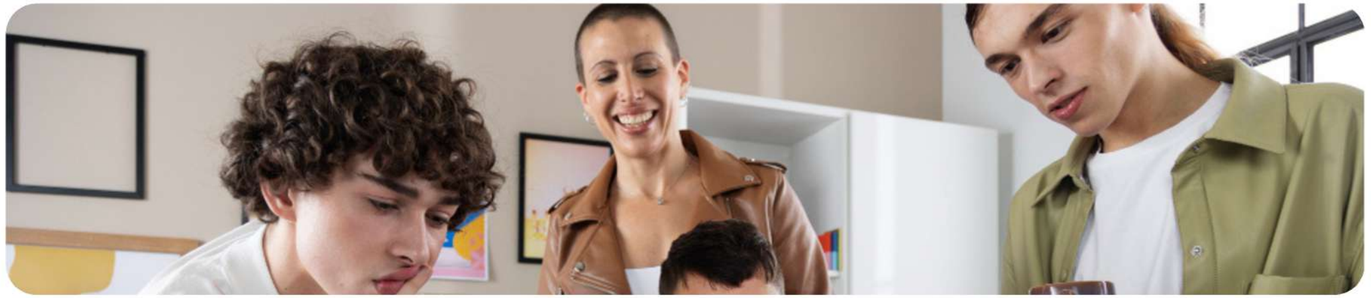
- Knowledge transfer is not a one-way bridge—it's a dialogue.
- Embedding learning between generations strengthens both agility and retention.
- Companies that formalize these exchanges future-proof their leadership and sustain cultural coherence across generations.

1. Harvard Business Review (2024). "The Power of Reverse Mentoring in Leadership Development."

2. Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, conducted between June and September 2025 across six regions, n = 1,379.

3. Deloitte (2024). Human Capital Trends Report 2024.

Retaining and Attracting Gen Z: The New Organizational Challenge



The Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025 highlights what has become one of the defining challenges of modern leadership, keeping and attracting the youngest generation in the workforce. According to the data, 79.7% of respondents believe that retaining Gen Z talent is "more difficult" than retaining previous generations, while only 26.8% state that their organization has a structured strategy to attract this new wave of professionals (Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025).

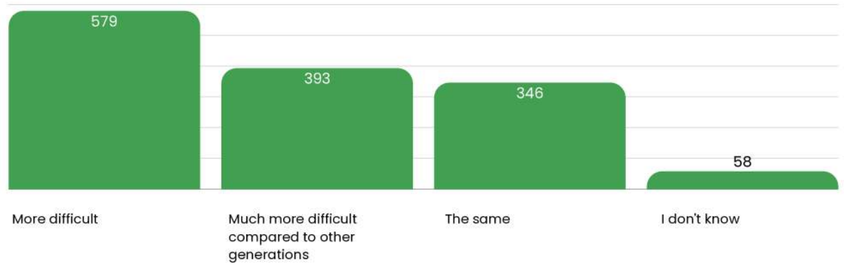
The numbers reveal a growing disconnect between recognition and readiness. Companies are aware that the expectations of younger workers are reshaping traditional talent models, yet few have redefined their strategies to align with these new values. This gap suggests that while organizations understand the symptom, high turnover, disengagement, and lower loyalty, they have not yet addressed the cause, a generational redefinition of what work represents.

For Gen Z, employment is not merely a financial exchange, but a reflection of identity and purpose. Research by Deloitte (2024) confirms that 61% of Gen Z professionals would leave a job that does not align with their personal values [1], while Edelman (2024) reports that 71% evaluate potential employers based on their ethical and social integrity rather than compensation [2]. They seek workplaces that mirror their principles, offer transparency, and create genuine opportunities for development and well-being.

Retention, therefore, is no longer just about compensation or benefits, it has become a question of meaning, belonging, and shared purpose. The ability of organizations to attract and retain young talent now depends less on financial incentives and more on whether they can create cultures of trust, inclusion, and authenticity, places where employees feel connected, valued, and part of something larger than themselves.

In your market, retaining Gen Z talent is perceived as:

1377 out of 1379 answere



Short conclusions

- The difficulty in retention is not about generational impatience, but about a shift in expectations and values.
- Most companies acknowledge the challenge, yet fewer than one in three have a concrete strategy to address it.
- The next frontier of competitiveness will depend on how effectively organizations learn to redefine engagement and attraction models for the next generation of leaders.

Insight: Nearly 8 out of 10 leaders recognize that retaining Gen Z talent is harder than retaining previous generations, confirming that the issue is systemic rather than local or industry-specific.

1. Deloitte (2024). Global Gen Z and Millennial Survey.

2. Edelman (2024). Trust Barometer: The Changing Expectations of the Workforce.

3. Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, conducted between June and September 2025 across six global regions, n = 1,379.

Why Traditional Talent Acquisition Fails with Gen Z

At the heart of the retention crisis lies a deeper sociological transformation, one that challenges long-standing assumptions about what people expect from work. Generation Z does not approach their careers with the same mindset that defined previous generations. They grew up in a world marked by constant disruption, economic instability, rapid technological innovation, and global interconnectedness. The rise of social media exposed them to infinite possibilities, but also to relentless comparison and pressure, while climate anxiety and political volatility made the future feel uncertain from a very young age.

As a result, their relationship with work is less about permanence and more about alignment. Stability, for Gen Z, no longer means staying in the same role or company for years, but having the freedom to adapt, evolve, and build a career that remains coherent with personal growth and values. Work is not a destination, but a platform for meaning, expression, and contribution. Traditional talent acquisition models, built around employer branding, loyalty, and linear career paths, fail to connect with this reality. While organizations still promote long-term commitment and corporate identity, Gen Z seeks authenticity, inclusion, and the flexibility to move across roles, industries, and geographies in search of purpose and impact.

The End of the Linear Career
Gen Z does not equate success with tenure. They value skills over titles and progression over permanence. They see each professional step as an opportunity to learn, diversify their competencies, and strengthen employability. A survey by LinkedIn (2024) found that 64% of Gen Z professionals plan to change jobs within two years [1], highlighting a generation driven not by instability but by a proactive need for evolution and growth.

Authenticity Over Image
Unlike Millennials, who were often drawn to purpose-driven employer brands, Gen Z prioritizes authenticity and transparency. They quickly detect contradictions between a company's stated values and its real actions, and they are not afraid to walk away when the alignment feels off. According to Edelman's Trust Barometer (2024), 71% of Gen Z employees evaluate employers based on their social and ethical behavior, not on perks or slogans [2]. For them, credibility is the new currency of trust, and corporate culture must reflect real integrity rather than crafted image.

Belonging Over Benefits
For this generation, engagement is emotional and relational, not transactional. They remain loyal where they feel respected, heard, and part of a community that values their individuality. Mental health, inclusion, and open dialogue weigh more than traditional incentives. Retention, therefore, depends less on salary or benefits, and more on whether people feel psychologically safe and connected to a shared mission.

Beyond Recruitment: Building a Culture That Attracts Itself
The evolution of the workforce reveals a fundamental truth: the strategies that once defined talent attraction and retention have reached their limit. Companies can no longer rely on linear career promises or symbolic engagement tactics, because younger generations are guided by a different logic of meaning, identity, and reciprocity. Work has become a social and emotional space where purpose, culture, and personal development intersect.
Organizations that adapt to this paradigm shift will be those that understand work as a living ecosystem, one that must evolve with its people. Attraction and retention are no longer separate HR functions, but two sides of a continuous cultural dialogue between company and individual, where trust and learning are built over time. The real advantage, in the end, will belong to those who stop chasing loyalty as an outcome and start cultivating authenticity as a foundation.



1. LinkedIn (2024). Global Workforce Report: The Future of Career Mobility.

2. Edelman (2024). Trust Barometer: The Changing Expectations of the Workforce.

3. Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, conducted between June and September 2025 across six global regions, n = 1,379.

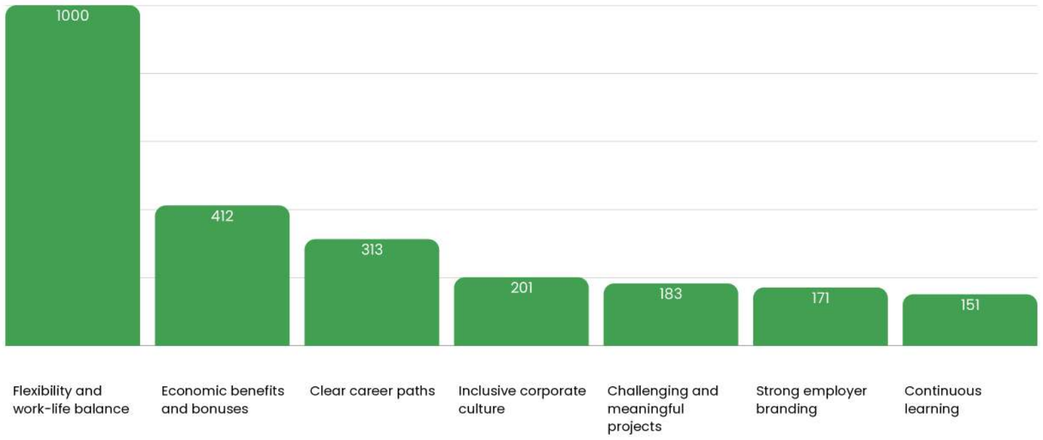


Understanding What Truly Engages the Next Generation

Engaging and retaining Generation Z requires more than adapting communication styles or updating benefit packages, it demands a shift in mindset. For this generation, work is not only a professional space but an extension of personal identity, values, and purpose. The traditional model of engagement, based on incentives, loyalty programs, and hierarchical recognition, no longer resonates.
The Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025 shows a clear hierarchy in what drives engagement today. Flexibility and work-life balance dominate the ranking, chosen by 76% of respondents as the most effective lever for attracting and retaining young professionals. Far behind come economic benefits (30%) and clear career paths (22.7%), underscoring a generational shift from material incentives to emotional and experiential fulfillment (Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025).
This data highlights a fundamental change, the new generation values quality of life as much as quality of work. They want to contribute meaningfully, but they also want to live fully. Companies that continue to see engagement as a transactional exchange risk losing relevance in a world where meaning, flexibility, and authenticity define loyalty and performance.ing the ability to connect with a generation that prioritizes autonomy, trust, and personal growth.

What actions or value propositions do you believe work best to engage and retain Gen Z in your organization?

1377 out of 1379 answered



Short conclusions

- Engagement for Gen Z is not built through control but through connection.
- Work-life balance is not a “benefit,” it is a baseline expectation.
- To engage this generation, organizations must move from offering perks to creating experiences.

Insight: Companies overestimate the importance of compensation and underestimate the power of flexibility, belonging, and purpose.

Among all generational shifts shaping today's workplace, none is as profound or as debated as the redefinition of work-life balance. What once meant leaving the office at a reasonable hour has evolved into something much more complex, a cultural, psychological, and even existential demand for harmony between who we are and what we do.
For Baby Boomers, work was often a duty, a source of stability, and the path to success. Generation X began to question that model, seeking more autonomy, while Millennials introduced the idea of purpose and flexibility. Gen Z, however, has taken this evolution further. They see balance not as the separation of life and work, but as their integration into a single, authentic continuum. They want careers that fit into their lives, not lives squeezed around their jobs.

Raised in a hyperconnected world where work, learning, and relationships overlap, Gen Z no longer distinguishes between "on" and "off" time. Digital technologies have blurred these boundaries, but they have also given individuals more control over how and when they work. According to the Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, 76% of respondents identify flexibility and balance as the main levers of engagement and retention, a figure that confirms the centrality of well-being in professional identity. This generation's quest for balance is not about laziness or entitlement, it is a rational response to a world in permanent flux, where mental health and adaptability have become survival skills.

Sociologically, the shift reflects a deeper redefinition of success. For older generations, success meant climbing the ladder, earning recognition, and achieving stability. For Gen Z, success means alignment, sustainability, and authenticity.

They want to work hard, but only in environments that respect their time, their health, and their humanity. A study by Harvard Business Review (2024) found that 78% of Gen Z employees believe that flexibility and psychological safety have a stronger impact on their productivity than financial incentives [1]. In this sense, the demand for balance is not a rejection of work, it is an evolution of it.

"We think, mistakenly, that success is the result of the amount of time we put in at work, instead of the quality of time we put in."

Arianna Huffington

This quote captures the essence of what the new workforce is asking for, not less ambition, but a more meaningful one. Gen Z's insistence on redefining work-life balance is forcing organizations to confront their own contradictions, to move from speaking about wellness to structurally designing it into their cultures. Companies that continue to equate balance with reduced commitment risk misunderstanding what this generation is truly advocating, a smarter, more sustainable way to achieve excellence.

Action	Description	Why It Matters
Embed Flexibility in Structure	Offer hybrid models, asynchronous collaboration, and trust-based evaluation.	Reduces stigma and creates a culture of empathy and safety.
Normalize Mental Health Conversations	Integrate psychological well-being into performance reviews and leadership training.	Reduces stigma and creates a culture of empathy and safety.
Design Purposeful Workflows	Align team goals with personal development paths and social contribution.	Increases motivation by connecting performance to impact.
Model Balance from the Top	Encourage leaders to demonstrate boundaries and self-care behaviors.	Creates visible permission for balance and strengthens retention.

Beyond the Office: The Human Side of Performance

The future of work-life balance is not about dividing time more efficiently, but about designing environments where people can exist fully. As younger generations enter leadership positions, this reimagined balance will become a defining feature of successful organizations. What started as a generational preference is quickly becoming a universal expectation: the idea that well-being, trust, and performance are not competing priorities, but mutually reinforcing forces.

1. Harvard Business Review (2024). "Why Flexibility and Psychological Safety Drive Performance."

2. Microsoft (2024). Work Trends Index: The Next Great Disruption Is Hybrid Work.

3. Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, conducted between June and September 2025 across six global regions, n = 1,379.
1.

From Cultural Shift to Organizational Transformation

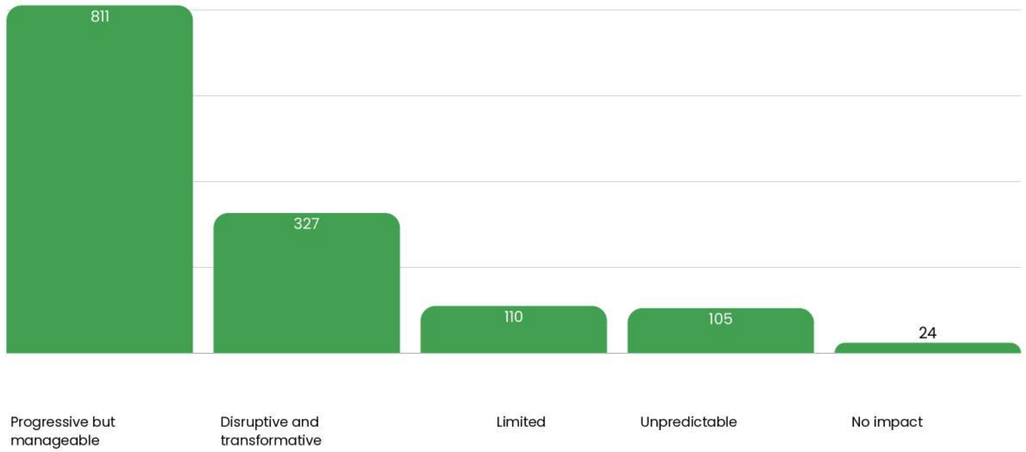
As Generation Z becomes a defining force in the global workforce, organizations are standing at a turning point. The *Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025* reveals that **58.9%** of respondents expect the impact of this generation to be *progressive but manageable*, while **23.7%** anticipate it will be *disruptive and transformative*. These perceptions suggest both optimism and uncertainty: leaders recognize the potential of Gen Z to drive innovation, but many are still unsure how to integrate their influence into established models *(Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025)*.

Across regions, the trend is consistent. In mature markets such as Europe and North America, the integration of Gen Z is viewed as an opportunity to accelerate digital transformation and sustainability agendas. In emerging markets like Latin America and Asia, where demographic renewal is faster, this shift is already reshaping management hierarchies and cultural norms. What emerges is a global realignment, where generational change becomes the engine of organizational renewal. This transformation is not only about who joins the workforce, but about how work itself is defined. The rise of Gen Z challenges organizations to evolve from structures of control to ecosystems of connection, from static hierarchies to fluid collaboration networks, and from traditional success metrics to values rooted in purpose, inclusion, and adaptability.

"The rise of Gen Z will not dismantle existing structures, it will demand that they evolve."
— Kilpatrick Executive Global Report 2025

In your opinion, the impact of Gen Z on company organization will be:

1377 out of 1379 answered





1. PwC (2024). Workforce of the Future: The Competing Forces Shaping 2030.

2. Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, conducted between June and September 2025 across six global regions, n = 1,379.

Leading Through Generational Change: A View from Kilpatrick Executive



At Kilpatrick Executive, we see this shift not as an abstract trend but as a reality unfolding in every client conversation, every search process, and every leadership transition we manage. The integration of Generation Z is not simply a demographic phenomenon — it represents a redefinition of how leadership, culture, and performance interact within modern organizations.

The data shows that most organizations are aware of the generational gap, but far fewer are prepared to address it strategically. The awareness–action gap, identified throughout our research, reflects a deeper organizational inertia — the tendency to adapt only when disruption becomes unavoidable. Yet, from an executive search perspective, the market is already rewarding those who anticipate. Companies that have introduced intergenerational leadership models, reverse mentoring, and flexible growth paths are not just retaining younger talent; they are becoming magnets for innovation.

Sociologically, the transformation underway resembles the shift from industrial management to knowledge management — but with an added layer of emotional intelligence. Gen Z leaders prioritize empathy, collaboration, and purpose over authority, which requires companies to rethink how leadership potential is defined and developed. According to McKinsey (2024), organizations that embed empathy and adaptability in their leadership models are 1.6 times more likely to outperform peers in innovation and retention.

For global headhunters, this means reimagining what makes a successful leader. The next decade will not be defined by titles or tenure, but by the ability to unite diverse generations around shared goals. The most effective leaders will act as translators — bridging the expectations of digital-native talent with the wisdom of experience — creating ecosystems of trust and mutual learning. Ultimately, the generational transformation is not something to manage but to harness: an opportunity to redesign organizations into more human, agile, and purpose-driven systems capable of thriving amid complexity.

> **The future of talent management lies in connection.**

Priority	Strategic Focus
1. Redefine Leadership	Shift from authority to empathy, from control to influence.
2. Build Adaptive Cultures	Encourage flexibility, feedback, and cross-generational collaboration.
3. Integrate Learning Loops	Foster continuous upskilling and reverse mentoring.
4. Measure Engagement, Not Presence	Align performance metrics with motivation and meaning.
5. Lead with Purpose	Connect business strategy with authenticity, sustainability, and impact.

Where Generations Meet, the Future Begins

The rise of Generation Z will not replace existing leadership, it will redefine it. The organizations that embrace this evolution will discover that the true competitive advantage lies not in generational homogeneity, but in the dialogue between perspectives. As we look to 2030, the companies that thrive will be those that transform generational diversity into collective intelligence. At Kilpatrick Executive, we believe this is not only the next phase of talent evolution, but also the foundation of a more human and sustainable future of work.

1. McKinsey & Company (2024). The Human Edge: Redefining Leadership in the Age of Empathy.

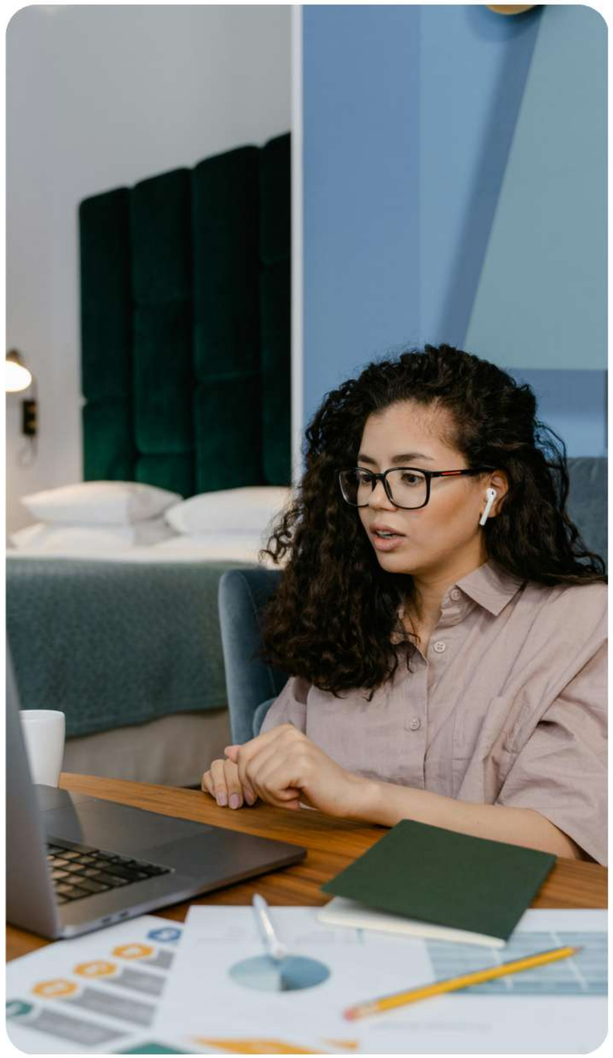
2. PwC (2024). Workforce of the Future: The Competing Forces Shaping 2030.

3. Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, conducted between June and September 2025 across six global regions, n = 1,379.



Conclusion

Where Generations Meet,
Transformation Begins.



Rethinking Leadership for a Multigenerational Future

The results of the Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025 make one point clear: the future of work will not be defined by a single generation, but by the ability of organizations to connect generations through shared purpose, trust, and learning. At Kilpatrick Executive, this conviction did not emerge in theory, but from practice. Every day, as headhunters working across continents and industries, we observe the shifting dynamics between generations inside companies. Conversations with executives, HR leaders, and candidates reveal a common tension — while the workplace has become more diverse than ever before, the real challenge is not coexistence, but collaboration.

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Our findings reveal that organizations no longer compete solely for technical skills, but for adaptability, empathy, and vision. Generational diversity, once seen as a management challenge, has become a vital source of resilience and creativity when properly harnessed. However, this potential often remains untapped. Too many companies still treat generational inclusion as a human resources initiative rather than a long-term strategic transformation. Those that succeed elevate collaboration between generations into a cultural foundation that strengthens leadership, engagement, and performance across every level.

Achieving this balance means creating systems where learning flows in both directions and curiosity holds the same value as experience. Senior leaders must share wisdom and vision, while younger professionals contribute renewal, digital fluency, and a new understanding of success and stability. Research supports this shift: Deloitte (2024) found that companies promoting multigenerational collaboration outperform peers by up to 35% in innovation and engagement, while the World Economic Forum (2024) reports higher adaptability and resilience in organizations that cultivate cross-generational learning.

These insights confirm what we see every day: bridging generations is not just an ethical responsibility but a true competitive advantage. A modern organization turns age, culture, and perspective into sources of creativity and stronger decision-making. At Kilpatrick Executive, we believe the future of talent lies in intergenerational dialogue — where leaders listen, guide, and evolve with their teams. The future of work will belong to those who unite experience with innovation, transforming diversity into collective intelligence and progress.

1. Deloitte (2024). Global Human Capital Trends: The Power of Human Connection.

2. World Economic Forum (2024). The Future of Jobs Report: Multigenerational Workforces as a Strategic Asset.

3. Kilpatrick Gen Z Global Survey 2025, conducted between June and September 2025 across six global regions, n = 1,379.

From Insight to Implementation: The 5 Steps to Action

Acknowledge Diversity as Strength

Recognize generational diversity as a core business asset, not a management challenge. Move beyond age stereotypes, and celebrate the creative tension that fuels innovation and problem-solving.

Redefine Leadership Models

Promote leadership styles centered on empathy, flexibility, and transparency. Effective leaders are cultural translators, capable of bridging perspectives across generations.

Measure and Reward Collaboration

Introduce KPIs that recognize mentorship, shared learning, and team success. Rewarding collective impact builds a culture of trust and cross-generational accountability.



Design Cross-Generational Learning Programs

Implement reverse mentoring, shadowing, and intergenerational workshops to foster understanding, strengthen collaboration, and ensure leadership continuity.

Embed Flexibility and Purpose into Work Design

Reimagine organizational structures to reflect the Gen Z mindset, autonomy, impact, and balance. Purpose-driven flexibility enhances motivation and long-term engagement.



Steer Tomorrow: Guiding Innovation Through Generational Synergy

"The future of work is not about replacing generations, but about connecting them."

At Kilpatrick Executive, we help organizations steer tomorrow by turning generational diversity into strategic advantage.

Connect • Lead • Inspire • Evolve