



98% of Job Seekers Say Adapting to Workplace Culture Is Important, but More Than Half Call It Unfair

Two-thirds have changed aspects of their personality to fit workplace culture, with Gen Z and millennials reporting the highest rates.

OKLAHOMA CITY, Sept. 9, 2026 — Job seekers say adapting their personality to fit workplace culture is important, but more than half call the expectation unfair. Despite perceptions about younger workers, Gen Z and millennials report adapting the most, according to a recent Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey.

For many, adapting is already part of the job. Two-thirds of job seekers (67%) have changed aspects of their personality to fit workplace culture, while 63% say their personality at work is very different from who they are in everyday life.



Younger job seekers are the most likely to report both experiences:

- Gen Z: 80% have changed their personality to fit workplace culture; 75% say their workplace personality differs from everyday life
- Millennials: 69% have changed; 66% report a difference
- Gen X: 59% have changed; 56% report a difference
- Baby boomers and seniors: 50% have changed; 42% report a difference

Adaptability Can Shape Career Success

More than 4 in 5 job seekers (86%) say adapting their personality to workplace culture is now considered a core professional skill, while 83% believe employees who are unable or unwilling to adjust may not stay with a company as long.

Personality also factors into how employees are evaluated and whether they advance. Nearly all hiring managers (94%) and job seekers (91%) say it shapes perceptions of performance, while 99% of hiring managers and 90% of job seekers believe a positive or approachable personality can accelerate career advancement.

Yet many job seekers question whether personality should carry that much weight. More than half (56%) say it has nothing to do with their work or ability to do the job, including 71% of Gen Z, 54% of millennials, 51% of Gen X and 36% of baby boomers and seniors.

That clashes with a common perception: Most job seekers believe younger employees are less willing than previous generations to change their personalities to fit in at work.

Workplace Guidance Has Not Kept Pace

Despite the pressure to adapt, only half of job seekers (50%) say their company provides guidance on managing or developing their personality for a professional setting. Millennials (59%) and Gen Z (58%) are more likely to receive that support than Gen X (39%) and baby boomers and seniors (30%).

Job seekers said personality differences can shape how teams function, particularly under pressure. One respondent said a calm and organized approach helped reduce stress during tight deadlines, allowing the team to collaborate and stay focused.

Others described how difficult interactions can take a toll. One job seeker said a defensive teammate made colleagues reluctant to offer feedback and slowed decisions, while another recalled an “extremely demanding and overbearing” colleague whose behavior contributed to several employees leaving.

“Workplace culture should set expectations for how people treat one another, not prescribe who people have to be,” said Bob Funk Jr., CEO, president and chairman of Express Employment International. “Shared values give people a foundation for how they work together while still allowing room for different personalities and ways of working. That requires flexibility from employers and employees alike. When both sides approach the workplace with respect and a willingness to adapt, people can be themselves while contributing to a culture where everyone can succeed.”

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Survey Methodology

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from May 19 to June 8, 2026, among 1,000 adults ages 18 and older who are employed but looking for a new job or not employed and looking for

work.

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from May 13 to June 1, 2026, among 1,006 U.S. hiring decision-makers

For full survey methodologies, please contact Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com, Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com, Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

About Robert (Bob) Funk Jr.

Robert (Bob) Funk Jr. is the Chief Executive Officer, President and Chairman of Express Employment International, a global staffing franchisor founded and headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He leads a portfolio of workforce solution brands, including the flagship Express Employment Professionals franchise, along with several affiliated brands serving specialized markets. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

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