

WHITEPAPER



WayUp

Understanding Candidate Interview Preferences: From A To Gen Z



Stop Making Generalizations About Gen Z and Millennials



It's time to stop treating online candidates as second-class applicants.

Generation Z is the first generation born in the midst of the Information Age. They're accustomed to using technology in all aspects of their lives. Millennials are similarly digitally adept, particularly those born on the cusp of Gen Z (1994 and after). They are, as the popular narrative goes, so consumed with technology that they seek it out and prefer it nearly universally to human interaction.

But is that actually the case? Some in talent acquisition and campus recruiting think yes. They believe that Gen Z and Millennials favor an automated interview process that emphasizes artificial intelligence and video interviews over human interaction.

YET THE DATA TELLS A STARKLY DIFFERENT STORY.

Now more than ever, it's imperative that employers understand what this critically important group of people actually want:

A BALANCE OF HIGH TECH AND HIGH TOUCH.

Think of it from the perspective of a candidate who has never met someone from your company before. After applying, they receive an automated response directing them to record and submit a video interview. This candidate is likely unsure if they will ever hear back, and certainly has no understanding of who—if anyone—will watch the videos they submit.

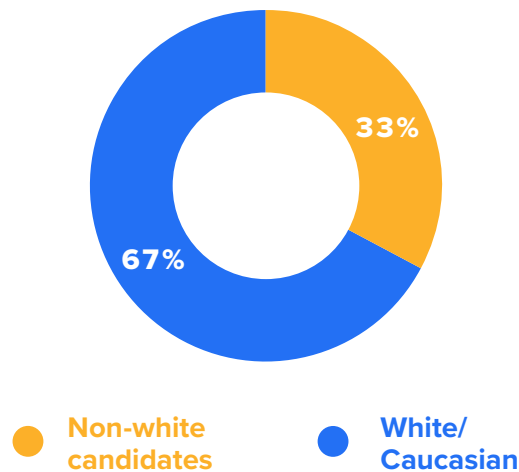
While going on campus can be a great way to get your brand in front of more people, it's important to remember that [roughly half of all college students don't attend career fairs](#).¹ That means that most people who apply to your jobs online likely have never met you in person.

We conducted a survey of 363 students currently enrolled at U.S. universities between the ages of 18 and 25, almost all of whom were working toward a Bachelor's degree. All respondents had applied for a job or internship within the past 12 months. The study sought to examine candidate interview preferences among this cohort, specifically their views on the use of artificial intelligence and technology during the recruitment process. The results are statistically significant.

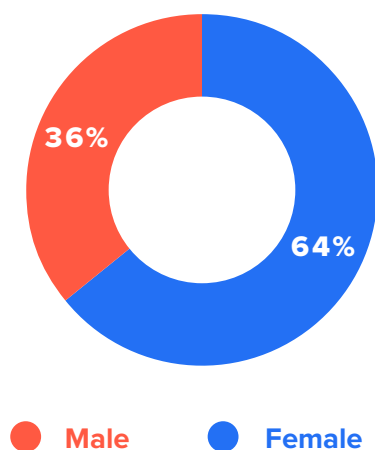
What Do Gen Z And Millennials Want While Interviewing? Human Interaction

RESPONDENTS' SELF-REPORTED DEMOGRAPHICS BREAKDOWN

RACE/ETHNICITY



GENDER IDENTITY



As Gen Z and Millennials comprise an increasingly large swath of the workforce, employers are adapting their recruiting processes to better engage them. But many of these changes are often not informed by data.

Though they're steeped in multimedia and comfortable with augmented and virtual reality (AR and VR) technology, Gen Z craves human interaction and has decidedly nuanced tastes.

What aspects of the first-round interview are important to Gen Z and Millennials?

THEIR TOP CHOICES WERE:

1. Quick responses from an employer about the interview outcome
2. Receiving information about the interview process
3. The ability to speak to an actual person (either on the phone or in person)

Relying On AI & Video Interviewing Is A Surefire Way To Turn Off Top Candidates

IF GIVEN THE CHOICE between a phone interview with a person or a video interview in which you record and then submit your responses and have no human interaction, which do you prefer?



LEVERAGING AI AND VIDEO to help screen candidates seems like an easy win from an efficiency perspective. But if you're trying to hire top talent, our findings suggest you should rethink that strategy.

When asked whether for a first-round screening they prefer a phone interview with a person or a video recording with no human interaction, nearly 90 percent of survey respondents chose the phone screen; only 8 percent opted for video.

"I overthink video interviews. I would rather not be in front of the camera when interviewing. With video interviewing, I'm trying to edit myself in so many ways it's just not natural."

— Hannah K., Class of 2021

Gen Z and Millennials have strong feelings when it comes to the use of AI in the interview process. Seventy-three percent said they were uncomfortable with AI being the sole determiner of their interview performance. This was particularly pronounced among female and underrepresented minorities, the vast majority of whom said they wanted a person making such decisions.

Overall, only **4 PERCENT** of respondents said they were very comfortable with AI being the sole evaluator of whether they passed an interview round, and just **2 PERCENT** said they were very comfortable with AI being the sole determiner of their job application.

This seems to be consistent among different age groups and aligns with data collected by Careerlist, a recruitment firm that caters to experienced professionals. They've found that 93 percent of their top talent members either declined or neglected to complete video interviews in 2018.

"Our company has seen that when we ask a candidate to upload a video recording as part of the interview process, the top 10 percent of all candidates we reach out to actually drop out of the funnel," says Careerlist CEO Michael Scissons.

What's Driving Their Preferences?

CANDIDATES' NEGATIVE SENTIMENT could be fueled by the [increasing body of research](#)² that suggests AI is biased and discriminates against underrepresented minorities. That's something even Amazon apparently experienced when it [shelved what Reuters reported](#)³ was an AI-based recruiting tool that allegedly showed bias against women.

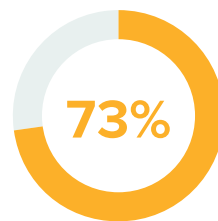
But there are other likely drivers as well. AI cannot, at least today, provide an intimate and authentic interview experience or seamlessly answer a candidate's nuanced questions about company culture.

What's more, since this group is just entering the workforce, they often have more questions and anxieties than experienced hires. To allay those concerns, they're looking to connect with a person during the recruitment process, particularly in the earlier rounds. An AI- or video-centric strategy can't deliver what they're looking for.

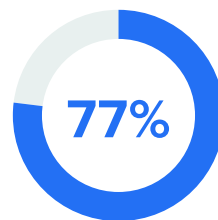
"I like reading people and the give-and-take of talking to a real person. I don't get that opportunity if it's a solo video interview when I'm just looking at myself and I'm super self-conscious."

— Alexander V., Class of 2022

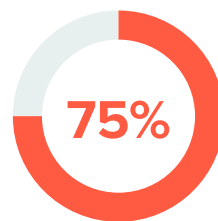
HOW COMFORTABLE WOULD YOU BE if an algorithm and not a person were the sole determiner of your interview performance?



Overall said they were not comfortable

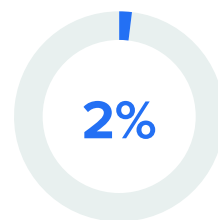


Of females said they were not comfortable

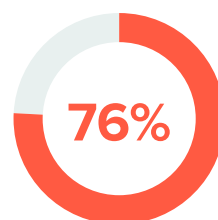


Of Black and Hispanic women said they were not comfortable

HOW COMFORTABLE WOULD YOU BE if an algorithm and not a person were the sole determiner of your job application?



Said they were very comfortable with AI being the sole determiner of their job application



Overall said they were uncomfortable

The Right Way To Use AI And Video In Your Recruitment Strategy

AI can be effective as a means of delivering information to candidates. For example, a smart chat bot can answer straightforward questions about the application process, triage inquiries from applicants, schedule interviews, and connect candidates with recruiters. In this use-case, technology can amplify the human touch rather than replace it.

Take the same approach with video. Gen Z and Millennials are undeniably comfortable with consuming video in their everyday lives.

And while they do record and send performative 15-second videos on Instagram and Snapchat, they do so knowing only their friends will see them and that they'll disappear in 24 hours. It's decidedly low stakes.

So, instead of asking them to record and submit video responses during a first-round screen, flip the script and think of how you can create and distribute video content that resonates with them. One way to achieve that is by producing

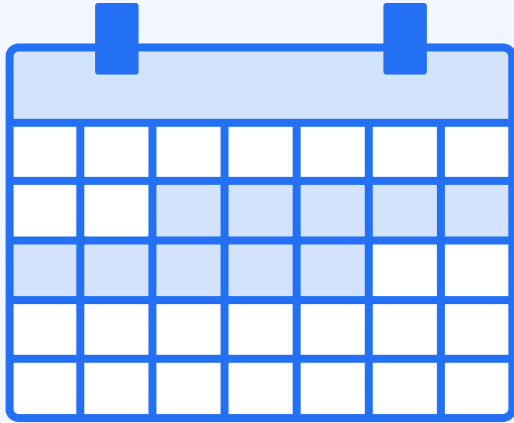
short (under 60 seconds), snackable videos that highlight your company culture and employer brand and can be distributed across social media. Just make sure to use text as well: The vast majority of these videos are viewed without sound, so your storytelling needs to be multi-dimensional to be compelling.

There is a place for both video and AI in recruitment, but Gen Z and Millennials don't want it to replace people. Find ways to blend high tech with high touch to augment your process, and you'll create a universally positive—and personal—candidate experience.

“I'd say one of the most frustrating parts of the job application process is not hearing back from employers. The lack of a rejection is 100 times worse than rejection.”

— Isabelle M., Class of 2020

You Need To Be Fast—Very Fast—And Transparent To Land Top Talent



Gen Z and Millennials expect the interview process to operate as efficiently as a Google search. They want to promptly know their application and interview status, regardless of the outcome, and they have little patience for slow response times.

What happens if you can't keep pace?
Simple: They lose interest and move on.

If your organization suffers from the dreaded [candidate black hole](#),⁴ then your chances of landing top talent drop precipitously. We hear this firsthand from many of our enterprise clients, who routinely tell us that, although they likely have strong diverse candidates in their ATS, they simply lack the resources to identify and move them through their funnel.

Being transparent about your internal process also empowers candidates to better prepare and feel as though the company values transparency. And for Gen Z especially, that's not a nice-to-have—it's a non-negotiable.

The takeaway? You need to keep candidates informed about their application status—from the moment they apply through every stage of interviewing—and continually engage them throughout the process.

“The most frustrating thing about the job process is not being answered, not receiving feedback for how you're performing. It's painful.”

— Kathryn K., Class of 2021

Employer Branding Is Essential To Your Recruiting Strategy

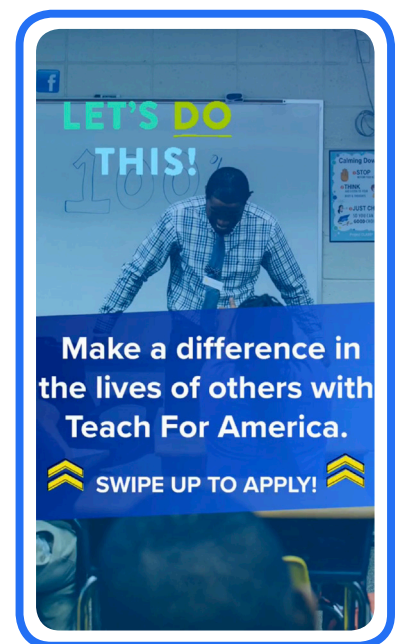
EMPLOYER BRANDING IS THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH TRANSPARENCY AND SPEED ARE BUILT.

Dedicating resources toward employer branding means you're thinking strategically about who you are as a business, what your principles are, and what your Employer Value Proposition is. From articles to videos, thoughtful employer branding helps shine a light on what working at your company is actually like. Just remember to incorporate content throughout the candidate experience to help keep top candidates warm and engaged.

When it comes to creation, think outside the box. Create an Instagram Story that outlines the various stages of your interview process and then save it as a Highlight on your company's handle. Ask an early-career employee what her favorite benefits are and then create a listicle from her perspective. This kind of approach—showing instead of telling—helps you forge an authentic connection with candidates.

“Diversity and inclusion is the number one thing I look for in a company. I want them to show me how they value it.”

— Kaiyell P., Class of 2021



What Does This All Mean For Your Organization?

In order to attract top Gen Z and Millennial candidates, you'll need to evaluate your recruitment process, identify gaps and areas of strength, and create a plan to strike the appropriate balance between high tech and high touch.

TO DO THAT, THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING FIVE QUESTIONS:

- 1. Are you using technology to boost your team's effectiveness, or is your reliance on high tech drowning out the human touch?**
- 2. Is your candidate experience uniform and consistent, regardless of whether a candidate applies online or first met you in person?**
- 3. Do you respond quickly when candidates submit an application online, and continually update them on their status?**
- 4. Do you have a unified employer branding strategy that lifts the veil on what it's like working at your business?**
- 5. Have you quantified your time-to-hire, and how does that stack up against your competitors?**



How You Can Improve Your Recruitment Process—Regardless Of Resources

“With the volume of the applications coming in, the WayUp Source, Screen & Coach engagement really helped us to move the dial and move on candidates much more expediently, which was fantastic for us and fantastic for candidates as well.”

– Simon Coombe, Nasdaq's North America Head of Talent Acquisition

The hiring process needs to have a human experience throughout. But achieving that at scale can be difficult for strapped teams who are struggling just to keep their heads above water. Whether you're flush with budget or a one-person team, there are steps you can take that'll have a substantial impact on your recruitment process.

1. Quantify Your Team's Time And Think Strategically About Allocating Resources

To better understand how efficiently your team is currently operating, start by calculating your cost-per-hire, making sure to account for things like recruiter and coordinator salaries. Many recruiting teams know they waste an inordinate amount of time reviewing and screening unqualified candidates, but they struggle to put an exact figure on the business impact of doing so. Sound familiar? Instead of repeating the same broken cycle, work collaboratively with your

finance, operations, and management teams to formally examine what that inefficient use of time is actually costing the business.

From there, you can better make a business case to hire additional headcount or work with a vendor to help screen candidates. Outside of enabling your team to focus solely on qualified applicants, using an outside recruiter for initial screenings won't negatively affect your candidate experience:

A MAJORITY OF CANDIDATES WE SURVEYED SAID THEY WERE COMFORTABLE WITH TALKING TO AN OUTSIDE RECRUITER FOR A FIRST- ROUND SCREEN.

After conducting an analysis, Nasdaq's recruiting team determined they were devoting roughly 100 hours of work per week screening unqualified applicants. By partnering with WayUp Source, Screen & Coach, they were able to empower their team to focus exclusively on qualified candidates. That, in turn, enabled them to hire top, more diverse talent faster than in the past.

“If a company never got back to me and I had to reach out about my status, that would make me never want to apply to that company again—even if it was a great company. It wouldn't matter.”

– Alexander V. Class of 2022

2. Use Technology And Employer Branding To Your Advantage

There are many ways you can leverage technology during the early-career recruitment process that don't risk turning off top talent. Start with candidate attraction. Instead of visiting dozens of college campuses, be more strategic and utilize sourcing platforms that help you reach a wider, more diverse group of applicants at significantly lower costs.

You can also work with your marketing team or an outside vendor to hone your employer branding strategy. Are you distributing the right content to the right candidates at the right times? Work on ways you can improve how you communicate your company culture and bring transparency to your interview process. Create informational packets that outline the various stages candidates will go through and what they can expect throughout.

3. Prioritize People—Both Your Candidates And Your Recruiting Team

Gen Z and Millennials are clear about what they want from the interview process. This ultimately boils down to:

- A timely decision—whether positive or negative—and updates on status after they've applied and while they're interviewing
- Information about the company, the interview process, and everything in between
- More human interaction, not less

Employers who focus on what candidates actually want are poised to break out from their competitors as this digitally-native generation comes of age. Resist the temptation of conjecture and focus on what the data says.

“After implementing WayUp Source, Screen & Coach, our candidate experience has been enhanced. These candidates can feel the personal connection [through phone screening] while also getting more polished and making little tweaks through feedback.”

– Whitney Manda, Director of Corporate Recruiting, Principal at Apex Systems

About WayUp

WayUp turns the outdated recruiting model on its head, enabling top employers—from startups to Fortune 500s—to attract and hire the absolute best early-career talent faster, more efficiently, and at lower cost than ever before. With more than 5 million undergraduates and recent grads using the platform, WayUp enables employers to strategically source and get their jobs in front of only qualified candidates. Its in-house branding team also creates best-in-class content campaigns designed to resonate with Gen Z and Millennials.

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WayUp's Flagship Offering Source, Screen & Coach

WayUp's Source, Screen & Coach removes the uncertainties from hiring, ensuring every qualified applicant receives a phone screen within 24 hours of submitting an application. Following each screen, all candidates are provided with personalized soft skills feedback, with those who pass directly added to your ATS. Employers who use WayUp Source, Screen & Coach have cut their recruitment-to-hire time by 50% and as much as doubled their minority hiring rate.

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