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Gen Z is in The Building: Prepare Yourself for a Mobile-First Workforce

Consider this: in less than two years, your entire training program could very well be obsolete.

This isn't to say the technology you're using to power your learning activities will follow suit – in fact, advances in learning technology will actually help you make sure the above doesn't happen.

The potential obsolescence of your corporate learning programs, instead, will be led by a new cohort of workers that are guaranteed to flip the way your organization operates, including the way people learn and develop professionally, on its head.

Before anyone's even finished considering the impact Millennials had on the world of work and learning, a new generation is headed your way. Say 'Hello' to Generation Z, Gen-Zer's to the cool kids, a cohort of newly-minted and fresh-faced, straight-out-of-college workers that is guaranteed to be more influential and disruptive than their Millennial cohorts sooner than we might expect. They're guaranteed to place a heavy emphasis not only on the purpose of training activities, but also the technology used to absorb them, with a particular focus on mobile-first learning.

While Millennials made the need for mobile compatible learning clear, Generation Z will push organizations to perfect it, requiring a shift in focus that considers a mobile-first design that is accessible to anyone, everywhere, at any time.



WHO IS GENERATION Z?

While the age-range of this new, tech-obsessed generation is still up for debate, their younger than their Millennial counterparts and will soon be flooding your workforce as the Baby Boomer and Gen X cohorts move closer towards retirement.

Gen-Zers were born in the mid-90's and raised in the 2000s and will account for more than 20% of working adults by 2020. While close in age to Millennials, Gen Zers have more in common with Gen Xers, workplace-wise at least. According to research by Accenture, Gen Zers demonstrated a "return to more traditional workplace values," which includes a desire for a clear, stable career path and (shockingly) a preference for communicating with their colleagues face-to-face rather than online. Gen-Zers also prefer dynamic and fast-moving work environments, with the majority of them expecting work hours to exceed the traditional 40-hour working week.

MILLENNIALS GREW UP WITH COMPUTERS AND KEYBOARDS GEN Z GREW UP WITH TOUCH SCREENS

Generation Z is the first truly digitally native generation. While Millennials adopted today's most well-known and widely used technologies (yes, the Internet) in their teens and early 20s, Gen Z doesn't know what it's like to live without an high-speed internet connection or access to social media, especially on a mobile device. They've grown up in a world of connectivity, instant information and remote learning, resulting in a vastly different approach to their careers than that of their older siblings, parents and grandparents.

Indeed, Millennials are tech-literate (many of the world's most popular Internet technologies were developed by Millennials, after all) and able to embrace change, they grew up in an age where the Internet was of the dial-up variety and watching YouTube or Netflix on your cell phone wasn't a thing. Gen-Z meanwhile has grown up documenting their entire lives on social media, and playing a key role in creating a world that's not only smaller, but that exists largely on a 4 inch by 6 inch touch screen in vertical video.

And they will enter the workforce with an instinctive and expert knowledge of all things digital, where their managers won't have to show them how things work, but instead how technology can elevate them - including their learning activities - thanks to an inherent confidence across online platforms that vastly exceed that of past generations to produce an abundance of valuable social and digital insights for their employers.

SOME GEN Z FOOD FOR THOUGHT...



Gen Z reaches for a tablet or phone every 7-8 minutes



Gen Z prefer communicating through images, icons and symbols, compared to their Millennials counterparts who use text messages as the norm



Millennials are concerned about growing their social status and “likes” on social media, while Gen Z cares about the economy and world ecology



Gen Z is less concerned about money than Millennials, and instead have a desire to fulfill their purpose and learn



They want answers quickly, and don't have the time or patience for slow processing

So just how should companies prepare for the mobile-first workforce as it relates to their learning activities?

EMBRACE CHANGE, BUILD IN ADAPTABILITY

We all like to think that our generation was the best one. And let's be frank, there's something inside all of us that want to believe today's young people are more selfish, absent-minded and lazy compared to how we were at their age. Problem is, this approach never serves anyone well and is rooted in very little truth.

The key to connecting with Gen Z is recognizing who they are and understanding that what they offer to your workforce is unique. It is, however, important to remember that it's not in your best interest to assume that everything they want is new and flashy, and instead, is more about gathering a genuine understanding of what makes them tick, and the value those interests can bring to your organization if respected.

Gen Z's core values may be surprising, considering many of them relate to older generations than the Millennials much closer in age.

- They're frugal: they like a good deal (who doesn't like a good deal?)
- They value social equality: In the Gen Z world, there is absolutely zero patience for racism, sexism or unfair treatment of any kind. They're also more outspoken about these issues when they see them in real-life.

- They feed on innovation, uniqueness and originality: Gen Zer's are confident in knowing what makes them special – and they want to know why your organization is special, too.

When considering these values, it's more important than ever to express your company's mission, vision, value and purpose – and how connecting them to your employee training programs will help you achieve them.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR L&D MANAGERS

“OTHER THAN PAYING DOWN STUDENT DEBT, OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORKPLACE ARE A TOP CONCERN FOR GEN Z - EVEN MORE SO THAN SALARY...”

Source: Adecco Staffing USA

There's a number of considerations L&D administrators and managers must embrace when designing learning programs that connect with this new and exciting Gen Z cohort. For example, Gen Z are more open than ever to bring-your-own-device workplaces, which will change the way organizations need to design their learning activities. They also expect to know what the intended outcome of learning is, very clearly upfront, so it's critical that these outcomes are outlined from the get-go.

Here are a few factors L&D leaders must consider when designing learning programs for Gen Z:

Be as authentic as possible: Gen Z is more likely than their Millennial and Gen X counterparts to integrate work and their personal lives, a shift driven by their constant connection to content via mobile phones and social media. Gen Z employees will make a bigger commitment to the organization and learning when they choose to engage with it – accomplishing that means making them feel like their work and the workplace connect with their value and brings them together not just as employees, but also as people.

Defaulting to a corporate identity that sounds manufactured and produced won't connect with marketing-savvy, brand-way Gen Z employees, who will instead see it as unctuous and inauthentic. Connecting your corporate identity to those of your fresh-faced Gen Z employees means bringing in personality, and that it's rooted in real and relatable people and situations. That means creating training scenarios that leverage external speakers for seminars and workshops (formal training) and allowing Gen Zer's to bring their own personalities into e-learning activities (gamification for the win).

Embrace collaboration and competition: Gen Z grew up with technology in the palms of their hands, an environment that places a premium on social interaction via social media and an inherent appreciation of community and opportunities to co-create the culture of the companies they choose to work for. While social learning is a key pillar in the creation of effective learning programs, it's more than important than ever when considering the needs and desires of Gen Z.

Learning programs that connect with Gen Z are those that create frequent opportunities for both on-the-job and formal social training. This gives Gen Z workers opportunities to problem solve, brainstorm, and form important relationships with employees from generations other than their own.

Doing so means connecting the values important to Gen Z (equality and innovation, for example) during training to establish important interactions with their co-workers to remove social barriers, while creating the potential for mentor-mentee relationships.

When using e-learning and online training, one of the best ways to connect with Gen Z is to not only serve these learning activities so they can be consumed on a mobile device, but also to incorporate gamification features that foster a healthy dose of internal competition. Doing so not only boosts morale, but also improve overall training ROI as learners compete to beat benchmarks set by fellow learners.

MOBILE (I.E. SMARTPHONES) IS THE PREFERRED MODE OF ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE BOARD FOR GENERATION Z EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING FOR ENTERTAINMENT, SHOPPING, RESEARCH, AND LEARNING.

5 STATS THAT PROVE MOBILE LEARNING IS WORTH ITS WEIGHT (AND WHY ITS KEY TO CONNECTING WITH GEN Z LEARNERS)

45%

Smartphone learners complete course material **45%** faster than those using a computer.

[LYNDA]

89%

89% of smartphone users download apps, **50%** of which are used for learning.

[TOWARDS MATURITY]

43%

43% of learners see improved productivity levels compared to non-mobile users.

[TOWARDS MATURITY]



2,600

The average person spends **2 hours and 51 minutes** on their smartphone each day, looking at it roughly **221** times and touching its screen more than **2,600 times**.

[DSCOUT]

27%

The number of mobile-only users (**27%**) has grown, now surpassing desktop-only users (**14%**).

[GOOGLE]

“GO WHERE THE LEARNERS ARE”

While traditional learning modalities will remain important, the popularity and growth of e-learning with benefit Gen Z like no other generation. They are, after all, accustomed to consuming content online, whether than be entertainment or educational. The key is finding a balance that compliments the needs of not only learners, but the goals of the organization as well, and that means using online training complimented by formal learning activities and hands-on learning, which is particularly important in industries where practical skills are necessary.

While it might seem counterintuitive, the growth of mobile devices and their role in learning is also important to instructor-led training as well. Does your existing learning platform manage announcement, notifications and alerts – and does it send them to mobile devices? While the elements of course delivery are on the instructor, it’s on the administrator to make sure learners know about those courses. It’s all about making sure your training can function in the new mobile world.

Soft skills must also be considered, including communication, problem-solving and management. Learning technology can bring these skills to life, especially in social learning capacities where older generations act as subject-matter experts to provide guidance to younger workers, while helping those newer employees learn how to engage with older generations that have different attitudes to life and the digital world.

CONNECTING WITH GEN Z LEARNERS



Leverage mixed media and stimulating messages



Keep their attention with bite-sized learning content, similar to that of their social media feeds



Provide a flexible approach to learning (and use technology to give Gen Z that flexibility to learn when they want, how they want)



Make sure learning is easy to use – Gen Z expects technology that’s intuitive and accessible.



Give them the freedom of self-study and autonomy



Go mobile – or go home. Gen Z is mobile first, and mobile only



Encourage collaboration and human connections

Learning technology can also help L&D administrators to create individualized learning plans, which in today’s world can be the make or break between retaining and losing digital talent. By allowing employees to provide input into these plans also allows the organizations to leverage and understand the skills they already have and identify ones they need to work on.

Gen Z is an exciting new challenge in the world of corporate learning, one that's well worth the effort to master. Being successful requires an acceptance that the things that may have worked in the past may need to be adapted to reflect the times, including the adoption of not only learning technology, but the proliferation of mobile versions to satiate their mobile-first appetites.

Are you prepared for a Gen Z, mobile-first learning world?

Docebo's newest mobile app, available now in the Apple and Google Play stores for iOS and Android devices, is a major step towards a frictionless user experience, balanced with the capabilities of an innovative learning platform to augment the overall learner experience – in the palms of your learners' hands.



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GIVE DOCEBO A TRY, TODAY!

START BOOSTING YOUR BOTTOM LINE TODAY WITH A 14-DAY DOCEBO FREE TRIAL!

Docebo is a learning platform that is laser-focused on changing the way people learn through a cloud-based, user-friendly technology that is built for the modern user. Established in 2005, Docebo offers a learning ecosystem for companies and their employees, partners and customers that is designed to increase performance and learning engagement. Docebo is a learner-centric technology, embraced for its elegance and ability to blend social and formal learning. Docebo provides a scalable pricing model and a robust set of integrations and APIs, paired with reliable support available 24/7.



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