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8/3/2025

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Purpose, People, and Growth: Why Gen Z Should Consider Senior Living

More than ever, people in my generation are looking for more than just a paycheck. We want work that feels meaningful, where we can see the impact, we are making. For Gen Z, a generation defined by its commitment to social impact, mental well-being, and inclusiveness, the senior living industry offers a unique opportunity to align our values with our careers. It is more than a stable job, it is a field where we can directly improve lives, influence workplace culture, and grow alongside an industry that will only become more vital in the years ahead. Unlike many career paths where young professionals may feel disconnected from the outcomes of their work, senior living allows us to see and feel the difference we are making every day.

When I started my internship at Transforming Age, I did not know what to expect. I thought it would be just another job experience, but it quickly became something much more. I got to work with real people, hear real stories, and help improve the lives of older adults who still have so much to give. Along the way, I realized this is not just a career path. It is a chance to lead with empathy, to grow in ways I did not expect, and to make a difference that matters.

During my internship, I worked across several departments, each showing me a different side of what it takes to run a senior living community. I spent time in management, lifestyle, and dining services. Although each setting had its own pace and responsibilities, they all revealed valuable lessons about people, systems, and leadership. I began to understand how

much thought goes into every hiring decision and how critical it is to choose people who will not only perform well but also contribute to the culture of the workplace. I used to think HR was mostly behind the scenes, but now I see how deeply it shapes the mood, energy, and success of an entire community. Hiring someone who genuinely cares and fits the team's values creates a ripple effect that touches everyone, including the residents.

The lifestyle department was where I felt most connected. I worked on creating activity packets, setting up events, and supporting outings for residents. I remember helping during barbecues, going on group rides to parks, and being part of afternoons where residents could relax, enjoy nature, and connect. These moments may have seemed simple, but they were incredibly meaningful. Many residents do not see their families often, and these experiences gave them something to look forward to. Being part of those interactions reminded me that joy, variety, and companionship are not luxuries, they are essential to emotional and mental health at every age.

Dining services was the part of the internship I enjoyed least. The pace was stressful, the shifts were tiring, and at times the staff seemed to be working under pressure without much emotional support. I spent less time talking with residents there, as I was focused on just getting through the day. But even that experience taught me valuable lessons. I saw the effort the dining team puts in, the physical and mental demands of their work, and how often it goes unnoticed. It opened my eyes to the importance of leadership, communication, and employee recognition in high-pressure environments. It also showed me what can happen when staff feel

undervalued or disconnected and made me think about how I want to lead differently in the future.

Overall, this internship helped me grow in ways I did not expect. I went in thinking I would simply observe a few departments and gain some experience, but I came out with a deeper sense of what it means to work in senior living. I saw the importance of every role, the impact of small acts of care, and the need for people who can bring both heart and strategy into the workplace. Someone like me, a young professional who cares about people, culture, and long-term impact, can thrive in this field and help shape it for the better.

The more time I spent in senior living, the more I saw the potential for young professionals. According to the United States Census Bureau, one in every five Americans will be 65 or older by 2030. For the first time in US history, older adults will outnumber children under 18. This shift will redefine how we design communities, deliver healthcare, and support older adults, and senior living is at the center of that change. It is no longer just about care, it is about creating environments where people can live fully, connect deeply, and age with dignity.

The job market reflects this urgency. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that employment for medical and health services managers, many of whom work in senior living, will grow nearly 30 percent in the next decade, one of the fastest rates across all professions. And the opportunities go beyond healthcare. Communities need experts in HR, business operations, lifestyle programming, technology, and communications. Whether someone's strength is strategy, people management, or service design, there is a place for it here.

This is why I believe Gen Z is a natural fit for senior living. A Deloitte survey found that more than 40 percent of Gen Z workers value making a positive impact over earning a high income. We care about inclusion, mental health, and fairness, and we are unafraid to challenge outdated systems. These are not just personal preferences, they are exactly what the senior living industry needs to grow, innovate, and serve its communities well.

My experience taught me that change does not always come from the top, it starts with individuals who step into roles aligned with their values and use their skills to improve the system. Whether that means better hiring practices, stronger employee support, more engaging resident experiences, or smarter operations, the opportunities to make a difference are endless.

Given today's competitive job market, senior living offers something rare, a career that combines purpose with security. The boomer generation is massive compared to ours, and the demand for care, leadership, and innovation will only keep rising. For Gen Z, it is a chance to lead with empathy, innovate with creativity, and grow into the kind of leaders we want to be.

Senior living may not be the obvious choice for young professionals, but it is one of the most meaningful paths we can take. It is where purpose meets growth, where impact is visible every day, and where our generation's values can truly shape the future. We do not have to wait to make a difference, we can start now, one community at a time.