

# W O R K F O R C E U N I T E D



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# WELCOME TO THE FOUR-GENERATION WORKFORCE

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## FOREWORD

What's in a generation? Twelve years of experience, development and change. You share a lot with the people who grow up around the same time as you. But does this really decide who you are and what type of career you'll have?

This question has never been more pertinent. In the last few years, Gen Z – those born after 1996 – have come of age. They have entered the workforce for the first time, joining colleagues who are up to fifty years their senior. Within any given office, factory or shop floor, you can find four distinct age groups – making today's workplace the most age-diverse in history.

What does this mean for employees in 2019? To find out, we commissioned a survey of 4,580 office-based workers across 24 EMEA countries. We discovered:

- What Gen Z think about and want from work
- How Gen Z relate to other generations and vice versa
- To what extent the arrival of Gen Z will change working styles and workplace technology
- How all generations increasingly share the same views and attitudes, crossing existing generational stereotypes

In putting this report together, we came to some unexpected conclusions, which shed light on the true nature of the 'generation gap'. I hope reading it inspires you to challenge your preconceptions about generational difference.

For me, the message is loud and clear: employees of all ages share the same beliefs and expectations. We all want to work to the best of our abilities, in a way that's efficient, stress-free, and technologically-enabled. Increasingly, we want to see business change for the better.

Gen Z's arrival in the workplace presents us with an opportunity to do this. We can re-assess traditional ideas about what it means to work and build a more inclusive work environment that enables everyone to reach their full potential.

And we'll do it as a workforce united.



David Mills  
CEO Ricoh Europe

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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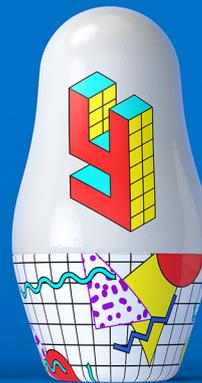
## FOUR GENERATIONS ARE CURRENTLY AT WORKING AGE



**BABY BOOMERS**  
1946 – 1964



**GEN X**  
1965 – 1980



**GEN Y**  
1981 – 1995



**GEN Z**  
1996 – today

This report explores the dynamic between different generations in the modern workforce, with a specific focus on the impact the arrival of Gen Z has had on the workplace.

We've examined the similarities and differences between all generations to establish whether the latest group has brought about a workplace revolution – or

whether they share the same habits, workstyles and technology preferences as everyone else. Here's what we uncovered:

- **The generational divide is mostly myth.** Rather than sparking conflict, the arrival of Gen Z has brought employees together.

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- **Employees of all ages share the same over-riding motivations to perform at work.** The opportunity to fulfil their potential came out on top of salary increases and promotion for employees of all ages.
  - **Values are important and shared across the generations.** There is consensus around the idea that businesses should be more responsible and that sustainability will be at the centre of future business and product strategies.
  - **While workstyles are shifting, there is far less tension between the generations about these changes than previously thought.** A collaborative work culture, for example, was equally popular among Gen X, Gen Y and Baby Boomers, with Gen Z indexing only slightly higher. More flexible working hours and better tools for remote working were equally valued by all generations, not just the young.
  - **Finally, we uncovered the deep excitement for technology that exists across the workplace.** Employees of all ages welcome new workplace technology. They also value training to help them make the most of it. Almost everyone expects to upskill throughout their career and believe that new forms of technology are crucial to that

process. In fact, technology is a serious pull for potential employees.

It turns out we're more aligned in our motivations, frustrations and aspirations than ever before. There's truly more that unites us than divides us in the workplace. It's time to move past unhelpful stereotypes and start treating employees like a workforce united.

## METHODOLOGY

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This report is based on a survey of 4,580 office-based employees across 24 EMEA countries. The survey was conducted by Coleman Parkes and commissioned by Ricoh.



WELCOME TO  
THE FOUR-  
GENERATION  
WORKPLACE

# WELCOME TO THE FOUR-GENERATION WORKFORCE

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**'MOTIVATED AND TRAINED,  
GENERATION BLOCKCHAIN  
IS PREPARING TO  
DISRUPT YOU'**

**'LOOK OUT, GEN Z IS  
ABOUT TO ENTER YOUR  
WORKPLACE'**

**'GEN Z SEE A JOB AND  
DON'T HANG ABOUT'**

**'GEN Z IS OFFICIALLY  
HERE. HOW WILL  
WE MANAGE?'**

These are the headlines announcing the arrival of Gen Z in the workplace. They paint a worrying picture of competitive digital natives on a mission to disrupt, or upstarts whose demands need to be 'managed'. At best, they suggest that you approach Gen Z with caution.

However, our research indicates that the first wave of Gen Z are far from a disruptive force. Quite the opposite: it seems that the introduction of a

generation of younger employees has unified existing workers around key beliefs. Instead of stirring up serious conflict, the interaction of different age groups seems to bring out the best in people. The majority (63%) feel they perform better in a team consisting of people of different ages, while 66% think that a cross-generational workplace is an asset to the company.

What's more surprising, given the headlines, is that 71% of employees actually like working alongside

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colleagues of different ages. Obviously different generations have distinct preferences and tendencies, and occasionally this can be a source of friction. All generations agree, for example, that Gen Z will need to work on communication (44%) and conflict resolution (34%). But this isn't necessarily a sign that Gen Z are maladjusted, or incapable of speaking to people 'in real life'. It's arguable that everybody undergoes a learning curve when they enter the workplace – and as the oldest of Gen Z are only just starting their careers, it's no shock that they're still learning how to manage relationships in a professional context.

At the same time, every generation agrees Gen Z is not given enough credit for what they bring to the workplace, with 46% of employees from each generation agreeing with this statement on average. Older generations recognised the skills and benefits particular to Gen Z, with the top three being:

- **New perspectives (41%)**
- **Tech skills (41%)**
- **New ways of working (42%)**

There's also a consensus that Gen Z's efficient use of technology could lead to a four-day work-week in the future, with over half of workers (57%) indicating that they could envisage this happening. And this could be a very good thing: a company in New Zealand conducted a trial four-day work week last year, and saw staff stress levels decrease by 7 percentage

points, while overall life satisfaction increased by 5 percentage points. Maybe Gen Z will lead the way to a more positive and balanced working world in the years to come.

The connection between Gen Z and the future is irrefutable. All generations agree (59% average) that Gen Z will be the most innovative generation to date. But this isn't necessarily focused on Gen Z alone: all generations believe that their successors will be more innovative than they have been (63%), including Gen Z. In this sense, it seems we really do think that the future belongs to the young.

59%

**BELIEVE THAT GEN Z WILL  
BE THE MOST INNOVATIVE  
GENERATION TO DATE.**

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SHARED  
MOTIVATIONS,  
SHARED  
FRUSTRATIONS

# SHARED MOTIVATIONS, SHARED FRUSTRATIONS

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**“CULTURE IS SIMPLY A SHARED WAY OF DOING SOMETHING WITH A PASSION.”**

Brian Chesky, Co-Founder, Ceo, Airbnb

Until now, the conversation about generations in the workplace has been dominated by one theme: division. But our evidence suggests that the picture is one of unity. Instead of dwelling on what divides their employees, business leaders should direct their attention to their shared motivations and frustrations.

In terms of people, the most common complaint is a lack of communication from management personnel, with 52% of employees across the board reporting this as something that annoys them. When it comes to culture, there is very little difference between Baby Boomers, Gen X, Y, or Z. All generations say a lack of innovation is their biggest frustration (53%) closely followed by a slow pace of change (49%). But then again, Gen Z are more likely than other generations to say workplace change is too fast-paced for their liking, with 37% of Gen Z workers saying this compared with a 33% average across all generations.

And while younger generations are much maligned for their supposed ‘job-hopping’, we’ve found that all employees are open-minded when it comes to thinking about future career moves.

Slightly more than a third (37%) of all generations are expecting to leave their job in the next one to two years. When asked for a reason, all generations pointed to a lack of a pay rise (25%) or opportunities to progress (20%). By addressing these key complaints, business leaders can effectively improve the satisfaction of workers of all ages – and hold onto their valuable staff.

As much as employees of all generations share the same frustrations, they also share the same priorities. First and foremost, employees of all generations want one thing: to perform at the highest level possible. Nearly a third (28%) of workers share in this priority, which over-rides the desire for salary increases (26%) and promotion (23%). In addition, factors such as well-being programmes, mobile working and a sense of autonomy are all similarly popular among different generations.

All generations are united in their desire to contribute more to their work, with 72% selecting this option across all age groups. Plus, 65% of all generations believe in their company’s values and ideals, while 59% agree that work is a key factor in defining who they are.

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It's a common misconception that an idealistic young generation is prioritising ethics and responsibility as never seen before. But our research shows that all generations hold their employers to the same standards and have similar views on the wider responsibility of businesses moving forward.

When it comes to successful leadership, for instance, all generations agree that effective problem solving (44%) and visionary thinking (39%) are crucial. Employees also share attitudes towards corporate social responsibility (CSR), as 25% of all generations agree that a responsible employer should pay attention to relevant social and environmental causes, adjusting their operations accordingly. What's more, all agree that sustainability will be at the centre of business and product strategies – 64% say this will happen in the next five to ten years.

All employees want to see their work as part of something meaningful. People spend a large amount of time at work and it's important that they feel this time isn't wasted in something that isn't worthwhile. As mentioned earlier, the majority of workers see their job as a key factor in defining who they are – so if we work for a company without values, does that mean we are without values too?

Increasingly, this is coming to mean environmental sustainability, but responsible social practices – like policies around diversity, inclusion and ethical uses of data – also have a big role to play. The majority of

people believe that enterprises will change to reflect this, as 63% of employees across all generations agree that we'll see dramatic change in the way we do business over the next five years.

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**OUR RESEARCH SHOWS THAT ALL GENERATIONS HOLD THEIR EMPLOYERS TO THE SAME STANDARDS AND HAVE SIMILAR VIEWS ON THE WIDER RESPONSIBILITY OF BUSINESSES MOVING FORWARD.**

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WORKSTYLES -  
BRAND NEW OR  
SAME OLD?

# WORKSTYLES - BRAND NEW OR SAME OLD

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**“MODERN HUMANS HAVE RADICALLY CHANGED THE WAY THAT THEY WORK AND THE WAY THAT THEY LIVE. COMPANIES NEED TO CHANGE THE WAY THEY MANAGE AND LEAD TO MATCH THE WAY THAT MODERN HUMANS ACTUALLY WORK AND LIVE.”**

Brian Halligan, Ceo, Hubspot

It's often said that Gen Z, full of demands and expectations, will force businesses to adopt new ways of working. But while workstyles are shifting, these changes are causing far less tension between the generations than previously claimed.

Overall, working styles are broadly the same across generations, with at most a 5% deviation in response between them. Practices like flexible hours and remote working were equally valued by all generations. In addition, a collaborative work culture was equally popular among Gen X, Gen Y and Baby Boomers (29%), with Gen Z registering only 4% higher at 33%.

It could be suggested that employees in general enjoy collaborating more than working alone. A recent survey by WeWork found that more than half of all 'happy' employees collaborate with five or more people at their office on any given day. Our

results were similar: we found that 29% of people (of all ages) preferred to work in a small team with a collaborative approach, whereas only 14% prefer to work independently.

In a clear message to employers, all generations show similar levels of support (roughly 50%) for the belief that businesses pay too much attention to the workplace expectations of Gen Z. Interestingly enough, this correlates with the 49% of people who agree that people work in the same way regardless of their age. Just a quarter of employees across all generations disagreed with this statement, which suggests that only a minority really experience the drastic divisions in inter-generational working style that we've been promised. For the most part, it seems age does not decide the way you like to work – factors like personality, skill level, job role, and motivation are likely more important in shaping this.



EMBRACING NEW  
TECHNOLOGY

# EMBRACING NEW TECHNOLOGY

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**“THE SHIFT TO LIFELONG LEARNING IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL. AS THE PACE OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE QUICKENS, WE NEED TO BE SURE THAT EMPLOYEES ARE KEEPING UP WITH THE RIGHT SKILLS TO THRIVE IN THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.”**

Zvika Krieger, Head Of Technology Policy And Partnerships, Center For The Fourth Industrial Revolution, World Economic Forum

The shock of the new is something we've all experienced. It's difficult to get to grips with something unfamiliar, which is why change is often the most difficult task for an organisation to undertake. But when it comes to the introduction of new workplace technology, it seems novelty phases no-one. All generations report feeling positive towards new tools or systems. And, most significantly, employees of all ages view long-term learning as essential to their ability to keep up with emerging tech.

All generations are equally confident in their ability to adapt to new technology, with almost three quarters (73%) saying they feel capable of keeping up with change. When it comes to choosing a new job, employees value companies that are up-to-speed: the majority of people (65%) across all age groups say

that an innovative approach to technology makes an organisation a more attractive place to work.

**73%** 

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**OF ALL GENERATIONS SAY  
THEY FEEL CAPABLE OF  
KEEPING UP WITH NEW AND  
CHANGING TECHNOLOGY**

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Perhaps employees value current technology so highly because of its positive impact on productivity. Over half (51%) of workers agree that smart applications of technology help them in their role. A further 69% would like to use tech to be more efficient, speeding up processes, facilitating communication and collaboration, and making routine tasks easier. When technology works in this way, it enables employees to achieve their full potential – indeed, 63% believe workplace tech should help them work to the best of their abilities.

In their attitudes towards workplace technology, the generations are united. And this applies to future technologies, too. When asked about artificial intelligence (AI), automation and robotics, employees responded positively, suggesting that automation (44%) and AI (39%) especially will help them in their role. But there's also an understanding that new technology will require new skills.

Across all age categories, 70% expect to upskill throughout their career, and the same number believe new forms of technology are crucial to that process. Interestingly, the majority (69%) also believe that the best workplaces are those that invest in digital technologies for upskilling staff. So, it's clear that employees are united in their call for lifelong learning – and employers better take heed.

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69%

**OF THE WORKFORCE  
WOULD LIKE TO USE  
TECH TO BE MORE  
EFFICIENT, SPEEDING UP  
PROCESSES, FACILITATING  
COMMUNICATION AND  
COLLABORATION, AND  
MAKING ROUTINE  
TASKS EASIER.**

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WORKFORCE  
UNITED:  
THE SUMMARY

# WORKFORCE UNITED

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There is much more that unites us than divides us. And this is especially true of the workplace.

It turns out the coming generation isn't demanding, disruptive, or overly idealistic. Gen Z will not herald a total workplace revolution, with brand new working styles, hours and tools. Instead they will confirm the desires that most employees share: to have a satisfying, productive career that balances with their lifestyle.

It's true that Gen Z will inject fresh perspective and innovation into the workforce, and their presence will lead to an increased emphasis on purpose and values. But every generation brings new ideas, and people of all ages are concerned about sustainability, responsibility and ethics. In fact, it's arguable that workers have always found purpose and values to be important. Maybe it's only now that businesses have started to listen.

And it's definitely time to listen. If organisations want to attract emerging Gen Z talent, and make the most of the multi-generation workforce, they have to start building a better workplace now.

But where should you start? We've put together four key pieces of advice, based on our findings from this report.

## 1. MAKE USE OF SMARTER WORKPLACE TECHNOLOGY

63% of employees want workplace tech to help them perform their best. The right tech will improve agility, make efficiencies, streamline processes and ultimately empower employees to spend time on the things that matter. This is the principle behind Ricoh's Business Process Services. By automating manual tasks and digitising processes, we're able to free up employees to focus on more productive tasks, like delivering an excellent experience to their customers. Reducing the level of resource needed to manage and control operations enables benefits such as improved cash flow and faster go-to-market times – and gives businesses the competitive edge they need.

## 2. FLEXIBILITY IS KEY

A multi-generation workplace contains lots of different preferences and perspectives that don't always follow generational lines. It's crucial that you allow employees to move between the new and the old as it suits them. We developed our Always Current Technology platform for this exact reason. It's completely customisable to the changing needs of your business as users can download and install new applications, features and upgrades as they become available – without needing to replace or update the original device. This empowers workplaces to scale their capabilities based on the latest needs of all their employees.

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### **3. FOSTER THE FULL POTENTIAL OF TALENTED INDIVIDUALS**

There's talent in every peer group. The trick is to seize and support it. This means allowing your employees to work however and wherever they're most productive. Ricoh Smart Integration offers enterprise grade cloud-based document workflow applications, so businesses can enable workers to carry out tasks from any device in their home or the office.

### **4. RESPONSIBILITY FIRST**

63% of employees across all generations agree the way the world does business will change dramatically. You want to be ahead of that curve – and we can help you. Our commitment to sustainability underpins all that we do. Always Current technology, for instance, reduces waste by eliminating the need to purchase new hardware for additional functionality or wait for contracts to expire. With this simple outlook, you can build the cleaner and greener workplace that employees want to see.

As the workplace demographic expands, it opens up more opportunity for innovation, collaboration and success. With the arrival of Gen Z, we're adding fresh perspective to hard-earned experience and multiplying a cohesive vision.

After all, we all share the same motivations, ambitions, fears and frustrations. We are a workforce united – and together, we're on the road to achieving great things.

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**WE ARE A WORKFORCE  
UNITED – AND TOGETHER,  
WE'RE ON THE ROAD TO  
ACHIEVING GREAT THINGS.**

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