

# HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH GEN Z IN THE WORKPLACE

**NO, THEY'RE NOT THE SAME AS MILLENNIALS. AND YES, IMPROVING HOW YOU COMMUNICATE WITH THEM WILL HAVE TANGIBLE BENEFITS FOR YOUR BUSINESS.**

## THE SURPRISING TRUTH

**True or False? "Gen Z prefer to be left alone to do their own thing. Only communicate to them via Slack, Facebook, email, TikTok and text."**

If you believe that Gen Z are just younger millennials, you may think that this sounds very true. But as it turns out, it's false: research has shown that despite being more interconnected, digitally savvy, and into new technology than any other generation before them, Gen Z prefer in-person communication when touching base with their managers. And it might be precisely because they're so digitally interconnected that face-to-face has become important to them...

Gen Z tend to be weak writers as a result of their generational relationship with slang and shorthand and their heavy reliance on emojis when communicating digitally. They are less adept at conveying tone in their own written communications or interpreting it in others. Face-to-face chats will give them more confidence in how they come across and give them a better way to prove and express themselves professionally. It will also help them address a typical Gen Z fear: that they may not be taken seriously by their much older colleagues, and that they'll be treated like children (especially if judged by written responses).

Remember that Gen Z still prefer autonomy and freedom in their work, and don't want to be micromanaged. However, they want plenty of managerial feedback to make sure they're on the right track. This also relates to their exposure to a constant stream of real-time feedback in the form of likes, comments and shares: Gen Z are under an immense amount of pressure to constantly perform in their online lives. Scheduling regular in-person check ins will help them feel more secure in their role, and give you the opportunity to convey your message and meaning clearly and without interference.

## BE HONEST

Gen Z place a high premium on honesty and integrity in business. This is an important attribute they want in a boss (and something they're more likely to pick up on face-to-face than remotely) and should not be taken lightly.

**When communicating with Gen Z, make sure your messages:**

- Are straightforward, clear and unambiguous.
- Offer thoughtful feedback and critique when commenting on Gen Z's work or concerns.
- Validate Gen Z's efforts: make sure they feel seen.
- Don't gloss over bad news or try to soften a blow – be candid about reality, including potential challenges AND solutions. Gen Z want to trust their bosses and if they lose faith in leadership, they won't stick around for long.
- Don't lie or "bend" the truth. Be transparent about subjects that are usually seen as "sensitive", such as salary information, company sustainability and ethics, and workplace policies and the procedures in place to implement them.
- Be authentic – about your wins and your losses, and how you focus on ongoing improvement. No business can be "perfect", but those who are honest about who they are, what they value and what they stand for are more likely to gain respect from this cohort.

**When communicating, Gen Z may be:**

- Forthright and upfront about what they like and don't like. Their desire for flexibility and their ambitions and expectations when it comes to the workplace won't allow them to stick in a space that does not speak to their values and needs.
- Questioning: blind trust in authority is not in their nature, and especially not when it comes to business.
- Searching for praise, which is important to them – as it is to all young workers who've just started forging their careers.

# COMMUNICATE AS EQUALS

Gen Z rightly fear that ageism will hold them back from making an immediate difference in any organisation they join. But it's been proven time and again that being young doesn't preclude someone from having amazing ideas or a huge impact. Gen Z are confident in their abilities, voice and vision, and they believe that industries and businesses can benefit from this. They can offer fresh insight – if they are heard.

Authoritarian managers who believe people must build up seniority in order to receive respect or earn a place at high-level planning sessions will see pushback from Gen Z. The future workplace isn't about age or hierarchy – it's about ideas

## GEN Z COMMS CHECKLIST:

Regular and in-person/  
face-to-face

Clear and unambiguous

Forthright and  
transparent

Honest and  
authentic



Supportive but not  
patronising

Non-ageist

Thoughtful and actionable (when  
providing feedback or critique)