step

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Preparing your workplace to welcome Gen Z talent in 2025

Who are they, what do they expect and how can you engage and retain them?

Bringing Business + Graduates together





Understanding Gen Z in the workplace

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, represents the first true digital natives, shaped by a world where the internet, smartphones, and social media have always been the norm. In the UK alone, they make up around 12 million people and are projected to comprise one-third of the workforce by 2025, bringing distinct expectations that organisations can leverage to future-proof their teams.

Unlike previous generations, Gen Z emphasises seamless digital integration in the workplace, favouring efficient technology and flexible work arrangements. However, these preferences resonate across generations as tools like Slack, Microsoft Teams, and Google Workspace have become universal for communication, collaboration, and productivity. Many workers, including Gen Z, also excel in digital tools such as Adobe Creative Suite, Canva, and CRM systems like Salesforce. For Gen Z, 85% prefer hybrid or remote work models, reflecting a growing workforce-wide demand for flexibility.

Gen Z, like others, values purpose-driven careers, with 77% seeking employers aligned with their values. Mental health and wellbeing are priorities for all, with Gen Z leading the call for more paid time off and flexibility. These trends highlight the universal need for balance and resources like wellness programmes and counselling.

Authenticity, inclusivity, and transparency matter to all generations. For Gen Z, 83% prioritise diversity and inclusion when choosing employers, and dissatisfaction with unclear job descriptions or growth opportunities is common across age groups. Clear communication and alignment with employee values are vital for retaining talent at all levels.

Entrepreneurial spirit is another hallmark of Gen Z, with 58% aspiring to start their own businesses. However, across generations, workers seek environments that foster creativity, innovation, and meaningful contributions. Tools like Asana and Trello that enhance efficiency and support work-life balance are appreciated by employees of all ages.

While Gen Z brings unique perspectives, their focus on flexibility, purpose, inclusivity, and efficiency reflects values increasingly shared across the modern workforce.

*FDM Group, 2023
*LinkedIn, Sommerville, 2024)



Building a future-ready workplace

As Gen Z becomes a significant part of the UK workforce, their expectations are reshaping workplace practices. Flexibility and mental health support are top priorities, with many favouring a balanced approach to remote and in-office work. Given that 1 in 3 Gen Zers report anxiety or depression, businesses can retain and engage these workers by prioritising wellbeing initiatives and flexible working arrangements.

UK businesses can attract Gen Z—and others—by offering purpose-driven roles and fostering an inclusive culture. Opportunities in areas like sustainability, corporate social responsibility, or community engagement enable employees to feel they're contributing to something meaningful beyond a job.

The shift to remote learning during COVID has influenced younger workers' workplace expectations, creating an opportunity for businesses to adopt flexible, collaborative arrangements. By balancing business needs with emerging talent preferences, employers can build environments that support productivity, satisfaction, and long-term success.

> "For graduates whose studies were shaped by remote learning during the COVID years, flexibility has become an expectation. Rather than focusing solely on office attendance, employers and younger workers can work together to create flexible arrangements that benefit both productivity and work-life balance."



Tamsin Millns
Director,
Step Recruitment

How Step can help you attract and retain

Successfully attracting and retaining Gen Z talent involves more than just offering attractive salaries—it's about positioning your organisation as the ideal choice by aligning with their values and expectations. Project Next Generation by UCAS highlights the importance of happiness, job satisfaction, and values alignment for this demographic (UCAS, n.d.).

Here's a breakdown of how your organisation can effectively get in front of this talent and present itself as their preferred employer:







1 Engage early and often

Establish a presence in the academic and early career stages of Gen Z candidates. We help you connect with students through university partnerships, placements, and internships, allowing you to introduce your organisation early and nurture these relationships as they progress towards graduation.

2 Align with an authentic brand

Gen Z values authenticity in the brands they connect with. By aligning with our well-recognised campus presence, your organisation can reach this generation in a way that resonates with their values. Through our established mission, culture, and relatable stories, we help you stand out to students as a genuine and desirable place to work.

3 Showcase your values

Align your recruitment messaging with the values that matter most to Gen Z, such as diversity, inclusion, sustainability, and social responsibility. We guide you in crafting content and campaigns that clearly communicate how your organisation lives these values daily.

4 Leverage digital platforms

Meet Gen Z where they are—online. We support you in leveraging social media, career platforms, and other digital channels to showcase your brand, share employee testimonials, and engage in meaningful conversations with potential candidates.

5 Interactive and transparent communication

Gen Z values clear, transparent, and interactive communication. We facilitate two-way engagement with candidates, ensuring they have access to the information they need while empowering them to ask questions and feel involved throughout the recruitment process.

Predictions for the Next Wave of Graduates and How to Prepare for Them

As work environments continue to change, the next wave of graduates will bring new expectations, skills, and challenges. Here are our key predictions for the next generation of graduates and how employers can prepare.

Emphasis on skills and upskilling

Employers are increasingly adopting skills-based hiring, prioritising practical abilities over formal qualifications to break down barriers like the "paper ceiling" and address economic uncertainties.

Develop skills-based assessment tools

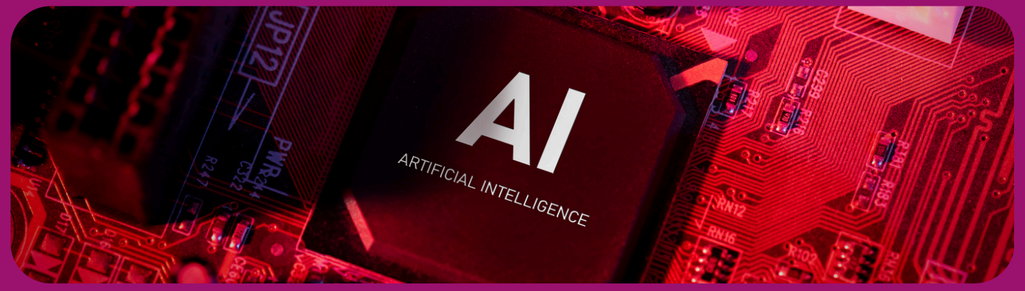
Incorporate practical assessments into your hiring process to evaluate a candidate's ability to perform specific tasks. This approach can help identify talent that might be overlooked if only traditional qualifications were considered.

Invest in upskilling programs

With the rapid pace of technological change, continuous learning will be essential. Offer training and development opportunities that allow employees to acquire new skills and stay relevant in their roles.

> "Focusing on skills, rather than a candidates' background, their grades or where they studied is also good practice to ensure a fairer recruitment process."
>
> **Tamsin Millns**





Integration of AI and Digital Skills

The integration of AI and digital skills into the workplace is inevitable. Graduates entering the workforce will need to be proficient in AI tools and navigating a digital-first environment.

Incorporate AI training into onboarding

As AI becomes a critical component of many roles, ensuring that new hires are comfortable with these technologies from the start will be essential.

Promote digital literacy

With the rapid pace of technological change, continuous learning will be essential. Offer training and development opportunities that allow employees to acquire new skills and stay relevant in their roles.

Sustainability and Digital Curriculum

As Gen Z enters the working world, they bring strong expectations around sustainability and digital proficiency, reflecting societal shifts toward environmental responsibility and tech-savvy operations. Organisations can harness this enthusiasm by integrating sustainability initiatives and digital tasks into their roles, allowing graduates to develop these skills on the job. This approach not only demonstrates a commitment to these important areas but also empowers the next generation to contribute meaningfully to the organisation's goals.

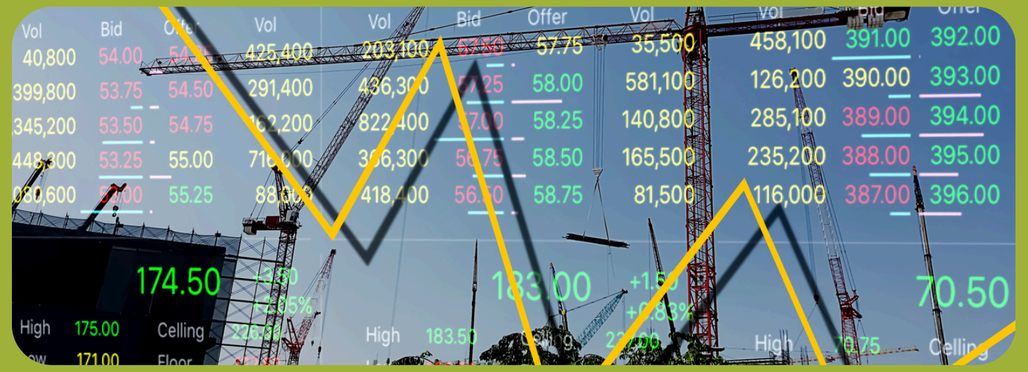
Emphasise sustainability in your employer brand

Highlight your company's commitment to sustainability in your recruitment efforts. This can make your organisation more attractive to environmentally conscious graduates.

Adapt roles to include sustainability and digital focus

Ensure that job roles, particularly in sectors like engineering, marketing, and operations, incorporate sustainability and digital skills. This will not only attract top talent but also future-proof your organisation.





Economic and Political Influences

The economic and political environment will shape graduate opportunities, with potential recessions and policy changes, like recent reforms to the apprenticeship levy. In September 2024, the UK government introduced a new 'growth and skills levy' to replace the apprenticeship levy, offering employers more flexibility to invest in training that meets their specific needs.

Stay agile in recruitment strategies

Economic downturns may lead to leaner teams and a greater focus on productivity. Be prepared to adapt your recruitment strategies to prioritise candidates with the skills necessary to thrive in a challenging economic environment.

Engage in continuous dialogue with industry bodies

Keep abreast of political changes that could impact your workforce, such as shifts in education policy or economic incentives for skills development. Partnering with industry bodies and educational institutions can help you stay informed and adapt quickly.

Future-Proof Your Workforce with Gen Z Talent

Let's chat about how we can help you attract and retain top Gen Z talent to build a future-ready workforce.

At Step, we specialise in connecting you with the next generation of bright minds through placements, internships, and full-time roles. Welcoming Gen Z into your team means setting your business up for success—let us help you find the people who'll drive your future forward!

Contact us today to discuss how our recruitment services can help you build a future-ready workforce.

www.step.org.uk

info@step.org.uk

0115 871 8740

employers@step.org.uk



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