

BIG Thoughts™ Research

Written by Directors. Not Algorithms.

Stop Calling Them Next Gen...They're Now

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BIG

BEST IN GOVERNANCE

Stop Calling Them "Next Gen"... they're Now.

The future isn't coming. It's already here.

By 2030, nearly 80% of the global workforce will be Millennials, Gen Z and even Gen Alpha.

This is a generational shift that is shaping business in real time, as for the first time in history, five generations will be working alongside one another.

These generations aren't just waiting on the sidelines. They're running companies, directing capital, shaping culture, and redefining success on their own terms. As employees, consumers, and investors, their influence is immediate and powerful.

Yet many boardrooms still refer to them as "the next generation," missing the fact that they're already at the helm. In actuality, they are the Now Generation, and they're not asking for change, they're creating it.

Boards must adapt to this new leadership era of "Now Gens" or risk losing relevancy.



Baby Boomers

1946-1964

70% of S&P Boards



Gen X

1965-1980

25% of S&P Boards



Millennials

1981-1996

<5% of S&P Boards



Gen Z

1997-2012

<5% of S&P Boards



Gen Alpha

2013-2024

From Control to Conscience – What's Changed?

Business used to follow a familiar script: strategy built on predictability, leadership rooted in hierarchy, profit isolated from purpose, and culture imposed top down.

"Now Gens" are flipping that script.

Purpose isn't a buzzword for Now Gens. It's embedded in their expectations.

Now Gens approach work and consumption with values-driven intent, distinct from prior generations. While only 6% cite "leadership" as a top goal, this doesn't signal a lack of ambition; it reflects a shift. They prioritize growth, continuous learning, meaningful experiences, and purpose-aligned impact.

Now Gens expect:

- flexible, purpose-driven work aligned with values;
- authentic brands with conscience;
- action on climate, equity, and mental health; and
- transparent leadership in decision making.

These expectations aren't soft preferences; these are bottom-line consequences pressure-testing if purpose is baked into an organization's strategy and values.

75%

of Now Gens say a company's societal impact influences whether they want to work there.

Why Boards Must Pay Attention

The Now Gen shift is more than just a culture movement; it's a power tsunami.

By 2045, more than \$68 trillion will transfer from Boomers to Now Gens, marking the largest transfer of wealth in history.

This purchasing power doesn't come with blind loyalty. It will control capital, shape public opinion, and reject companies misaligned with their values. Boards that don't evolve will lose talent, trust, and market relevance. This isn't about trend, it's about long-term viability and governance that reflects today's reality.

64%

avoid brands misaligned with their values and are willing to pay more for sustainable options.

And yet, Boards are missing a significant stakeholder perspective at the boardroom table. **Less than 5% of corporate board seats are held by people under 50.** This is a governance risk with significant consequences for innovation and relevance.

BIG Founder & CEO, Ivy Lumia, sat down with Aki Temiseva, President of the United Nations Association in Canada, to discuss the growing influence of Now Gens and the impact on leadership and governance.

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We're witnessing a generational power shift, not just in numbers, but in values. Younger generations aren't waiting to be invited in. They're already shaping business, policy, and public trust. The question for boards is no longer when to engage, it's whether they're willing to lead alongside them. By supporting programmes like the United Nations Association in Canada's Building Young Professionals, Science and Technology Internship Programme (STIP) & Green Schools Volunteers Across Canada (Eco-Schools), boards can meaningfully engage talent and create real pathways into leadership.

~ Aki Temiseva, United Nations Association of Canada

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5 Forces Now Gens are Driving

Now Gens are actively rewriting the rules of business and Boards must understand the forces reshaping strategy, culture, and competitiveness:

- 1 Purpose Over Paycheques**
Now Gens seek purpose-driven work, stay for personal growth, expect real action on equity, climate, and ethical AI, and view silence as complicity. This shift forces companies to embed ESG in strategy and lead with integrity, or risk losing trust and talent.
- 2 Values-Driven Purchase Power**
Now Gens are conscious consumers, investing in brands that reflect their principles and valuing impact over logos. Their financial behavior prioritizes minimalism, experiences and digital assets.
- 3 Flexibility Is the New Standard**
Now Gens reject 9–5 models, favoring flexible, results-driven work. Loyalty is earned through growth, experience and learning opportunities, prompting companies to rethink space, tools and productivity metrics.
- 4 Wellbeing & Belonging**
Mental health and inclusion are table stakes. Now Gens expect real support like wellness benefits and leaders who demonstrate authenticity. They want action on social issues and cultures where well-being and inclusion are modeled by leadership.
- 5 Redefining Pathways and Pipelines**
Traditional education and lifetime loyalty are fading. Declining university enrollments and geographical recruitment expansion are reshaping pipelines, making upskilling and digital credentials key to recruitment and retention.

What Can Boards Do?



ALIGN STRATEGY WITH PURPOSE

- Embed ESG, equity, and ethics into board accountability.
- Ask: Does our strategy reflect the future stakeholders we serve?
- Audit brand credibility; do public stances align with strategy?



MODERNIZE TALENT OVERSIGHT

- Expand Human Capital oversight of belonging and wellbeing.
- Enable flexible work, growth experiences, and reverse mentorship.
- Offer benefits they want like mental health support.
- Expand talent criteria to lived experience and alt credentials.



GOVERN CULTURE AND ETHICS

- Treat inclusion, transparency, and mental wellness as board-level priorities, modeled from the top.
 - Embed ethics into strategy, risk oversight, CEO accountability.
 - Strengthen digital ethics (privacy, bias, and responsible tech).
 - Track culture through engagement and whistleblowers data.
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ENHANCE BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

- Align board composition with real-world experience and future needs.
 - Engage through co-creation and strategic advisory roles.
 - Evaluate governance with a lens on stakeholders and culture.
 - Ensure open communication, clear metrics and candid dialogue.
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How BIG Can Support Your Board

At Best in Governance, we see the rise of the Now Gen as a powerful opportunity for boards to strategize, engage, and lead with relevance.

Our award-winning, full-service advisory firm empowers boards and executive teams to navigate the complexities of today's governance with customized, evidence-based solutions. From **Board Evaluations** to **Governance Risk Assessments** and **ESG Accountability Frameworks**, we help boards modernize with purpose, turning reflection into practical action for lasting impact.

Because the future isn't coming, it's already here. Let's build a board that's ready for it.

[Get in touch](#) to learn more or visit www.bestingovernance.com

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