

# Are Post-COVID Work Models What Future Generations Want?

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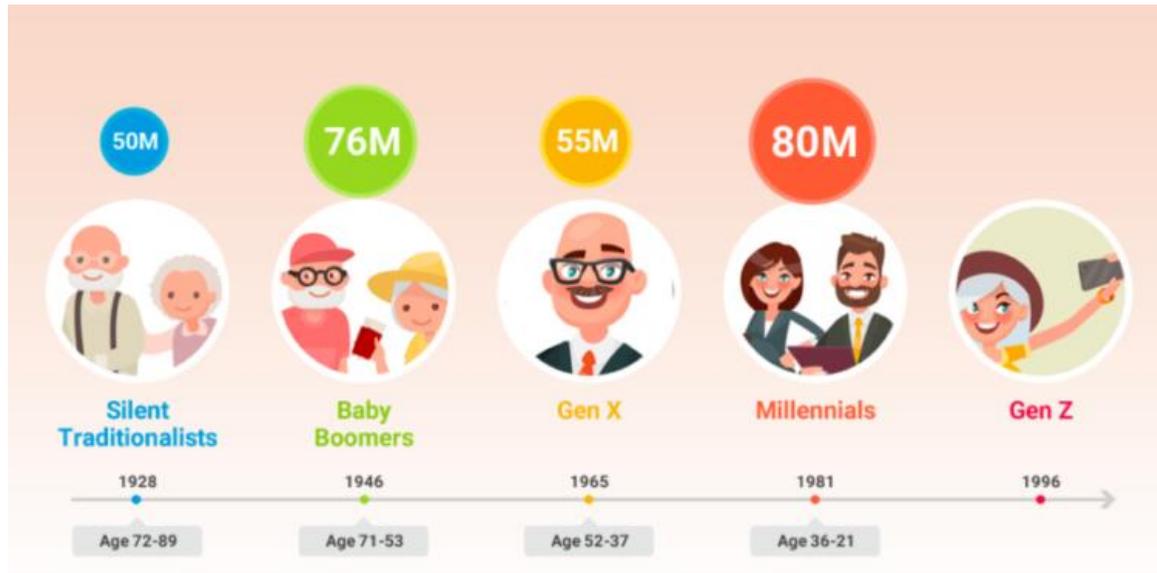


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**The Post COVID work models** have truly changed the landscape in terms of how and where our workforce performs their duties. Below are some of the projected trends from an online article by Gartner Consulting dated June 16, 2022, regarding workforce models reshaping the employee experience:



- Hybrid work becomes mainstream
- Continued shortage of critical talent
- Well-being will be a key metric
- DEI outcomes could worsen
- Turnover will increase
- Manager roles are changing
- Gen Z wants in-person work experiences
- The new employee value propositions (EVP's)
- Data collection is expanding

**These nine trends** will have a great impact on the manager and employee experience, which underscores how the EVP must change and respond to shifts in employee expectations. And with 75% of these workers already working in a Hybrid work environment, it is estimated that if that were to now change, an employer would risk losing

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up to 39% of its workforce and creating an even greater staffing shortage to overcome.

**Do these future trends coincide with what future generations want?** Presently the Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z aged worker now represents 75% of the workforce and this will exponentially rise as the Baby Boomers continue their departure for retirement and the coming-of-age Gen Z worker enters the workforce. This paper will explore the new trends in workforce models and how they will sync up with the strengths and wants of four generations in motion.

### **Hybrid work becomes mainstream**

As stated earlier, 75% of hybrid or remote workers now expect to be offered more work flexibility and many feel that the future is hybrid. For the 55 million Gen Xers in the workforce, a hybrid work model is appealing to them because of their desire to work independently, but for the 80 million Millennials, which are more tech savvy, they also desire a more collaborative work environment, which might be challenged by a hybrid work model. Employers should also take note that the upcoming Gen Z age group may prefer to work on-site rather than remote. This is covered further later in this article. For the 76 million Baby Boomers still in the work force, they have a strong work ethic and would typically support and be the most trustworthy for a hybrid work model. As a supervisor of a remote work force, however, they could be frustrated by their inability to communicate and mentor co-workers remotely. Because of such generational trait differences and shifts underway, employers will be challenged to create a new, human-centric model for the hybrid environment by designing work around employee-driven desires for work flexibility. And on the issue of creating culture connectedness and human leadership advancement opportunities, these will be even more challenging.

### **There's a shortage of critical talent**

HR leaders are under more pressure than ever to fill roles with individuals that has the critical skills to meet market needs and drive organizational change. While there's an urgency to obtain this scarce talent, there is also an increasing effort to optimize costs given our current economic climate. It is also important to point out roughly that 10,000 Baby Boomers are

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reaching retirement age each day. To fill the job openings with individuals that have the necessary skills, employers must target and adapt to the what the Millennials and Gen Xer's, in particular want from their employers. For example, the Millennials want a trustworthy employer, to be challenged with problem-solving opportunities, competent work colleagues, and a certain amount of autonomy. The Gen Xer's wants an empathetic employer, the opportunity for meaningful work, training for new skills, and work flexibility. In other words, if the structure and tasks of an employer's workforce has not yet been updated to the changing wants of these generational workforces, they are getting a late start, and the quickly they adapt the better. It is further recommended that employers develop processes, norms and infrastructure that facilitate the mobility of employees from their current roles to other existing or newly created roles within their organization. This creates an internal labor market and makes it easier and more attractive for employees to fill open positions and the opportunity for career advancement without exiting the company.

### **Well-being is now a key metric**

In recent years, and predominately post-COVID, the traditional employee experience indicators, such as engagement surveys and turnover metrics, haven't provided the complete picture. Workers of all generations, not just the Millennials, now are seeking a more empathetic employer that cares about their well-being, and recognizes how it can impact their performance and intent to stay. 70% of organizations have made additional investments in employee well-being throughout the last two years, but others are still not adapting to these generational needs. The employer must deliver on well-being as part of their EVP to attract and retain talent.

### **Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) outcomes could worsen**

Another issue negatively impacted by the new Hybrid and remote work model is that it does not guarantee all workers will experience the benefits of (DEI) equitably. In fact, it has the potential to actually worsen such outcomes. For example, it has been common for years that the workers that are visible and have day to day contact with their supervisors and department managers and work in the headquarters office of large companies are often promoted more readily compared to those that work remotely in field offices. The Gartner article reference

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earlier, indicates that 76% of managers say on-site employees are more likely than remote workers to be promoted. Considering that women and employees from underrepresented groups are more likely to want to leverage flexible work, the proximity bias becomes a recipe for inequity. To support all employees in a hybrid future, it will be critical for employers to mitigate this potential bias in performance and recruiting and support underrepresented talent. A tall task for most human resource departments.

### **Turnover will increase**

Since Hybrid work has become a baseline expectation for most employees, worker turnover has significantly increased. Some of the primary reasons include:

- Employees are required to come back into the office full-time. Gartner analysis show that 52% of employees say flexible work policies will affect their decision to stay at their organization.
- Worker turnover is actually easier because the emotional costs of leaving the organization are lower for the worker when working in a hybrid remote environment.
- There is more choice in employers when location is no longer a factor with the job.

The key to reducing such turnover is for the company to have a strong corporate culture and makes sure the hybrid worker is tied to that culture. The company needs to invest in talent processes to expand employee networking opportunities within the organization. Lastly, the company needs to develop methods to effectively communicate internal job and advance opportunities. Obviously, these actions will appeal to Gen X workers that value communication and to the Millennials that value collaboration and focusing on the greater good.

### **Managers' roles are changing**

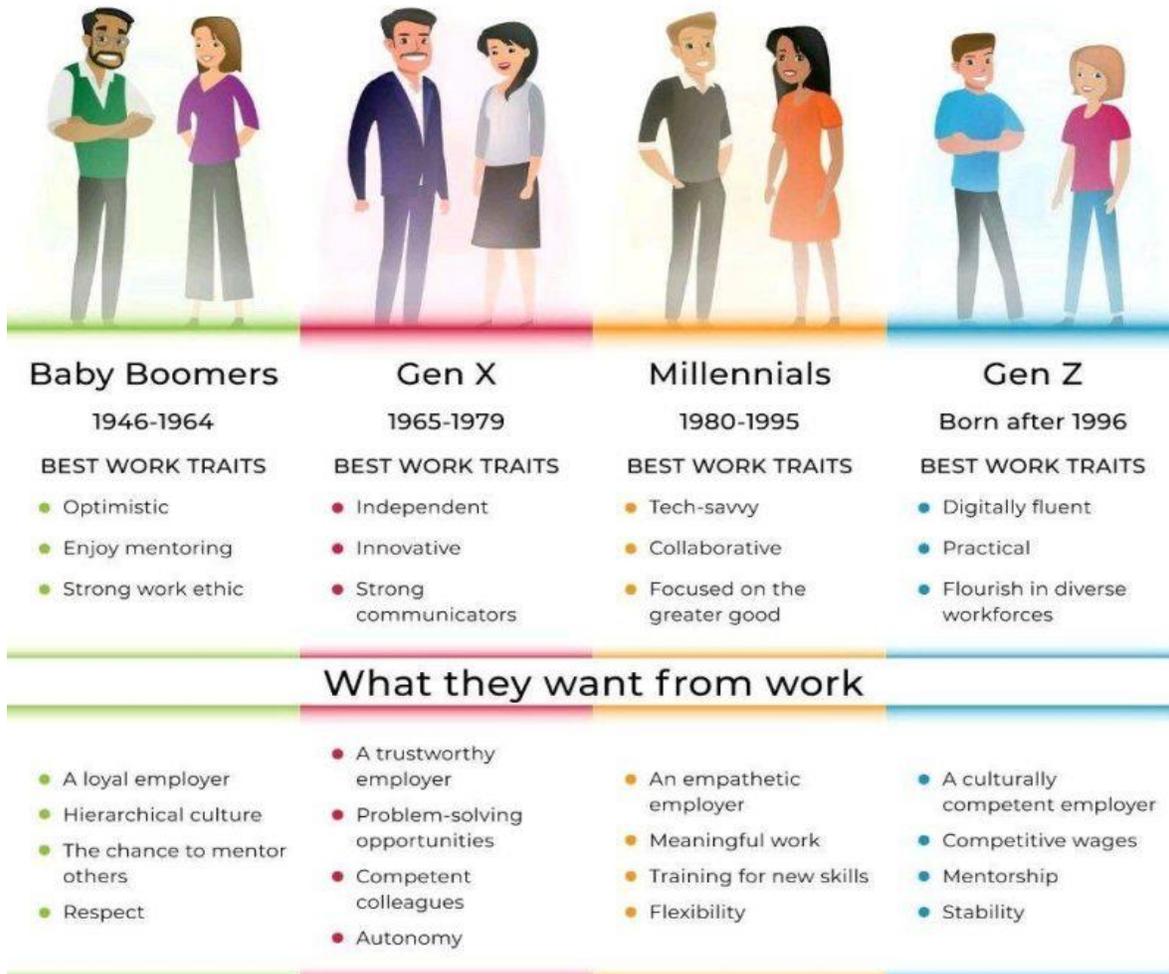
With fewer opportunities for spontaneous in-person interactions in the workplace, managers need to be more intentional in establishing and developing relationships with their hybrid and remote team members. The manager-team member relationship is critical in shaping the employee experience and connection to the organization. Corporate Human Resource Directors need to provide managers with the proper tools to become better "human" leaders and manage team members' career perceptions, well-being and connection to organizational

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culture remotely rather than have the luxury of working with these team members in-person. In fact, I often discuss the importance of enhanced communication and interaction for managers that supervise team members working at multiple remote locations, such as hotels, and the need for awareness and recognition of challenges and successes.

## What employees want by generation

Data source: Mazlo | Infographic design by Antonio Grasso for educational and motivational purposes



### Gen Z wants in-person work experiences

Although this generation is comfortable with hybrid work (having finished their education and entered the workforce during the pandemic), the experience they received in school and now as they entered the workforce has been pretty “underwhelming for some. To a Gen Z worker, many are being asked to jump right into working remotely, often with sub-standard training, and without the benefit of first establishing a defined schedule balancing work and life activities

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they would have received working in an office with others. They are being given, in some cases, immense responsibilities with little to know supervision, encouragement and support, let alone the opportunity to truly experience what the true culture is of the new company they just joined. These combinations of factors are, in turn, resulting in levels of high frustration, a lack of recognition and, not surprisingly, high short-term turnover, which is not good for the worker or the employer. As referenced above, a Gen Z worker wants a culturally competent employer, competitive wages, the opportunity to receive mentorship, and job stability. These individuals strive for continuing connections built in-person while maintaining a flexible schedule. Employers, must pay attention to the needs of this generation now filling most entry-level jobs. These young workers will impact decisions surrounding redesigned office spaces, additional in-office onboarding support, and career development opportunities.

### **The new employee value propositions (EVP's)**

Labor market competition and high inflation are putting pressure on compensation, and many employers can't afford to increase pay as quickly as employees want or expect. The ability attract and retain talent cannot not be done based on compensation alone. To address these issues, employers have been rethinking their EVP beyond hybrid scheduling. Many have reduced or eliminated the wait time for new employees to receive medical benefits, defined shorter work weeks, and even offered variations to paid time off and how it is earned. Overall, these strategies make good sense and such EVP's have great value to most workers, especially for those in which their job was lost during the COVID pandemic. Corporate leaders and hiring managers must work together to review roles and processes to be associated with each job classification and have their EVP's clearly defined.

### **Data collection is expanding**

One of the fundamental challenges that employers and their managers have struggled with concerning remote workers, has been how to track their hours, worked and productivity. Gartner analysis' show that 16% of employers are more frequently using technologies to monitor their employees through methods such as virtual clocking in and out, tracking work computer usage, and monitoring employee emails or internal communications/chat. While some companies track productivity, others monitor employee engagement and well-being to

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better understand employee experience. In fact, even before the pandemic, organizations were increasingly using nontraditional employee monitoring tools, to assure levels of productivity and work schedule compliance. This trend will only accelerate in conjunction with managers needing to monitor their remote workers and the collection of employee health and safety data has become so vital. Employers are cautioned, however, to make sure to follow best practices to ensure responsible use of employee information and analytics.

### **In Summary:**

- The retirement of the Baby Boomer generation, the ability to embrace the differences in what Generation X and Millennials workers want from their employers, and the impact a post-COVID work environment can have on the upcoming Gen Z's, will all be critically important issues to employers moving forward.
- Ongoing changes in the way people work have permanently transformed the relationship between the manager and their team members, now often working remotely
- The hybrid work model, although appealing to our current and upcoming workforce can present challenges in terms of leadership, recognition and advancement, if not management effectively
- Employers that embrace these nine high-impact trends will help differentiate themselves as employers of choice for future generations of workers.

### **About Hospitality Performance Systems, Inc. (HPS)**

*Hospitality Performance Systems (HPS) was created to provide operational and sales support to the hospitality industry globally. Founded in 2009 this enterprise takes advantage of its founder and President, Stanton D Jacobs, CHA, with over 40 years of proven success in the hospitality industry and strategic relationships globally, HPS is affiliated with a wide array of professionals specializing in their respective disciplines, enabling HPS to provide a wide range of services. <https://www.hps-strategic.com> <https://www.linkedin.com/in/stantonjacobs/>*