

Gen Z Doesn't Want Feedback—They Want Coaching

success.com/gen-z-coaching-in-the-workplace

Kate Loweth

December 9, 2025



Gen Z now accounts for a significant, and growing, portion of today's workforce. In the U.S., they [represented about 18% of the labor force by the second quarter 2024](#), surpassing the share of working baby boomers. More broadly, [Gen Z is expected to make up around 30% of the workforce by 2030](#). With that kind of critical mass, their workplace expectations matter, not just for HR but for the long-term vitality of organizations.

"We're living in a post-institutional workplace, one where the old social contract of career loyalty has broken down," shares leadership and cultural strategist [Madeline Miller](#). "Gen Z has seen systems fail, leaders burn out and workplaces lose credibility. So, they no longer trust titles or tenure and are [redefining what work means](#)."

According to [Deloitte research](#), Gen Z will increasingly demand greater personalization in how they progress in their careers. While salary is important, Gen Z values it less than other generations, often choosing a more fulfilling job that pays less over a boring, higher-paying position.

What Gen Z values in the workplace

Feedback has long been the cornerstone of performance discussion. But many Gen Z professionals are signaling they want something different—not just to be judged but to be coached.

“Gen Z employees aren’t asking for their managers to completely change their protocol,” according to Barry Garapedian, career coach and CEO of [MAG 7 Consulting](#). “They want to know their manager is invested in their development, not just how much work they can complete in a given day.” Garapedian recommends that managers focus on these four areas when mentoring Gen Z employees:

1. **Establish frequent touch points:** Don’t save up feedback for quarterly or yearly reviews. Check in with employees more frequently to ensure they are getting value from the role.
2. **Connect the work to purpose:** Work can sometimes feel siloed. Gen Z workers appreciate knowing how their work impacts projects and company goals on a larger scale.
3. **Provide conversational feedback:** Gen Z has been using texting and instant messaging to communicate from an early age. They thrive on in-the-moment praise, like: “Your presentation really helped the team understand the ‘why’ behind this work.”
4. **Demonstrate you care about their growth:** Less focus on output and more on growth is the way to show your Gen Z employee you care about their career. Letting employees share the skills they want to work on puts them in the driver’s seat of their careers.

The coaching mindset

For companies facing retention challenges, this shift toward coaching isn’t just “nice to have”; it’s essential. A [2024 Gallup survey](#) found that 68% of Gen Z employees reported experiencing work-related stress a lot of the time—more than any other generation surveyed. The same study noted that engagement among younger workers skyrockets when managers take on the role of coach rather than critic.

When managing [Gen Z in the workplace](#), leadership should coach employees to help them connect daily tasks with long-term purpose. This builds trust and loyalty—two things Gen Z deeply values in an era where many have witnessed layoffs, unstable economies and organizational restructuring.

“Managers should be trained to listen, validate and guide, creating psychological safety that fuels performance,” explains Miller. “This is going to put a lot of pressure on managers who will be stuck with this additional level of care, managing down, while reporting to senior leaders who remain unaligned most of the time.”

Practical coaching frameworks for managers

So, how can leaders put coaching into practice? These proven frameworks can help make these conversations more intentional and productive:

1. The GROW model

Initially developed by executive coaches, the GROW model (Goal, Reality, Options, Will) provides a structure for meaningful conversations. This model shifts the focus from critique to collaboration. For example:

- **Goal:** What do you want to achieve this quarter?
- **Reality:** What's going well for you, and what obstacles are getting in your way?
- **Options:** What different approaches could you try?
- **Will:** What's one action you'll take before our next check-in?

2. The 15-minute micro-coaching check-in

Instead of formal reviews, try brief, structured one-on-ones every few weeks. Each conversation can include a reflection on a recent success, a discussion of current challenges and one new learning goal or resource to tap into before the next meeting. This format blends accountability with encouragement, keeping communication flowing.

Rethinking leadership for the next generation

For many organizations, this evolution requires a cultural shift. Traditionally, managers were trained to evaluate performance, but tomorrow's leaders must inspire development. The payoff is tangible: Employees who feel coached are more engaged and more likely to stay with their employer long-term.

Gen Z doesn't want to be managed. They crave managers who see potential, not just performance. "Ultimately, loyalty from Gen Z isn't earned through perks or pay—it's built through presence, personalization and purpose," shares Miller. "When leaders coach the person, not just the performer, engagement follows."

For [leaders](#), the invitation is clear: Shift from telling to asking, from grading to guiding. The future of leadership isn't about delivering feedback—it's about building trust, cultivating growth and coaching Gen Z employees toward their best selves.

Photo by PeopleImages/Shutterstock



Kate Loweth

Kate Loweth is a writer and editor based in the San Francisco Bay Area with over a decade of experience covering travel, parenting, business and culture. Her work has appeared in outlets including USA Today, Business Insider, AARP, AAA and Thrillist. Kate is happiest when she's traveling with her three teenagers and exploring a new city or national park.

[View Profile →](#)