



MEET GEN Z WHERE THEY ARE:

Your Guide to Connecting with
the New Generation of Early Talent



Forage

Welcome to the new generation of early talent



There is a new and powerful generation on the talent scene - Gen Z. This generation is vocal, confident and values-driven and it demands more of the uncertain and challenging future it has inherited. Fortunately, there is an early talent community that is filled with passionate employers and educators seeking to empower this generation. They are continuously looking for methods to better inspire, nurture and engage talent in a way that leaves a lasting impact. All while dealing with a future of work that is in a state of flux, a generation that demands employers to act on social justice issues like social mobility and climate change, and an ever-expanding skills gap.

The early talent ecosystem is beautiful, but complex - and any attempt to navigate it must be cohesive. To date, there has been no meaningful opportunity to connect the brightest minds in the early talent space with Gen Z on a global scale. At Forage, we felt compelled

to create this opportunity.

Connect 2021, the world's first global early talent summit, brought together over a thousand employers, educators and Gen Zers into one (virtual) room for 24 hours. By connecting the full talent ecosystem, we were able to benefit from a firestorm of insights into the world of early talent.

It ultimately came down to one question: How can employers and educators around the world better connect with Gen Z in the current talent landscape?

And we got the answer: Meet them where they are.

But how, exactly, does that look? By bringing the talent community together, we were able to distill some fascinating insights into the following guide.



1 Values first, always.

This rising generation has been influenced by some of the biggest challenges of our time - the 2008 Global Recession, accelerating climate change, political turmoil, the resurgence of (and need for) social movements like Black Lives Matter, and a global pandemic to boot. As a result, they have been forced to grapple with what values they hold true to themselves from a very young age - values from true equality and environmental sustainability to compassion and loyalty.¹ And now, that is what drives them and they are looking for employers who empathize and align.

Employers should not underestimate the importance of clearly showcasing their values to early talent - from the company website and social media platforms to in-person events and one-on-one interactions.

2 Authenticity wins. Take a human approach to demystifying the compelling work you have to offer.

As the values-driven generation, Gen Zers want authenticity and transparency. They want to see employers engaging in their communities and on Gen Z's platforms - opening their doors, demystifying their workplace and showcasing what their organizations are about. They also want an authentic, human approach throughout the entire recruiting process. Whether it be constructive feedback or links to free online training that could help them with their

“Talent has a choice - and alignment with personal values is increasingly important.”

Lloyd Stephenson, Head of
Diversity & Resourcing at Ashurst



application the following year, they do not want silence after they apply. And when word spreads as quickly as it does with Gen Z, so too can loyalty and goodwill.

¹ Dr. Corey Seemiller, Researcher, Author and leading Gen Z expert, 'Who is Gen Z', Connect 2021.

3

Nurture early - this generation is doing more than previous generations.

Stories like those of Jay'Aina Patton - who learned how to code at 10, developed an app at 12, and is now at 16 a co-founder of Unlock Academy and director of Photo Patch Foundation - prove that age is just a number when it comes to building skills. And with the increasing access to technology and information, Gen Z is doing more, younger, than previous generations - from starting companies to inventing products or new technology.² Waiting until college to engage them means leaving it too late. Go early and become their 'career escort' along the way.³

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Word spreads.

Imagine if you get rejected but the company provides an opportunity for you to get a certificate and invites you to apply again the following year. That could create real credibility & goodwill.

**'Demystifying the recruitment process:
Stories from Gen Z'
- Connect 2021 Panel**

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It's better to start early. It gives you more time to figure out what you want to do and if it's what you want...Once you're out of college, you have to go into the world and figure it out - you don't have that much time... and it's the biggest factor determining everything else.

Jay'Aina Patton, Director of the Photo Patch Foundation & Unlock Academy

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- 2 Dr. Corey Seemiller, Researcher, Author and leading Gen Z expert, 'Who is Gen Z', Connect 2021.
- 3 Sloane Stephens, U.S. Open Tennis Champion & Founder of the Sloane Stephens Foundation. Connect 2021 Panel.



4

Embrace your role as the ultimate career enabler through preskilling.

Colleges can provide the theoretical foundation, but they cannot accommodate for the nuanced skills required for each and every unique workplace. Employers must take it to the next stage and provide workplace-specific training opportunities before students become candidates (also known as ‘preskilling’). Why? Because there is no entity or organization better placed to do so and only 14% of students believe college provides them with the skills they

“ We produce content regularly, but it’s different if it’s from the employer...and tasks that they’ll actually experience on day one of the job. We can try to do this but it’s very different when you don’t do the day-to-day. ”

Chris Roberts - Engagement Manager,
Durham University Business School

need to be a success in the workplace.⁴ Colleges themselves recognize this and are consistently working to weave work-based learning and career preparation into the fabric of coursework. But to do this effectively and meet Gen Z where they are, we must embrace their preferred learning environment. According to Dr. Corey Seemiller, that preferred environment is demonstrated and experiential - viewing how the work is done then being given the opportunity to try it for themselves, rather than reading about it in isolation. Virtual and experiential work-based learning environments that enable students to complete the simulations around existing commitments provide the perfect solution. In fact, they are already being recognized by leading colleges as the critical way forward.

5

There's no simple solution to increasing social mobility, but empowering first generation college students through access helps.



The education-to-workforce pathway is a product of a system that benefits the privileged. Those who are the first of their families to attend college do not always have the same level of access. From knowing when to apply, how to apply, and even what to say to questions like 'why do you want to work in this industry,' those without the benefit of access are immediately on the backfoot. This problem, coupled with imposter syndrome, has many individuals ruling themselves out of the race before they reach the starting line.

The system will not correct itself on its own - it will take the full talent ecosystem to empower first generation college students.

Employers are uniquely placed to make a difference. They can level the playing field by providing first generation college students with open access to opportunities that showcase the work they do and how they do it - while teaching them the skills along the way in a safe-space environment. Doing so virtually and at scale will empower this community of students in a way previously unheard of.

“You don't know what you don't know. It is our responsibility to find ways to meet students where they are...Virtual work experience gives these students a better story to tell.”

'Creating a new paradigm for the relationship between universities and employers' - Connect 2021 Panel

6 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are now the baseline, not just the goal.

The early talent community has moved leaps and bounds when it comes to diversity, equity and inclusion over recent years. The commitment of early talent professionals to create a more equitable landscape is nothing short of inspiring. But college graduates today are the most diverse they have ever been. Diversity, equity and inclusion have now become the baseline.

To truly create a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace culture, all employees must feel a sense of belonging - that they can be their best selves in the workplace and be accepted for being themselves. It can take time - not to mention consistent and

conscientious efforts to empower all to reach the realm of belonging, but employers should not shy away from using data to assess where they sit and holding themselves accountable for improving these metrics. That type of transparency not only enables moves forward, but also aligns with a generation of talent that values honesty and authenticity from employers.

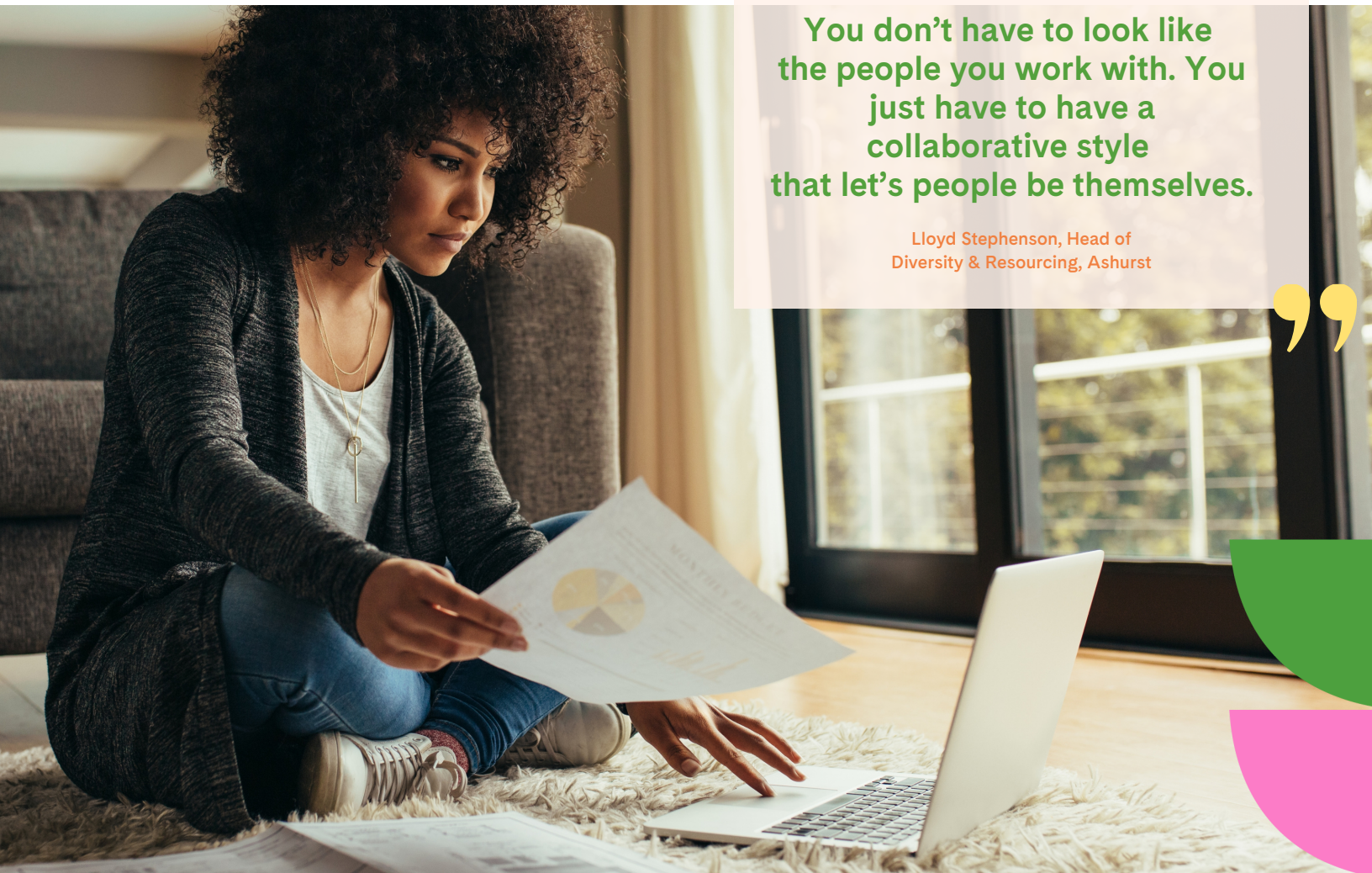
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If you're going to bring them in, you have to make them feel like they can bring their whole selves - and be comfortable and safe.

You don't have to look like the people you work with. You just have to have a collaborative style that let's people be themselves.

Lloyd Stephenson, Head of
Diversity & Resourcing, Ashurst

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7

Move beyond hiring signals like college or GPA. Use the best indicators of exceptional talent - intent, ability, and engagement.

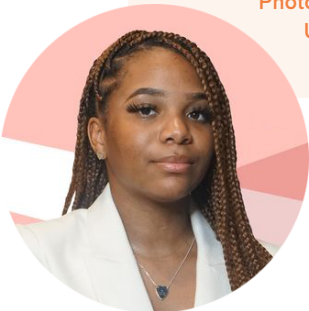
When companies use the same approach to hire talent, they create a mold that can stifle other perspectives, thoughts and lived experiences that could otherwise enable them to innovate. This generation of talent cannot be defined by the college they went to or their GPA. Why? Because this generation is teaching themselves to code or how to invest in cryptocurrencies. They no longer feel beholden to the traditional education-to-workforce pathway.

Talent wants to be seen for their ability, intent and engagement. All they need from employers are to be given an opportunity to be seen for who they are and what they can do.



Provide the opportunity - you never know how much of an asset a person can be to your business... they could be the best person you've ever hired.

Jay'Aina Patton, Director of the Photo Patch Foundation & Unlock Academy



When we develop the same things, we develop a certain myopia that can put us at risk - need to constantly infuse other perspectives and thoughts to innovate.

Michael Lee, Senior Director - Next Gen Talent at Electronic Arts



8 Walk the walk when it comes to sustainability.

Many major organizations around the world have made a public statement about or acknowledged the climate crisis. Many have commented on the importance of sustainability or outlined a broader strategy plan to play their part in combating climate change, but as the values generation, Gen Z expects more than words, especially when it comes to environmental issues. They want to see organizations enacting their principles and policies on the climate crisis - across all facets of the organization.

Fortunately, organizations like the Sustainable Recruitment Alliance, already exist. They are empowering and guiding early talent teams to embrace the challenge of becoming a sustainable practice.

“We need to make this easy for people to measure. Easy for them to show that they have taken action and it has made a difference.”

Laura Yeates,
Founder, Sustainable Recruitment Alliance



9

Connect with Gen Z by giving more than you take, while speaking their (tech) language.



Unsurprisingly, Gen Z is the technology and social media generation. The internet became commercialized in the same era they were born. Therefore, it is natural that they are more comfortable engaging online than they are interacting in person. According to Dr. Corey Seemiller, they commonly seek connections through online platforms, often never physically meeting the person. Through platforms like Tiktok, they are also accustomed to curated content and recommendations to help them navigate the influx of information.

Employers can use this to their advantage by speaking their 'language' while forming connections with Gen Zers. They can do this by providing opportunities that inspire, engage and nurture Gen Z throughout the daunting and complex journey of finding their right career fit. They can distribute curated experiential work-based learning opportunities that are free and open-access - such as through virtual job simulations - that enable Gen Z to not only form a connection with a particular career path, but also a particular employer, in the manner they feel most comfortable with.

“Wouldn't it be radical if we all came together to provide differentiated experiences that provided all of the skills that are needed, instead of a collection of the same programs?”

Laura Yeates,
Head of Graduate Talent, Clifford Chance

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10 Speaking of tech, virtual is here to stay.

The pandemic accelerated a change to virtual that was inevitable - particularly with this exceptional generation of talent. Virtual platforms have proven to be inclusive (enabling those otherwise restricted by their geographical location, the cost of travel, or even physical impairments) and scalable - and they are here to stay.

And when you have a generation that prefers to connect virtually than in-person and has built an entire 'metaverse' to do this, concerns about the lack of engagement or relationship building across a virtual framework fall away. And speaking of on-campus activities, Laura Mills said it best:

“**Hallelujah - career fairs are gone. May they never return.**”

Laura Mills, AVP - Human Resources, Cognizant

“**These small things lead to bigger things in life.**”

Sloane Stephens
US Open Tennis Champion & Founder of the
Sloane Stephens Foundation

If this feels daunting, that is because it is. We are navigating a new age of early talent that is questioning our long-accepted practices - and this means we need to reassess. And as stated by Michael Lee, Senior Director Next Gen Talent at Electronic Arts, we must increasingly “become comfortable with the uncomfortable.”

But, together we can embrace this challenge. Small but incremental steps can lead to big changes. And if we learned anything from Connect 2021, it is that the early talent ecosystem is filled with incredible talent teams that are open and ready for the challenge - and ready to navigate it together.



Want to
learn more?
Contact us
[here.](#)

2021 Speakers

Aditya Sharma, Graduate, NSW Government

Adrika Sri Bawan, Relationship Assistant Manager, ANZ

Aisha Labefo-Audu, Partnerships Manager, University of East London

Albert Batiancela, APAC Campus Tech Lead, JPMorgan Chase & Co

Amanda DoAmaral, Co-Founder & CEO, Fiveable

Andrew Tan, CEO, Ladder

Anita Hawtin, Manager Talent Acquisition, NSW Government

Annie Hopkins, Head of Americas Graduate Recruitment, Deutsche Bank

Antoine Patton, founder of the Photo Patch Foundation & Director of Unlock Academy

Armel Talla, AOD Podcast Host & Google Intern

Benjamin Powell, Work Based & Placement Learning Project Manager, University of Westminster

Bob Athwal, RACE Equity, Employer Brand & Early Careers Leader, Skyscanner

Chris Roberts, Engagement Manager, Durham University

Claire Maton, Head of Employability Programmes, Sutton Trust

Dr. Corey Seemiller, Gen Z Researcher, Author & Speaker

Dani Yates, Sutton Trust Alumni

David McIntosh, Management Consultant, EY

Dorothy Adu-Mfum, Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance

Fallon Wanganeen, Inclusion Program Manager, ANZ

Graham Richards, Indigenous Full Time Trainee, ANZ

Jamie Byrne, Program Manager, NYC Tech Pipeline

Jay-Aina Patton, Director, Photo Patch Foundation & Unlock Academy

Jenn Prevoznik, Global Leader, Early Career Talent Attraction, SAP

Jess Harvie, Manager, DEI Strategy, Snap



2021 Speakers

Joanna Kargotich, Director, Human Resources, Google

Jubril Sabra, HR Director, IHS Towers

Justin Nguyen, Founder, Declassified Media

Katherine Leopold, Faculty Employability Lead, University of Greenwich

Karen Davis, Director Leadership & Talent, NSW Government

Kayley Curtis, Sutton Trust Alumni

Kerry Callenbach, People & Culture Specialist, Mantel Group

Kiara Ramos, Talent Acquisition Manager, Commonwealth Bank

Kiera Warda, Manager, Policy & Performance, NSW Trustee & Guardian

Laura Mills, AVP - Human Resources, Cognizant

Laura Yeates, Head of Graduate Talent, Clifford Chance & Founder of the Sustainable Recruitment Alliance

Lloyd Stephenson, Head of Diversity & Resourcing, Ashurst

Maymoona Ismail, Head: Youth Development & Employability, Standard Bank

Michael Lee, Senior Director - Next-Gen Talent, Electronic Arts

Nana-Gyasi Kessie, Law Clerk, White & Case

Renata Janini Dohmen, Global Head of Early Career Talent Attraction, SAP

Rob Anderson, People & Development Adviser, King & Wood Mallesons

Robin Dagostino, Branding & Marketing Director, BCG

Rowena Innocent, Group Head of STEM Strategy, Spectris plc

Ryan McDaniel, Global Emerging Talent Lead, Netflix

Sam Turnpenny, Future of Work Consultant, Accenture

Sarah Moriarty, Head of Corporate Affairs, Goodbody

Shenae Djulbic, HR Manager, Allen & Overy



2021 Speakers

Sloane Stephens, US Open Tennis Champion & Founder of the Sloane Stephens Foundation

Tân Ho, Co-Founder & COO, Fiveable

Tasneem Bhuiyan, Operations Business Analyst, ANZ

Townson Uta, Graduate, ANZ

Victoria Ayodeji, Sutton Trust Alumni

Key Links

Connect 2021 Panel Session Recordings: <https://info.theforage.com/connect2021>

Photo Patch Foundation: <https://photopatch.org/>

Jay'Aina Patton fundraiser to bring 10,000 girls and women of colour into Tech:
<https://www.gofundme.com/f/10k-tech-queens>

Sloane Stephens Foundation: <https://sloanestephensfoundation.org/>

Sustainable Recruitment Alliance: <https://sralliance.co.uk/>

Unlock Academy: <https://www.unlock.academy/>



Forage

We provide candidates, regardless of their circumstances, with the means to experience what it's like to work at some of the world's top employers, like BCG, Latham & Watkins, Citibank, or GE. Our virtual job simulations empower students to find their right career fit, while enhancing their skills and work-readiness along the way.

For companies, it flips the hire-then-train model. It allows them to use workplace-specific training (rather than generic industry training) en masse as a recruiting tool. In doing so, they build a diverse network of current or future candidates and leverage high-fidelity signals to nurture, engage, and hire best-fit talent – who are conveniently upskilled in the role before they even start!

By providing open-access and virtual job simulations, company partners like JPMorgan Chase & Co., Electronic Arts, and SAP benefit from:

- A 24/7/365 virtual campus presence through Forage's university relationships
- Moving away from merely describing what they do to illustrating what they do in an interactive simulated environment – helping them stand out from their competitors
- Immediate and far-reaching goodwill by opening their doors to help train the workforce of the future and level the playing field

Contact us to learn more at theforage.com.