

The A, B, Zs of our new generation and how to accommodate them in the workplace

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Millennials are now entering their thirties and, just like me, they are beginning to peak at around 34 - 35 years of age, and we have seen that they already play a big part in our work culture.

Known as 'digitarians', or the superficial extroverts, Generation Z can be seen as one of the most profound changes in business following the emergence of the post-millennial generation. Perhaps we should pay more attention towards those born in the 90s, the ones who are about to flood the workforce and who already make-up a whopping one quarter of the American population.

One of my favourite websites, Fast Company, recently announced findings from Adecco Staffing USA this week which shed some scary workplace insights on Gen Z. One of the startling findings was that 27% of students surveyed believe they should stay at their job for one year or less.



Image via [123RF](#)

Looking forward, in order to beat competitors, we will need to focus our efforts on ensuring the sustainability of our most important assets, the staff. In order to attract the very best and brightest, we need to pay urgent attention to the workspace. Here are five ways companies should address Gen Z to best position their workplace for success, as reported by Fast Company:

- 1. Prepare your millennials for managing Gen Z:** Gen Z thrive on private time to think and explore new ideas while remaining close to their team mates for mentorship. Organisations will need to coach their millennials on how to provide this type of management and also create workplaces that support this employer-employee dynamic to maximise their potential.
- 2. The 'one workplace fits all' approach does not work:** Companies need to re-think their approach on how to support collaboration, idea generation, and recognition. With mobility on the rise, corporates also need to create spaces that provide environments that foster Gen Z's mentoring and development requirements, empowering them and making it a space they want to visit each day.
- 3. Encourage play and flexibility:** Additional stats from the Adecco report show that a friendly work environment and allowance for flexible schedules were both in the top five attributes Gen Z will look for in a job. More than any other previous generation, Gen Z will put pressure on organisations to provide flexible work environments.

4. Constant connectedness: Gen Z has never known a world without computers. They spend hours a day connected digitally via phone, laptop, or tablet. In fact, according to a Sparks & Honey report, these "digitarians" will often multi-task across five-screens. Technology is an integral part of their lives and they will expect it to be seamless in their work experience.

5. A healthy workplace equals a healthy bottom line: Gen Z expects organisations to care about their energy use and carbon footprint and to have a vested interest in helping. A formal wellness program is also vitally important.

According to *The Gen Z Effect: The Six Forces Shaping the Future of Business*, by authors Tom Koulopoulos and Dan Keldsen; while every new generation has faced its share of disruption in technology, economics, politics and society, no other generation in the history of mankind has had the ability to connect every human being on the planet to each other while being socially and economically engaged.

From what we can see, a company's success is determined by the quality of the workspace it provides - and how it can allow workers to connect and collaborate together under one roof. As South African corporates begin to wake-up and smell the workplace benefits, it's evident they realise that the workspace of today needs to be optimally planned in order to attract, retain and engage workers. More than just a single workspace - it is a palette of places and shared experiences for all personality types and generations to thrive in.

ABOUT ADAM HUNTER

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