

GUIDEBOOK

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

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INTRODUCTION

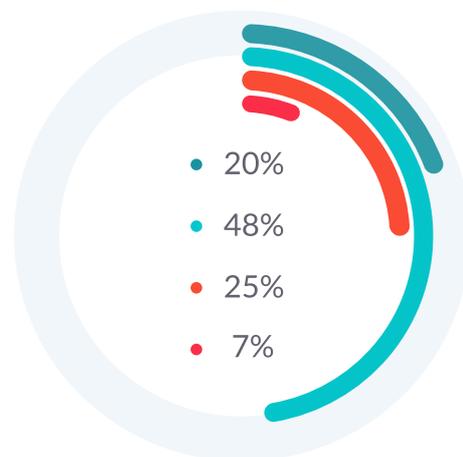
These are difficult times for anyone involved with people management or workforce communications within organizations. Within the past few years, Generation Z has reached working age, while retirement age is being upped in almost all countries around the world. The consequence is a workforce that could span four generations, all under the same physical or hypothetical roof.

Our recent [Speakap survey of HR professionals in non-desk industries](#) revealed that millennials make up the majority of the workforce at 48% of companies, followed by Gen X (25%), Gen Z (20%) and baby boomers (just 7%).

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. 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.

And then there are the vastly different socio-economic backdrops they grew up against: from the Cold War to Trump; from the vacuous wealth and apolitical 80s to the renewed sense of civic responsibility and economic uncertainty of the Obama era.

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.



- **Gen Z** (Born mid-1990s to mid-2000s)
- **Millennials, or Gen Y** (Born mid-1980s to early 1990s)
- **Gen X** (Born early/mid-1960s to early 1980s)
- **Baby boomers** (Born early/mid-1940s to mid-1960s)

DEFINING WORKFORCE GENERATIONS



BABY BOOMERS

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.



GENERATION X



MILLENNIALS (GENERATION Y)

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.



GENERATION Z (IGEN OR CENTENNIALS)

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

1. Modify your communications to suit the audience

For internal communications, the medium is so often the message. Our recent study, [Technology's Role in Managing & Retaining Employees](#), revealed that 49% of HR managers are modifying their communications due to differing comfort and skills levels with technology, while 27% referred to different levels of mobile adoption as being the differentiator. It's not what you say that helps you reach younger employees, but how you say it.

2. Choose familiar platforms and solutions

There's much mention of Generation Z being the first to grow up watching kids' shows on iPads, but it's also the first generation for whom social media has always been a presence. Almost half of HR managers believe that millennial and Gen Z workers want an employee communications platform with similar functionalities and experiences to the consumer social media they've used all their lives.

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.

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. This may not be easy, but it is worthwhile: 27% of HR teams find retaining top talent a key challenge, with 21% claiming it is their top priority for 2019.

4. Put security high on the list

If millennials and Gen Z have grown up with technology present, they've also grown up against a background of constant data breaches and security leaks. This makes them more security conscious than even their older colleagues; if you put the privacy of their data high on your list of priorities, they'll reward you by sharing more information with their colleagues, commenting and engaging with content, often preferring more private messages with targeted groups and teams to general catch-all alerts.

5. Real life is real time

Raised in a world where brand customer service provides social media responses within an hour, millennials and Gen Zers expect the same of their workplace experience. Forty-seven-percent of HR managers say that their younger employees expect to have questions answered in real-time. Create channels and processes that can service that need.

6. Allow employees to choose their terms

The always-on mobile nature of modern life means that millennial and Gen Z employees are less likely to disconnect after working hours than their older colleagues. The key here is providing flexibility: give those who want to unplug the ability to do so (Speakap, for example, has the **Do Not Disturb functionality**) while allowing those who wish to remain connected to their employer to do so.

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.

7. Experience equals engagement for Generation Z

'Keeping employees engaged long-term' and 'improving employee-manager relationships' are the top priorities for managing Gen Z workers in 2019; these differ from the priorities for millennials and baby boomers. Gen Z workers have high expectations and want exceptional experiences, be it with brands they interact with, the employer they work for, or their immediate manager. HR teams need to identify tools, managers and moments of experience that can engage Gen Z workers to get the best out of them.

8. Provide a variety of tasks

A **2018 LinkedIn** survey revealed that employees aged 24 and younger are three times more likely than baby boomers to change jobs. With 16% of HR professionals citing 'reducing employee turnover' as their top HR priority in 2019, reducing the Gen Z 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.

9. Value individuality at scale

Social media has made everyone the star of their own channels, with consumer technology delivering individualized experiences to match. 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. 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.



10. Ask real questions

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. 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.



11. Speak the language of Likes

Having grown up with social media a regular part of lives, Gen Zers, in particular, have acquired their own lexicon and shorthand that carries over into all parts of life. One of those is the Like. Whether it's a heart or a thumbs up, the Like is how both millennials and Gen Zers show they care: whether it's an update to processes, news about a colleague or a branch smashing its business objectives, give employees the chance to Like. **Our Q4 2018 data** revealed that company updates garnered 77% of the total likes on Speakap. 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.

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.

12. Create a feedback culture

Younger workers are looking for more out of their job than just a paycheck. Increasingly, they're looking for a sense of fulfillment and purpose, even out of part-time jobs. One of the most critical ways for employers to deliver this is through feedback; however, disturbingly, 57% of HR managers in non-desk industries confess to having no feedback process for frontline employees.

13. Video content rules

When a Gen Zer wants to know how to do something, their first port of call is usually a 'how to' guide on YouTube. Video is how younger generations experience the digital world and our **Q4 2018 platform usage data** indicates this is equally true for employee communications, with interactive files (i.e. photos, GIFs, videos) opened 10% more than more traditional formats. Organizations can use this to their advantage: announce company news in a video format, make sure training materials are visual too, and maybe even have leadership post vlogs instead of drier text updates or blog posts.



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.



ABOUT SPEAKAP

Founded in 2011 by co-founders Patrick Van Der Mijl and Erwin Van Der Vlist, Speakap is a secure, private enterprise social network that enables organizations in the retail, hospitality & restaurants, entertainment, travel, auto, manufacturing and logistics industries to reach, support and engage their non-desk employees. By doing so, both frontline employees and businesses are able to reap a multitude of benefits, including higher productivity levels, increased job satisfaction, stronger knowledge of products and promotions/offers, better job performance, reduced absenteeism, higher employee retention rates and more sales.

On the shop floor, in the kitchen or on the production line, Speakap is available 24/7 and enables communication and collaboration from any internet-connected device. The company currently has over 350 customers in 27 countries around the world, including iconic and trusted brands such as McDonald's, IKEA, Hudson's Bay and Rituals. The company is headquartered in New York, with additional offices in Amsterdam, London, Barcelona, Koln and Brussels.

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