

# Survey: Unlike Their Parents, Gen Z Looking For Careers With Freedom, Purpose, And Balance

BY: ANNA WATSON ON JULY 12, 2023 | 413 VIEWS



EDHEC's campus in Lille, France. Courtesy photo

The identity of Gen Z students has been shaped by the digital age, climate anxiety, a shifting financial landscape, and COVID-19. And when it comes to their interests and passions, Gen Z students express a deep desire to learn on a daily basis to serve both the broader public and the environment.

That's according to a recent study by a European business school which found that a greater number of young graduates prioritize more social, entrepreneurial, and environmental impact opportunities than previous generations, based on the results of the survey from **EDHEC Business School**. The survey report points out this is opposed to prioritizing conventional training programs undertaken for future managerial roles.

The July report stems from EDHEC's NewGen Talent Centre. It argues a younger generation of workers are focusing on gaining entirely different outcomes from work compared to the elder generations. It's focused on the interests of recent

French graduates and garnered 2,099 responses from alums of the Grand Ecoles network, a collection of France's notable and prestigious universities and colleges. The report concludes that 38% of respondents reported their ambition focuses on the "utility of their mission," global challenges, company values and culture. Another 35% are motivated by having an "entrepreneurial profile", defined **in the report** as "the freedom of action and autonomy of the missions entrusted in him/her."

A lesser amount, 27% of respondents, are focused on developing a route that reaches the upper echelon of management.

### **SOME CONTEXT BEHIND CAREER PERSPECTIVES: TIKTOK**

Buzz around the motivations and behaviors of Gen Z have long inspired articles examining the impact of the country's younger workforce. Take, for example, how Generation Z has now exceeded the number of Baby Boomers at work. A professor of professional practice commented **in a Forbes article** how the "tech-savvy generation" is likely to cause more disruption in the workplace than any other age group through prioritizing mental health days, more employee benefits and calling for pay equity and more diverse corporate culture.

TikTok has been recently favored as new grounds for discourse highlighting work experiences, in most cases those of Gen Zers. Some TikTok trends provide tips or trade perils about navigating unhappiness in a workplace in post-pandemic style amid rising remote work or in a labor economy where the number of added jobs have **only just begun to quell.**

One so-called TikTok trend, "Act Your Wage," reportedly garnered over 451.1 million views on the app, according **to an article** in Business Insider. The trend essentially expresses how it sounds: only doing the job you're paid to do, a re-branding of another TikTok trend called **quiet quitting.** The quiet quitting phenomena recently inspired a **Gallup poll** that estimates about 50% of the U.S. workers and "probably more" are quiet-quitters.

According to the metaphorical expressions portrayed in viral TikToks, it refers to workers who don't go above and beyond at work but instead execute the requirements of the job as conveyed in their job descriptions. Gallup also states that the number of disengaged workers have increased by 2% from 2020-22. The poll finds the workplace has only become more difficult among remote workers under the age of 35 where, according to the analytical firm, only 4-in-10 remote or hybrid employees understand clearly what is expected of them.

A key point in the report is made about managers. Gallup calls quiet quitting a “symptom of poor management” and the random sample survey of 15,091 employees done in June of 2022 concludes that successfully managing is key to eliminating quiet quitting.

## **73% WANT TRANSPARENCY AND HONESTY FROM THEIR BOSSES**

Luckily, the report from EDHEC’s NewGen Talent Centre has something to say about the part managers play in all this. According to their responses, the main expectations young workers have of management are, as follows: transparency and honesty (73%), trust and autonomy (67%), team protection and defense (49%) and recognition of good work (48%). Additionally, 1-in-2 surveyed grads say they positively benefited from some kind of onboarding program when they were first hired. More respondents noted they experienced more success initially when they had support from a team member (56%) as opposed to a manager (41%).

EDHEC’s NewGen Talent Centre was created in 2013 and is a hub for analyzing the behaviors/aspirations of the younger generations through data analysis, laboratory observations and research from experts and partners. Some of its work includes publications and studies. Other parts of it involve hosting conferences, speeches and integrating its findings with the career site [Graduate Programme](#), a decade-old database boasting more than 1,300 programs from more than 630 global companies.

The French B-School enrolls about 9,500 students per year in its undergraduate, executive and graduate programs, with four campuses in Lille, Nice, Paris and Singapore. Just in 2022, The Financial Times named the B-School the 7th best business school in Europe. Recently, P&Qs spoke with [EDHEC’s Dean Emmanuel Métais](#) about how the university’s strategic plan to lead a more sustainable future is developing.

## **WHAT YOUNG WORKERS REALLY PRIORITIZE**

Considering their professional aspirations, in rank order of 1 to 3, respondents chose skills acquisition and personal development (33%) above anything else. Positive impact on society ranked a close second, with 31% favoring it. Other career priorities that followed in the ranking were high income (13%), diversity in career (9%), career stability (6%), management position (5%), and international environment (3%). In working conditions, grads favored flexible hours, the possibility of a 4-day work week and the freedom to choose their working location.

According to the report, in a respondent's own words, their aspirations are: "[A] Fulfilling, caring work environment. Good professional and personal balance. Continue to learn, evolve in different positions, even sectors and structures, build my own career path, build something new."

Demographics of the respondents were 54% male and 46% female, with more than 80% being French and the rest having single or dual nationalities from regions outside France. The survey was carried out in October and November of 2022.

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