



FRENCH EDITION

GEN Z RISING

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GRADUATES ARE FEELING THE LOVE

In their first few years on the job, French university graduates are gaining real-world insights into opportunities for professional development.

A new Accenture Strategy study shows that one in four those about to graduate prefers to start their career at a large company. However, among recent graduates—those with one to two years of work experience—popularity of large companies grows, with one in three desiring to work for a large company.

That leaves large employers with a question: How do they show new graduates the benefits of working for a large company before these potential employees make their first job choice?

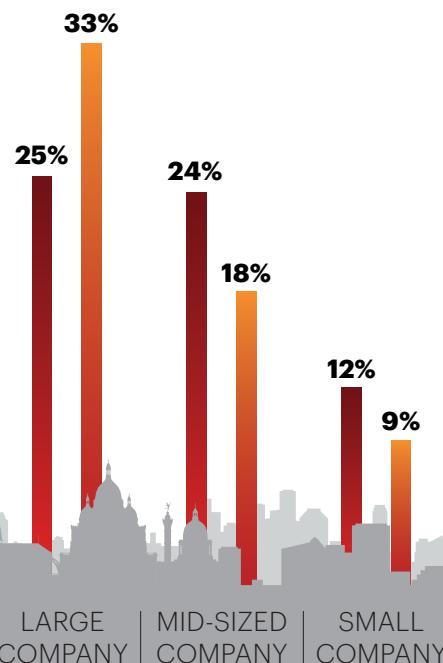
The latest cohort of university graduates in France, the first belonging to Gen Z, enters the future workforce willing to commit and ready to roll up their sleeves. In return, they are looking for an engaging employee experience that takes full advantage of their skills. Many see their predecessors feeling underemployed, as 72 percent of recent graduates who finished university in 2015 or 2016 are in a job they feel does not require their degree.

New graduates are keen to avoid the same fate. They will carefully weigh career development opportunities, staying only if an employer shows an interest in giving them interesting, challenging work and a chance to grow. This holds true even more for the highly sought after “Grandes Écoles” graduates, those from engineering and business schools, than for public university or “Universités” graduates (see sidebar on page 3). Large companies are usually better positioned than their smaller counterparts to provide the opportunities and career paths new graduates desire.

**Once in the workforce,
recent graduates
prefer to work for a
large company**

■ NEW 2017
GRADUATES

■ RECENT
2015/2016
GRADUATES



ENGINEERING/BUSINESS SCHOOL GRADUATES: READY, SET... GOING?

While recent graduates from engineering/ business schools fare better in finding a job that aligns with their sought-after degrees, their high ambitions also drive them to switch employers sooner.

ENGINEERING/BUSINESS SCHOOL ("GRANDE ÉCOLE") RECENT GRADUATES

PUBLIC UNIVERSITY ("UNIVERSITÉ") RECENT GRADUATES

Are employed full time in their field of study



Receive training



Are high earners (salary above €40,000)



Plan to stay 5+ years



Are most concerned about...



- Underutilized skills
- Ability to move up
- Not earning enough
- Relationship with supervisor

A TAILORED EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE PAYS OFF

While 60 percent of 2017 graduates expect to stay at their first job for three years or longer, 72 percent of recent graduates who finished university in 2015 or 2016 feel underemployed.

Recent graduates from public universities are one-and-a-half times more likely to stay for five or more years if they feel their skills are fully utilized with challenging, meaningful work.

For “Grandes Écoles” graduates, results are even stronger. They are three times more likely to commit to their first employer for at least five years when they receive a meaningful employee experience.

Employers who provide an employee experience with challenging, varied roles, a strong career path and training are therefore likely to see their investments pay off. A well-designed, engaging employee experience is important for Gen Z workers, and can be the difference between retaining and losing digital talent.



72%
of graduates who
entered the workforce
one or two years ago
consider themselves
underemployed



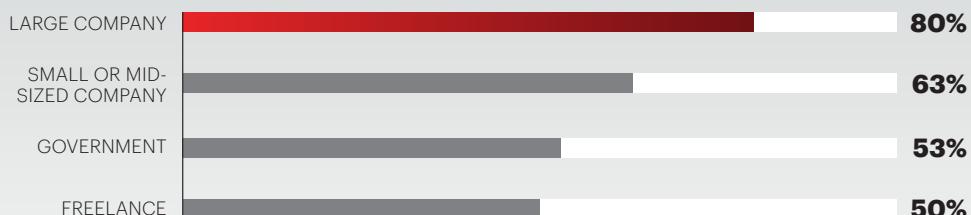
When it comes to employee experience, one size does not fit all. New graduates have a variety of expectations:

- Interesting and challenging work
- Innovative work environment
- Opportunities for rapid advancement
- Flexible hours
- Skills and experience to prepare for the next job
- Training opportunities

CLASS OF 2017 CAN LEARN FROM RECENT GRADUATES

Based on the experiences of recent graduates who finished university in 2015 or 2016, large companies offer more of what new graduates value.

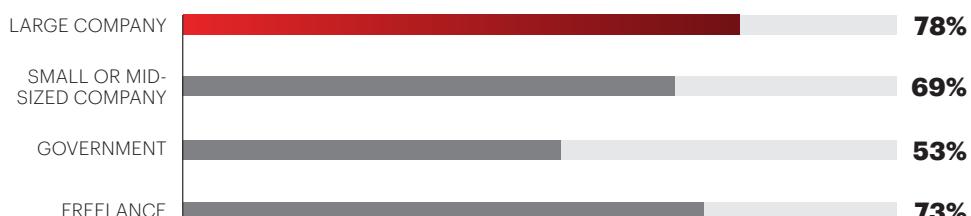
Employed full time in field of study



Receive training



Can advance career at current employer



Plan to stay 5+ years



GEN Z HOLDS TRADITIONAL VALUES WITH A FUTURE-FORWARD OUTLOOK

Senior leaders will quickly see some shared values with the first cohort of Gen Z graduates, from taking ownership of their careers to requests for the training and work experience necessary to develop new skills.

In this way, Gen Z shows an unmistakable maturity. Upon entering the workforce, 82 percent of 2017 graduates will already have completed an internship or apprenticeship—showing an appreciation for the need to bring practical skills to the table from Day One as they embark on their careers. This is valued by employers, as more than three out of every four recent graduates (78 percent) report this experience led to a job after graduation.

Because of their commitment to come prepared, as well as the desire for a career, graduates expect their skills to be fully utilized. Large employers would do well to address this need from the start, via career counselors, coaches and job rotations across the company to ensure new talent is on a constant learning curve.

Employers benefit from Gen Z's interest in continual learning. This new generation of talent comes with a modern flair, bringing much desired digital skills to employers in addition to the skills relevant to their field of study. While 2017 graduates are true digital natives—growing up with a device in hand from a very young age—they realize keeping up with technology requires ongoing learning. Seventy-two percent of new graduates have already taken digital or computer science related courses in university prior to starting their first job—bringing a highly marketable digital mindset with them.

Despite Gen Z's digital prowess and effort to come to a new job prepared, this future workforce is keen to learn more and develop additional skills, with 83 percent of new graduates expecting their employer to provide formal training.



82%
completed an internship or apprenticeship



83%
expect their first employer to provide formal training

PRAGMATISM REIGNS

Gen Z graduates exhibit a willingness to work not just for—but with—their new employer on many issues.

Their pragmatism is easy to spot, with 84 percent of new graduates willing to relocate to another city or region for a job offer. Almost all (91 percent) considered job availability before selecting their area of study. And almost half (48 percent) of new graduates consider it acceptable to work on weekends or evenings. In return, Gen Z workers expect equal flexibility on the part of employers to help them maintain work-life balance, which is new graduates' top concern.

New graduates seem to realize their university preparation is just a starting point. They are now looking to their employer as a partner in their growth, offering the challenges and career path necessary to help them advance.



84%
are willing to relocate to another city or region for a job offer



48%
consider it acceptable to work evenings or weekends

DIGITAL NATIVES CRAVE THE HUMAN ELEMENT

Having grown up in an age where technology is pervasive, new graduates swim well in digital waters.

At the same time, they understand the importance and value of the human touch in a world of robotics and artificial intelligence (AI). More than one third of new graduates (36 percent) show a preference for face-to-face interactions with colleagues, with web communication tools running a distant second (21 percent). Also, approximately one-third of new graduates rated communications skills (34 percent) and problem-solving skills (31 percent) as something that would make them attractive to potential employers.

While new graduates want to improve their interpersonal skills, they also realize humans and machines must work as a team. A majority of new graduates (65 percent) welcome AI and other advanced technologies, believing they will enhance their work experience. Contrary to what is often heard in the popular press, 78 percent of new graduates believe their school prepared them for today's digital workforce. As a result, it is not surprising that these digital natives are less worried about their competency with emerging technologies. They have grown up in a connected world where humans and machines have coexisted for as long as they can remember. For them, working alongside technology is less daunting than mastering the softer skills of communication and problem solving.



36%
prefer in-person meetings



78%
believe their school prepared them for the digital workforce

A CHECKLIST FOR LARGE EMPLOYERS

Large companies have an opportunity to capitalize on the inherent match between what they can offer and what Gen Z talent is looking for.



CROSS-TRAIN

Create a boundary-less project assignment and staffing model internally, one that breaks down organizational and functional barriers and allows newer workers the opportunity to learn in multiple areas of the company. The added benefit to doing this is that current employees are exposed to new graduates' digital mindset and skills.



CONNECT THE DOTS

Make each employee's experience line up to the value system of the new generation, and show each employee how his or her contributions support the organization's purpose and objectives. For example, allow employees to make choices that align closely to their values as they change over time, from the work they do and learning opportunities, to work-life balance and compensation.



PLAN FOR GROWTH

Develop an individualized skills and career plan for new hires, showing them your company invests in their advancement by providing multiple, different experiences early in their career. Begin by asking new hires to help co-design their development plans, to ensure you are utilizing their skills to the fullest and providing the necessary growth opportunities.



DIGITIZE YOUR TALENT

Create initiatives that allow you to leverage the collective intelligence of Gen Z graduates and their natural affinity for digital technologies. For example, allow them to work with an internal innovation hub or provide access to computational thinking and computer science classes independent of functional expertise.



COACH FOR SUCCESS

Formalize the process of assigning coaches to incoming employees to help leverage their strengths, guide career paths and provide a personal touchpoint beyond their supervisor.

While not comprehensive, these actions are a healthy start to welcoming the graduates headed your way. Especially for the highly sought after engineering/business school ("Grandes Écoles") graduates, such investments in the employee experience are likely to pay off in the ongoing competition for top talent.

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ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The Accenture Strategy 2017 Graduate Employment Study surveyed 1,005 students in France who are graduating from university in 2017, and 1,000 students who graduated from university in 2015 and 2016, between the ages of 18 and 24, to compare the perceptions of students preparing to enter the job market with the experiences of recent graduates already in the workforce.

Generations in the workforce were defined per the following birth years: Gen X: 1965-1979. Millennials/Gen Y: 1980-1993. Gen Z: 1993-1999

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