# What does mentoring Gen-Z entail?

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What does mentoring Gen Z really entail?

For starters, you'll need patience, vision and the willingness to accept them with all their quirks.

Not too long ago, there were only three streams of education for the youth in India. Based on how much one scored in their board exams, the Gen X and their predecessors enrolled for either Science, Commerce or the Arts stream. Things changed when the millennials broke preset norms and built careers in a myriad of industries such as aviation, hotel management, creative arts and allied engineering fields, just as the Internet boom helped foster growth across all domains. However, the last ten years, with all its technological disruptions, have been a true game changer. The way the world has changed at a brisk pace and at times, it feels difficult to catch up with. Gone are the days when the Millennials came home to dial-up internet and Yahoo Chats on their desktops, this new Generation Z born between 1996 and 2010 grew up in a world overrun with technology – they had everything at the click of a button and they practically live on the cloud. What was once aspirational for many is a given for the teens of today. And maybe, that's a good thing!

From social media influencers, brand managers and environmental engineers, to Data Scientists, research analysts, and statisticians – the neoteric career options are significantly advanced from what they were even a decade ago. Soon enough, the Gen Zers will make up a large percentage of the workforce, bringing in their distinct perspective on what they truly want. When options are plenty and the right mentoring is missing – confusion sets in. Especially with a generation that has grown up with machines more than humans. That's why, it is crucial to help them understand how things work and to motivate them to make the right decisions. It's important to identify their strengths. For instance, while it's hard for them to go without their devices, and their attention spans being limited, know that they can processes information faster and are better multitask-
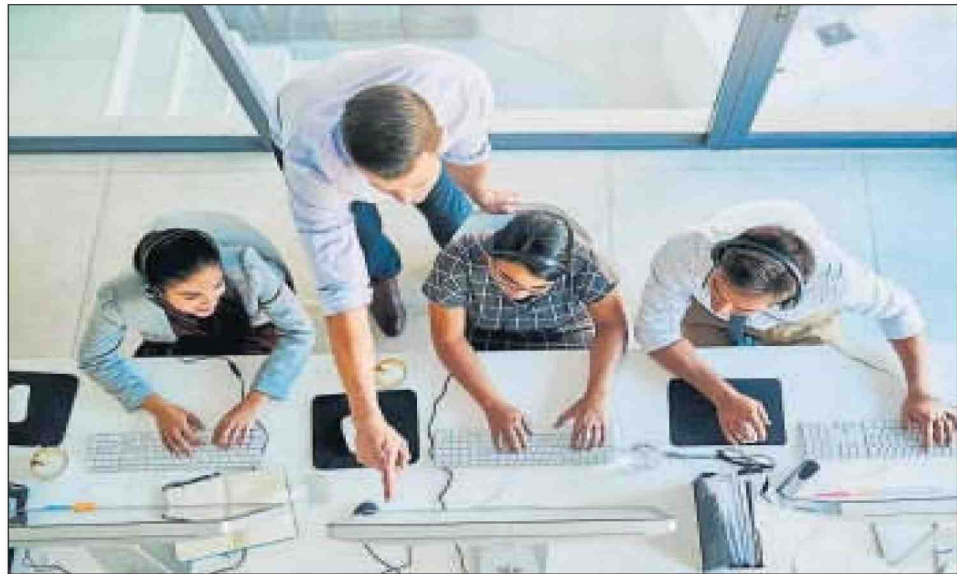
■ **Gen-Z can efficiently shift between work and play**   GETTY IMAGES

ers. They can efficiently shift between work and play as they research for notes on the laptop, watch a movie on the phone and face-time with friends on their iPad.

Another trait to observe and appreciate is how entrepreneurial they are in their outlook. There are expert counsellors who are qualified to pick up imperceptible traits like their desire to work in independent environments or to tap in on their global outlook. In fact, we've observed that they have more in common with their global peers than they do with adults in India. Now imagine how all this might shape the office of the future.

CATCH THEM YOUNG
Another observation is how this generation of digital natives will be early starters. More teens between the ages of 16 and 18 going straight into the workforce, opting out of the traditional route of higher education. They are capable of learning on their own, through efficient, non-traditional routes and would rather finish school online. That's why new, more affordable and convenient online alternatives are on the rise. There are plenty of courses in the Information Technology, Banking and Finance, Digital Marketing, Business Analytics,

Retail and Telecom sector. However, only skilled expert counselling for these courses will help them make a more informed choice.

GEAR UP FOR THE FUTURE
An interesting study conducted by us suggest that youth today aspire for a certain lifestyle. They however seem to be 'drifters' not knowing what exactly needs to be done to attain that lifestyle. They procrastinate often but at the same time, they strongly feel that they need help and guidance. What makes the role of a mentor so critical and challenging today is Gen Zers seek 'Inspiring Mentors' who really walk the talk. Unlike Gen Xers, the Gen Zers are not satisfied with merely reading a brochure and taking decisions blindly. If you tell them about the opportunities in the field of data mining or cloud computing – they will ask for details and will not hesitate at all to cross-question. They need to know that, what they learn will actually make a difference to the project they will be working on in the future.

During a learning course, we believe it is imperative for them to be put at the center of innovation, challenging them and watching them chalk out their own route to develop new solu-

tions to problems. Just like in the games they play on their phones and tablets, they must feel the challenge right down in their bones – only then they can succeed. At the same time, they need to be cross-trained to create a larger talent pool – this will allow project assignment to break down functional barriers. If artificial intelligence is the way for the future, know that partnering with a machine isn't a challenge for them. The real test for them is gaining command over softer skills of communication, problem solving and management however – that may not be so easy but then, it's crucial to look at courses that are designed to help them master these skills too. That's why, assigning appropriate mentors and coaches who can identify the youngsters' skills and help leverage their strengths early-on, is important. We show them the plan for their growth, and also share how we would help co-design their development.

We believe in investing the time and resources to create a supportive and transparent workplace. Above all, we know that they will value the mentorship only if they do not find it monotonous and preachy and most of all – only if they consider value in the deal!

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