

# A Call-to-Action: Rethinking Automation for Generation Z

*by Rachel Snyder*

With more Gen Zers joining the manufacturing workforce, there are significant culture shifts needed to accommodate how these new workers (born from 1996 - 2010) view automation. As the first Gen Zer member of the Manufacturing Media Consortium (founded by Thomas R. Cutler, 23 years ago, before I was born) I can vouch for this need to reframe the context of automation for my generation. Failure to do so will make it impossible for industrial leaders to attract and hopefully keep us engaged.

Gen Zers were brought up alongside our phones, growing, and adapting with every new advancement in technology. Phones are our lifeline; it is how we communicate, learn, and understand almost everything.

Zers perform best by having an interaction with technology that engage and motivate us to keep working. Taking something we see as our core competency...working with automation, builds our self-esteem through validation, inspiring us to work harder and find enjoyment.

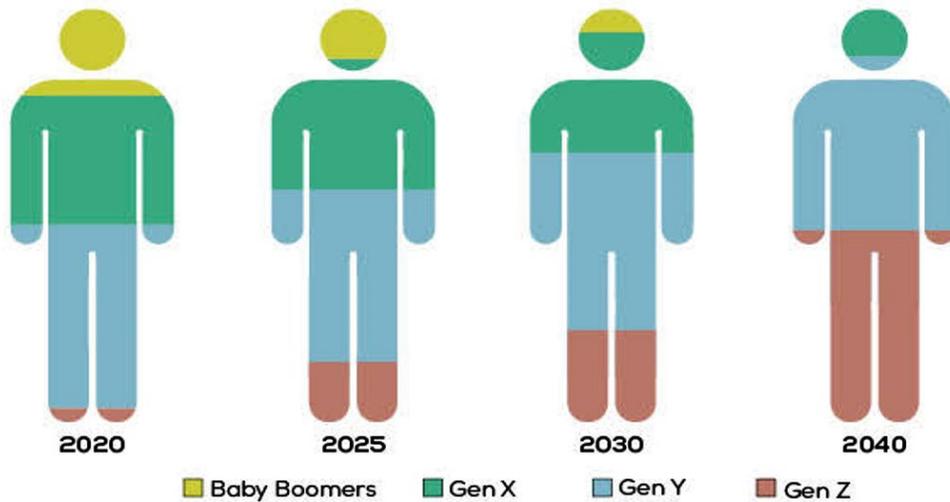
## **Automation In Academia Transfers To The Gen Zers' Workplace**

Integrating technology and learning is not something new, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. As Boomers and Millennials had to make the difficult adjustment of putting their entire lives online, this adjustment however was quite easy Gen Zers.

Pine Crest School in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, which I attended for 14 years prior to starting my higher education at Boston University last year, started integrating technology and automating their learning program since Lower School. Whether it was utilizing the iLab to make our science projects, learning how to use the 3D printer for art class, or even taking out our phones during class to play interactive games to help us understand the course material, we were always using technology to further our education. Teachers were beginning to understand that students show quantifiable success when utilizing technology in the learning process, particularly given our comfort with learning programs to further our studies. At Boston University the integration of learning and technology was included in the automated orientation.

Students are required to take a drug and alcohol seminar as well as a sexual assault seminar. The program was fully online with interactive videos and quizzes to keep the students focused on the material. Since many Zers are used to using electronics throughout their educational careers, the transition to a working environment makes automation an extremely critical process for young workers.

## Workforce Percentages



### Gen Zers Want New and Innovative Automation Technology

As shown above, our role in the workforce is growing significantly and we will be the majority by 2040 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Outdated business practices hackneyed, and dull training will be reasons for my generation to quit a job. According to DellTechnologies, 80% of Generation Z hopes to work with cutting-edge technologies and around 91% cite technology as the most important factor when choosing a job.

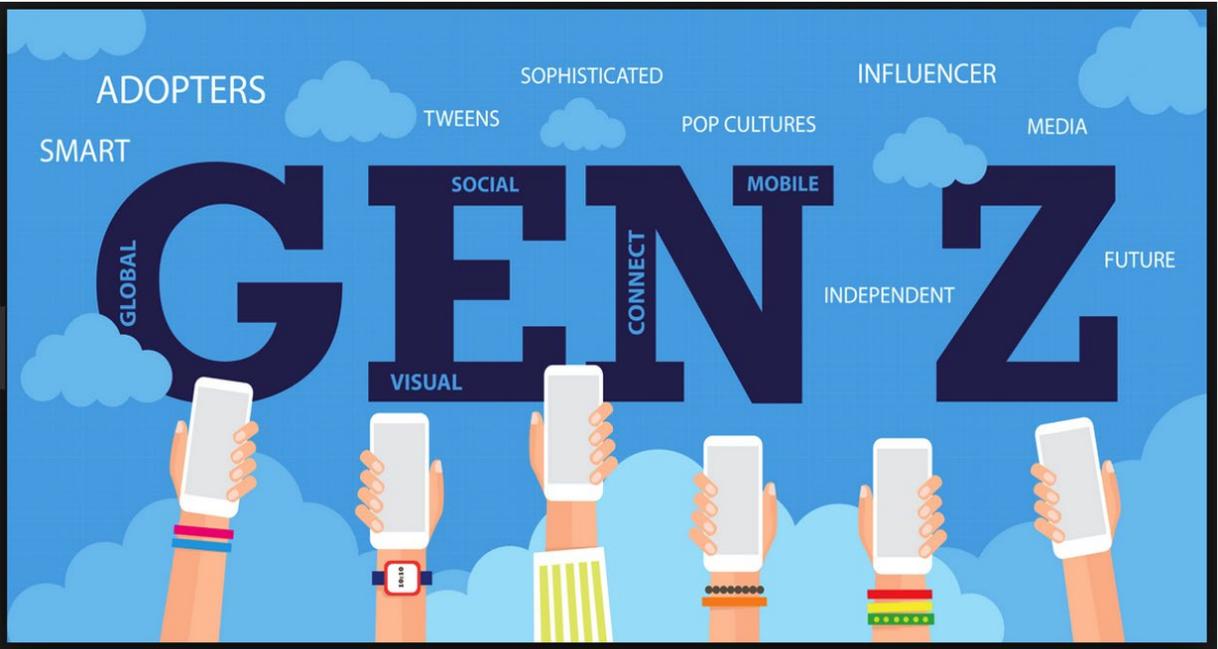
### For Gen Zers: Automation = Technology

Gen Zers are excited about technology and use the language of automation synonymously. Since issues like quality assurance, quality control regulatory compliance, occupational health and safety, ISO certification are constantly changing, Zers will simply access these data on their phones and proceed as immediately debriefed workers.

### Deploying Automation For Zers

Zers want to hear about fun and sexy automation tools, processes, and techniques. From Lean Six Sigma to Automated Guided Vehicles, this can all be presented to Zers as dynamic and intriguing (all via phone).

No longer are the outdated methodologies such as in-person seminars and training instruction acceptable. When manufacturers, now looking to hire millions of new workers, package and communicate in a manner appealing to Gen Zers, success is inevitable. To the C-Suite...check out TikTok; it can be your automation friend. Your children, nieces, and nephews will appreciate that you are savvy and aware of the trends that guide their lives.



### Start Small In The Gen Z Realm

As manufacturers start implementing new technologies that engage Gen Z employees, simple advancements such as having employees clock-in via scanning a QR code or allowing them to take training through an interactive video presentation are simple ways to make a big impact.

*Rachel Snyder as a Generation Z individual herself, Snyder has a unique understanding of the role of social media among her peers; her analysis examines how it impacts the lives, decisions, and actions of fellow Gen Z thinkers. Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are more than resources but rather the answer to reaching her generation. These insights are vital for businesses to inspire, motivate, and engage Gen Z job applicants and employees. Traditional PR, messaging, tradeshows, job boards will simply be ignored by Gen Z thinkers according to Snyder.*