

How Different Work Models Affect Employee Relations



White Paper

This paper explores recent research into the preferred work model of different generations and how this impacts their abilities to form close personal relationship with colleagues.

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Survey Intro

The Research Question and Preliminary Results

In the Fall 2024, one of our Market Research student groups conducted research on the hypothesis that individuals working remotely have more difficulty building relations in the workplace than people working in person with their colleagues. Their goal was to ask questions about how work models affected the ability to build relationships and impacted a collective sense of workplace culture.

Demographics

They collected 165 survey responses from people ranging from 18 to 60+ years old. 89% of their respondents were female, 15% were students, and 52% were full-time employed.

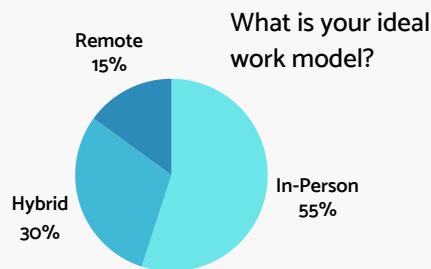
Preliminary Results

The survey results showed that the in-person work model is still the most used, and most preferred. The majority of respondents listed face-to-face as the most common form of communication. They also mostly agreed that it was easy for them to communicate with their colleagues. The data also revealed a strong difference in work models across different generations, which indicates the need for further research.



Preferred Work Model

We've had many conversations in the last 5 years about what the American workforce should look like. Dealing with a global pandemic and large swings in employment and resignations has reshaped our ideas of the ideal work model. These differences are also felt across generations - which is something our student researchers wanted to pay particular attention to with this survey. Our survey results found that the majority of full-time employees work in-person (78%) and that they are satisfied with their current work model (85%).



64% of Gen Z report preferring working in-person to other work models

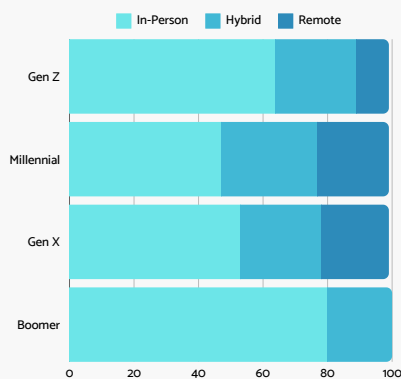
81% say that face-to-face is their main form of professional communication

Many other researchers are reporting that Gen Z prefers in-person or hybrid models over remote work. This is likely influenced by the amount of secondary and post-secondary education they spent online or in remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Ben Wigert](#), Gallup's director of research and strategy, argues that Gen Z "need time onsite to learn how to work effectively within their organizations, build relationships, and feel like a part of the organization's culture."



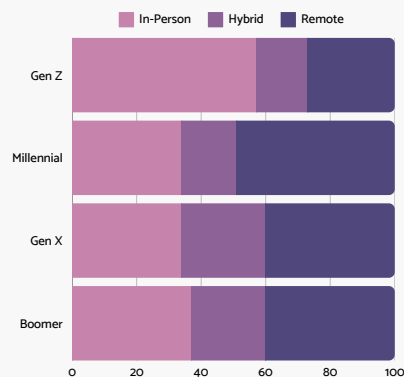
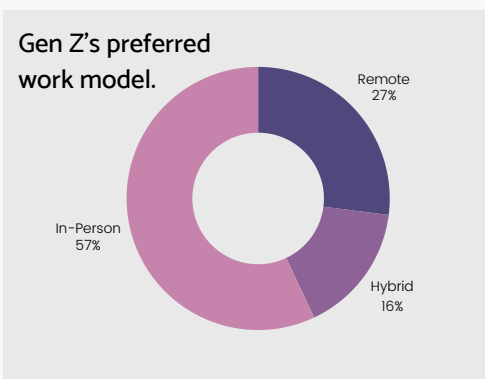
Generational Differences

What is your ideal work model?



Our student researchers decided to break down their survey question on ideal work models based on generations. Their results match what other analysts have found - particularly when it comes to Gen Z's preference to work in-person. Their small sample of Boomer workers skewed the numbers against remote work. But this dynamic graph also illustrates the popularity of remote work within Millennials and Gen X.

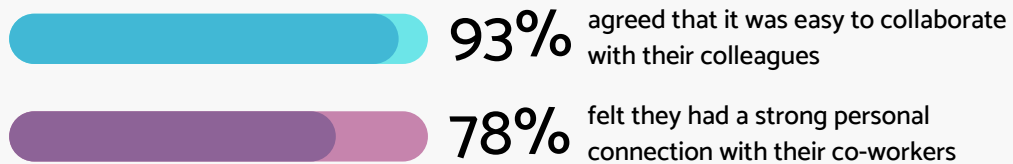
Joblist produced a [Job Market Trends Report in 2023](#), which generated similar results across the generations. This data (below) shows a significant bump in preference for in-person work models between the older three generations in the workplace and Gen Z. In their survey, 57% of Gen Z respondents preferred in-person, versus an average of 30% across the other three generations. There is a similar reflection in the difference between Boomers (40%), Gen X (40%), Millennials (49%) and Gen Z (27%) with their preference for remote work.



Interpersonal Relationships

Our student researchers did not specifically ask about the value of in-person interactions in workplace relationships. However, based on other available data, we can extrapolate some relevant findings that teach us something about the efficacy of different work models.

As a reminder, 78% of our respondents work in-person. Of those workers our survey found that:



Our [supplemental research](#) supports the idea that employees who are engaged with their co-workers are more likely to be productive, to stay with their organization, and to contribute to the organization's performance.



A [2022 Gallup workplace survey](#) found that 71% of respondents felt that hybrid work improved work-life balance, and 67% found it was a more efficient use of their time. However, the same survey also found that 32% of employees admitted to feeling less connected to their organizations culture, and a 30% believed hybrid work led to a decrease in team collaboration. Overall, 24% of respondents said that hybrid work (including remote work) impaired their working relationships.



Findings

What does this mean about our understanding of different work models and how they impact employee relationships?

Here is what we've learned:

- Our survey data showed that Gen Z workers are more likely to prefer in-person or hybrid working models over remote.
- The survey also found that the greatest differences on preferred work model exist between Gen Z workers and workers from the other three generations.
- Our research also corroborated recent findings that in-person and hybrid models appear to be better for developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships.

Applications

What does it all mean?

Every research project tells a story, and here's how this story can help you better understand these ongoing changes in the workforce:

- Different work models have different pros and cons, and need to be considered intentionally before widespread implementation.
- Preferences for a specific work model can be different from generation to generation - making it necessary to adopt a more flexible approach to work.
- Depending on which work model you adopt, you will need to make a concerted effort to support employee relations and culture.

How can we help?

This White Paper only scratched the surface of our understanding of Gen Z and how they impact multigenerational workplaces.

If we can help you or your organization reach a fuller understanding of generations, please reach out via the contact information below, or scan the QR code to book a call with us or learn more about the trainings we offer!



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 BOOK A CALL



 Our Trainings