



**MEDIACOM**

A VIEW FROM JOSH KRICHEFSKI

# Forever young or quickly grown?

CONSUMER OPINION SOCIAL

JOSH KRICHEFSKI, CEO, UK 14 AUG 2017

With A-Level results just around the corner, the media will soon be filled with headlines debating what the results tell us about the aspirations and goals of our future workforce. But reading through articles speculating about what results day may bring, I found myself wondering whether academic success is a reflection of how young people feel about their future and what they aspire to be.

Part of our job at MediaCom is to understand people and audiences. So it's vital we understand how they tick. But as a business leader, more broadly, I'm also just curious about what the future workforce, and our future leaders, look like. What does success really mean to them? Is it about money or is family more important? And in a world of real socioeconomic change, from Brexit to the General Election and all that's in between, how confident are teens about their future and what it holds for them? Moreover, what do they want that future to be?

As part of our annual [Connected Kids campaign](#), which gauges the views of young people about all manner of topics, from the technologies they use to who they are influenced by, we spoke to them about what it's like to be a teenager in 2017.

A key point that kept coming up is the focus on happiness over money. Almost three-quarters (73%) of teens believe that happiness is a bigger priority than earning lots of money. Similarly, only 34% believe money is the biggest measure of success and three quarters (75%) also say they want a job they are passionate about, regardless of wage.

It's refreshing to see teenagers of today value happiness over money and we should be proud of 'Generation Z' – overall they believe being fulfilled is most important to them. However, there are huge pressures nowadays to get a good education, find a way onto the property ladder and earn a good keep. And this plays out in our research because as soon as teens start to get a little older, this focus on happiness over everything does seem to shift. For 17-19 year olds, being in a well-paid job (67%) and buying a property (63%) are more important than remaining close to family (59%) and being in a long-term relationship (58%). Obviously, 17-19 is a key age – it's when exams are being taken, teens are being told to focus on their future and life after school is beginning. It's perhaps no surprise that, rightly or wrongly, even at 18 owning a house suddenly becomes a priority.

On a similar topic, the research also looked at the confidence of the younger generation – gauging how they feel about their future. Although teens remain ambitious, they are less confident about their future than they were this time last year. Only 53% of teenagers have become more confident about their future over the last year, compared to 61% the year before. Girls, in particular, are much less confident in 2017 (46% in 2016-17 vs. 60% in 2015-16).

There are various reasons for this decrease in confidence: teenagers are most concerned about safety in the UK (69%), followed by the economy (65%) and the environment (65%). A further 59% are worried about the cost of going to university and 57% are concerned about politics.

The economy, environment and safety are all legitimate concerns, particularly for a generation that has grown up in a recession and with the threat of global terror ever present. Together with recent world events and growing concerns about the pressures of social media, it's not surprising that young people are feeling less confident. As a business community, we need to support them through this.

It's easy to dismiss these concerns and insist "they have it easier than I did" – a tone you unfortunately see quite often in media and will likely see in coverage of next week's A-level results. But the reality is that it isn't an easier world, it's just different. Technology has developed but so has the threat of terrorism – so can we really say that the world is better now than it was 20 years ago? What doesn't change, no matter the social, political or technological circumstance, is that we all have a responsibility to help young people succeed.

Every single one of us, from business leader to parent, aunt or teacher, should be warm, encouraging and want to help teens develop and grow into the future leaders they can be.

As a business, we've made sure that youth talent is a core pillar of our recruitment strategy – we are hugely proud of our [Apprentice scheme](#), which was the first of its kind in the media agency world and has seen over 75 apprentices working with us. And then for those who choose to go to university before starting their careers, we have the MediaCom [Exec Programme](#) for recent graduates. Whether or not people go to university or straight into work or, with A-level results in mind, whether they get As or Cs, we need to help people start their career and build a life.

Across all sectors, businesses must take some responsibility for nurturing the talent of young people and giving them a platform to grow. As a society, we need to ensure we are listening to our youth and providing them with the tools, encouragement, learnings and, as a business leader, job opportunities that will drive them forward.

Our youth are growing up in a tumultuous world with plenty of uncertainty – let's make sure they reach their potential unreservedly.

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