

# 5 Reasons Why Millennials & Gen Z Aren't the Same



A QUICK GUIDE FOR PARENTS, EDUCATORS,  
AND EMPLOYERS ON WHAT MAKES THESE  
GENERATIONS UNIQUE—  
AND HOW TO MOTIVATE THEM.

# Millennials and Gen Z aren't the same. Here are 5 reasons why.

**As someone who has spent years studying generational trends, I have a simple mission: to create greater awareness of the true potential of the younger generations.**

When we understand how they think, what makes them tick, and what motivates their decisions, we can increase their performance at home, school, and work.

A greater understanding of these talented younger people is an asset to anyone who interacts with them—from parents and educators to employers and community leaders. Today's younger generations have incredible potential; in fact, I believe they are some of the most talented, tenacious, and intelligent young people we've ever seen in this country. We just have to unleash them.

To those of us in generations such as Generation X and Baby Boomers, Millennials and Gen Z may seem crazy sometimes. They're not—they're just operating from a different worldview that was shaped by the formative events in their early lives.

It can be easy to lump the Millennial Generation (born roughly between 1981 and 1996) and Generation Z (born roughly between 1997 and 2012) into one big group. But while there are many traits they share, there are also key differences between these two generational cohorts.

Read on to discover what makes these two generations so different from one another—as well as the things they have in common.


Warmest Regards,




**Mark C. Perna**  
Speaker | Author | CEO



# 1. Team Players and Self-Starters

MILLENNIALS	GENERATION Z	
<p>Millennials are team players known for their preference for group interactions. They seek out fun, varied, and new experiences, and group engagement allows for more of that than individual or one-on-one interactions. Collaborative group work is where they find their best voice in the workplace, and their emphasis on teamwork is helping them become effective managers as they step into the shoes of retiring Boomers.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p>Gen Z tends to be much more private and individualistic. They prefer independent work where they have control over their own outcome. This may be why Gen Z is far more self-starting and entrepreneurial than the Millennials ever were. According to various studies, anywhere from 62–72% of Gen Z say they want to own their business someday (or already do).<sup>2</sup></p>	

# 2. Digital Adopters and Digital Natives

MILLENNIALS	GENERATION Z	
<p>While Millennials are comfortable with technology, it was not an integral part of their childhood. Though they quickly adopted it in their teens and early working years, they can remember a time when cell phones were a novelty and Friday nights meant a trip to Blockbuster to rent a VHS tape. They enjoy social media, especially Facebook, and have no problem with sharing details of their personal lives online.</p>	<p>Gen Z is the first generation to be true digital natives. They grew up with devices in hand, which is perhaps why they see a greater need for online privacy than their Millennial counterparts. Perhaps related to their heavy social media usage, Gen Zers are more likely than Millennials to struggle with mental health issues.<sup>3</sup></p>	


## GEN Z FACTS



- **61%** of Gen Z admit concern over social media addiction
- That's despite spending an average of **6.5 hours** per day across sites like YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter
- **Twenty percent** say they would need to be paid **\$1 million** to permanently delete their most used social media account
- **13%** say no amount of money would persuade them to do so

(According to research by ExpressVPN)<sup>4</sup>

# 3. Debtors and Debt-Avoiders

MILLENNIALS	GENERATION Z	
<p>Millennials are more stressed about their debt burden than any other generation.<sup>5</sup> Millennials' main money regrets are student loans and credit card debt. One study found that 90% of respondents did not fully understand the terms of their student loans when they signed on the dotted line. Eighty-four percent borrowed more than they needed and accrued credit card debt while working toward their degree.<sup>6</sup></p>	<p>Perhaps observing how debt has crippled Millennials, Gen Z tends to be much more debt-averse. This means they may be less likely to choose a college pathway because of the debt often associated with that route.</p>	


## GEN Z FACTS




- **Only 29%** of Gen Z students see pursuing passions as the #1 factor of a college education—the lowest rate of all generations
- **Almost half (49%)** of Gen Z see maximizing earning potential as the most important factor in attending college—the highest rate of all generations
- **Gen Z** is more open to other, less traditional ways of learning skills (such as YouTube) that were not as widely available when Millennials were coming of age

(According to an OnlineU survey)<sup>7</sup>

4. Advocates and Activists

MILLENNIALS	GENERATION Z	
Millennials are known for their advocacy of social and environmental causes, and organizations have adapted to this priority. However, Millennials also value transparency and are quick to detect when an organization's professed involvement in a cause is genuine or just lip service.	Though Millennials and Gen Z both champion the causes they care about, Gen Z tend to be activists who take this passion further. In fact, many Gen Z members will not work for a company whose values do not align with their own. Both prioritize purpose at work, but not to the detriment of paycheck— but especially Gen Z. <sup>8</sup>	

5. Idealists and Pragmatists

MILLENNIALS	GENERATION Z	
Millennials grew up in the age of helicopter parenting and the self-esteem movement. Their parents were urged to teach their kids that they were unique, special, and important— beliefs that contributed to the Millennials' idealistic view of themselves and the world.	Gen Z leans more toward the pragmatic end of the spectrum (not unlike their Boomer grandparents). This is seen in their aversion to debt and reasons for attending college; as stated earlier, almost half (49%) see it as an investment in their future earning potential rather than a place to pursue their passion.	

What They Share

- **The Why Generation:** Millennials and Gen Z are innately curious about the reasons behind everything they're asked to do. Unlike previous generations, they don't find the answer "because I said so" enough. "Why?" is the question they're always asking, to the point that older generations may think they're trying to flout authority. In general, these generations simply want to understand the big picture so they can invest fully in improving the outcome.
- **Delaying Milestones:** Millennials and Gen Z are both not as concerned as previous generations about hitting life milestones such as marriage, kids, home purchase, et cetera "on time."
- **Human Connection:** One thing that Millennials, Gen Z, and every other generation share is the need for human connection. We all want to be seen, heard, and valued by the authority figures in our lives. Millennials grew up being praised and encouraged to achieve at every level, and they still love that type of affirmation today. Gen Z is more private, but requires a true human connection from the authority figures in their life, perhaps because of the disconnected nature of their social media experience.





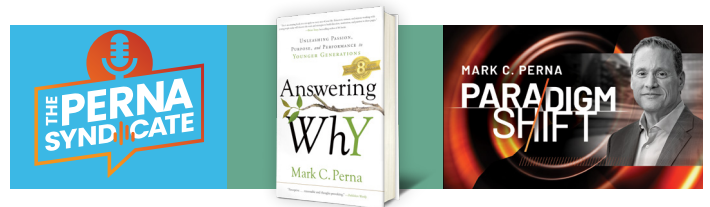
## Sources

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- 2 <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/06/18/microsoft-finds-gen-z-is-redefining-the-idea-of-work-hustle.html>
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## Further Resources

(Clickable Link Bars)



Connect directly with Mark to discuss a dynamic, inspiring, and actionable presentation for your organization, tailored to your audience and delivered in person or virtually.

[Read the first chapter](#) of Mark's award-winning bestseller, *Answering Why: Unleashing Passion, Purpose, and Performance in Younger Generations*, for free. And don't miss the free resources that accompany the book!

Subscribe to Mark's channel at Forbes.com, where he contributes weekly on Millennials and Gen Z in careers, education, and the workforce.

Check out Mark's Paradigm Shift video series for an actionable and inspiring journey into the mind of the younger generations.

Listen to *The Perna Syndicate* podcast in 90 seconds every weekday, where Mark shares the latest strategies to shift the paradigm—in education, careers, workforce development, and in our own lives.

Subscribe to Mark's free e-newsletter, Paradigm Shift News, to stay posted on the latest from Mark and his team.

Join the next Call to Action livestream experience, where Mark will inspire educators, employers, and communities to better connect their talent pipelines through Education with Purpose & Employment with Passion.



**Mark C. Perna is the founder and CEO of TFS Results**, a full-service strategic consulting firm at the forefront of the national paradigm shift in education and workforce development. As an international generational expert, Mark has devoted his career to empowering educators and employers to unleash the tremendous potential of today's young people.

Mark, who serves on the Advisory Council for the Coalition for Career Development in Washington, DC, founded the Education with Purpose & Employment with Passion movement to help communities connect the pipelines between education, business, and economic development. His work has helped countless parents, schools, districts, businesses, and state organizations across North America to engage with the younger generations more effectively.

Mark delivers 70+ in-person and virtual keynote speeches annually at national and statewide events. He's also spoken at Harvard University by special invitation. At TFS Results, Mark's team of talented professionals share his vision of helping organizations of all sizes experience significant gains in recruitment, engagement, retention, and performance.

Mark is a weekly contributor at Forbes.com, where his articles and leadership videos reach an audience of more than 3 million. He also hosts the 90-second podcast *The Perna Syndicate*, has published many articles in national publications, and interviews frequently on radio shows, television, and podcasts. His multi-award-winning bestseller, *Answering Why: Unleashing Passion, Purpose, and Performance in Younger Generations*, was written to help educators, employers, and parents understand and motivate the Millennial and Z generations. Mark is the father of two successful millennials and resides in Cleveland, Ohio.

Find out more about Mark and his work at [MarkCPerna.com](http://MarkCPerna.com).