

A new talent war is coming and Gen Z is leading the charge

It's been more than a year since we were first ordered to "stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives". Since then, scientists and healthcare workers have proven themselves modern-day marvels, driving the UK's world-leading vaccination campaign to deliver more than 65 million doses of the COVID vaccine... and counting. As spring is finally springing over Britain, there's a sense that our most difficult days are behind us.

But even as restaurants and pubs start to (cautiously) welcome us in, the government guidance on office work remains: *if you can work from home, you should work from home*. So many of us with jobs that demand time behind a computer screen are still working not just from home, but also alone.

Working from home has benefitted many over the last year, slashing commuting costs, allowing parents more time with their children, and giving employees more of control over their time. Bloomberg has recently reported that some employees are even quitting their jobs rather than returning to the office.

But a year of working without in-person contact has also come at a cost. According to Microsoft's [Work Trend Index](#), employees are reporting high levels of exhaustion and digital overload, while shrinking networks are stifling innovation. Few are feeling the effects of this more than Gen Z, many of whom have never met a single manager or colleague in person.

The erosion of the workplace social capital that is built through formal and informal networking opportunities, and the pure serendipity that happens when humans bump shoulders

and exchange smiles, has far reaching consequences; loyalty and commitment is borne of strong working relationships with and within our teams. Currently, 41% of employees report that they are considering leaving their employer. And, while remote working is at the root of some of the dissatisfaction behind that number, it has also opened a plethora of opportunities

to a workforce that is no longer bound by a commutable radius.

According to [research](#) conducted by EDHEC's NewGen Talent Centre, the most important aspect of work for highly skilled Gen Z talent is to have an influence on business decisions. Yet, Microsoft's report indicates that in the context of remote working Gen Zs are currently report struggling to "bring new ideas to the table" and "get a word in during meetings or calls". And, in a recent [study](#) by Ten Spot, about half of employees from our most digitally native population reported feeling

bored and unproductive at work with the current remote arrangements.

It has been a tough job market – for Gen Z especially – over the last year. But, as economies bounce back, highly skilled emerging talent will soon once again have the upper hand, with a greater degree of choice of employers than perhaps at any time in history. Only organisations that understand what motivates and inspires our brightest young minds, and then deliver on those expectations consistently can win the war for talent that is to come. ■

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