

- You're listening to HR Mixtape, your podcast with the perfect mix of practical advice, thought-provoking interviews, and stories that just hit different so that work doesn't have to feel, well, like work. ♪ There's no one better ♪ Now your host, Shari Simpson.

- Joining me today is Hana Ben-Shabat. Hana is the founder of Gen Z Planet, a research and advisory firm. She helps business leaders to prepare for the next generation of employees and consumers. In this role, Hana combines her passion for insights with her commitment to support the integration of the next generation into society. As an award-winning management consultant who was named one of the top 25 consultants by Consulting Magazine, Hana is a sought-after speaker and business commentator and is the author of the book "Gen Z 360: Preparing for the Inevitable Change in Culture, Work and Commerce." Hana, thank you so much for joining me on the podcast today.

- Thank you for having me.

- So you have done so much amazing work in education around our newest generation coming into the workforce, Gen Z. I can't wait to see what you do with Gen Alpha. But as we think about Gen Z, you know, I'm curious about how this generation is different. You know, we spent so much time in HR talking about Millennials, and I feel like we still do because Millennials now are in management, they're leading companies, but we gotta get well versed on Gen Z real quick. So what are the markers we need to think about with this generation?

- Yeah, and you know, there is a tendency to sometimes think just because there is a new generation, they're gonna be so different. So I'm always trying to ask myself, what we haven't seen before? And I believe that with Gen Z, there are maybe two or three attributes that are really unique to this generation. The first one is diversity. This is the most diverse generation to ever live in the United States. 48% are minorities. And as such, that has a huge influence on what they expect from the workplace. Gen Z want to see in the workplace the same diversity that they see at their homes, at their schools, at their communities. It's something that is becoming more and more a non-negotiable for them when they consider an employer. And I believe that, while we have a lot of talks about diversities before with previous generation and how important it is, this is a generation that it's really demanding, demanding that because of who they are. And I think it's important to understand that diversity for Gen Z is not only a statistical figure, and it's not like, "Oh, I want to see myself represented." It is a cultural lens through which they view the world and through which they interact with one another but also with, you know, with their employers and what they expect from employers and . So that's one thing. I think the second attribute is really the level of education. Gen Z is the most educated generation that we had so far. I mean, if you look at the statistics, we have a generation that has the lowest high school dropout and the highest college

enrollment. We saw a little dip after the pandemic, but I think it's climbing back. So as a result of that, we are getting into the workplace a generation that is much more educated than we had before. And on top of that, they are the digital natives. And they bring those digital skills on top of the formal education that they have, and that creates a completely different expectations from the workplace that we haven't seen before. And the third thing is, of course, the technology. Gen Z is true digital natives. They grow up in a world where they don't know a reality without search engine, mobile phone, social media. And that has shaped who they are, how they learn, how they process information, how they want to be trained, how they want to communicate with each other and with their bosses and with the workplace in general. And that creates another layer of complexity for employers who may not fully understand that digital mindset.

- How do you think employers should go about attracting, entertaining this generation with all of those factors in place, right? I think you said the word about Gen Z demanding, and I actually really love that word because I think there is some onus on employers to be more transparent, think about these different things. So as we're thinking about attracting and retaining this generation, how do we need to make changes as an employer?

- For employers to be effective in attracting and retaining Gen Z, the list of things that need to be taken into account and considered is truly long. And there are things that, you know, you will not be surprised. Compensation and benefits is always top of the line for a generation that, I always say, are the kids of the Great Recession and the graduates of the pandemic. They really go up in a world where they learned the lessons of previous generations, and they're very focused on securing their financial futures. So obviously, the compensation is a very important part, but it's not only about money with Gen Z. And going back to the point I raised before about the education, I think what's really happening is we have a generation that wants the security and the stability, and they are willing to commit and provide their loyalty for employer. All the studies we do show that black and white, that Gen Zers are willing to stay longer in a company. But one happening in their reality is that they come and they leave very quickly after. Companies are really struggling to retain them. And one of the biggest challenge is never compensation, but it's the roles that they are given. And I would say one of the most important things that an employer can do these days is to really examine their entry-level roles and see are they fit to the current environment that we live in? Is the entry-level role really suited for a highly-educated individual that also has amazing digital skills and is very exposed to the world around them and what's happening, you know, in the country, in the world. And they are much, they have a certain degree of exposure to the world around them that we have not seen before. And that's actually add and brings a level of maturity that we have not seen with young people before. So if you think about it, you know,

somebody like that comes to the workplace and then they're asked to do a traditional entry-level role that, you know, it's either repetitive tasks or things that are not interesting to them, it's very hard to keep them engaged. I think the other thing that is going to be very helpful with Gen Z is the level of feedback that they are required. And this is another reason why we see many of them deciding to leave because they either felt uncomfortable, they didn't feel like they're doing well, nobody really told them what's going on. And I guess part of it is the situation that we all found ourselves in the pandemic with the work from home. It made it more difficult to do that kind of integration that we would do otherwise. And they need feedback. And people sometimes think that Gen Z needs feedback because they're so insecure and they require too much handholding, which is actually not the truth. They want that constant feedback because they're ambitious, because they want to progress very quickly. So they want to know where they stand. They want to know what do they have to do to exceed expectations, and they want to have a clarity on their job and, you know, what task they have to perform to be successful. And if they don't get that, they leave. And I think this is the interesting thing about this generation is that, you know, previous generations would say, "Oh, you know, like, you should be happy just to have the job, and, you know, you have to put your heads down and just work hard." They just don't see things this way because that personal development, that constant learning and being able to develop yourself is very important that they would rather move or not have a job for a while than stick in something that they're not feeling happy or comfortable with.

- It really does force us to think differently or change the definition of some of the things that we've held to in HR for a while. Like, thinking about when you were talking about how they define feedback and are potentially seen as, I'm gonna use some negative words, needy. Right? I've heard that before. Gen Z's needy or they're, like you said, insecure, and that's just not the reality. And I love that you shared around they wanna know how they exceed expectations. You know, I think for so long in my career, exceeds expectations, that rating was like a, you know, a diamond that you found randomly or a golden something, and there wasn't really a path to it. It's just, yeah, you exceeded expectations this year. You know, we've made that change where we wanna be more intentional on the feedback that we give, but I love that idea of, let's have a real conversation about here's my expectations in your job. If you accomplish these things, I'm gonna view this as exceeding. If you accomplish these things, I'm gonna view it as outstanding. Because I think there's so much value in the organization and for that employee to know, like, hey, I know my path I know where I'm gonna be successful. And it allows that employee to make the decision whether they want to be an exceeding employee, right? That might mean more discretionary effort. And if that's not the lifestyle they want, now we give them the choice, right? We can have a transparent conversation about that. So that's really

fascinating to me.

- That's absolutely right. And I think that's brings another point which is we need to change the definition of feedback. This whole notion of we're gonna do annual feedback and we're gonna give you one time, you know, evaluation of how did you do this year, that's kind of outdated. And many companies completely realize that, and many companies already adapted different ways of giving that feedback. I think it's with Gen Z, it's more about an ongoing conversation as opposed to here is your annual feedback, and, you know, we mark, you know, we get the points for this and points for that, and this is your final score. It just doesn't walk this way with them. They need that constant conversation with their boss to really understand, you know, where they stand and how they're doing. I also think that, talking about things that need to change in terms of definition, I believe that Gen Z brings a different definition of success. What is success? Is success is really climbing the ladder, or is, you know, is success is making more money? And I think, while all of these things are true, what you see a lot with Gen Z is that they define success in how they develop personally. Are they develop skills? Because one thing that they know, some of them know this intuitively, some of it are really conscious about it. They know that, in a world that is changing so quickly, skills can be obsolete very quickly. And therefore, they're looking for employers who can provide that development opportunities where they know that they can always learn, always develop new skills because they don't want to be stuck in one hole and find themselves 10 years down the road kind of filling, you know, ChatGPT is going to do all this stuff, you know? So I think, I believe that part of that mentality is being proactive, and it's related to that whole notion, "I have to secure my future." So one thing is, you know, I need to earn well and I need to do a good job and all this kind of thing that we all familiar with. But there is also a great sense of understanding that your skills today may not be valuable 10 years down the road, and therefore you got to be constantly learning.

- And it reiterates this idea of feed forward instead of feedback, right? Give me the feed forward that I need to make the change or learn the new skill or get ready for next. So I think that's really valuable. You know, as we think about organizations now, you know, you may have four or five different generations working in your company now. You know, how have you seen employers tackle that with just so many, obviously we're using generics as we're talking about generations, but there is different priorities there and there is different things that they look for. And as an employer, I feel like your head could be spinning a lot as to how do you support all of these people? So what have you coached employers on for that?

- It is a new reality. I mean, we never had that before. And it depends on your organization, right? So if you, you know, we all walk into a Walmart and being greeted by somebody who may be in their 80s.

They are, you know, the still Silent Generation who are still in the workplace. And then you will have, you know, the young person who is a Gen Z and everybody in between working under the same roof, if you like. And for many companies, it's mostly about four generations. But even with Boomers and Xers and Millennials and Gen Z, even if it's just only four generations, that could be a source of conflict. And it is a conflict that happens very naturally because you have all these people in one environment, and every generation has different values, different working styles, different expectations. So it's very easy to see how conflict could arise. And sometimes it's just because of that different definition of what a good job looks like. There is a different definition of what success is. There is a different definition of what you should be doing as a young employee. And you know, and older people think, "Oh, young people you know, they are disrespectful and they, you know, they don't want to pay their dues. They just want to jump and, you know, be in high positions." While the young people think, you know, "The older employees are detached. They really don't understand, and they don't get it." And so, and so forth, and there are a lot of stereotypes, you know, flying all over. And I believe that employers will do good if they get ahead of that conflict happening and start, you know, making sure that people work together well and work together and create a harmonious workplace that works for everyone. And there are lots of ways to do that. But I would say one of the most effective way is to actually do training. Many companies are doing constantly diversity training. This is just another dimension of diversity. It's age diversity or generational diversity. So why not talk about it and make sure that people do understand where each generation come from? What are the events that shape their values, why they see the world the way they do? And by doing that, you create a level of awareness that allow people to see each other for who they are instead of being latched onto stereotypes. And that is something that I found extremely effective in most organizations. Some organizations actually do big events around this, and it works well.

- I love that idea of adding generational training into your DEIA initiatives. Thank you for that example. I think that's genius. I think that's really, really cool. Hana, this has been such a great discussion. And if you're listening and you wanna know more about Hana and the work she does, she wrote this great book called "Gen Z 360: Preparing for the Inevitable Change in Culture, Work and Commerce." So excited to have you on the podcast, Hana. Again, thank you so much.

- Thank you very much.

- I hope you enjoyed today's episode. You can find show notes and links at thehrmixing.com. Come back often and please subscribe, rate, and review.