



How to be a good manager for Gen Z

4 useful rules of thumb

The competition for new young employees is fierce. It has never been more important for companies to understand what motivates them. The young employees belong to the first generation characterised as digital natives - often referred to as Generation Z, or Gen Z for short.

They have grown up in a digital world with social media and smartphones being a natural part of their lives.

This means that they have different work expectations that you should be aware of.

In collaboration with Expert in digital natives Søren Schultz Hansen, we have developed four useful rules of thumb for you as a manager for young Gen Z employees.

1. Create a safe start

Many young people believe that they are expected to deliver 100% from day 1, and this can be difficult to live up to. It is therefore important at first to prioritise frequent interaction with your young employees, preferably on a daily basis, where you can discuss their performance of tasks and align expectations. Focusing on creating social security may also promote a good job start. Buddy or mentor schemes and social events are some of the tools to creating a sense of security. It is a misconception that young people only want to socialise digitally. On the contrary, physical communities are crucial for them to thrive.





2. Highlight what's meaningful

Young people today take great pride in working for companies that have a positive impact on the world. As an employer, you therefore need to focus on how your company contributes to a greater purpose. However, young employees are also motivated by being able to see the purpose and outcome

in a smaller, situation-specific context within the framework of their own tasks. They care about how even small tasks specifically contribute to a greater purpose. Think about incorporating purpose in your communication when you present a new task to young employees.



3. Think short term

Exciting tasks and development opportunities attract young talented employees. Gen Z is ambitious and impatient and wants rapid personal and professional development. If you invest in Gen Z employees with a view to retention, you might be disappointed. Young employees are not motivated by long-term career plans, so focus on the short term and break the plan down into smaller bites. For each bite, explain that "if you succeed in task x, then you can achieve y, which represents a value for z". Before you know it, your young employee may have stayed with your company for three years. And if a young employee does decide to leave your company, consider it a possible investment in the future. Maybe they will return to your company even more skilled at a later date.



4. Show them who you are

As a manager, Gen Z employees will expect you as a matter of course to establish a personal relationship with them; an equal, authentic relationship. Such relationships are key to their well-being and development. Young employees want managers to be role models whom they can relate to as real human beings with both strengths and vulnerabilities. Be curious about your young employees and get to know their values. You need to be able to master the balance between a close constructive relationship while maintaining your authority.



Tips on how to get the best job start – for young digital natives and their managers

	HR/Manager	Colleagues	The young employee
1 week before first working day	<p>Send a welcome email containing practical information.</p> <p>Designate a social buddy (preferably another young employee) and a mentor.</p>		
3-5 days before first working day	<p>Send a welcome package containing relevant documents. Remember to also focus on social events.</p>		<p>Look through the welcome material and write down any questions in advance.</p>
First working day	<p>Start the day with a warm welcome in the department.</p> <p>Introduce the organisation's culture, mission, vision and values.</p>	<p>Be open and accommodating towards your new colleague.</p>	<p>Be open to establishing a new network and understand how different departments work together.</p>
First week	<p>Give a thorough introduction to the job function.</p> <p>Schedule daily brief check-ins.</p> <p>A social event is recommended.</p>	<p>Social buddy: Introduce your new colleague to colleagues in other departments.</p> <p>Colleagues: Take part in the social event.</p>	<p>Reach out to your mentor if you have any questions or doubts.</p> <p>Take part in the social event.</p>
First month	<p>Specific task due already during the first week (manageable, realistic task).</p>	<p>Guide and support your colleague.</p>	<p>Be open to constructive feedback. Do not think of it as criticism but an opportunity to learn.</p>
First 3 months	<p>Hold frequent, brief one-on-one meetings.</p> <p>Encourage the employee to be clear about their expectations for the job.</p>	<p>Introduce your new colleague to relevant social networks.</p>	<p>Frequent one-on-one meetings with your manager can give you direction and the opportunity for continuous feedback.</p>
First 6 months – special attention	<p>Be aware that young digital native employees require a different level of attention than you are used to.</p>	<p>Identify relevant training opportunities and resources that your new colleague can use to continue their professional and personal development.</p>	<p>Set realistic expectations. Build up a network of 'work friends'.</p> <p>Remember: you rely on others, not just yourself, to achieve your goals.</p>