00;00;00;02 – 00;00;07;15
Marcie Merriman
If they have an ability to adapt to different ways of working, they're going to have a huge advantage over everyone else.

00;00;07;17 – 00;00;13;01
Jon Quinn
You know, you help your boss be successful and they're going to support you. It's a two way thing.

00;00;13;03 – 00;00;28;17
Narrator
Welcome to Career EQ, a resource for aspiring young professionals navigating the job search process and the early part of their careers. Your host is Jon Quinn, senior lecturer of marketing at the Fisher College of Business at the Ohio State University.

00;00;28;19 – 00;00;33;18
Jon Quinn
Welcome back to career EQ, Marcie. Thanks for continuing our conversation about Gen Z.

00;00;33;20 – 00;00;35;05
Marcie Merriman
Thank you for having me back.

00;00;35;08 – 00;00;52;05
Jon Quinn
So this episode's going to be a continuation of our conversation about Gen Z in the workplace. But this time, I solicited a bunch of questions from a bunch of my students on this topic. So I'm going to kind of tee up a bunch of questions and they get to hear, get the opportunity to hear your answers.

00;00;52;05 – 00;00;53;12
Jon Quinn
So you ready for this?

00;00;53;13 – 00;00;54;04
Marcie Merriman
I am ready.

00;00;54;07 – 00;01;16;15
Jon Quinn
All right. So the first one deals with the primary concerns employers have regarding Gen Z workers. So our first question is from Lauren, a first year marketing major. What are some tips or resources that students could use to improve their communication skills, specifically due to growing up in an age that is so focused on online communication and behind the screen interaction.

00;01;16;18 - 00;01;43;10
Marcie Merriman
I think the biggest thing that they can do is experiment without the technology. You know, consider it experiment like what I'm I'm pushing the Gen X and millennials to do who are at the other side of it is to, really adapt to the online technology. And if you think about when, when Covid started, for many of us, how awkward it was to suddenly be on video or video calls.

00;01;43;10 - 00;02;07;01
Marcie Merriman
And it seemed really weird. Now it's second nature. For Gen Z, I think it's the same thing. So if they really experiment, take away the phone, spend more time without the phone, without the social media talking with people, and actually force yourself into the environment that the employers, the workforce expects you to, you know, be more fluent in it can help you adapt easier.

00;02;07;06 - 00;02;22;14
Jon Quinn
Yeah, that's that's good advice. I, have some episodes on networking, and it seems like those face to face interactions aren't coming as naturally as they did maybe previous generations. You can have to force the situation and get yourself more comfortable with them.

00;02;22;18 - 00;02;37;22
Marcie Merriman
Which makes sense. And and and Gen Z has the advantage with virtual and with online. Again, think of it as a challenge to close the gap so that others don't have the advantage on you when it comes to in-person.

00;02;37;24 - 00;02;56;20
Jon Quinn
Yeah, yeah. There you go. So I particularly like this next set of questions and they're all kind of related. So a second year is major information systems tailor asked what can Gen Z workers do to overcome any possible negative stereotypes in the workplace and prove their value to older colleagues and managers?

00;02;56;23 - 00;03;21;20
Marcie Merriman
One look at what the norms are of the workplace and what they're doing, how they're working, how they're dressing, and understand where it makes sense to assimilate in because some of the stereotypes might be based on reality. I mean, if you're going in and dressed ways that not everyone else is, then you're kind of feeding into a stereotype that they're already expecting.

00;03;21;23 – 00;03;24;16
Jon Quinn
And a bunch of associations go along with that. Then then.

00;03;24;19 – 00;03;25;07
Marcie Merriman
Absolutely.

00;03;25;07 – 00;03;26;06
Jon Quinn
May or may not apply.

00;03;26;07 – 00;03;59;08
Marcie Merriman
Absolutely. And when? When you're, perceived to have a stereotype, I think the best thing you can do is to question it and do it with curiosity and maturity, because the fact is that can throw off the person who thinks you know they're good at is coming at it with a stereotype. And if you ask them why they think something or why something's important, but do it with genuine interest and curiosity, it can flip the discussion often what the person who's holding the stereotype, or coming at it with a certain way.

00;03;59;13 – 00;04;10;08
Marcie Merriman
Maybe they don't even intend to come across the way they do. Maybe they don't understand that something's changed. And that's why I think opening up the the door around it a little bit more can be helpful.

00;04;10;10 – 00;04;26;11
Jon Quinn
So a related follow up is from Riffic, a finance and accounting major. He would like some insights regarding what can they do in their first nine days. So like the Gen Z employees, what can they do in their first 90 days in the job to demonstrate motivation and professionalism?

00;04;26;13 – 00;04;48;02
Marcie Merriman
This is where I go back to the blueprint. Ask your manager if they would be willing to talk with you about what their expectations are. Ask them proactively. How do you prefer to be communicated with? When do you you know what's most important to you? What are your goals? How do you just how do people discernment whether you're successful?

00;04;48;04 – 00;05;05;15
Marcie Merriman
Then ask them how are they going to determine whether or how you're successful. Otherwise? I think some of these things, there are things like being there when you're expected to be there, communicate the way

that's expected. You put in as much as you can in those 90 days because just like first impressions, that's when your employer's deciding what their impression is of you.

00;05;05;15 - 00;05;36;11
Marcie Merriman
And you can either spend the next year fighting back against it or being in a little bit more of a flow with it. But if you take on proactively and ask these questions, your employer is going to understand that you genuinely want to succeed and you want to help them succeed. Don't be afraid to take those initiatives, but do it with, an attitude of interest, of curiosity, of desire to succeed, letting them know you want to do this because you want to do a really good job and you want to understand what that you know.

00;05;36;13 - 00;05;38;13
Marcie Merriman
Make sure you have a clear understanding of what that looks like.

00;05;38;13 - 00;05;49;18
Jon Quinn
I might add a little bit to that too. I mean, also asking your, your supervisor, what are those other relationships you should be forming within the organization? Cross-functionally. Don't get stuck in your silo.

00;05;49;19 - 00;05;51;22
Marcie Merriman
Absolutely. That's a great one. Yeah.

00;05;51;24 - 00;06;00;28
Jon Quinn
So Marleau, a first year accounting student, is concerned about how a new hire can do this without coming off as too pushy or coming off as being entitled.

00;06;01;00 - 00;06;30;15
Marcie Merriman
I think the best way to do that is to sit with them and let them know that the reason you're asking, the reason that you want to understand the questions, the reason you want to understand what they need and what they want. I think there might be a little bit too much fear of looking entitled and stepping away from it, and that can actually make it look worse.

00;06;30;18 - 00;06;32;02
Jon Quinn
So how so?

00;06;32;05 - 00;06;55;15

Marcie Merriman
Well, if you think about with, with someone who's starting and if they, if they meet with me and if they're afraid of looking entitled, they may be doing things or taking steps or taking actions or working certain ways because they're trying to beat the stereotype, or they're trying to look the opposite of what it is. I may not even want them doing those things.

00;06;55;15 – 00;07;23;23
Marcie Merriman
I may not want them working in those ways. I think it comes down to the communication and the talking with the employer and taking the initiative around it. I think the challenge also is around focus and this comes in both directions. I mean, there's so much going on in organizations right now and so much expected, especially as the economy feels like it's tightening and there's more demands, employers have more expectations put on them of what they're supposed to do, of what they're supposed to achieve.

00;07;23;26 – 00;07;44;14
Marcie Merriman
And with that, it takes the focus off the time that they can give to you if you twist it a little bit. The other thing that I think is really important, that can help with the entitlement perspective is when you're hired. Well, one we talked about in the last episode, the expecting 50% of your job.

00;07;44;15 – 00;07;46;28
Jon Quinn
Thanks for the extra plug, by the way.

00;07;47;01 – 00;08;03;26
Marcie Merriman
Expecting your job to, you know, 50% of your job to be you don't like it, right? If you had that attitude, you're automatically in your head going to flip from the entitled aspect because you might feel entitled that I should love my job. I should be passionate, that it's a little bit entitled. Like if you have a different.

00;08;03;28 – 00;08;04;12
Jon Quinn
Thing about me.

00;08;04;13 – 00;08;28;05
Marcie Merriman
You have a little bit of a different attitude around it. But the also with when you're hired in, one of the things I've heard from a lot of the Gen Z that I've researched is that they want an employer that supports them, and that their best days are the days that they feel supported. That's fantastic, and that's good.

00;08;28;05 - 00;09;00;28
Marcie Merriman
And it's great when it happens. The challenge is most of your employers are hiring you to support them. And if you have in your mind that this person needs to support me matter, they need to do these things better, it's going to come through and it will come through as feeling entitled. Yeah. And that's where I think some paradigm shifts and what the job is, what the position is, and the idea that if you get an employer that really does support you, that takes care of you, that cares about you, that's fantastic.

00;09;01;00 - 00;09;06;29
Marcie Merriman
But you're not likely to get that until you've shown that same degree of loyalty and care and dedication to them.

00;09;07;02 - 00;09;19;01
Jon Quinn
Also reminds me of something I was told early in my career. It's like, make your boss look good. You know, you help your boss be successful and they're going to support you. It's a two way thing.

00;09;19;03 - 00;09;20;12
Marcie Merriman
Absolutely.

00;09;20;15 - 00;09;44;23
Jon Quinn
So in the process of, like, soliciting some questions, I told my students I was going to do this and say, hey, let me know what you want to know. Right. And apparently many of my students are experiencing quite a bit of angst about working remotely. So in the next few set of follow ups are kind of along the along these lines, two juniors, Avery in information systems and Gavin in operations, plus Aiden.

00;09;44;23 - 00;09;58;24
Jon Quinn
So I guess it was a third one, a second year finance student. They want to know how they can demonstrate motivation and professionalism in a hybrid or remote work environment where these, like interactions are somewhat limited.

00;09;58;26 - 00;10;22;27
Marcie Merriman
So whether you're in person, hybrid, fully remote, one of the best things you can do is take extra initiative. So go beyond what is being asked of you. If if you're asked to do research on something, dig deeper. One of the things that I've seen and I hear many funk back

from many clients, is these kids don't know how to do research.

00;10;22;27 - 00;10;44;29
Marcie Merriman
These people that coming in, they don't understand how to do research, which just absolutely shocks me because Gen Z has the most intuitive understanding of what's out there and the ability to find it and learn it and learn about people and find information way above you know where our expectations are of it, where I think that comes in.

00;10;44;29 - 00;11;11;27
Marcie Merriman
I think they have the ability to do it. Where the challenge comes in is I've seen many, giving the bare minimum or just simply answering the question that's asked of them and not taking it a step further. So go beyond what's asked of you. Learn more, dig deeper. That is what your employers and your managers. That's honestly what they expect.

00;11;11;27 - 00;11;33;03
Marcie Merriman
Yeah, it's more than what you experienced in college, where in college you're given an assignment. You do the assignment. You hopefully do the assignment super well. You turn it in. Yeah. You know, that's fair game, right? In the workforce, it's not just doing enough or just doing what you're asked. Keeps you at a bare minimum. Yeah.

00;11;33;04 - 00;11;38;17
Marcie Merriman
And when things get tight and when promotions are made, you're not going to be the one thought of.

00;11;38;18 - 00;12;03;16
Jon Quinn
So that ties into something that you and I were talking about, outside this podcast when we were, talking about the, evaluations, the annual evaluations usually get. So in school, we have rubrics. And if you do a certain level, you get, you know, a certain grade, you and you really nail every aspect. You might get an A where in the real world you very often have a five point scale.

00;12;03;22 - 00;12;18;01
Jon Quinn
And if you're just doing what's asked of you, you might get a three. Right? So, it's and sometimes it's a bit of a shock to Gen Z when they, when they get out in the workplaces like I do, I ask, why am I getting top ratings?

00;12;18;02 - 00;12;18;19
Marcie Merriman
Absolutely.

00;12;18;20 - 00;12;27;01
Jon Quinn
You did what you're asked. That's what we expected when you hired you. But you know, you get now you get a 1% raise this year instead of a 5% raise.

00;12;27;04 - 00;12;50;12
Marcie Merriman
So that's right. And that's where the understanding of expectations is so important. And the understanding of what your, what your employer actually wants and what they're hiring you for, if you give just what's asked, you're at a bare minimum. Yeah. And you can consider that fair or unfair. But the fact is those are the rules of the road.

00;12;50;14 - 00;13;02;11
Marcie Merriman
And either you want, you want more, you want more money, you want more responsibility. You want more opportunity and wanting more. You have to give more. Yeah.

00;13;02;13 - 00;13;24;08
Jon Quinn
All right. So, still on this kind of hybrid remote type, topic, Hannah, a third year HR major, wants to know how have post-pandemic workplace policies changed and how are they affecting the integration of Gen Z employees? So I'm assuming she's talking about return to office hybrid.

00;13;24;10 - 00;13;51;08
Marcie Merriman
They they they seem to change daily. And the rules seem to change daily. I think one of the latest things that we've seen in many of the employers having, mandatory, in office, whether it's three days a week, five days a week, you know, whatever it is, one of the, the reasons that it's happening is to give managers more leeway to make decisions.

00;13;51;10 - 00;14;25;23
Marcie Merriman
If you start with the, you know, everyone's remote and then you're negotiating how often you're going to come in or if you're going to come in for meetings or whatever it is that's really difficult for the managers, leaders, team leaders, whatever they are, to manage that situation. If the baseline is you're supposed to be here three days a week or five days a week or whatever it is, and your manager's willing to work with you to say, okay, you don't you don't really have to be here three days a week or, you know, I know you work better if you're isolated and that's the type of work you're doing.

00;14;25;25 – 00;15;14;08
Marcie Merriman
That's where a lot of it's coming in is in giving more power and, and less chaos because managers and organizations have been dealing with a lot as well. At the same time, what I, coach organizations on is that if they're focused on whether people are in the office or not in the office, they're already losing because I and these other technologies coming in are going to change how where or why we all work in such drastic ways in the next five years that if you're pushing just to go back to the rules and the way we did it five years ago, you're going to have a really difficult time adapting going forward.

00;15;14;10 – 00;15;39;27
Marcie Merriman
And that's where I think Gen Z has an incredible advantage because they have they have come into a world and grown up and into a work world that is so radically different than what any of us experienced. If they can show that their have an ability to adapt to different ways of working and what's demanded and what needs to happen, they're going to have a huge advantage over everyone else.

00;15;39;29 – 00;16;02;03
Jon Quinn
Yeah, right. All right. So this next question comes from a couple different second year students. The question comes in somewhat different forms. But Alex, a finance major, and Ananya, a marketing major, both essentially want to know how they can be true to their authentic selves while still adapting to the expectations of corporate culture.

00;16;02;05 – 00;16;08;24
Marcie Merriman
Yeah, the authentic self is a really difficult and can be a really difficult topic. And in my research I.

00;16;08;24 – 00;16;09;29
Jon Quinn
Had authentic in quotes.

00;16;10;00 – 00;16;34;24
Marcie Merriman
So it's it's a challenging one, but honestly it's one of my favorite topics. And I research it consistently comes up. And this is across countries as one of the most important attributes. In the U.S it's 88% of Gen Z say it's important to be, you know, authentic or true to yourself. We got to think about what that means in the workforce, though, and that's where I can.

00;16;34;25 – 00;17;10;02
Marcie Merriman

I have seen it used as an excuse to say, you know, I'm I'm authentically a morning sleeper, so I don't come until noon or I'm just not a suit sort of guy. And that's where I think it gets mixed up. It's not an excuse to go against what the needs are of an organization. What I think of as authenticity is being able to, feel comfortable in my skin, like, feel like I am valued for the things that make me unique or different, to be able to share those things.

00;17;10;05 – 00;17;37;03
Marcie Merriman
And what I've seen from organizations and leaders, generally speaking, the most of them really want that because they themselves want to be able to be authentic, you know, be who they really are, share who they really are. The challenges so many of us, you know, boomers, Gen Xers, you know, older millennials, we spent so many decades trying to conform and fit in.

00;17;37;03 – 00;18;02;29
Marcie Merriman
We may not even know who we authentically are anymore. So sometimes we have a challenge with those who have a different view of it. So this is where I think that there is a lot of room for improvement on both sides. But with the younger people, it's considering what makes you what what, what makes you, what do you think is different about you that you know around this authenticity that you're sharing?

00;18;03;06 – 00;18;26;29
Marcie Merriman
Like, for me, it has been being in a professional work world where I'm expected to travel or, well, to do what I want to do. I need to travel a lot, and to work certain hours and to do do different things at the same time. I have raised my daughter on my own as a single mother.

00;18;27;01 – 00;18;54;07
Marcie Merriman
And the authenticity I, I've been told at different points that I should hide that that in this probably comes as a crazy idea to Gen Z. Yeah. To that. And, you know, I came up through the professional workforce. I, you know, women were often told, you know, one hide pregnancies, don't talk about having kids, don't act like you have other responsibilities because then you won't be taken as seriously, you know, on and on and on, and they won't be seen as being able to do the job.

00;18;54;09 – 00;19;16;11
Marcie Merriman
I, I took a different approach to it. Like I shared openly who I was, how I was doing things, whatever it was I, but not as an excuse not to do what was expected of me, but instead to to be able to demonstrate I could be something that was different and still do the job, you know,

still be able to, you know, pull it through.

00;19;16;13 - 00;19;48;12
Marcie Merriman
And that's where I think being able to show who you are authentically is important, because we need the unique aspects, the views, the attitudes, the beliefs, the experiences that come with it. Because it's an a huge advantage of to your organization to have those, you know, diversities of viewpoint. But if you use it as a reason to not fit the mold, to not do what's expected of you, then I think you're actually doing a disservice to yourself and what authenticity represents.

00;19;48;14 - 00;20;07;24
Jon Quinn
Well, that's a that was a great personal story. Thanks for sharing that. Yeah, that that's very relatable. So all right next one's a bit of a curveball. And potentially maybe something Gen Z could leverage to their advantage. A sophomore in finance, Maddie wants to know how the use of AI is impacting the success of undergraduate students.

00;20;07;26 - 00;20;18;18
Jon Quinn
Meaning, like, you know, students coming straight out undergrad and then working or in their internship and it's, and is this connecting to a lack of effort in the workplace?

00;20;18;21 - 00;20;54;19
Marcie Merriman
I'm not seeing a connecting to a lack of effort in the workplace. I haven't seen that in my work. I've done a lot of research around AI and the use of AI in the workplace and looking at across all the different generations. And what's really interesting is that it is the leaders, again, you know, mostly represented by Gen X, older millennials and you still some boomers in their, that are most eager to adopt AI, to, incorporate it into the workforce and go fast and furious.

00;20;54;21 - 00;21;21;22
Marcie Merriman
And that makes sense to me because as a Gen Xer, I came up through a workforce where we had to constantly adopt analogies in order to survive in order to, you know, be in the workforce. You had to do it like I when I came in, we didn't even have email yet. Right? So a lot of things that we've gotten used to, and it has become our natural reaction that when it comes go fast and go furious, otherwise you're going to be left behind.

00;21;21;22 - 00;21;48;13
Marcie Merriman

This is just our mode of operation. At the same time, P of Gen Z, who's coming into the workforce and has grown up during an era when they had been warned about everything that technology represents, that you can't trust it, that you there's privacy issues, that it causes attention deficit, you know, it's on and on and on. So we came up and we were conditioned against technology's good.

00;21;48;13 - 00;21;51;27
Marcie Merriman
Take it. Just do it. They've been conditioned on the other side.

00;21;51;27 - 00;21;52;15
Jon Quinn
And beware.

00;21;52;21 - 00;22;18;19
Marcie Merriman
Beware and what I'm seeing within the workforce are some challenges. But I think there's benefits on both sides. You have employers that really want to move fast and you have gen Z. In the younger millennials too, who are more hesitant, they're wondering why. And I think that the there's a lot of validity in asking those questions. What's the purpose of that technology?

00;22;18;19 - 00;22;46;04
Marcie Merriman
What are we going to do with it? How are we going to use it? So where I think Gen Z has an advantage is in understanding the technology, but also in asking questions around it, asking what's valid, what is allowed. You know, what you're supposed to do. I've seen just as many Gen Z in college who are staying away from AI or Genii because they're fearful of of what they're allowed to do.

00;22;46;04 - 00;23;15;21
Marcie Merriman
You know, what they're allowed to do within organizations. Which is funny, because I see a lot of, educators and business leaders who are just going with it are going faster than many of the students. And there's going to be a point where we have to come together on it and understand what the real opportunities are. But so far, I see AI as an advantage for those who understand how to use it, but also come with the knowledge.

00;23;15;23 - 00;23;35;12
Marcie Merriman
Because if you think about a calculator, right? So if you have or even an Excel program, like when again, when I was young we weren't allowed to use calculators in class or, you know, to do these different things. We had to figure out how to do the math. Now, what's important is being able to assess. Doesn't make sense.

00;23;35;12 - 00;24;09;23
Marcie Merriman
Does the formula, does a solution. And that thing came out of Excel or a calculator? Do you have enough knowledge and understanding to be able to question, you know, whether it's correct or incorrect? It was done the right way. And I'm seeing the same thing with Gen I. You can use it as a tool to help you clarify communications to, you know, dig into research in different ways, but you also have to have enough knowledge and expertise, in some case, around what's coming out or around the topic in order to know whether what you're seeing is valid or not and have the right ways to question it.

00;24;09;25 - 00;24;41;14
Jon Quinn
So, in full disclosure, I filtered out some questions from some students. But, and a lot of these questions addressed how the workplace should change to adapt to the new generation's communication styles, their attitudes towards formality, things like that. However, I'd like to get your reaction to this. And you've talked a little bit about some of this in the, previous in the previous episode, but what are your thoughts about such expectations or even maybe demands that the workplace changes?

00;24;41;16 - 00;25;31;07
Marcie Merriman
The most important thing is to assess where you're actually looking at working and what their culture is, how they work, what they do. And just in the baseline of what it is today. Are you is it a place you can go in, feel comfortable, feel comfortable being yourself and follow kind of the guidelines that they have established for the moment at least, going in and immediately pushing for changes in whether it's, how you dress when you work without first demonstrating that you are a value to the organization, is going to be a challenge if you prove your worth, if you show what your ability is and what you can do, that then gives you

00;25;31;09 - 00;25;55;23
Marcie Merriman
the runway to start to implement changes to help move in the direction of change, to help challenge things. But until you've earned the respect and have credibility as somebody who is of value to the organization, it's going to be really difficult to make demands of a place that often has other people willing to come in and do the job.

00;25;55;26 - 00;26;02;27
Jon Quinn
It's kind of like going back to an earlier theme. You've got to earn it first, right? You got to prove your value before you can start pushing on some of these things.

00;26;02;27 – 00;26;22;16
Marcie Merriman
And and, you know, to Gen Z’s credit, there's a lot of things that should change and there's a lot of things that should have already changed. So it's not saying that everything's right. What I'm saying is, if you want to actually enact change, if you want to be part of it, if you want to make something different, going in with a different approach may be your best way.

00;26;22;19 – 00;26;33;00
Jon Quinn
Well thanks again Marcie. This has been fun, very informative, really enjoyed this. And by the way, it was Marcie's idea to do this Q&A. So I think I'm going to steal this format and do it for some future episodes. So thanks for the idea.

00;26;33;02 – 00;26;33;18
Marcie Merriman
Thank you.

00;26;33;22 – 00;26;38;01
Jon Quinn
All right. So make sure to check the episode notes for more resources regarding Gen Z in the workplace.