
What Matters to Generation Next?

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There are now four generations working concurrently at ICT: Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z. Bayley Camp (Gen Z) joined ICT in 2023, initially as an HR Intern Coordinator, assisting on our summer intern program. After graduating from USC with a BA, Social Sciences, concentration in psychology, Bayley joined us full-time as an Administrative Assistant. Here she gives her Gen Z perspective on what matters to the next generation and how she sees that play out at ICT. NB: Since writing this essay, Bayley Camp has been promoted to Operations Officer, Defense and Intelligence Initiatives.

I'm 24, which makes me a Gen Z-er, one of the (very) few currently on staff at ICT. My generation has never known a world without always-on connectivity, mobile telephone (I was 7 when the iPhone launched), peer-to-peer platforms (i.e. Uber), managed by cloud-based, reputation-based safety systems (enabling ratings and tracking), and yes, the perils of social media (which is why most of us have set our accounts to private).

In my experience, out there in the global community, there are a lot of misconceptions about my generation (born between 1997 – 2012). We're often portrayed as constantly tethered to our mobile phones, engrossed in the most up-to-date fads / gaming experiences. However, because of its thriving intern program, that's *not* what I hear inside ICT.

In fact, after working as the HR Intern Coordinator last summer, I feel ICT *knows* that Gen Z will redefine the trajectory of technological innovation. But Gen Z has more on its mind than just tech. We also care deeply about a just world. Diversity, social justice, inclusion, and equity are not just buzzwords for my generation. In fact, we won't work somewhere that doesn't embrace this view of the future.

Joining ICT

Straight after earning my bachelor's degree from USC, ICT gave me an amazing opportunity to find a world beyond the university gates. In May of 2023, I had the opportunity to interact with much younger Gen-Z interns as ICT's HR Intern Coordinator, working with a lively group of 39 interns (10 REUs, 16 ICT, 5 ARL, and 8 Cadets) from around the world, encompassing different age groups, ethnicities, and genders. This diverse group collaborated on projects across the institute, injecting fresh perspectives and vitality into projects.

The ICT intern program is a highly competitive program. Over 700 applications have come in for the Summer 2024 program, but there are only 40 places. This is less than a 6% acceptance rate, which does nothing to dissuade eager candidates from applying.

A key takeaway from last summer's intern program was the idea that "progress is the key to innovation" – innovation requires that we *evolve* our technologies, programs, and how we collaborate. These are all essential ideas for the next generation. So, how do we succeed in prioritizing these aspects of innovation for who comes next?

Born Digital

My generation was "born digital." Growing up in a fully digitized society, we have an innate familiarity with devices, applications, and platforms. This intimate understanding uniquely positions us to anticipate and shape the next wave of technological advancements. We possess an intrinsic grasp of what resonates with our peers and what lies on the horizon, making us invaluable contributors to the ongoing evolution of technology.

Generation Z, aka the e-generation, has experienced rapid technological change. Many of us, myself included, spent most of our college years navigating COVID-era restrictions. All learning how to adjust and incorporate

programs like Zoom into our daily lives. This has impacted how we interact with technology. We see it as a societal necessity, giving us the ability to adapt, create, and expand our desire for things we learn, through a global electronic village.

What lies beyond our digital horizons? Will we take **flying cars** to work? Maybe. Go beyond Facetime into **holographic communication**? Why not? But whatever future vision we see, it has to transcend the present, cultivating an environment conducive to innovation and advancement. This means fostering progress within our generation and among those who came before us.

Shifting Traditions

Progress happens when traditions are questioned, and new ways of learning or tackling problems are found. We know that genuine novelty cannot exist without change. We think that “staying with old practices” will inhibit creativity and limit technological advancement. We want to see the promotion of diverse views and innovation encouraged within organizations.

While navigating through ever-changing technological environments, we are primed for shifts and brand-new opinions. Our generation declines to be limited by old conventions; instead, we embrace novel concepts, try out new technologies, and actively collaborate together across fields to drive progress.

Progress also has a broader meaning than mere employment. It is an overarching societal imperative—to strive for a technologically advanced but equitable and sustainable planet. For example, education and healthcare delivery systems must be reimagined through a lens that includes

environmental impacts, with a constant respect for inclusivity and social responsibility.

To wrap it up, inclusivity, diversity, social responsibility, and the notion of a more just and better world highlight the deep connection of Generation Z in the creation of a more balanced and environmentally friendly place. This next generation utilizes technological platforms to influence perspectives on various issues, such as gender equity, mental health awareness, environmental sustainability, and more, both locally and globally. Generation Z will reignite change in segmented markets and the broader community through synergy and channeling our unique perspectives and approaches.

Multi-Generational Perspectives

At ICT, I see a willingness to embrace multigenerational perspectives. This is important to Gen Z. We need to be heard. Working together, this multigenerational coalition can tap into and exploit the full potential of Gen Z and lead the way for what comes next.

While Gen Z-ers will bring in new ideas, be tech-savvy, and be totally willing to question the status quo, we want to learn from Boomers, Gen X, and older millennials. They bring valuable maturity, institutional knowledge, and mentorship to the mix. Societies that thrive will depend on creative development centers that stimulate innovative, creative thinking and life-long learning through genuine relations between different persons of different ages.

As an undergraduate, my interests centered on gender equality, neurodivergence, and mental health – like many other members of Gen Z. We know our interests in these greater societal issues will converge with technological advancement to bring change. The possibilities for critical

shifts to our world today to make a better tomorrow are endless. This is the essence of progress; this is what matters to Generation Next.

In September 2023, I was promoted to administrative assistant, so I won't be working directly on the intern program this year. But I'm still eager to hang out with the interns when possible, to see what this new group of bright minds will bring to the Institute. As the next cohort of ICT Interns arrives in a few weeks, I'll be excited to hear their fresh perspectives, witness the innovation they'll bring to our Labs, and learn from those younger than me. At ICT, our multigenerational makeup is instrumental in propelling our success and we take great pride in it.

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BIO:

Bayley Camp joined ICT in May 2023, initially serving as an HR Intern Coordinator before transitioning to the role of Administrative Assistant in Sept 2023, then being promoted to Operations Officer, Defense and Intelligence Initiatives, in 2024. Before joining ICT, she earned a BA, Social Sciences, with an emphasis in Psychology, from USC. Since becoming part of the ICT team, Bayley actively contributed to the success of the intern program, and continues to play a key role in organizing events involving participants from diverse fields, ranging from the US Army to the entertainment industry.