

Insights Into Why Fear, Anxiety and Purpose Might Just Make Gen Z The Best Entrepreneurial Generation Ever

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Gen Z could channel fear, anxiety, technology and purpose into being entrepreneurially disruptive.

There is a lot being written and observed about Gen Z with respect to life and entrepreneurship. Some articles talk about the lack of face to face communication skills. Others, the lack of focus. Additional articles and studies mention the high level of mental anxiety and stress that seems to be associated with this generation. Is all hope lost for this generation? Not so fast. All this 'noise' seems to remind this author of another generation that was told they would never amount to much, that their long hair and questioning of authority and rules would lead to a wasted life. Well, that generation of people, let's call them young baby boomers (teenagers from the 60's and 70's), turned out just fine. So, let's take a deeper look at Gen Z, their current shortcomings and their potential.

According to Pew Research, Designing Generations Report, what is unique for Generation Z is that technology has been part of their lives from the start. The iPhone launched in 2007, when the oldest Gen Zers were 10. By the time they were in their teens, the primary means by which young Americans connected with the web was through mobile devices, WIFI and high-bandwidth cellular service. Social media, constant connectivity and on-demand entertainment and communication are simply assumed by Gen Z. What we don't understand is the implications of growing up in an 'always on' technological environment over time. We do know they are extremely tech savvy.

With regard to Gen Z communication skills, especially face to face communication, the abundance of articles on the subject, including this one from LinkedIn, agree on one thing. That Gen Z struggles with core communication skills. The common link in the articles seems to be the early exposure to technology, social media, and now the pandemic which has isolated and hampered Gen Z's communication abilities. And college may not have prepared Gen Z for the 'soft skills' needed early in their career, like how to negotiate, public speaking, networking and how to resolve conflicts via communication skills. That means either they will have to learn these skills on the job or employers will recognize that Gen Z are talented via hard skills but need training on the soft skills to grow in their careers.

So, we have a Gen Z population growing up in front of our eyes that is technically savvy, is dealing with high levels of stress and anxiety and needs to improve their communication skills. Is it possible that this generation could be one of the greatest entrepreneurial generations ever? How?

Here are several insights into why Gen Z will be disruptive on purpose and potentially very entrepreneurial.

Ambitious and purpose driven. Early in life, Gen Z has stated their concerns about several things, including the planet, food and energy. They seem genuinely concerned and want to make a difference. This concern will help them form their purposes and they will eventually form a strong resolve about what they believe in and won't be easily swayed. While stressing heavily about life and their fears, purpose is their north star.

Restless and disruptive. The restlessness they feel is directly related to their uncertainty about their future, whether its job, career, purpose, planet, Ai, etc.; they worry a lot. They also question quite a few things. They have now experienced the great quit, remote work and the great regret as tech companies are rightsizing. It is becoming clear to them that working for a large company will not bring them the kind of satisfaction or life purpose they yearn for.

Gathering expertise. Gen Z is working. They are gathering even more work experience and expertise. They are becoming smarter with respect to what work is and is not. While they are gaining knowledge, they are fearing less. On top of the technology they already know, they are now learning how SaaS, Ai, and other next generation technologies can be used to improve/disrupt things. In fact, purposeful tech disruption might be their future weapon.

Maturity but not loyal. Talk to several Gen Z adults between the ages of 25 and 30, and ask them about their current company loyalty. They might like what they are doing but if a company's goals do not line up with theirs, they are simply biding time, earning an income,

travelling, and waiting for what's next. If they work for a company for more than three years, it will be amazing. On the other hand, they are getting slightly older, developing more maturity, gathering confidence, and actively looking to live a good life.

Disruptive. All the above leads this author to believe that Gen Z will be disruptive on purpose and use their life purposes to create the kinds of companies they want to see in the future. Once they get over their fears, gain more work experience and confidence, then they might easily create disruptive companies because they will discover they can. And once they gain some early success, they will create even more companies to the point where they just might become the most entrepreneurial generation ever.