



How can
societal change
drive the next
business shift?

■ ■ ■
The better the question. The better the answer.
The better the world works.

EY

Building a better
working world

Every generation deals with significant events, technological disruptions and economic uncertainties that shape and reshape their values, behaviors and beliefs.

The way each generation manages these disruptions creates a societal shift as well as major opportunities for entrepreneurship and new business thinking.

A person's legs, wearing pants heavily splattered with various colors of paint, stand in the center of a room. The floor is covered in a dense layer of paint splatters and numerous paint cans of various colors. The background is a wall also covered in paint splatters. The overall scene suggests a creative or artistic environment.

GENERATION:

Born from shared events and experiences that shaped the society they grew up in

Each generation resets societal norms thanks to their collective responses and reactions to the times and events during which they grew up.

“

It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change.

– Charles Darwin

Generations in the workforce in **2025**

BOOMERS | Born: 1946-1964

15.5%

GEN X | 1965-1980

28.8%

MILLENNIALS | 1981-1996

43.9%

GEN Z | 1997-2007

11.4%

In less than two years the U.S. Dept of Labor forecasts that four generations will make up 99.6% of the United States workforce.



Generations in the workforce in **2030**

BOOMERS | Born: 1946-1964

8.7%

GEN X | 1965-1980

25.1%

MILLENNIALS | 1981-1996

43.7%

GEN Z | 1997-2007

22.4%

By 2030, Millennials and Gen Z will represent more than 65% of the workforce

By 2030, millennials and Gen Z will make up more than two-thirds of the workforce, mainstreaming new beliefs and behaviors that will change every business as well as daily life.

“

The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow.

– Nelson Mandela

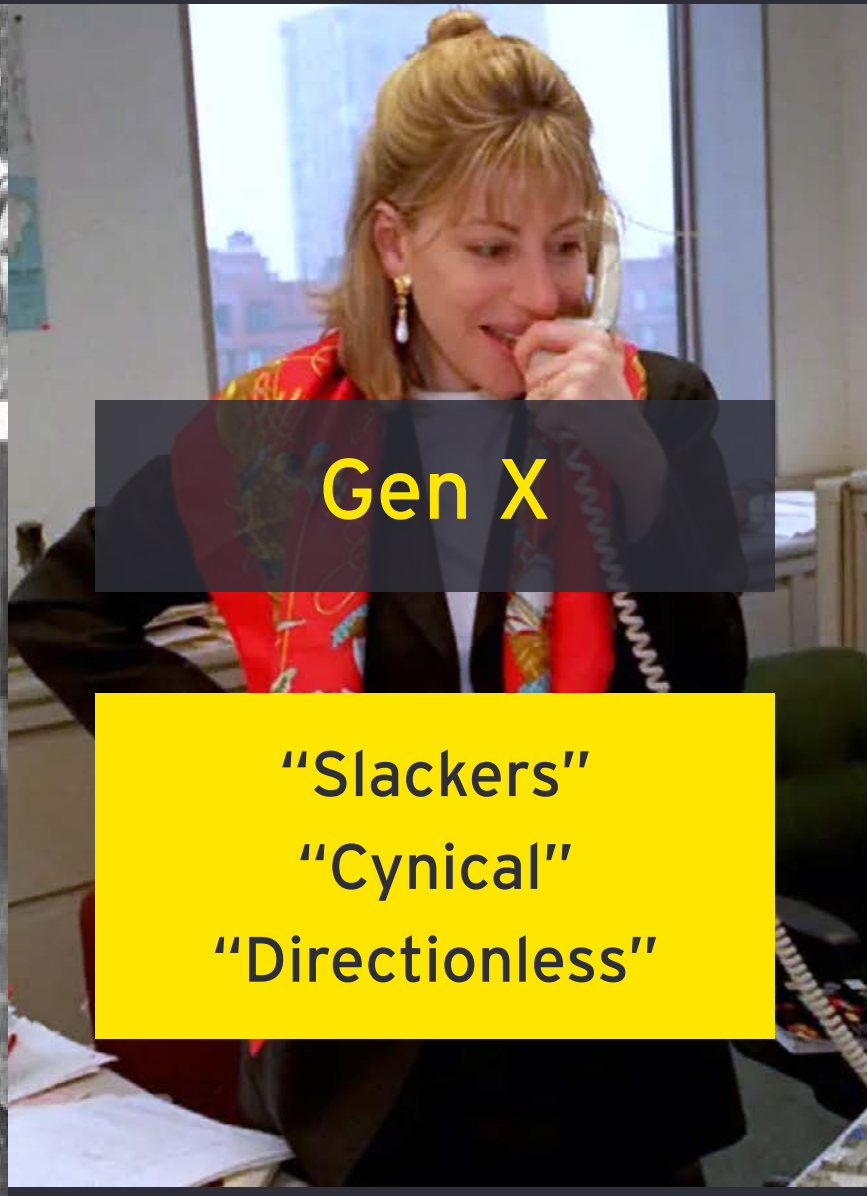


Influence is richer and more profound than stereotypes



Boomers

"Hippies"
"Spoiled"
"Idealistic"



Gen X

"Slackers"
"Cynical"
"Directionless"



Millennials

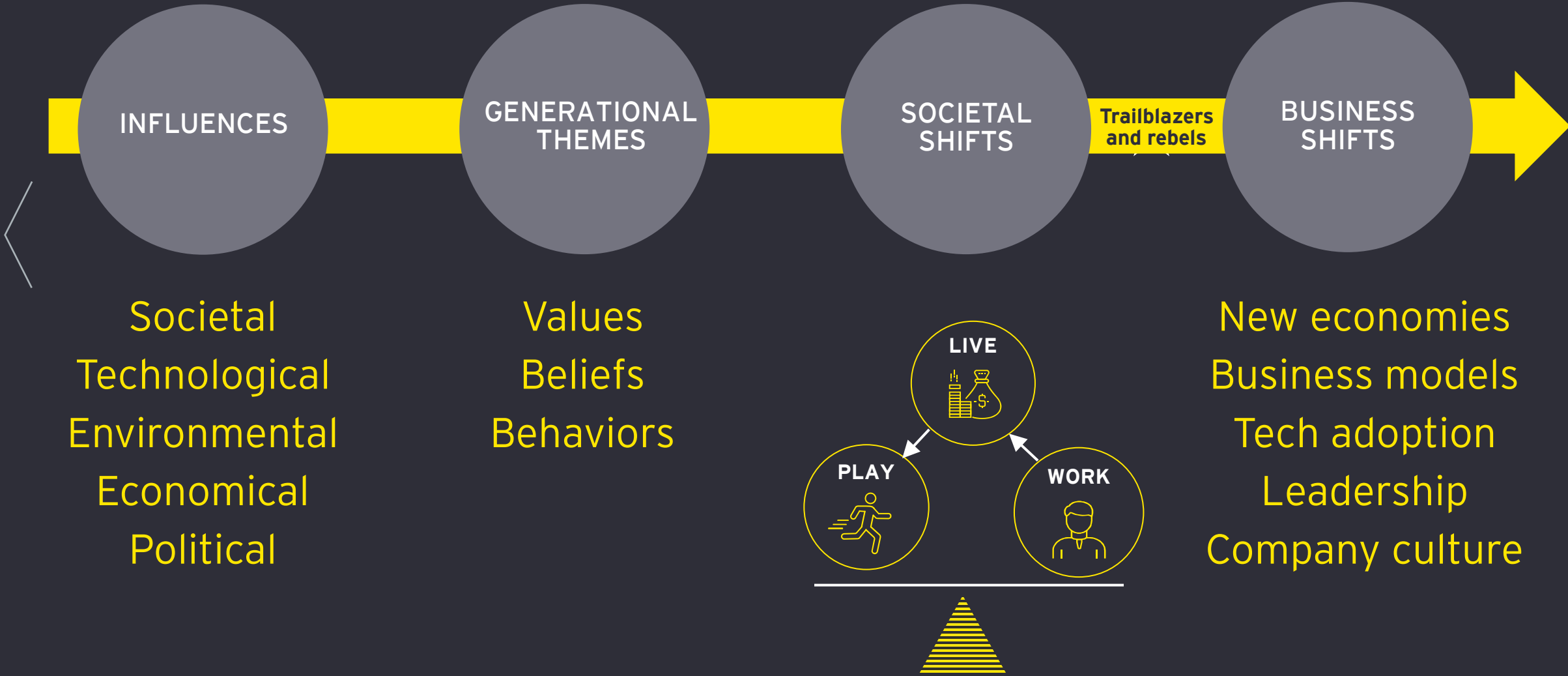
"Entitled"
"Self-obsessed"
"Noncommittal"

“Hey, Boomer” doesn’t help anyone or anything.

Each generation gets stereotyped by the one that came before, and the 24-hour news cycle and social media amplify the falsehoods. Let’s not fall for that.



External influences shape the values, beliefs and behaviors of every generation – which ultimately lead to societal and business shifts



The values, beliefs and behaviors of a generation ultimately lead to three primary societal shifts:

Live: the things that define lifestyle, education, home and family

Play: the sports, hobbies, volunteerism and travel experiences that enrich us

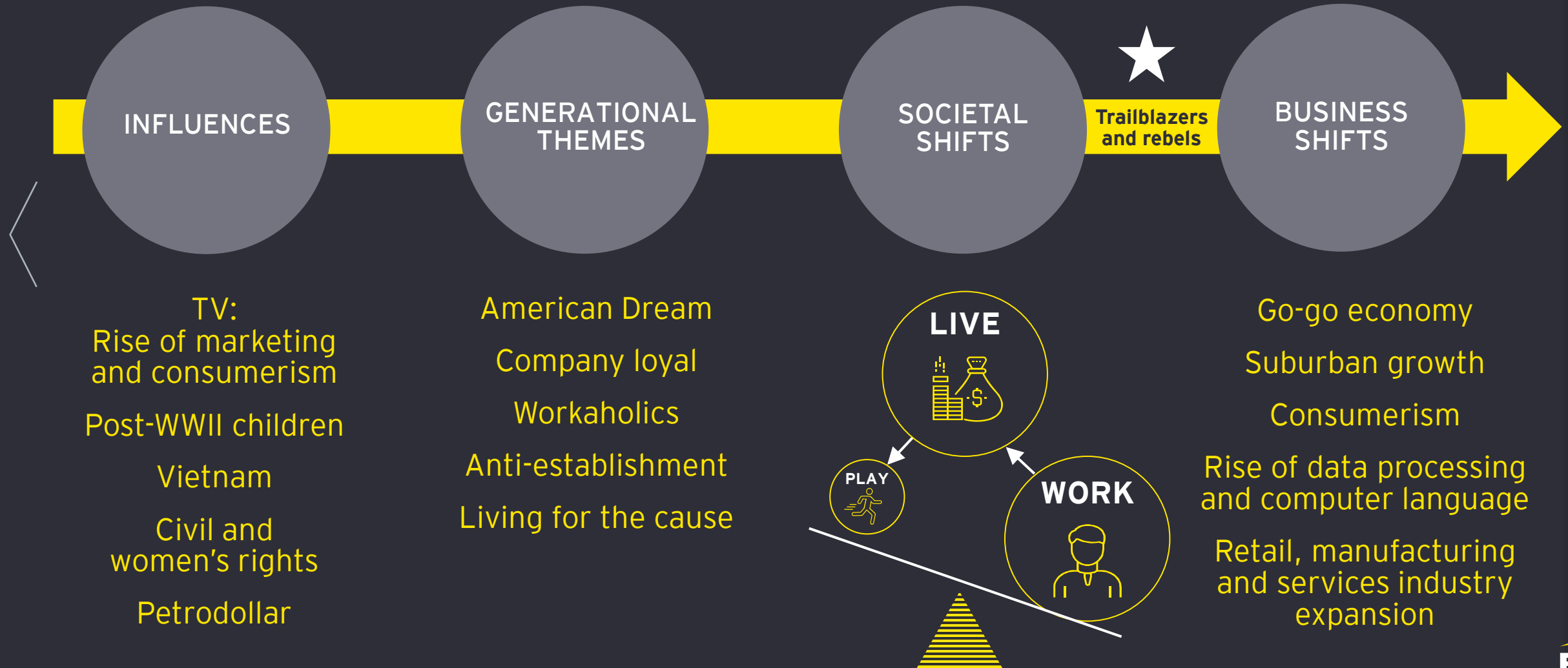
Work: the career or jobs that fuel our lifestyles

These societal shifts ultimately lead to a shift in business – the economies of the time, the business models, technology adoption at scale, and leadership and cultural norms.





Baby Boomers | Born: 1946-1964

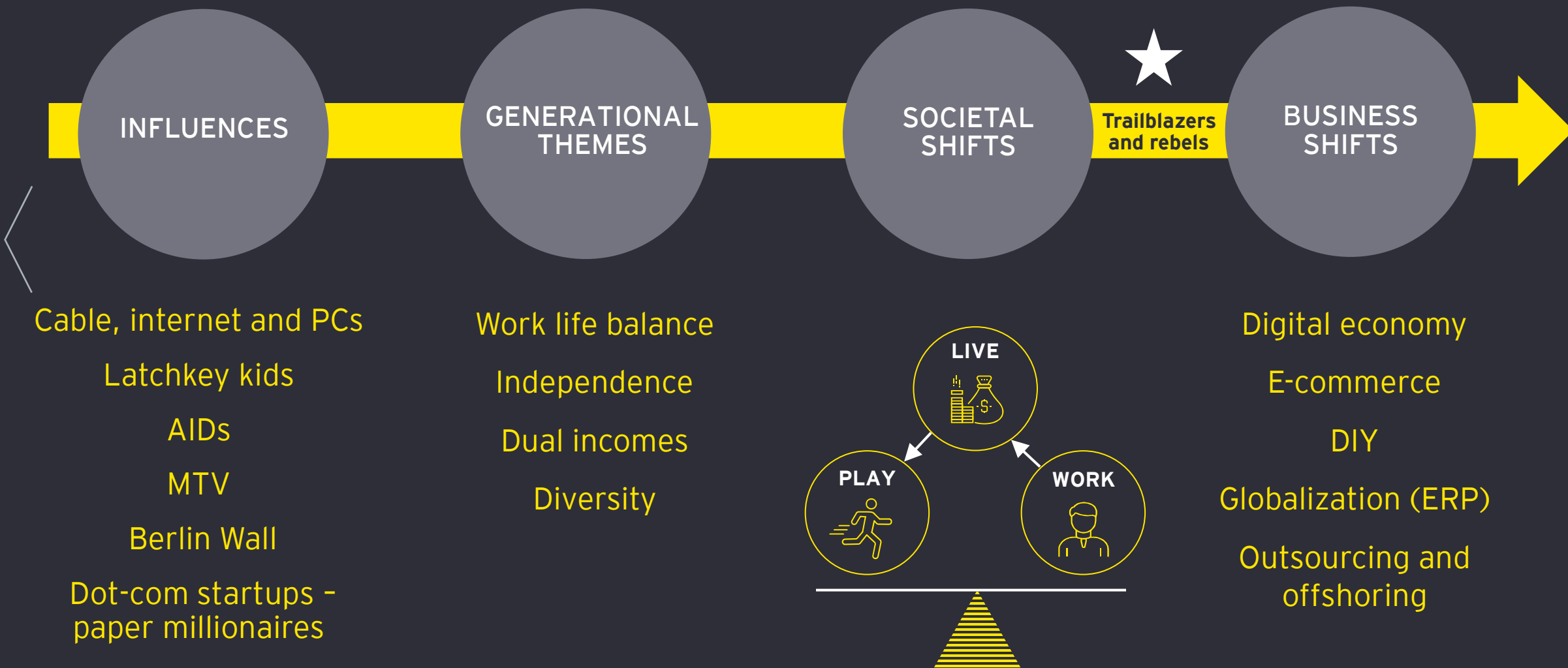


Baby boomers and the work ethic that changed the world

Baby boomers experienced, and drove, a period of intense societal change. In the aftermath of WWII, they rolled up their shirt sleeves and got to work chasing the American dream and the material gains of a newfound consumerism and middle-class wealth. Others, however, challenged the establishment. Trailblazers of their generation focused society's attention on civil and women's rights, and we saw the birth of rebel tech companies that changed technology and the future. Boomers sacrificed play for work, which had enormous personal and societal impact on their families and relationships, but created the go-go economy and fueled the American dream for others.



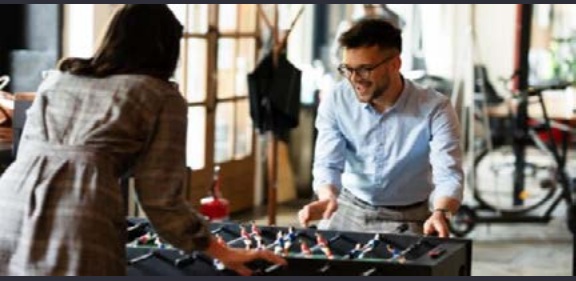
Gen X | Born: 1965-1980



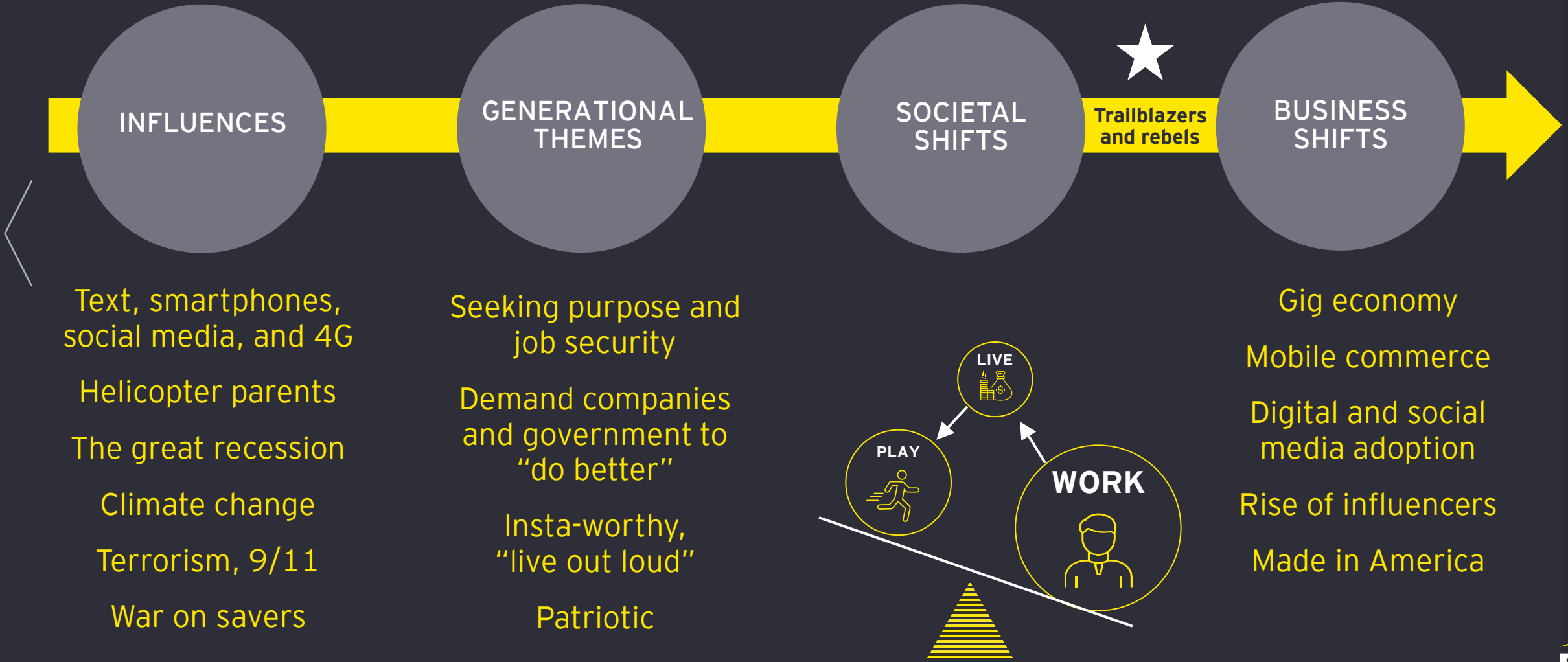
Gen X and the benefits of balance

Gen X, or the forgotten generation, were the latchkey kids of workaholic or divorced parents. By the time they entered the workforce, balance was critical. They created and valued an increasingly diverse workforce and prioritized play as much as work. The last to know life before the internet and the first to embrace modern computing in the workplace, Gen X drove massive change as technology exploded. The internet, global 24-7 news and communications, and the meteoric rise of e-commerce, all happened on Gen X's watch. Gen Xers were fiercely independent, fluid and loyal to their professions not their employers. They broke the mold of lifelong careers, chased innovation and helped give birth to major tech and retail giants that continue to shape our experience today.





Millennials | Born: 1981-1996



Millennials and the rise of social media

Millennials grew up the kids of schedule-driven, helicopter boomer parents and recipients of everyday technology in their hands. Many started college or work during the Great Recession, graduating to enormous student debt and an unaffordable housing market. Compared with boomers ages 25-35 who accounted for 21% of total wealth, millennials own just 5%. Dogged by financial challenges, they seek job security but with the balance Gen X ushered in and the affirmation of friends and community. It's hardly surprising, then, that millennials fueled the birth of social media, online communities and the now pervasive flexibility of the mobile, gig economy.





Gen Z

Gen Z and the next great shift

Gen Z just grew up. The last of them have turned 16 – and all are of working age. An incredibly diverse and cause-focused generation, they're just 16% of the world's population but outpunch in terms of influence. Connected, ultra-networked, online constantly and socially conscious, they're poised to create widespread change in the workplace and the world. It will be crucial for businesses to avoid stereotyping Gen Z and understand their motivations, beliefs and potential.



Emerging technology

Hybrid work anxiety

COVID-19 continuation



Metaverse/Web 3

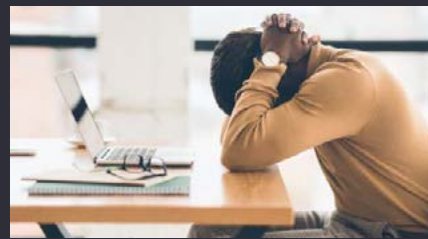
Advanced robotics

Burnout

Mental health issues

War

Gun violence



AI & Machine Learning

Bandwidth

Food shortages

Energy Crisis

Social injustice

Climate change



Gen Z – digital natives and leaders of change

If millennials were tech-savvy, Gen Z is digitally native. They've never known life without mobile, let alone the internet. Online friends are valued equally to school and real-life relationships. But with enormous potential in a digitally expansive world, Gen Z is stressed unlike any other generation at their young age. Environmental worries, financial instability, global conflict, social justice and their own mental health concerns all weigh heavy. Smart, pragmatic and intuitive with the ability to harness rapid technological advances, Gen Z are agents of the next big change.



Understanding the generational themes that define Gen Z

Ubiquitous technology

Expect **immediacy, intuitive and seamless processes, policies and procedures.**

Health matters

Admittedly **high-stress, anxiety-ridden and fearful of failure** – and want to address it.

Inclusivity and transparency

A generation of skeptics, **authentic connections and transparency** are critical attributes.

Intentional consumerism

They are **financially pragmatic and will push brands to be more ethical and sustainable.**

Multiple economic pathways

Always looking to do more with less – **painting economic pathways that aren't fully paved.**

Five factors shaping Gen Z behavior and beliefs

1. Technological connections – Technology is about connecting with people in Gen Z's always-on world.
2. Health awareness – Almost half of Gen Z believe they don't receive the emotional and social support they need and are ready to address it.
3. Authenticity and transparency – 92% of Gen Zers believe being authentic and true to themselves is critically important. They value diversity and absolute inclusivity.
4. Intentional consumerism – With easy access to information and technology, Gen Z values brands that are socially and environmentally conscious, and 71% purchase pre-owned clothing – an industry growing 24 times faster than other retail segments.
5. Economic pathways – 77% of Gen Zers are savers. Some have an average of \$33k in retirement savings already, and all embrace the idea of making money through creator, collaborative and virtual economies.

Gen Z will create a societal shift where live-work-play is in balance



Gen Zers want it all: the perfect balance of live, work and play. But they can't see and don't recognize the boundaries between. For Gen Z ultimate mobility, gig-based work and flawless technology will reshape their careers and lives.



GEN Z WILL FLIP OUR TRADITIONAL MODELS UPSIDE-DOWN



The change is already here. Or underway. Completely remote jobs. Digital nomad programs. The blending of vacation and business travel. And new educational principles based upon building skills vs. academic discipline. As this progress occurs, Gen Z remains concerned over mental health and overall wellbeing and is looking for the support to help them break or manage digital wellness. It's one of the reasons we're seeing a rise in digital health and wellness startups as well as rebels and trailblazers calling for more digital ethicists in businesses.

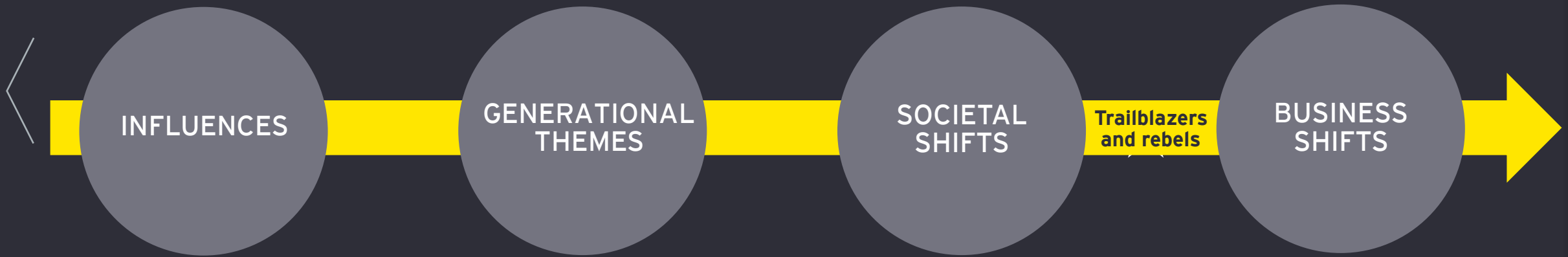




Gen Z will flip the work model for every business

You may have seen the video of a toddler trying to treat a magazine page like a tablet touchscreen. This is the same dynamic Gen Z is facing in workplaces that weren't designed around them or their digital fluency. It's now essential that every business become a truly digital company to be attractive to Gen Z workers and stay relevant as the world of work evolves rapidly.

How are you preparing for the shifts in front of us to reshape your customer, product, employee and brand experiences?



For more on Gen Z, visit our content library:
www.ey.com/GenZ

Human connection for all

Whatever generation, whatever life stage we're experiencing from retiring boomers to Gen Zers stepping up, we are all connected. We are all part of the amazing human experience and bear the responsibility of helping each new generation propel society and our businesses forward to greatness.



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SCORE no. 19217-231US
2302-4190030

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