

Executive summary

Addressing generational preferences in the workplace

How do you maintain a workplace culture across in-person, remote and hybrid teams? How do you continue to attract top talent amid a constrained and competitive labor market? How do you meet the evolving needs and priorities of a diverse and multigenerational workforce?

These questions are ones that many organizations are asking, and the answers may appear seemingly impossible to uncover. However, for those who stay attuned to the expectations of their workforce, the answers are closer than they seem.

To better understand the differing needs across the four generations in the workforce – Gen Z, millennials, Gen X and baby boomers – and dimensions of diversity, we surveyed 3,000 full-time, white-collar workers in the US at organizations with 5,000 employees or more. The results of the [2022 EY US Generation Survey](#) uncovered the unique preferences, differences and similarities in today's workforce.

Culture matters more than ever

Company culture revolves around how someone feels – if they feel valued, if they feel supported personally and professionally, and if they feel like they belong.

Ninety-two percent of workers surveyed said company culture has an impact on their intent to stay with their current employer. Baby boomers, however, tend to care less about culture: 29% said it has little, or no impact at all, on their intent to stay with an employer. That's strikingly different from younger workers (Gen Z and millennials), who said culture has a great deal of impact on their intent to stay at their current place of employment, at 39% each.

If organizations neglect to cultivate an inclusive culture or understand their role across in-person, remote and hybrid teams, they risk losing top talent and future leaders. Culture isn't static, and leaders need to continuously align their companies' workplace to what their people expect and desire.



92% of workers

surveyed said company culture has an impact on their intent to stay with their current employer.



39% of Gen Z and millennials

said culture has a great deal of impact on their intent to stay at their current place of employment.



76% of millennials

said they'd leave an employer if DEI initiatives were not offered.

What diversity, equity and inclusion mean to workers

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are top of mind for organizations as they work to become more transparent in their efforts to drive further and faster change. This hasn't gone unnoticed: three-quarters (75%) of white-collar workers surveyed believe their companies' DEI commitments are authentic. These efforts cannot stop. The majority (76%) of millennials said they'd leave an employer if DEI initiatives were not offered.

But what does DEI mean? Overall, a majority of survey respondents (59%) say DEI means "equitable job opportunities," and 57% believe it means the people they work with and who are in

leadership roles represent diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Upon closer examination, however, the meaning varies. Gen Z workers associate DEI with a commitment to community support through corporate responsibility efforts and volunteering (44%) and the establishment of employee resource groups (34%), while Black respondents see DEI as a company's investment in the development and advancement of underrepresented populations at work (57%).

Also, LGBT+ respondents say DEI equates to a culture that focuses on belonging (53%).

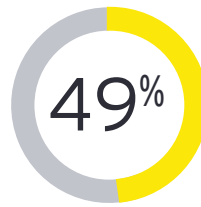
The workforce isn't a monolithic group, and organizations need to stay abreast of their people's expectations around DEI. Leaders need to be broad in their actions but also intentional. They should also look for intersectionality opportunities where there might be overlap across various dimensions of diversity, such as through employee resource groups.

Taking a stand on social issues

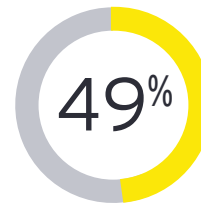
Nearly 3 in 10 (29%) millennials say they're planning to leave their companies within a year because their employers' values don't match their values. With social issues dominating headlines in the US, leaders need to respond to issues that align to their organizational values. Staying quiet, or responding too late, could lead to their future leaders and top talent looking elsewhere for roles.

According to the survey, 36% of employees say their companies' positions on these issues impact their decision to stay. A deeper dive into that data showed some distinctive differences. Almost half (49% each) of the younger workforce (Gen Z and millennials) say corporate positions on social issues played a significant impact on their decision to stay with an employer.

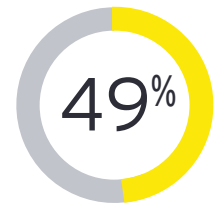
Corporate positions on social issues played a significant impact on their decision to stay with an employer



Gen Z



Millennials



LGBT+ workers



33%

of baby boomers rated flexibility in when and where they work as a top factor in looking for a new position.

Flexibility continues to be a priority

With the pandemic ushering in an era of remote and hybrid work, many people learned that they are just as productive, if not more so, at home. As a result, workers are pushing back on return-to-office requirements. More than ever before, they value adaptability in where, when and how they work.

The survey found that all four generations agree on the importance of flexibility. For instance, a third (33%) of baby boomers said flexibility in where and when they work is a top factor in looking for a new position, more so than any other generation. Thirty-five percent of millennials and 29% of Gen X respondents who intend to leave their jobs in the next year said hybrid/work-from-home options would entice them to stay.

The pandemic showed that productivity didn't falter when working remotely. Organizations that provide flexibility in where and how their people work can help cultivate a culture where all can thrive personally and professionally. Those that embrace flexibility will rise to the top and attract and retain top talent.



35%

of millennials who intend to leave their jobs in the next year said hybrid/work-from-home options would entice them to stay.

Conclusion

The workplace is diverse, and employees' expectations are distinct across generations. As these expectations change and evolve, leaders cannot afford to be reactive. They need to be strategic in their approach and look to maintain an inclusive culture where all people – across generations, race and ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation and disability status – can belong and thrive.



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