ORU President: Why I Believe Gen Z Will Be the Most Influential Generation Ever

“Leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less.” If this statement by *New York Time*s bestselling author and speaker John Maxwell is close to being true, then the leadership potential of Generation Z is huge because they are influencing the world. Generation Z is now the largest generation on the planet, as billion of the 7.8 billion people on earth are part of it. Larger than both the millennial and baby boomer generations, Generation Z’s number alone positions them to make a significant impact.

Gen Z is currently influencing consumer and financial decisions in a substantial way. *Forbes* magazine recently noted that Gen Z represents $29 billion-$143 billion in buying power in the United States, along with exhibiting a considerable influence on how monies are spent by other generations. *Forbes* states, “93% of parents today say their children influence family and household purchases, according to a report by CASSANDRA, meaning a significant portion of overall market spend is because of these youths.” Marketers and businesses are acutely aware of Gen Z’s buying and decision-making power and are attempting to identify what works with them. The traits that characterize Generation Z can be surprising, combining a desire for security, authenticity and social value with an expectation of speed, convenience and seamless service.

A recent McKinsey report says Gen Zers are undefined, communaholics, prologuers and realistic. They are also a consumer force to be reckoned with, according to McKinsey, who states, “Young people have always embodied the zeitgeist of their societies, profoundly influencing trends and behavior

alike. The influence of Gen Z – the first generation of true digital natives – is now radiating outward, with the search for truth at the center of its characteristic behavior and consumption patterns. Technology has given young people an unprecedented degree of connectivity among themselves and with the rest of the population. That makes generational shifts more important and speeds up technological trends as well."

Generation Z is also more financially conservative than other generations. Michael Pankowski, who leads the Crimson Connection on the Harvard campus and is a Gen Zer himself, said, "35% of us plan to start saving for retirement in our 20s, and another 10% are planning to save as teens."

Generation Z is also influencing nations and politics. Roughly 24 million Gen Zers were eligible to vote in the 2020 election, which accounted for roughly 10% of the total number of eligible voters in the United States. Generation Z has been at the forefront of protests against racism around the world, and they are the most racially diverse generation ever. They will overthrow and reverse systemic racism patterns, opting for societies where every race and mixtures of races are treated equally. Over the next decade, their influence and leadership on social issues from climate change to abortion will be felt in the capitals of the world.

Generation Z will also lead and influence the world because of their educational prowess. They will be the most educated generation in history. A recent Pew Research Analysis noted that more Generation Zers are in college in the United States at the age of 18 to 21 years than were in any previous generation at the same age. These trends are also true globally as the emerging middle class accesses higher education, bringing an explosive need for advanced opportunities while giving rise to a host of new global institutions to meet the need. This ascendant knowledge base in Gen Z will serve them well in the marketplace and push them toward leadership quickly.

Gen Z will influence the world. This is indisputable. However, the question before us and them is *how* will they influence it? This collective generation has the greatest opportunity in the history of humankind to make a positive impact and an exponentially expanded opportunity to grow the influence of God's kingdom on the earth. I believe that they are the new leadership generation and everyone will see their impact for good in the days ahead.

From all my years of travel and engagement with young people, I have become convinced that Gen Z is special and unique. The unprecedented variables surrounding them have created an environment conducive to greatness. I believe they will rise to the occasion and that history will view them as one of the most important generations ever to live.

The storms are going to be strong in the days ahead, and Jesus is going to be revealed in mighty ways. Above the wars, disasters, calamities, diseases and difficulties, however, Christ will stand – calling our names and beckoning us to step onto the surface of the sea and walk with Him.

I believe that many in Gen Z are standing on the edge of a boat right now with their faces turned into the wind or kneeling in the sawdust at a makeshift altar somewhere – giving Jesus everything. Fearless and faith-filled, they are about to make history. Their time of destiny has come, and the Holy Spirit has marked them for this moment.

My heart sees them as they believe God's estimation of them and as they step onto the sea, witnessing the miraculous. The depth of the storm before us will only make the height of their victory appear even greater.

When the dust of time has settled and tumult has turned into eternal peace, it will be forever known that Generation Z was Born for the Storm. {eoa}

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