

Future of Work: Understanding the Newest Generation Entering the Workforce

A recent study by Purdue University, in collaboration with BASF and the National FFA Organization, focused on workplace attractiveness to 18-25 year-old FFA Alumni. There were five key dimensions used to measure the extent an individual is attracted to an employer:

1. **Interest value:** An exciting work environment, novel work practices and that make use of its employees' creativity to produce high-quality, innovative products and services.
2. **Social value:** A working environment that is fun, happy, provides good collegial relationships and a team atmosphere.
3. **Economic value:** Above-average salary, compensation package, job security and promotional opportunities.
4. **Development value:** Recognition, self-worth and confidence, coupled with a career-enhancing experience and a springboard to future employment.
5. **Application value:** An opportunity for the employee to apply what they have learned and to teach others, in an environment that is both customer-oriented and humanitarian.



This document provides high-level findings that can assist in better understanding the generation currently entering the workforce.

About the Participants in This Study: Generation Z (Gen Z)

The 18-25 year-old participants¹ in this study are classified as younger members of Gen Z. Gen Z, also known as iGen, Centennials or the Recession Generation, are individuals born between 1997-2013.² They live in a world of websites, readily available networks and smart devices.³ They are motivated to excel in the workplace. They want to conduct their projects with limited supervision and prefer challenging projects that are often changing and in which they can solve problems using new methods.⁴ Younger members of Gen Z are close in age to those in Generation Alpha, the generation following on the heels of Gen Z. Younger Gen Z are entering the workplace for the first time and by gaining their insights into what makes a workplace attractive, companies can understand how their current onboarding practices, policies, and job recruitment may be perceived by those coming into the workforce soon: older members of Generation Alpha.

Findings

All dimensions of workplace attractiveness hold equal weight when it comes to attracting Gen Z workers.

- **All five dimensions** used to measure the extent an individual is attracted to an employer were **found to be important** to attracting Gen Z workers – **companies cannot be selective in emphasizing one value over another.**
 - The survey asked respondents to reflect on 25 statements and honestly rate how each mirrored the attractiveness of working for an agricultural company (1-7; 1=to a very little extent, 7=to a very great extent).⁵ A mean score was calculated based on respondents' assigned ratings to each values' associated statements. All means were high; see Table 1.

¹ The National FFA Organization provided contact information for past FFA members who graduated high school between 2018-2022.

² Pew Research Center

³ Bascha, 2011; Brue Tulgan, & Rainmaker Inc., 2013

⁴ Sladek & Miller, 2019.

⁵ Berthon, P., Ewing, M., & Hah, L. L. (2005). Captivating company: dimensions of attractiveness in employer branding. International journal of advertising, 24(2), 151-172.

Table 1. Dimensions of workplace attractiveness

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Social Value	5.94	1	7
Development Value	5.78	1.2	7
Economic Value	5.77	1.2	7
Interest Value	5.65	2	7
Application Value	5.57	1.4	7

What Gen Z workers expect from potential employers

- According to the study, respondents expect to be *promoted in two years or less*.
- Respondents generally *do not want to move* outside their community/state.
- Respondents generally were willing to work *40 hours per week* but *did not want to work longer hours*, work weekends or stay away from home for weeks.
- Respondents agree that the workplace must be *supportive of the employee and their family*.
- The survey asked respondents to indicate the value they place on six statements in choosing an agricultural career (0-10; 0=not at all, 10=essential).⁶
 - A mean score was calculated based on respondents' assigned ratings to each values' associated statements. All means were high; see Table 2.

Table 2. Career attractiveness

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Company values reflect my values	8.54	1	10
Personal fulfillment/I can make a difference	8.54	0	10
Salary	7.44	0	10
Benefits other than salary, e.g. insurance, retirement	7.40	2	10
Company impact/makes a difference in society	7.38	0	10
Company contribution to environmental sustainability	6.16	0	10

Where Gen Z look for job opportunities and search for a job

Participants learned about job opportunities through:

- Ag teacher (75%)
- Peer networking (67%)
- Company social media (42%)

Participants searched for a job with these tools:

- Company websites (75%)
- Job search websites (60%)
- Social media sites (38%)



⁶ Career Attractiveness Scale