

Canadian
Forces
College

Collège
des
Forces
Canadiennes



Lieutenant-Colonel Derek Mattinen

Generation Z – The Next Wave

JCSP 47

Exercise Solo Flight

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of National Defence, 2022

PCEMI 47

Exercice Solo Flight

Avertissement

Les opinions exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

© Sa Majesté la Reine du Chef du Canada, représentée par le ministre de la Défense nationale, 2022

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 47 – PCEMI 47

2020 – 2022

Exercise Solo Flight – Exercice Solo Flight

Lieutenant-Colonel Derek Mattinen

Generation Z – The Next Wave

“This paper was written by a student attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfilment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions, which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.”

“La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale.”

GENERATION Z – THE NEXT WAVE

As business resumption activities increase in momentum due to lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, so too must a focus on recruiting in an effort to lessen the critical personnel shortage faced across the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). Although Millennials (born 1981-1995) still represent a population of potential recruits, aged 27 and up, it is the majority of the Generation Z (Gen Z) population (born 1996-2012) that is coming of age and entering the workforce¹ craving stability, health/mental health accessibility, potential for advancement, continuing education and institutional relevance that they find critical to employment² in their world defined by political uncertainty, financial crises, terrorism and an alarming climate emergency³.

Institutionally, the CAF tends to be value aligned with the cohort, as Gen Z prioritizes social justice⁴ and diversity (gender, orientation, and race) and environmental activism more than any other generation⁵. The identified culture concerns in the CAF are problematic; however the CAF's reaction to the problem was to “provide a unified response, own up to the error, be transparent” and finally be “authentic to the brand and desired culture.”⁶ Furthermore, the CAF's environmental strategies include utilizing green power on all bases by 2025, reducing pan fleet emissions by 40% by 2030 and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050⁷.

¹ University Website, “Generation Z in the Workforce”, Concordia University Saint-Paul, 2022, pg 5.

² Deloitte, “Welcome to Generation Z”, Network for Executive Women, 11.

³ Maria Dolores Benitez-Marquez et al., “Generation Z Within the Workforce and in the Workplace: A Bibliometric Analysis), *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2022, Vol 12, 2.

⁴ Maria Dolores Benitez-Marquez et al., “Generation Z within the Workforce...3.

⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁶ Jason R. Rich, “How to Deal with Negative Press in a Positive Way”, *Forbes Agency Council*, 2019.

⁷ Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, *Defence Energy and Environment Strategy*, Government of Canada, 2021-2023, 9-18.

Gen Z's concerns around social justice, inclusion, ethics and environmental stewardship position them to be instrumental in the continued momentum of what the CAF is embracing and working towards, providing opportunity to fulfill the positive agents of change Gen Z desires to be⁸. They do, however, want inherent flexibility in their employment model; a very important element to Gen Z company commitment⁹ and getting the message to Gen Z is the key. Implementing a policy of flexible work arrangements and focusing CAF messaging and recruiting efforts through influencers on social media is essential in potential Gen Z recruiting.

Flexible Work Arrangements

Not a new topic of discussion for the public service, a refinement of the Canada Labor Code was recommended as identified by the Arthur Commission in 2006 for flexible work arrangements in the federal workplace¹⁰. Although Bill C-63 proposed changes to the Labor Code concerning the addition of flexible work arrangements that received Royal Assent in 2017, many have yet to be implemented¹¹. Even when implemented, Bill C-63 does not apply to members of the CAF¹². Doctrinally however, Strong Secure Engaged (SSE) supports the theme of providing for more personalized career choices and flexibility resulting from a comprehensive

⁸ Tracy Francis and Fernanda Hoefel, "True Gen: Generation Z and its Implication for Companies", McKinsey and Company, 2018, 2.

⁹ Kendra Harris, "A New Generation of Workers: Preparing for Generation Z in the Workplace", Scholar Commons – University of North Carolina, 2020, 19.

¹⁰ Bonny Mak and Rachel Devon. "Towards a More Flexible Workplace for Employees: Recent Changes to the Canada Labour Code", Law Society of Ontario, 2018, 17-3.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Canada. Labour Code. R.S.C., 1985, c. L-2. Minister of Justice. Copy current to March 27, 2019, last amended on March 17, 2019, Section 5.

review of conditions of service¹³. This is identified again as a principle in CAF Personnel doctrine stipulating flexibility in approach to personnel management¹⁴.

Gen Z harbors a greater desire for independent work rather than leaning towards the collaborative (in person). Although willing to work together in a team setting, they thrive independently and place a higher desire on work flexibility¹⁵. Flexibility in support of work-life balance as it pertains to Gen Z includes remote work (no geographical restrictions), hybrid structure of remote work and in-person work, compressed work week, flextime (different start and finish working hours) and not correlating productivity at all with hours worked¹⁶. In fact, Gen Z may concern themselves only with productivity and tasks completed regardless of time spent in the office or in front of a computer¹⁷.

The COVID-19 pandemic occurred at the early stages of the initial wave of Gen Z moving into the workforce. As of March 2020 federal employees, including the military, who were not providing essential services, were directed to work from home¹⁸. Currently, much of the CAF is still working remotely or has begun a metered transition back to the workplace. The CAF has roughly two years of experience employing a remote work structure and it is arguably an ideal time to maintain momentum in a reduction of attendance bias (association of not

¹³ Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged*, 2017, 22.

¹⁴ Department of National Defence, CFJP 1.0, 3-2.

¹⁵ Maria Dolores Benitez-Marquez et al., "Generation Z Within the Workforce...3.

¹⁶ Isabel Sanchez-Hernandez et al., "Work Life Balance in Great Companies and Pending Issues for Engaging New Generations at Work", *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16, 24, 2019, 4.

¹⁷ Tara Holton and Brenda Fraser, "Generation Z and Technology – Constructing Tomorrow's Boundary Spanners", DRDC – Toronto Research Centre, 2015, 18.

¹⁸ Government of Canada, "Guidance and Practices for the Safe Return to Workplaces in Light of the Easing of Restrictions", 2020.

physically being in the office and not being observed working with non-productivity)¹⁹ and implement flexible work solutions to entice Gen Z to the institution. Furthermore, lessons learned could be gleaned from allied militaries, such as Germany, Australia and New Zealand, that have incorporated workplace flexibility into their policies and the associated insights could be leveraged into a refinement of CAF policy²⁰.

Of course, not all vocations in the CAF are on an equal footing when it comes to remote work. Employment at operational units versus the institutional CAF and the associated careers may not lend well to remote work options, but could incorporate flex hours for example. An individual's personality and efficacy as it relates to the independence required to remote work, the operational / deployable fitness of an individual and requirements to maintain certain qualifications (PT test, ranges, etc.) and adaptation of leaders (PER challenges, mentorship efficacy, incorporation of different performance management tools) are challenges that will be encountered. Being mentored, not managed, in support of their adaptive and tech savvy approach to problem solving tying together institutional concepts and performance outcomes through mentor demonstration and behavior is key in building the intuitive and independent Gen Z team²¹.

Some research suggests Gen Z, given the COVID lockdown experience, are looking forward to some dedicated time in the office for the experience and mentoring and forming

¹⁹ Ioannis Kanlis, "Possibilities and Limitations of Flexible Work Arrangements in the Military", (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016), 36.

²⁰ Louisa Brooke-Holland, Armed Forces (Flexible Working) Bill 2017-19: Progress of the Bill (London: Commons Library Briefing, 2018); Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations on to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives: NATO, 2016.

²¹ Barnaby Lashbrooke, "Want More from Gen Z? Mentor, Don't Manage Them", Forbes, 2019, 3.

initial networks before embracing a more hybrid format²². It is the flexibility to choose (and modify) their work arrangement that is the single most important factor to Gen Z²³. The challenge is reaching Gen Z to educate and inform them of what the CAF has to offer as an employer of choice, the value alignment they both share and the ideal of where the CAF wants to be as a reflection of Canadian society.

Social Media and Influencers

The true digital natives, it is the Gen Z cohort that engages with technology in nearly every aspect of their lives including schoolwork, maintaining social connections and expressing their viewpoints and personality particularly through current, supporting platforms such as TikTok²⁴. They are the digital nomads that are the catalyst of change in branding, redefining who is influential and who is not, disrupting the reach of companies and institutions through their desire for raw, unpolished, authentic, unscripted truth²⁵. They are a challenge to connect with as they have an attention span of 8 seconds and tend to juggle five screens simultaneously and any messaging they perceive to be manufactured or scripted will be instantly discarded²⁶. It is suggested that they may spend up to 2.5 hours per day (men) and up to 5 hours per day (women) on social media²⁷.

²² Lexi McMenamin, "Some workers are calling for full-time remote work situations. But even with the chance to permanently work from home, some younger employees want time in the office too", BBC Worklife, 2021.

²³ "The Gen Z Effect in Australia and New Zealand", Nintex Process Management, 2022.

²⁴ Paul Briggs, "Generation Z in Canada 2021", *Insider Intelligence*, 2021.

²⁵ Jalean Wansi, "How do Instagram influencers affect the consumer buying behavior of Gen Z", Artevelde University of Applied Sciences, 2020, 3.1.1.

²⁶ Darren Lee Colwell, "How to Reach Generation Z", *The Landpower Essay Series*, United States Army, 2020, 2.

²⁷ Jalean Wansi, "How do Instagram...1.1.

An influencer is an individual that “affects the way other individuals behave”²⁸. Gen Z views influencers as role models, movement leaders and educators²⁹, much more than traditional celebrities and success in reaching Gen Z resides in the use of the appropriate influencer(s) to deliver and educate content in efforts to elicit the desired engagement from the Gen Z audience³⁰. Through the use of influencers, attention-grabbing content (entertainment) is the first element to social media content creation followed by brand information (marketing)³¹. Figure 1 presents the taxonomy of digital influencers:

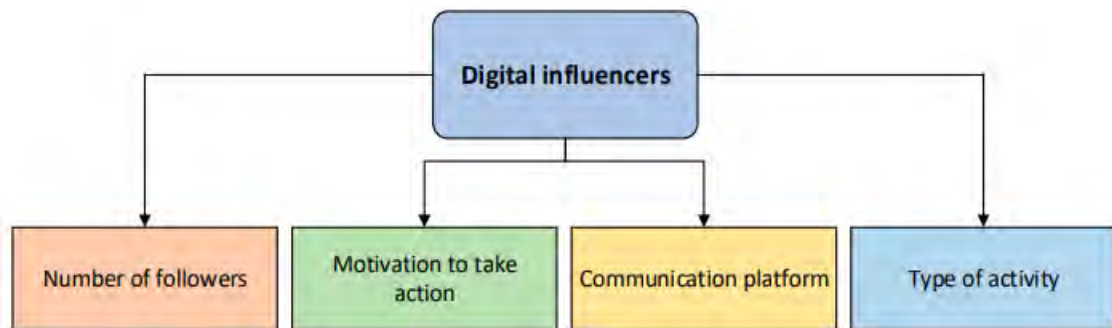


Figure 1. Taxonomy of digital influencers³²

Number of followers, or range, include nano-influencers (1,000-10,000 followers), micro-influencers (< 20,000 followers), mid-level influencers (20,000-100,000 followers), macro-influencers (100,000-500,000 followers), top influencers (> 500,000 followers), mega-influencers (1,000,000-5,000,000 followers) and celebrity influencers (> 5,000,000 followers).

²⁸ Ibid., 3.2.4.

²⁹ Deep Patel, “5 Differences between Marketing to Millennials vs. Gen Z”, *Forbes*, 2017.

³⁰ Jalean Wansi, “How do Instagram...1.1.

³¹ Pamela Bump, “How to Create Content for Gen Z, from a TikTok-Influencer-Approved Marketing Agency”, *Hubspot*, 2021, 4.

³² Janusz Wielki, “Analysis of the Role of Digital Influencers and Their Impact on the Functioning of the Contemporary On-Line Promotional System and Its Sustainable Development”, Faculty of Economics and Management, Opole University of Technology, 2020, 5.

Motivation includes the influencer categories of idols, experts, life-stylers, activists and artists, relating to their particular messaging. **Communication platform** of use includes categorization relating to the choice of platform, TikTok relating closest to Gen Z, and finally **type of activity** includes active (targeted by companies to market for them) or passive (not targeted by companies)³³.

The US Army, also in the midst of an identity and recruiting crisis, realized that the use of traditional messaging on traditional media channels to market the service would not be successful in their recruiting efforts. In 2018, a US Army recruiter created short recruiting videos of him and a fellow recruiter rapping about the benefits of enlistment on social media, titled “Enlisted”. The videos were targeted to Gen Z, and have attracted more than 1.2 million viewers since its release resulting in a significant increase in enlistments³⁴. The video has entertained, informed, inspired trust, created digital word-of-mouth advertising and convinced many Gen Z viewers to make the choice to enlist.

The CAF does currently engage in social media recruiting, however efforts will need to be intensified and modified if it is to attract, engage and convince Gen Z to recruit and help buffer the current attrition rates³⁵. Traditional marketing techniques, even on social media, are not relevant for Gen Z³⁶. The CAF could incorporate the use of active influencers, as mentioned above, to tap into an already trusted individual with an existing follower base. An example could be an influencer posting their reaction to a ride in an aircraft (unscripted, true, raw), a tandem

³³ Ibid., 4.

³⁴ Darren Lee Colwell, “How to Reach Generation Z...2.

³⁵ Tamara Spitzer, “Using Social Media to Tackle Recruiting Shortages in the Armed Forces”, CDA Institute, 2019.

³⁶ Alexandra Artemova, “Engaging Generation Z through Social Media Marketing”, South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, 2018, 35.

parachute jump, participating in a scuba dive, ride in a submarine, going for PT with a unit, shooting on the range, working in a shop supporting a CAF tradesperson being given a tour of certain facilities or even chatting with someone remote working. As an example, an accounting firm hired a mega-influencer, described above. A few clips were posted to social media of her simply pretending to work alongside actual accountants at the firm. One of the posts however, showed her dancing at lunchtime with the accountants and just having fun. It painted a picture of typical accounting work, but it also suggested working in an office can be funny, relatable and lighthearted and ended up registering over 6.2 million views³⁷. Using an already established influencer also minimizes the risk of Gen Z potential interpretation of the content as too promotional or scripted in its messaging (not genuine, raw or authentic). A genuine influencer's convictions are at the heart of the endeavor³⁸, so the CAF needs to be transparent, even concerning its flaws, and represent institutional efforts to strive to be better. In effect, current CAF flaws represent a flawed organization (genuine) which is trying to change and better itself and carries potential for Gen X to be part of the solution.

Enabling a number of currently serving members (in effect nano-influencers) to post ephemeral (short duration) content sharing real-life moments from their present experiences in the CAF, regularly, is another idea. A diverse group of nano-influencer CAF members going about their daily business routinely posting content encapsulating the exciting, the rewarding, the boring, the unknown, the challenges and even the conflicts/risks carries the potential to paint a true picture of CAF life. As identified in the accounting example above, the content does not

³⁷ Pamela Bump, "How to Create Content for Gen Z...10.

³⁸ Janusz Wielki, "Analysis of the Role of Digital Influencers...6.

need to be glossy excitement to send the message. Platform interactivity would be beneficial in this case as viewers could respond to the video post and dialogue created.

There is risk involved with any aspect of participation in social media by CAF members of course, and approved posts would need vetting to ensure operational security (OPSEC) breaches do not occur. However, as more of Gen Z enters the CAF there is likely to be a significant increase in shared content in social media. Their digital connectedness as such could be both an asset and a liability³⁹.

A final option might be to entice / inspire Gen Z (not already in the CAF) to create content for CAF recruiting. Perhaps offering a reward(s) to Gen Z to create posts as to why they think they would or would not like to work in the CAF, or what they think about certain aspects of the CAF. As above, interactivity with the video posts could create discourse and dispel myths. Potentially some of the individuals with particularly negative beliefs could be invited for a visit, as a follow-up post, to address their concerns and ask questions (raw and unscripted) with a measure of entertainment added in as a bonus (helicopter ride, repel off a tower, etc.). “Gen Z loves to be creative and really experience a ‘brand’ through content creation”⁴⁰. This recruiting construct alone could be quite a novel recruiting effort. Putting the audience in control with user generated content supports single issue granular context and reduces perceptions of scripted recruiting content as the focus needs to be on the posted problem and not pan CAF brand, while still influencing as CAF elements are still visible and integrated in the video response posts.

³⁹ Tara Holton and Brenda Fraser, “Generation Z and Technology...20.

⁴⁰ Pamela Bump, “How to Create Content for Gen Z...11.

Trends on social media platforms can move quite quickly and stagnation is the enemy of popularity⁴¹ on these platforms. The CAF offers over 100 career options⁴² to support the goals and interests of the Gen Z young adults, which supports the potential for continued, authentic, raw content in support of the above mentioned possibilities. Gen Z is a generation whose actions are heavily influenced by their values and beliefs and in turn expects the same from their employer. Whether contention arises from perceived social inequities, environmental concerns, or misconceptions of CAF life and raison d'être the CAF has an opportunity to engage Gen Z concerning institutional benefits, challenges and failings in the capacity that Gen Z wants to be addressed.

Conclusion

Gen Z is the next generational wave currently entering the workforce. They bring value-driven expectations they want to see from employers as the most multicultural and socially just and accepting generation to date. Given the environment they grew up in, the extrinsic elements they expect from an employer align with what the CAF has to offer. Supporting the flexibility in work-life balance Gen X desires, the CAF should implement a policy of flexible, tailored work arrangements already identified as critical in doctrine and endeavor to reach Gen X utilizing influencers and social media to dispel myths, educate and recruit Gen X into the CAF through raw, unscripted and genuine messaging.

⁴¹ Ibid., 12.

⁴² Canada and Department of National Defense, *Strong Secure...20*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Artemova, Alexandra. "Engaging Generation Z through Social Media Marketing", South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, 2018.
- Benitez-Marquez, Maria Dolores, Eva Maria Sanchez-Teba, Guillermo Bermudez-Gonzalez and Emma Sofia Nunez-Rydman. "Generation Z Within the Workforce and in the Workplace: A Bibliometric Analysis." *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 2022.
- Briggs, Paul. "Generation Z in Canada, 2021". *Insider Intelligence*, 2021.
- Bump, Pamela. "How to Create Content for Gen Z, from a TikTok-Influencer-Approved Marketing Agency", Hubspot, 2021.
- Canada. "Guidance and Practices for the Safe Return to Workplaces in Light of the Easing of Restrictions", 2020.
- Canada. Department of National Defence. B-GL-005-100/FP-001, CFJP 1.0 Military Personnel Management Doctrine. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2008.
- Canada. Department of National Defence. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017.
- Canada. Labour Code. R.S.C., 1985, c. L-2. Minister of Justice. Copy current to March 27, 2019, Last amended on March 17, 2019. Section 5.
- Colwell, Darren Lee. "How to Reach Generation Z", The Landpower Essay Series, United States Army, 2020.
- Deloitte. "Welcome to Generation Z". Network of Executive Women.
- Francis, Tracy and Hoefel, Fernanda. "True Gen: Generation Z and its Implication for Companies", McKinsey and Company, 2018, 2.

- Harris, Kendra. "A New Generation of Workers: Preparing for Generation Z in the Workplace", Scholar Commons – University of North Carolina, 2020, 19.
- Holton, Tara and Fraser, Brenda. "Generation Z and Technology – Constructing Tomorrow's Boundary Spanners", DRDC – Toronto Research Centre, 2015.
- Kanlis, Ioannis. "Possibilities and Limitations of Flexible Work Arrangements in the Military," Naval Postgraduate School, 2016.
- Lashbrooke, Barnaby. "Want More from Gen Z? Mentor, don't Manage Them", Forbes, 2019.
- Mak, Bonny and Devon, Rachel. "Towards a More Flexible Workplace for Employees: Recent Changes to the Canada Labour Code". Law Society of Ontario, 2018.
- McMenamin, Lexi. "Some workers are calling for full-time remote work situations. But even with the chance to permanently work from home, some younger employees want time in the office too." BBC Worklife, 2021.
- Patel, Deep. "5 Differences between Marketing to Millennials Vs. Gen Z", Forbes, 2017.
- Rich, Jason R. "How to Deal with Negative Press in a Positive Way", Forbes Agency Council, 2019.
- Sanchez-Hernandez, Isabel, Rodrigo González-López, Oscar et al. "Work Life Balance in Great Companies and Pending Issues for Engaging New Generations at Work", International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 16, 24, 2019.
- Spitzer, Tamara. "Using Social Media to Tackle Recruiting Shortages in the Armed Forces," CDA Institute, 2019.
- "The Gen Z Effect in Australia and New Zealand." Nintex Process Management, 2022.
- University Website, "Generation Z in the Workforce", Concordia University Saint-Paul, 2022.
- Wansi, Jalean. "How to Instagram influencers affect the consumer buying behavior of Gen Z", Artevelde University of Applied Sciences, 2020.
- Wielki, Janusz . "Analysis of the Role of Digital Influencers and Their Impact on the Functioning of the Contemporary On-Line Promotional System and Its Sustainable Development". Faculty of Economics and Management, Opole University of Technology, 2020.