

Tips For Effectively Communicating With & Engaging Millennial & Gen Z Workforces



INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic workforce, effectively communicating and engaging with millennial and Gen Z employees is essential for every organization's success.

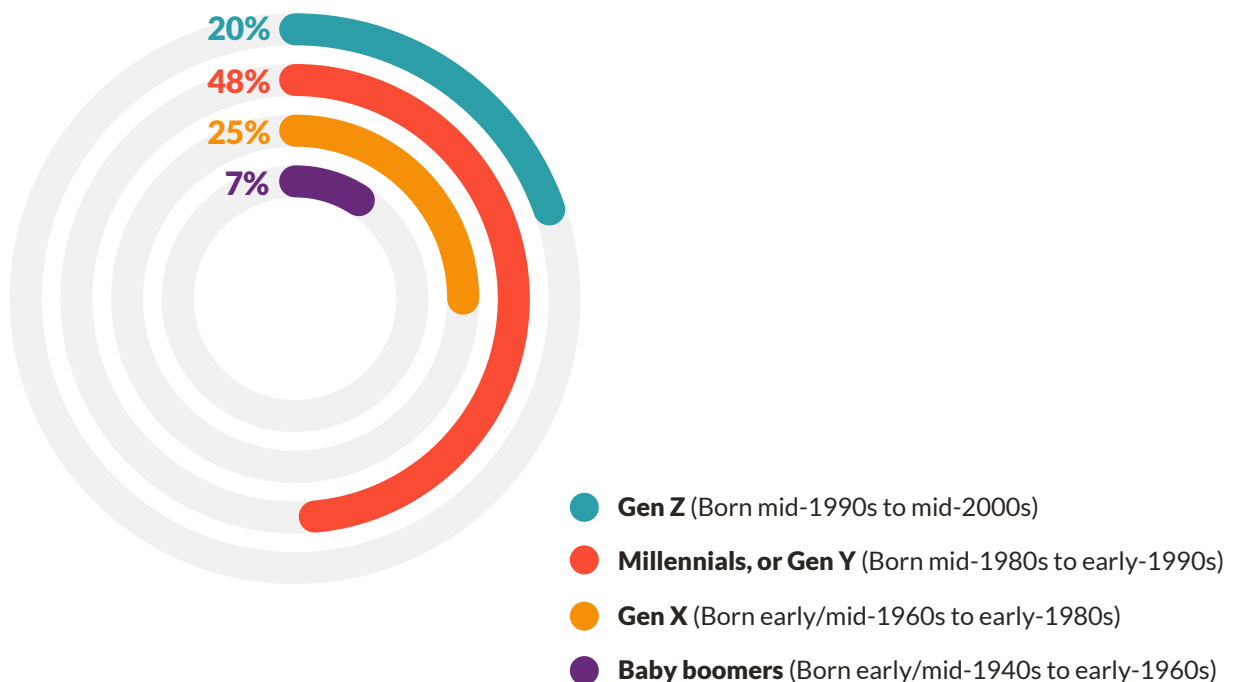
Workforces have always consisted of multiple generations, of course; however, they've never comprised so many different generations of workers and—thanks to the speed of technological development over the past few decades—those generations have arguably never been more different. According to a report by OliverWyman Forum & TNM, by 2031 millennials will make up 35% of the workforce, followed by Gen Z (31%, which is a steep increase compared to 15% in 2022), Gen x (26%) and Boomers (8%).

From the oldest employees who were likely well into their 40s before they owned their first brick-like cell phone, to the youngest employees whose parents already owned iPods by the time they were born, the familiarity and relationship with digital devices, social media and the internet on the whole— and therefore the way they interact with the world at large—is enormously different.



From growing up in an era of materialistic abundance to witnessing a renewed call for civic engagement during the Obama years, these generations were also tasked with adapting to the rapidly changing landscape caused by COVID-19.

But what does this mean for today's workforces? Fortunately, there are also a lot of professional characteristics that are shared by generations of employees too. The challenge is often in nuancing communications and engagement tactics to fit the employee rather than reinventing the wheel completely. After all, millennials may be the hardest generation of employees to engage but they now make up the largest section of the modern workforce, so they're a double-edged sword all organizations are going to have to learn to empower.



DEFINING WORKFORCE GENERATIONS



Born 1946 to 1964, they are typically practical, hardworking and still like to remain loyal to employers. They are goal-oriented, seek financial rewards and see working long, hard hours as the way to succeed. They respect authority but do have a cynical side and, of course, they find it hardest to adapt to new technologies but are very willing to try.

Born 1965 to 1976, Gen Xers spent a lot of time as children alone due to having hardworking parents and, as a response, they are very independent and also introduced the concept of work-life balance. They believe in workplace meritocracy. They are digitally proficient but not necessarily native.



Born 1977 to 1995, millennials are the first truly tech-savvy generation, and they use that to gain new skills, feedback, mentorship and insight. They are much less loyal than previous generations and are happy to bounce between roles. They enjoy workplaces that value collaboration and communication, and they have high expectations of the companies they work for and the brands they buy.

Born after 1996, Generation Zers enjoy the flexibility and balance demanded by previous generations but they also like more structure and guidance while being more loyal—in the right circumstances—than millennials. They are truly digital in every way, but also value face-to-face communications, as well as social and online communities.



12 TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH & ENGAGING MILLENNIAL & GEN Z WORKFORCES

1 Modify your communications to suit the audience

In the realm of internal communications, the choice of medium frequently shapes the message. Millennials tend to frequent platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, making them receptive to text-based and visual content, such as images.

On the other hand, Gen Z gravitates towards short-form video communication, as seen on YouTube, Instagram Reels and TikTok. Given their notably short attention spans, often a mere 8 to 12 seconds, they're constantly scrolling, swiping, and clicking.

Therefore, opt for concise, straightforward messages, breaking away from traditional professional language norms. Don't hesitate to incorporate emojis, as they make your text more approachable, visually appealing, and engaging. It's not what you say that helps you reach younger employees, but how you choose to say it.

The opportunity is vast

While engaging millennial and Generation Z employees might be challenging—and may even require the organization to learn a whole new set of skills—the potential benefits are enormous. Studies show that young employees genuinely want to be engaged by their employer and, if they are, they will do great work on its behalf.



2 Choose familiar platforms and solutions

According to [Webex research](#), over 70% of Gen-Z and millennials prefer communicating over digital channels.

Being generations that value texting over calling and appreciate instant and friendly interactions, **instant messaging platforms** are the best communication tools. Messaging apps offer convenience and control that other forms of communication lack. With messaging, individuals can choose when and how to respond to a message. This level of control is especially appealing to Gen Z and Millennials, who value autonomy.

Ensuring that your chosen solutions are optimized for mobile usage can significantly enhance the engagement and productivity of these generations.

3 The whole experience counts

Communicating well isn't enough for millennial or Gen Z employees; they are a demanding workforce and expect the entire working experience to be considered, planned and beneficial. That starts at recruitment and crosses onboarding, retention and career advancement.

Recent research from the [McKinsey Global Institute](#) underscores the critical importance of attracting and retaining talent. That starts at recruitment and crosses onboarding, retention and career advancement. Companies that successfully develop people and manage them well (organizations often referred to as “people and performance winners”) gain a long-term performance edge.



This may not be easy, but it still remains crucial: according to SHRM research, 47% of HR teams find retaining top talent a key challenge, while at the same time focusing on improving employee retention with it being a the top priority in 2023 for both operations (51% of respondents) and HR (66% in turn), according to Gallagher's 2023 U.S. Organizational Wellbeing Report.

4 Real life is real time

Raised in a world where brand customer service provides social media responses within an hour, millennials and Gen Z are accustomed to constant communication and feedback. They prefer to communicate electronically at work than face to face or even over the telephone. They want ongoing conversations and expect real-time communication.

Create channels and processes that can service that need.

Refer to local laws

Some countries and states have laws on communicating with employees outside of working hours. Make sure you're aware of any specific regulations regarding the employee's right to disconnect.



5 Encourage work-life balance to support mental well-being

The significance of maintaining a work-life balance has grown in significance in recent times, especially for individuals belonging to the Gen Z and millennial generations.

In today's world, characterized by the constant accessibility provided by mobile devices, younger employees from Gen Z and millennials are less inclined to disconnect from work-related matters outside of their designated working hours. The crucial factor here is flexibility: grant the option for those who desire a break from work-related notifications, such as the "Do Not Disturb" feature offered by platforms like Speakap. Simultaneously, enable those who prefer to stay connected with their employer to continue doing so.

6 Experience equals engagement for Generation Z

96% of HR/TA leaders say creating a great experience for their employees is becoming more and more important. Yet, managing Gen Z and millennial employees differs significantly from other generations with the focus shifting towards long-term engagement and improved employee-manager relationships.

These generations set high expectations and want exceptional experiences, be it with brands they interact with, the employer they work for, or their immediate manager. That is why HR must identify tools and experiences that can engage Gen Z workers to get the best out of them. A person-first experience is crucial with 82% of employees saying it's important for their organization to **see them as a person, not just as an employee.**



7 Provide a variety of tasks

A 2023 [LinkedIn report](#) revealed that over half of U.S. workers, notably including a higher percentage of Gen Z (ages 18-25) and millennial (ages 26-41) employees, are considering leaving their jobs, according to a LinkedIn report.

With 66% of HR professionals citing ‘improving employee retention’ as their top HR priority in 2023, reducing Gen Z and millennial churn is vital. By providing junior positions with a high degree of variety, organizations can give Gen Z workers the array of experience they desire while keeping them in the business.

8 Encourage people to share stories, information, and experiences

Establishing a proactive and continuing effort to get to know all employees can help address high levels of millennial and Gen Z turnover; technology, such as an Enterprise Social Network (ESN) can help to scale that experience to thousands of employees.

Chatting is learning

Almost two-thirds of all content shared on Speakap in Q4 2018 was in the form of private messages. They are how employees share knowledge and build relationships, highlighting the need for modern organizations to empower employees with compliant, user-friendly messaging platforms.

According to the most recent [LinkedIn report](#), the younger generations are much more focused on the importance of having an inclusive work environment. As much as [96% of Gen Z](#) employees say it's important that they feel valued, included and empowered at work.

For example, new hires can be encouraged to send a quick intro to their new team or workplace. Simple maybe, but even this can help new employees to start forging digital connections that make them feel more valued as individuals.

Another way to build a stronger relationship with young employees is to make them feel empowered and connected by asking for their opinions, insights, needs, preferences, and suggestions.



9 Ask real questions

Prioritize transparency and shift your managing and communication style from a “need-to-know” policy to an “open-access” one. This is true even if the news or information you are holding back is meant to “protect,” such as when business performance is not meeting targets, supply chain issues are on the rise, or you may need to cut their budget. Give them opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback, with transparency remaining your top priority throughout the communications process.

Again, technology can help drive this at scale; implementing an employee app with an integrated survey or polling functionality can allow you to listen to large workforces and adapt quickly to relevant feedback.

Access to information will alleviate Gen Z’s anxieties and allow them to process and feel in control.

10 Speak the language of Likes

With the prevalence of social media in the lives of younger generations like Gen Z, a unique lexicon and communication style has emerged, with 'Likes' (or reactions) serving as a universal symbol of approval and care. Whether conveyed through a heart or a thumbs-up icon, Likes have become a way for both millennials and Gen Zers to express their interest and support.

In the workplace, providing employees with the opportunity to 'Like' updates, whether related to process improvements, colleague achievements, or business milestones, can foster a sense of connection and acknowledgment.



Managers and senior leadership offering a few likes on updates, comments and images is also an extremely quick but valuable way of noticing younger employees who crave recognition.

11 Listening is key

Younger workers are looking for more out of their job than just a paycheck. With a shocking 72% of Gen Z reporting feeling shy, and 71% feeling that no-one understands them.

One of the most critical ways for employers to deliver this is through open communication and collecting feedback; however, disturbingly, 57% of HR managers in non-desk industries confess to having no feedback process for frontline employees.

12 Provide personalization

Social media has made everyone the star of their own channels, with consumer technology delivering individualized experiences to match. As a result, Gen Z and millennials demand greater personalization in how they receive and engage with information. This shift extends to the realm of internal communications, especially for frontline workers.

To effectively connect with this workforce, tailor your communication strategies to their preferences, ensuring that the information they receive is relevant, timely, and resonates with their unique needs and work environments.

CONCLUSION

Effectively communicating with and engaging any workforce is incredibly difficult and takes constant commitment to establish the right culture. That challenge is further complicated when your workforce potentially straddles four generations: baby boomers, Generation X, millennials and Generation Z. Each of these generations has its idiosyncrasies in terms of characteristics, requirements, motivations, and concerns. The modern HR organization needs to find a way to collaborate, cooperate and inspire all of them.

However, when you scratch the surface, what you find comes as no surprise to anyone familiar with Maslow's Pyramid (i.e. everyone who works in HR!). No matter which generation they belong to, all employees are seeking smoother onboarding, better employee-manager relationships, constructive real-time feedback and recognition, and increased job satisfaction. Meanwhile, even the most modern organization is still looking for ways to attract great employees who engage with their role, staying and developing within the company.

However, the immediacy and reciprocity that technology has brought with it lead younger employees to feel issues more quickly and acutely. Especially in frontline where pressure can be felt more keenly.

There is one constant that can improve the delivery and efficacy of employee communications: technology. To be more specific, an employee communications platform can bridge generations by driving productivity, connectivity and culture. When emergencies arise, the right employee communications platform can not only increase employees' knowledge of critical information, but also speed up response times to help resolve crises more effectively.





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