

See You, Millennials

...the Generation Z is Coming

(Ten Terms That Define Generation Z Today)

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Some are now calling Generation Z by a new name. They are known by many as *Generation Covid*, or *Generation C*. I have heard others call them, the *Coronials*. I released a book last fall called *The Pandemic Population*. They are the young people who will forever be marked as those who came of age during a pandemic. University of Minnesota advisor David Perry wrote, “It’s a generation that will not only be marked by the trauma of the disruption and death, but also by witnessing the total failures of adults to protect them and their world.”

Have you seen the latest data on this young adult generation?

“Employees are feeling the impact of working remotely during the pandemic. Many have been asked to social distance for months now, and those ages 18 to 24 have been especially hard-hit,” according to a new study by The Center for Generational Kinetics (CGK), a global research firm in Austin, Texas. “Generation Z employees are finding remote work more challenging overall—more than one-third said it has hurt their work/life balance and think their employer needs to provide them with better tools for working remotely.”

Generation Z members reported it is most important that their supervisors are well-informed (infection rates and health hazards) while Baby Boomers and Gen Xers said being candid is what they want most from their manager.

Ten Defining Terms for Generation Z

After reviewing the data on members of Generation Z in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and this past year overall, I have curated ten defining characteristics summarized by two-word terms that will help you wrap your arms around their reality.

1. New Normal

They grew up with terrorism, recession, and other common hardships. Now, they’ll remember the COVID-19 pandemic that impacted their childhood and early career.

2. On Demand

They expect entertainment when they want it and fight boredom with screen time. Not only did time on Zoom increase but also Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, and YouTube.

3. Multicultural Mix

They’re a mix of ethnic races, more than any generation in U.S. history. There’s been a 50% increase in this identity since 2000. Half of Generation Z is made up of individuals who would be considered from minority people groups.

4. Instant Access

They have a Google reflex and can find answers at the tap of a screen. No waiting. They ask Google and Siri questions that past youth generations asked their parents. It's in their hands.

5. Woke Culture

I witnessed family divisions over what determines whether one is racist or truly supports movements such as Black Lives Matter. Generation Z's decisions are informed by equality for all and *woke culture* overall.

6. Immediate Feedback

They insist on responses from social media, games, or friends and desire them instantly. Some employers tell me they can't give feedback to young staff quickly enough.

7. Constant Contact

This isn't just a tech platform. Gen Z is always connected, with few margins for solitude or silence. Often a screen is "on" 24/7. It's the first and last item they look at each day.

8. Blended Family

They offer new definitions for family, identity, and sexuality. "Binary" is a boundary of the past for most. Gen Z is extending the parameters and believes in dozens of genders.

9. Anything Goes

They grew up at a time when traditional morals are in question. Having felt betrayed by older leaders, they are questioning everything, much like Boomers did in the 1960s.

10. Panic Attack

They are the most anxious generation in U.S. history. Last fall, one in four young adults considered suicide due to the pandemic. Mental health must be a top priority for leaders.

Because these two-word terms clarify the culture in which Generation Z is growing up, business, educators and parents must focus on the social and emotional development of teens and young adults. It is our job to connect with them, not control them, and guide them into self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, as well as responsible decision-making. In addition to those EQ qualities, they'll have to learn how to effectively leverage their screens for healthy change and growth. Denise Villa, the CEO of CGK said, "Gen Z's emergence could herald in a new era of hybrid work that is normal to them and for the youngest members of Gen Z, all they've ever known."

What comes next? Following Gen Z is the Alpha Generation, the young children being born today. Following them will be Generation Beta, whose birth years will span all the way to 2039 or so. "If the nomenclature sticks, then afterward will be Generation Gamma and Generation Delta.