



**MATT HAVENS**



# **Hiring and Engaging a Gen Z Workforce: The Do's and Don'ts**

## Hiring and Engaging a Gen Z Workforce: The Do's and Don'ts

Hiring has always been a top priority for any organization, and today's work environment is no different. What has started to change more recently, though, is the type of workforce available and the expectations they bring into the workplace. More bluntly stated, Gen Z is the newest generation to enter the workforce and how you hire and engage them might look differently than in times past.

Now let me be clear. I believe we massively overcomplicate this whole generational conversation. When I have the opportunity to speak from stage, I try to shift the focus away from generational differences and focus more on what we ALL need in the workplace, regardless of which generation we identify with. Truth be told, we are a lot more similar to each other than we give ourselves credit for.

That said, I do recognize that we've been brainwashed to believe that we invent new cohorts of people every 15-20 years. Therefore, the title of this article – and the reason I'll refer to Gen Z in this space – is to not confuse the conversation. Gen Z does indeed operate a little differently than the Baby Boomer generation, so we will focus on those nuances. However, I beg and implore you, please recognize that you might be hiring or working with a Baby Boomer with more Gen Z qualities than the 20-something you just hired. That's why it's imperative to not always lump someone into a generational box based purely on their birth year.

So what is different these days when it comes to hiring and engaging a Gen Z workforce? Here are 5 tips to get you started on the right path:

### Hire for Development

Depending on your field of work, it's entirely possible your industry doesn't come off as sexy, cool, and the source of everyone's childhood dreams when they considered what they wanted to do when they grew up. It's a good reminder that the youngest generations aren't likely to understand the benefits of the field immediately, so focus your hiring efforts on candidates who want development. Better yet, hire with a mindset towards those you can develop! Additionally, there are plenty of Gen Z'ers who will jump at the opportunity to develop real-world experience, learn a new transferrable skill, and control their destiny. So focus on hiring towards development versus looking at specific skills, and you'll probably be happier in the long run.

### Don't Hire for the Long-Run

Wait. You just said to hire with a mindset towards development. Are you now saying I should hire someone who will leave for another job in 6 months? Yes and no. Too often organizations hire (or don't hire) based on how long they can keep the person with them. After all, repeatedly hiring is costly and tiresome.

However, your hiring shouldn't be focused on finding someone who will stay with you for 10 years. Why? Because it's not their job to convince you that they'll stay for 10 years; it's *your* job to convince *them* that they want to make a career with you. You'll have some talented people who leave after a year, just like every other business does. That's OK – and perfectly normal for a Gen Z workforce gaining experience. If you hire good talent, regardless of the tenure they promise you, your

company will benefit and may even attract new talent off the networking and goodwill of past team members.

### **Personalize the Rewards**

Sales incentive packages work, but more important for a Gen Z workforce is how those incentives or perks can be personalized. In some cases, these personalized incentives can come with little to no financial cost. An impromptu day-off, lunch with the boss, or quick recognition amongst peers for a job well done tends to go a long way with this crowd. I'm not asking you to revamp your entire rewards package. I'm merely suggesting that you sit down with your new team members (and existing ones, while you're at it) and get a better understanding of what motivates them personally so that you can properly tailor your approach.

### **Don't Make All Rewards a Competition**

Most organizations offer some sort of rewards package to encourage a team member's production or results. Many sales incentives like "top salesperson" or unit bonuses are structured for group competition. And while competition is healthy, most Gen Z'ers won't have the experience to effectively compete with your more seasoned staff – and as you can probably imagine, it's rather deflating to begin a competition with no expectation of being able to win. So while the competitions will push them to learn more and grow, make sure your leadership team is also incentivizing the individual based on their personal growth and improvements. Those efforts will keep this group engaged while they take aim at higher production goals.

### **Support a Networking Mindset**

Sales are still conducted frequently in person or on the phone, but consumers are shopping online and engaging in a digital environment. This is the area where your Gen Z employees can probably shine. So make sure your business practices don't confine or box your team to a specific mode of communication! Organizations which encourage their teams to network in the community, at events and online – and even provide avenues within the workday to do so – are the ones winning sales when it comes time for an informed consumer to purchase. Allowing your Gen Z'ers to tap into this networking economy on their terms will help them appreciate the flexibility and support from a company willing to think outside the box.