WORK, TECHNOLOGY AND THE NEXT GENERATION

A Report by Logitech in partnership with
WORKTECH Academy

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INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, the influx of Millennials into the workforce challenged prevailing notions about how organisations might best induct, motivate and equip their new workers. This emergent generation thought differently and had different expectations to their predecessors. This paradigm shift in demographics made organisations reconsider how best to attract new talent.

Growing up during the convulsive expansion of technological revolution, Millennials intuitively adopted new technology habits and matched them with experimental social attitudes, new expectations and different life aspirations. Significantly, the Millennials (born between 1980 and 1994) were also forerunners of the next youthful demographic revolution now upon us: Generation Z.

As the next generation of employee's filter into the office environment, the workplace will have to adapt to the unique challenges and preferences that this cohort will bring. Each new working generation tends to form reciprocal relationships with the technologies, cultures and norms that they have grown up with: that is, they are influenced by them and in turn influence them.

What this means in practice is that with every cohort that enters the workplace, differences will emerge in how workers behave and interact. These present new challenges for how operators of workplaces accommodate them – especially with regard to technology.

According to a recent study conducted by optometrists Vision Critical, device use by Gen Z workers favours smartphones (15.4 hours per week) over laptops (10.6 hours), whereas Millennials take a different approach with desktop use (16.4 hours per week) beating smartphone use (14.8 hours). Pivoting working practices towards the smartphone as opposed to laptop or desktop computer puts a different accent on how the work environment is configured and asks new questions of the relationship between people, place and technology.

Generation Z is set to make up around 25 per cent of the working population in 2020 and this will grow. Understanding this generation will be a critical factor in business success and will only become more important as time goes on. Because of their unique experience of technology, they also interact with services in different ways that will shape their demands in the office. A good example of this is video technology: Generation Z typically prefer visual social networks to others, with YouTube being the most popular (85 per cent of Generation Z report using this), followed by Instagram (72 per cent) and Snapchat (70 per cent).

As highly visual people, Generation Z will take a video-first approach in the workplace. This means that organisations will have to navigate how to implement a digital workplace for the next generation, while balancing the demands and preferences of the existing workforce.
This report sets out the key issues facing employers and presents a Gen Z WISH List of technological to aid development requirements (WISH stands for Wellness, Individual, Sustainable and Holistic).

Section 1:

DIGITAL DEMOGRAPHIC: WHO ARE THE NEXT GENERATION AND WHAT DO THEY WANT?

Generation Z (born 1995 to 2012) are often seen as an extension of the Millennial generation (born 1980 to 1994). While both generations are considered 'digital natives' – having been introduced to digital technology from an early age – the two generations differ quite dramatically in terms of behaviour and perspectives.

Gen Z differs from the Millennials in that members of this cohort have never known a world without the internet and social media. They are digital dependants. Technology informs every aspect of their lives from personal health tracking and online gaming to social media, box set streaming, the monitoring of global politics and climate change activism. For them, flexible working is increasingly a reality, not an aspiration. They are not awestruck by what digital technology can offer; they are simply impatient when it under-performs.

Millennials, on the other hand, have a different mindset. While video forms an important part of their social world, it does not dominate it. Feeling much safer behind a keyboard or a touchpad, their first instinct is to send an email or instant message before picking up the phone or video-calling another colleague.

While these changes may not seem significant, they impact the potential for collaboration between the two generations substantially and organisations should be mindful about how this could impact future knowledge sharing in their business. As Millennials start to move into leadership positions they will need to understand how best to communicate and collaborate with their new Gen Z teams.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

More so than any previous generations, Gen Zers have high expectations and a low tolerance for failure or inconvenience. Studies show that when something goes wrong, digital natives assume that it's the technology that's at fault, not them. They expect to access technology that is immediate and omnipresent. They pride themselves on being able to cut through fake news by virtue of their extensive experience of filtering digital media. They are globally connected and often feel closer to their circle of virtual friends than those they know in the 'real' world.

San Diego State University psychology professor Jean Twenge notes in her book iGen that 'students switched between tasks every 19 seconds on average. More than 75 per cent of the students' computer windows were open less than one minute.' The average attention span of Generation Z is variously estimated at being between eight and 10 seconds. To them, commuting increasingly looks like a historical concept. They assume that technology should deliver everything rapidly and seamlessly wherever on the planet they might want to use it. They have no time for sluggish buffering, unavailable wi-fi, patchy phone signals, or non-intuitive interfaces on any device.

They want to be able to work in any location, whether it's the traditional workplace or at home. This trend towards a mixed mode of working has been increasingly adopted by a broader spectrum of the workforce as Covid-19 enabled more employees to work remotely and flexibly from their home. The difference is, however, that most Gen Z workers will have started their career working from home during this time. This means they expect the workplace to accommodate for the same efficiency and sophistication of the technology they have at home.

As flexible and de-centralised working continues to become a preferred method of working, organisations will have to consider using cross-platform-friendly technology that allows work to become a secure but free-flowing activity spanning home devices, workplace computers, phones, tablets and meeting room video conferencing technology. The lifetime exposure of Gen Z to personal video-telephony programmes has democratised the once rarefied concept of international corporate video conferencing, making it a crucial and accessible work asset.

> **"The experience of Gen Z today and their digital lifestyle informs much of what is to come. Their approach to real-time interaction through platforms such as Snapchat, WeChat and Fortnite demonstrate an expectation of being connected, always on, interacting synchronously and transparently with their friends. A gamified workplace will be one consequence of the 'Xbox generation'"**
>
> Philip Ross, futurist and UnWork CEO

Research by architects HGA with the Interdisciplinary Center for Healthy Workplaces (ICHW) at UC Berkeley took a 'deep dive' into Gen Z attitudes to the workplace, commenting: 'While connection has been a recurring theme in the research, Gen Zers look to control when and how their connections occur. From on-demand learning opportunities to how and when information is shared, designing the workplace of the future should include choice-rich environments. Just as the boundary between digital and physical is blurred for this generation, we saw a similar blurring between privacy and connection in 100 per cent of participants.'

As face-to-face interaction has been substituted by video conferencing during periods of lockdown and working from home, video has been normalised across the workforce, making it a universal method of communication across different businesses. Upon returning to the office, Gen Z will expect to see the same quality and efficiency of video technology seamlessly embedded into the workplace.

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE: A VIDEO-FIRST APPROACH

Overwhelmingly, Gen Z are image- and video-conscious, due to growing up with social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat and video-sharing platforms such as Youtube and TikTok. They are accustomed to receiving and sending information through a video format and prefer written information to come in short-form messages or even sparse bullet points.

For Gen Z, the point is not to have a fixed home office set-up conforming to some supplier-defined expectation, but rather to maintain a changeable array of readily available devices, services and platforms to best respond to the needs of the moment.

As a result, Gen Zers have a video-first approach to the workplace. The abundance of video-based services coupled with fast Wi-Fi serves as a powerful inducement to conduct more and more communication over video. However, many offices do not have sufficiently capable video infrastructure

to support the level of video-based interaction that Generation Z are going to expect. For example, many workplaces have traditional boardroom style meeting spaces built for 12 or more people. This tends to be the only meeting room that is actually video-enabled.

Many businesses recognise the need for smaller meeting rooms spaces and are making changes, however they haven't made a significant enough change to also equip employees or the rooms with video. There is a sense that organisations are still adapting and transforming their workspaces for agile working to accommodate Millennial expectations, but now the Gen Z cohort is arriving and tech-enabled spaces are not only an expectation, they are a requirement.

Case study: McLaren, UK

At automotive pioneer McLaren, innovation and high quality are essential. So alongside standout office design, it has focused rigorously on the technology that new workplace cohorts are going to be using, in order to attract and retain emerging talent.

As McLaren expanded globally, the company was increasingly challenged to improve collaboration between offices, remote workers, agencies and track-side teams. It also wanted to empower staff with tools better suited to the modern workplace and unique job functions.

To achieve this goal, McLaren has set itself the goal to video-enable every meeting space it has worldwide, while still matching its distinctive branding. The McLaren IT team also believes that end user peripherals need to be customised and is moving away from a one-size fits all approach to meet the needs to a diverse and modern workforce. Through enabling colleagues all over the world to better connect and collaborate with one another, McLaren is already creating a workplace ready for the future.

McLaren Group leverages Logitech Video Conferencing solutions and desktop peripherals to boost innovation, creativity and collaboration. The combination of these tools has unlocked a deeper level of productivity and teamwork at McLaren. By allowing users more intuitive and streamlined ways of performing and collaborating, remote teams can now work together as if they were in the same room.

Desktop peripherals tailored to each employee's unique requirements allow them to perform more productively and comfortably. This provides an edge that maximises performance and innovation in a highly demanding industry.

EMERGING EXPECTATIONS: THE GEN Z WISH LIST

Navigating the needs and expectations of emergent workforce cohorts can feel like an uphill battle for many organisations. This paper presents a Gen Z WISH list to aid tech development. This approach takes a holistic approach to understanding the demands of younger generations through four lenses:

- **W**ellness
- **I**ndividual
- **S**ustainable
- **H**olistic

WELLNESS

As we learn more and more about our physical and mental health and the way it is affected by the work environment, so too are the newest generations coming to expect a higher standard of wellbeing in the workplace. This is evidenced by wide-ranging initiatives aimed at younger workers to encourage activities like exercise, mediation and relaxation.

When competing for the best future talent, companies will have to bear this in mind. Highest salary or smartest company car will not be the deciding factors when Generation Z comes to choosing jobs.

Instead, benefits that support their health and wellbeing will be far more valuable. These include measures like flexible working and workplace wellbeing programmes. To be truly successful at this however, companies will need to show that looking after their employees is a fundamental part of the way they work, not just a tactical add-on to company culture. They will need to evidence this through everything they provide to employees and the way they act.

Workplace wellness has become a vast industry worth US$47.5 billion according to the Global Wellness Institute. However, under 10 per cent of the global workforce has access to a workplace wellbeing programme. Those programmes that do exist primarily focus on physical and mental wellbeing, not on digital wellbeing.

A recent survey commissioned by contact lens specialist Acuvue found that office workers spend 1,700 hours a year in front of a computer screen, which equates to 6.5 hours every day, and that 37 per cent of workers attributed excessive screen use to headaches. These results are based on a survey of 2,000 office workers, but they do not consider the hours spent outside of the workplace staring at smartphone and tablet screens. This amount of screen-time can have significant physical and psychological implications.

Around four in 10 Americans say pain interferes with their mood, activities, sleep, ability to work or enjoyment of life. These people may not necessarily need a workplace running programme or a wellness centre in their office, but instead the right ergonomic equipment from the outset to prevent further pain. Providing the right tools has reciprocal benefits for organisations as workers perceive their employer to be respecting their needs and health because they are going beyond what is merely 'required' from them. In turn, this leads to a happier, more productive workforce.

Psychologically, our smartphones trigger the reward system in our brain, which has the same impact as physically taking drugs; this means that it is possible to become addicted to our smart phones. So much so that The Collins Dictionary defines the term 'nomophobia' as 'a state of stress caused by having no access or being unable to use one's mobile phone'. This kind of constant connection takes a heavy physical and emotional toll. As more research comes to light about the detrimental effects of digital overload,

organisations are starting to take a proactive approach to employing an overall wellbeing strategy to get the most from people and technology.

By 2023 it is predicted that 90 per cent of employees will need basic computer skills to conduct their work. This means that the amount of time we spend sitting at our screens will only increase, placing stress on our muscles and natural posture. The average worker currently moves their mouse an average of 100 feet per working day, or over six miles every year, according to a 2019 Wellnomics report. This movement places a lot of strain on the wrist if an ergonomic mouse is not used and that wrist pain can contribute to a 15 per cent loss in productivity, according to the Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation.

There are both direct and indirect costs related to poor ergonomics of computer equipment. US businesses alone spent US$1.5 billion in 2018 on rectifying repetitive motion workplace injuries, whereas using a good quality ergonomic keyboard and mouse can prevent those significant costs to organisations.

INDIVIDUAL

Another common technological trend being driven by Generation Z is the trend to make services customisable for the individual. Familiar with flexible software rather than clunky hardware, most in Generation Z will have grown up in an age of highly customisable products and services that can offer each individual what they most want out of it. Major news websites, online retailers and social media outlets are all striving to learn more about their customers as that has become a lucrative way to monetise them. This has resulted in a high degree of customisation: if you are only interested in politics or sports, that is all your news application will display to you. This level of customisation will come to be expected in the workplace. Digital services tailored to individual preference will be the order of the day, pivoted around the smartphone apps – one sizes fits one, not all.

SUSTAINABILITY

Gen Z expectations don't stop there. As the workforce shifts towards a more varied mix of freelancers, contractors and permanent office workers, organisations not only need to consider more sophisticated digital tools to accommodate new patterns of work, but they also need to be mindful of growing environmental pressures around climate change. Some of the momentum around climate change slowed amid the Covid-19 crisis, but it never went away; indeed, the changes in commuting and business travel habits induced by the crisis have shown what a more sustainable future might look like. In this respect, in contrast to their more passive predecessors, Gen Z has an action-driven approach – organisations must do more than give lip-service to supporting environmental movements. They must make serious efforts to reduce carbon footprint and be a responsible guardian of planetary heath as well as personal health. Investment in workplace technology must therefore give greater focus to quality of materials and longevity and reusability of products.

HOLISTIC

Gen Zers are highly invested in the type of technology they use. Not only must the product be good quality, it must also look good. The personal technology Gen Z buys is often sophisticated and stylish – and they do not want any compromise on this aspect in the workplace. Logitech's unified communications specialist Martin Smith identifies a key requirement. 'People want a seamless transition from the quality of technology they use in their personal lives to the technology offered in the workplace,' he says. 'It's not about equipping employees with technology they need to use, it's about equipping them with technology they want to use.' This observation is echoed in a report by Siemens, The Future of The Smart Office, co-authored with WORKTECH Academy. This describes how 'demographic change brings a younger, more entitled and more digitally comfortable generation to the fore' with a central requirement for seamless connectivity.

GENERATIONAL SHIFT: LOGITECH'S VIEW

Logitech has been anticipating the arrival of Gen Z inside and outside the workplace in its products, and is no stranger to a video-first approach. As personal video usage transitions into corporate environments, Logitech has partnered with video conferencing expert Zoom for its latest product development. A new system integrates Zoom's video conferencing system with Logitech's one-tap user interface.

Martin Smith, Logitech's unified communications specialist based in the UK, observes: 'Generation X [1965 to 1980] have always been happy with a handset on the desk and a conference phone where you can dial a number. Video never really took off for this generation...There has been a massive shift now. FaceTime changed all that. Now people want to use the tools they want to use, not the tools you want them to use.'

In recognising the shift in generational attitudes, Logitech is well equipped to address Gen Z's WISH List.

WELLNESS

Logitech has developed a whole range of products that are specifically aimed to be possible to use for extended periods of time while maintaining good ergonomics. Many of these are tailored especially towards knowledge work. They include mice to reduce muscular strain and precisely fit the shape of the hand, keyboards that automatically light to reduce eye strain and have a wide range of tilt angles for adjusting to different users. Many products offer a range of different ergonomic benefits suitable for supporting employee wellbeing.

The **Logitech MX Vertical** is an advanced ergonomic mouse that combines science-driven design with elevated performance. It is positioned in the form of a natural handshake which reduces muscular strain by 10 per cent and promotes a more ergonomic posture. It uses advanced optical tracking with a dedicated cursor speed switch which results in four times less hand movement so hand and muscle fatigue is significantly reduced.

Greg Dizac, senior director of product management at Logitech, explains that 'when employees are faced with physical and mental challenges, they cannot perform to the best of their ability'. If digital wellbeing isn't addressed, it creates a Catch 22 whereby physical discomfort from constant use of technology leads to detrimental mental wellbeing – which again has an effect on the physical wellbeing of an employee.

Ergonomic tools are not simply comfy chairs and sit-to-stand desks. Their design is a precise science between efficiency, performance and usability. Logitech has a design lab - ErgoLab - based in Switzerland where muscle activity and angles are measured within the context of using a mouse or keyboard. This combined approach of science and performance allows Logitech to hit the optimum sweet spot between physiology, performance and efficiency.

The lab focuses on natural body formation and the impact that constant technology use has on our bodies. In order to enable efficient digital work, compromises have to be made to the natural placement of our bodies. Logitech has worked on the mechanics of this and delivered an optimum solution through its Ergoseries range of keyboards and mice.

These ergonomic devices consist of vertical mice to reduce pronation – or downward pressure – in the wrist. The design mimics the natural posture of a handshake and is best for reducing wrist pressure and forearm strain. The trackball mouse is aimed at reducing movement, increasing comfort, improving hand posture, and consequently alleviating wrist pain.

Split keyboards allow arms and wrists to rest at their natural shape, reducing the stress on muscles. The wave keyboard improves the posture of the hand using a comfort curve which feels familiar to the human form, while the split keyboard allows people to type naturally with a curved, split key-frame to improve posture and accommodate for a relaxed typing position with good wrist support.

Digital wellbeing brings a perspective to health and wellbeing that is holistic, blending physiological wellbeing with mental wellbeing. As the workforce increasingly depends on digital technologies, organisations will no longer be able to ignore the impact of digital wellbeing on their employees. The basic starting point is ergonomic equipment because this can act as a preventative model for injury and alter the way workers perceive their employers for the better.

Broader encouragement of digital wellbeing by companies is the wider frame within this provision sits, creating a comprehensive approach to a priority need – especially at a time of global pandemic when technology is critical to keeping the workforce connected.

INDIVIDUAL

The idea that work should be a stream of choices to enable autonomous working by the individual is embedded in Logitech's products. Logitech offers customisable buttons on mice and keyboards which allow the user to specify different inputs that they find themselves using most regularly, such as adding a new desktop or opening a program.

> **"Work is not a place anymore; it's what you're doing. You need to have products that can deal with a changing environment around you. They need to be unobtrusive and portable. You need to have headsets and other peripherals that can match the mobile phone's portability."**

Martin Ruddle,
Head of Product Development, Logitech

Customisation is an increasingly important feature in tech devices, particular now in the workplace. Logitech uses Flow - a software package that allows Logitech devices to interact with multiple computers, seamlessly sharing files and control between them. It even works across multiple operating systems. As the drive for customisation develops, more and more people are preferring to bring their own devices into work to make use of something that is set up exactly how they want it. **Logitech Flow** ends the need for finding a flash drive or emailing things to yourself, allowing quick and easy transfer of both control and data between devices.

Logitech solutions aim to enhance the user experience and work closely with cloud-based services to deliver products that make workers productive wherever they are. This includes technology like LDR in cameras to lighten facial features and work in challenging light conditions.

Logitech's **Brio Ultra HD** webcam is a good example of this. This small camera can clip onto a range of different screen sizes and connects via a simple USB. It supports video quality up to 4K Ultra HD and high-dynamic range to ensure it can capture perfect detail in any environment. Lightweight and simple design make this device an easy accessory to add to a workstation and enables working practically anywhere.

SUSTAINABLE

Logitech products are designed around the principles of sustainable design. From specification of durable, long-lasting materials to a circular economy approach to waste in factories, Logitech aims to live up to the Gen Z rallying call around environment.

In 2020, Logitech became the first consumer electronics company to provide detailed carbon impact labelling on product packaging across the entire portfolio. In doing so, it intends to empower and collaborate with consumers, informing the purchasing choices they make. Until now, the carbon impact has not been visible to consumers looking to better understand their individual impact on the environment. Now, Logitech's carbon transparent labelling will quantify that impact and communicate it to consumers.

In 2019 Logitech announced its support of the Paris Agreement, pledging to limit its carbon footprint to support the ambitious 1.5oC goal and committed that the company will be powered exclusively by renewable electricity by 2030.

Carbon impact is measured using a Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) developed by Logitech. This reflects a product's carbon impact throughout the life of a product, from its raw materials to manufacturing, distribution, consumer use and ultimately the end of life. Application of the LCA tools and design expertise allows the company to analyse the carbon, toxicity and circularity impact of various product and packaging materials.

Case study: Department for Work and Pensions

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is the UK's largest governmental department, and it employs around 90,000 people in over 800 offices across the UK.

Whilst the DWP had experimented with video conferencing to try and tackle unnecessary business travel and improve collaboration, the previous legacy solution suffered from poor audio and video quality. It also came with an expensive managed service subscription fee. With plans to eventually roll out Microsoft Teams, the DWP needed a solution that provided future-proofing, superior performance and seamless integration.

By upgrading to Logitech Rally and MeetUp with Skype Room Systems in over 280 meeting rooms across the UK, the department is saving time on unnecessary travel, improving collaboration and reducing its carbon footprint.

Following the success of the initial rollout, and at the request of employees, the DWP is now looking to equip a further 52 meeting rooms with Logitech video conferencing solutions, to ensure its workforce is more agile and productive.

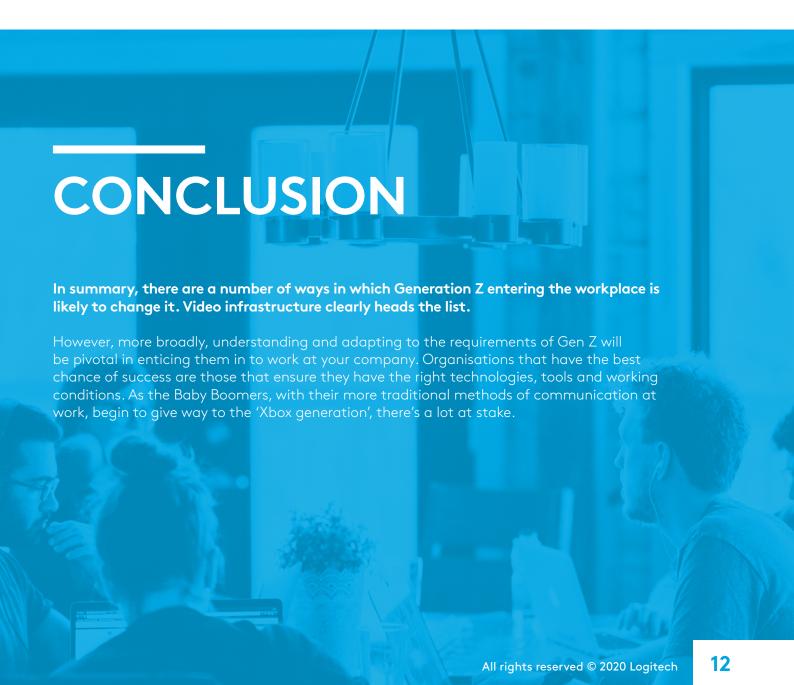Department for Work & Pensions

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HOLISTIC

It is not just functionality that plays a key role in ergonomic devices. Desirability of the design plays an increasingly important role too, particularly amongst image-conscious younger working cohorts.

Greg Dizac of Logitech says, 'The products need to be attractive for Generation Z and Millennials to want to use it'. According to Forbes magazine, 'Generation Z addresses new technology as an "extension of themselves" rather than an addiction or compulsion.'

Logitech's product development has to some extent anticipated the expectation of the Gen Z entrants to the workforce to work anywhere inside and outside the organisation, using technology in the workplace to mirror the technology they have at home. This blend of personal and professional tech takes the workplace into a new hybrid landscape.

CONCLUSION

In summary, there are a number of ways in which Generation Z entering the workplace is likely to change it. Video infrastructure clearly heads the list.

However, more broadly, understanding and adapting to the requirements of Gen Z will be pivotal in enticing them in to work at your company. Organisations that have the best chance of success are those that ensure they have the right technologies, tools and working conditions. As the Baby Boomers, with their more traditional methods of communication at work, begin to give way to the 'Xbox generation', there's a lot at stake.

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ABOUT LOGITECH

A Swiss company focused on innovation and quality, Logitech designs products and experiences that have an everyday place in people's lives. Founded in 1981 in Lausanne, Switzerland, and quickly expanding to the Silicon Valley, Logitech started connecting people through innovative computer peripherals and many industry firsts, including the infrared cordless mouse, the thumb-operated trackball, the laser mouse, and more.

Since those early days, we have expanded both our expertise in product design and our global reach. For each of our products, we focus on how our customers connect and interact with the digital world. We keep design at the centre of everything we create, in every team and every discipline, to create truly unique and meaningful experiences.

With products sold in almost every country in the world, Logitech has developed into a multi-brand company designing products that bring people together through music, gaming, video and computing. Brands of Logitech include Logitech, Logitech G, ASTRO Gaming, Ultimate Ears, Jaybird, Blue Microphones, and Streamlabs.

www.logitech.com

ABOUT WORKTECH ACADEMY

WORKTECH Academy is the world's leading knowledge platform and membership club exploring how we'll work tomorrow. The Academy's content is curated in six streams: people, place, technology, culture, design and innovation. It brings ideas and insights from WORKTECH conferences in more than 25 cities around the world to a global community of workplace professionals. Logitech is a Corporate Member of WORKTECH Academy.

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