

Top French graduates express different career ambitions than their parents as they enter the job market

A survey of French graduates reveals distinctly different views on career success: These grads are done with the traditional junior manager career track and want to tackle big challenges, including climate change, from Day 1

For immediate release

Paris, 4 July 2023 – A new survey conducted by the [NewGen Talent Centre at EDHEC Business School](#) in France offers more proof that young people today are seeking different professional goals than previous generations, including a reluctance to join companies with old-fashioned hierarchical management structures and a genuine desire to tackle climate change and social injustice from the start of their careers.

The survey, conducted in the Fall of 2022 by the NewGen Talent Centre in partnership with 20 of France's "Grande Ecole" alumni associations (a group known as the G16 Careers that includes France's most prestigious higher education institutions), reveals that recent graduates with less than 6 years of work experience have two main career objectives: 1) To acquire new skills, education, and experience, and 2) To positively contribute to society and efforts to combat climate change.

In contrast to previous generations, only 27% of the 2,099 young professionals listed the traditional junior manager career track as their #1 goal. This track, a favorite of past generations, typically includes several years of training and mentorship, with a management position to follow. Instead, many of those surveyed expressed a strong desire to integrate ESG practices into the business (38%) or launch entrepreneurial projects (35%) within the companies they work for.

"Young people today want to work to expand their knowledge and earn a good living but also to solve our world's greatest problems," said Manuelle Malot, director of the NewGen Talent Centre. "The vast majority of them see the business world as the place they want to be because they believe business can be a part of that change."

However, Malot cautions that only some workplaces may be ready to deliver on this demand. While 80% of survey respondents said their current position allows them to learn new things and develop new skills, only half said their work positively impacted society and the environment.

The NewGen survey also found that this generation wants to work for companies with a mission statement that aligns with their personal values. Recent grads aren't willing to work for a company that ignores environmental and social needs. Eight out of ten young people know their company's mission statement, and 67% say it is one of the main reasons they feel committed to their employer.

This generation of young people is greatly motivated by personal engagement and impact. They need to feel that their work contributes to the greater good and moves society toward a brighter future. For this generation, work is not just about earning a living but about leading a purposeful life.

The NewGen survey also found that young professionals have high expectations of their managers. They count on them to be honest and transparent (73%) and to give them a high level of autonomy (67%). Survey respondents told Malot and her team that they will stick with a firm if they feel they are working on interesting assignments (71%) and if the work environment (including both human and physical aspects) is appealing (67%).

Survey summary and key figures

1. Young graduates have different ambition profiles:
 - i. 38% feel that their ambition is centred around global challenges, general interest, company values and culture, and/or the utility of their mission.
 - ii. 35% recognise that they are motivated by challenges, the company project, independent actions, and/or mission autonomy.
 - iii. 27% say they are motivated by career development, manager posts, higher responsibility, and/or attractive salaries.
2. 44% of young graduates are mainly motivated to develop career expertise, 29% are motivated by the management hierarchy, and 27% are motivated by teamwork (working in concert without a hierarchy).
3. The young graduates' two main professional objectives are to acquire new skills/personal development and to positively contribute to society. 80% think that their current post allows them to develop skills and 50% believe it lets them positively contribute to society.
4. 85% of the alumni that were surveyed thought that entry-level employee status is ideal for them to have stability, test the waters, or develop a parallel project.
5. Young graduates prefer these types of working conditions:
 - i. Flexible hours (31%)
 - ii. Possibility of a 4-day work week (26%)
 - iii. Freedom to choose their working location (21%)
6. One in two graduates feels that they benefited from a new-hire program when they took their post. The most effective practices for a successful start to the job are: 1) support from a team member (56%) and 2) support from a manager (41%).
7. Their main expectations of management are:
 - i. Honesty and transparency (73%)
 - ii. Trust and autonomy (67%)
 - iii. Team protection and defense (49%)
 - iv. Recognition of good work (48%)
8. The main factors that reinforce their professional commitment are:
 - i. Interesting assignments (71%)
 - ii. The work atmosphere (67%)
 - iii. Personal alignment with the company values (51%)
 - iv. Ambitious and challenging work (51%)
9. The importance of the company's raison d'être/mission

- i. 80% of young graduates are aware of their company's mission statement, 71% say that it is a determining factor when they are considering new positions, and 67% say that it is a commitment/loyalty factor.
10. 85.9% of young graduates say that their job gives them a sense of professional fulfillment and 75.4% say it gives them a sense of personal fulfillment
11. 86.3% of young graduates recommend their academic course/degree for the job they hold.

Methodology

This study was carried out in October and November 2022 by the NewGen Talent Centre, EDHEC's centre of expertise on the skills, aspirations, and behaviours of the new generations for the G16 Careers graduate associations. The survey was sent to graduates of member Grandes Ecoles (France's most esteemed and selective universities and colleges), and 2,099 responses from these graduates were used in the final analysis.

G16 Careers members: AGRO-UNIAGRO, ARTS ET METIERS, CENTRALE SUPELEC, EDHEC, EMLYON, ENA-INSP, ENS, ENSAE, ESCP, ESSEC, ESTP, HEC PARIS, IAE PARIS, ISAE SUPAERO ENSICA, MINES INTERMINES, ECOLE NAVALE, ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE, PONTS, SCIENCES PO, TELECOM.

Respondent demographics:

- 46% female, 54% male
- 82% French, 18% international (single or dual nationality)
- 62% Engineer alumni, 30% Business Schools alumni, 2% hybrid course alumni (at least 2 different types of establishments attended), and 6% other types of courses.

##

Press Contacts:

Lynn Anderson Davy - lynn.davy@edhec.edu - +33 (0)7 68 89 98 42

About EDHEC

EDHEC is an international business school with more than 110 nationalities represented on campuses in Lille, Nice, Paris and Singapore. With 50,000 alumni in 130 countries and learning partnerships with 290 institutions worldwide, EDHEC educates the leaders of tomorrow: men and women who are determined to solve the most pressing economic, social, technological, and environmental challenges of our time.

EDHEC's unique research model is rooted in public service: to society, to business, and to higher education. A hub of excellence, innovation, and diversity, EDHEC's mission is to educate future generations in a world in constant transformation.