

Generations:

- The Greatest Generation – born 1901-1927
- The Silent Generation – born 1928-1945
- The Baby Boomer Generation – born 1946-1964
- Generation X – born 1965-1980
- Millennials – born 1981-1996
- Generation Z – born 1996-2012
- Gen Alpha – born 2013 – 2025

For this Exchange of Ideas, we will focus on Generation Z, but also discuss the Millennial Generation as well.

Millennial Values (source: <https://axerosolutions.com/blog/how-to-communicate-with-millennials-at-work-23-surefire-tips-to-retire-the-stereotypes>)

1. They appreciate honesty.

Ask a millennial what he or she thinks about something, and you'll get a direct, truthful response—in fact, one that can sometimes sting. This can be a huge put-off for colleagues who are used to more diplomatic, even evasive communication styles that are designed to save face.

Millennials want to build a solid foundation of trust with their colleagues and managers, and sugar-coated exchanges won't make this happen. Millennials are honest and to the point, and they know this makes for [effective internal communication](#).

Encourage them to speak up on projects they're working on, and solicit their opinion on projects outside of their immediate scope as well. They may have an idea or suggestion that can provide a fresh approach.

2. They want to be heard and share their expertise.

With unprecedented access to information, today's up-and-coming millennials are exceedingly smart. They demonstrate tremendous promise and leadership potential at a young age. As a result, these millennials want to be a part of the decision-making process ... now.

Those in leadership should expect that millennials will be highly forthcoming and knowledgeable when asked their thoughts on a particular decision. Even better than simply asking millennials their thoughts, add a set of robust [knowledge management tools](#) to your software stack and let their knowledge and expertise flow freely throughout your organization. Managers should listen to these new voices, let them know that they're heard, and take their viewpoint into consideration to benefit the entire organization.

3. They're looking for upward movement.

No self-respecting millennial wants to sit back and wait for that dream job to arrive, even if long-term chances for a promotion at the current workplace are good. In most cases, millennials are looking for upward movement, and they don't expect it to take a lifetime.

Communication between managers and millennials can indicate if an employee is ready and willing to take on more responsibility. Even if your employee has only been with your company for a year or two, evaluate his or her performance, and offer a promotion if appropriate.

4. They want to speak to top-level leaders.

Millennials are an increasingly confident bunch, and they're always looking to get to the source.

Whether it involves a major decision, a new project, or a simple desire to get to know their managers better, millennials want to communicate with top-level leaders whenever possible. This can throw some CEOs and managers off, as they may be used to working with employees who are more timid or less vocal. Ultimately, this direct communication style should be embraced as a way of creating transparency and encouraging new ideas.

One of making this two-way conversation accessible for everyone in your company, including millennials, is to implement a company intranet that contains [internal communications software](#) built-in.

It allows information, news, and updates to be delivered across your organization, while at the same time giving employees the option to comment, ask questions, and further the discussion.

5. They like feedback and constructive criticism.

Feedback and constructive criticism are vital to professional development, and millennials are unusually open to this dynamic. Most millennials thrive on a quick back-and-forth with the manager or CEO, as they know it will improve individual and business performance.

Millennials don't like to go through the motions blindly, so they'll want to know how they're doing. If you're not steering them in the right direction with accurate feedback, they will easily lose interest and become disengaged. When providing feedback, tailor your approach to fit the millennial communication style—clear, direct, and collaborative.

6. Millennials communicate their needs. Just ask.

There was once a strong sense in the business world that if you didn't absolutely need something, you didn't ask for it. This "don't complain unless you have to" attitude may be a

method of staying out of trouble and keeping your job, but it doesn't do your staff or your organization any favors.

Millennials strongly believe that their needs matter, and they aren't afraid to speak up. Perhaps they need more time to finish a project or could use a personal day. Unlike previous generations of workers, millennials will let you know where they stand.

7. They want success for everyone involved.

Millennials are more globally connected and intuitively collaborative than their predecessors. On any given project, they truly want all participants to succeed and to be satisfied. As a result, millennials will post project updates on social intranets and copy all stakeholders on emails, rather than "hoarding" information for personal gain. Their focus is on the whole, and they view their colleagues as teammates.

8. They appreciate quick wit.

Perhaps as a result of the social unrest and political turmoil in many parts of the world, millennials are a generation that particularly values humor and quick wit. In their exchanges, millennials rely on puns, sarcasm, and jokes to underscore their points and to relieve the tension of long workdays. They are more likely to react positively if even serious topics are approached with some elements of humor.

9. They favor a liberal bias.

Today's generation is one of the most progressive in many decades, and they favor a liberal bias. Most millennials have absolutely no time for language or policies that offend or discriminate. Framing a conversation with this in mind is essential to reaching a millennial and engaging buy-in on projects and issues.

10. Millennials equate newer with better.

Looking to really grab the attention of millennials? Give them the latest and greatest in technology.

Millennials thrive on testing out new devices and technology. They jump at the release of a new smartphone, social media platform, [mobile intranet](#), etc.

Millennials are by definition “early adopters,” and not just when it comes to digital devices. They constantly seek fresh ideas, innovative approaches, and original insights. When employers internalize the concept that “newer is better,” communicating with millennials becomes easier and more productive.

11. They prefer optimism.

In previous business cultures, a dour demeanor was often equated with determination, gravity, and leadership skill. However, negative outlooks are no longer embraced by younger generations. Rather, millennials prefer to view the world with a sense of optimism, and they often look to CEOs and managers—such as the ever-smiling Richard Branson—as role models for positivity.

12. They thrive on passion and excitement.

It’s quite possible that the millennial generation is more driven than their predecessors. Millennials have grown up in a fast-paced world that rewards people for their hard work and achievements. Passionate and exciting dialogue can bridge the gap between millennials and those from other generations, and it can also help [improve employee engagement](#) and business productivity.

13. They respond to stories and anecdotes.

As a generation that’s passionate about social media and entertainment, millennials crave stories and personal anecdotes. Abstract concepts come alive when they’re given a personal face and an individual narrative. A well-told story is part of the language of the millennial that should be incorporated into business communication.

Millennial Time

As products of the digital and information revolution, millennials operate on a schedule that differs substantially from the traditional business timetable.

14. They prefer 24/7 availability.

Millennials tend to be available after “regular business hours” to a much greater extent than older professionals. Some of this has to do with youthful energy and the excitement of career advancement. However, much of this trend can be attributed to millennials having constant access to email, social media, and social [collaboration tools](#). Smartphones have made 24/7 availability a reality, and hungry millennials often take pride in their quick, late-night responsiveness.

Because of their high-energy, hyper-connected work style, millennials often prefer to set their own schedules. Many managers understand that this flexibility can boost productivity and allow companies with a global reach to span multiple time zones.

15. Millennials juggle multiple conversations.

Most millennials will admit to juggling a number of conversations at the same time, whether personal or professional in nature. It’s important to understand, though, that this is not an indication that they’re not paying attention. Instead, it demonstrates that millennials are expert multitaskers, as many have grown up in a world where instant messaging, email, and even phone conversations are all handled at once.

Millennial Technology

So, given their values and their schedule preferences, how exactly do millennials communicate? Digital technology is the key.

16. They’re not into face-to-face communication.

There are plenty of times when communicating face-to-face is necessary. Many lasting business relationships are formed over lunches and at in-person events.

However, due to their penchant for multitasking and digital technology, many millennials would prefer to work remotely if possible and use [business communication tools](#). Even when they’re attending an in-person meeting, millennials will constantly scan email and send texts, making face-to-face communication a matter of sharing screen time with a smartphone. Virtual meetings, by contrast, are faster, less costly, and more focused for the millennial.

17. They prefer written communication.

Managing an important project or handling complex tasks can be overwhelming. Most millennials would rather leave the telephone untouched and streamline their workload using written communication methods. Sending out a message via email or instant messaging is a quick, effective way to get in touch with someone.

Written communication through a social intranet also enables millennials to assign a project without losing any details – and all of the information can be recalled later. This helps when keeping track of project updates because everyone involved is accountable.

18. Millennials think in terms of “social”.

One of the most important advancements in business technology over the past decade or so has been the introduction of the social intranet. [intranet software](#) serves as the collective mind of an organization, allowing employees to interact with each other in a real-time virtual environment whenever they want.

Many of today’s best intranet platforms place focus on the “social” aspects. Because many millennials grew up with Facebook, Twitter, and similar platforms, they think in terms of “social” ... and it has made an impact on how they communicate.

19. They’re mobile and highly connected.

Laptops are still the preferred tools for professionals on the go. They’re easily accessible, and they allow you to get your work done quickly and effectively.

However, when it comes to communication, millennials are almost always on their smartphones. Whether they’re texting a colleague, drafting an email, or initiating a phone call, a smartphone is the center of their universe. Because of this, millennials are readily available for any type of business communication.

20. Millennials respond well to media.

Onboarding new hires can be a challenge, especially given the volume of information and training you need to communicate in a short period of time. Millennials are different, though – they prefer to take learning into their own hands. As a result, they respond well to media such as informational videos and infographics, which are easily distributed digitally ... perhaps on your company intranet.

Millennials like to have a strong grasp on the content they consume, so give them access to helpful media. This will be more productive and less costly than staging a formal training session.

Millennial Style

As you can see, millennials have a style all their own, and their communications reflect that unique voice.

21. They're short and to the point.

Sometimes particular projects or issues require deep discussions in order to analyze processes, tasks, and resources. However, these discussions can often veer off topic, wasting time and money.

Millennials tend to take a brisker approach to [business communication](#) – short and to the point. Small talk can come later.

For millennials, the focus is on getting the job done accurately and effectively. After the workday is over, then it's time to shift focus and engage with co-workers on a more personal level.

22. They have their own lingo.

Slang evolves with each generation. When was the last time you heard a guy referred to as a “cat?” Indeed, most millennials are quicker to call someone their “BFF” than they are to comment on something as being “far out.” Older slang terms are no longer part of the conversation, and if you're going to employ millennials, learning their language will help you to

better engage them. A word of caution, though — don't overuse slang terms in general conversation, as you might appear to be trying too hard.

23. They like to use abbreviations.

The social media generation relies heavily on abbreviations, which can mystify older professionals. Many abbreviations have been (and continue to be) developed by the space constraints of text messages and social media platforms like Twitter. Some of the more well-known examples include LOL ("laughing out loud"), BTW ("by the way"), TL:DR ("too long; didn't read"), and NP ("no problem").

Millennials often incorporate these shortcuts into their business communications. By taking the time to learn the more popular terms, you can better engage millennials and keep pace with the ever-changing dynamic of language

How Millennials Prefer to Communicate (<https://www.lifehack.org/484062/5-effective-ways-to-communicate-with-millennials>)

1. Partake in Mobile Communication

Millennials [love their phones](#). Their phones are constantly in their hands, as if it were a permanent attachment. They check their phones immediately when they wake up, the phone is given more attention than actual people at the dinner table, and their phone stores almost all of their entertainment. Their phone is a very important asset for them.

It is in your company's best interest to take advantage of millennials' fascination with their phones. Texting is the preferred form of communication for millennials – entire conversations can be had through text conversation.

Your business should be using [text marketing](#) to communicate with millennials. They will be more receptive to this form of communication and choose to engage with it. It would be wiser to place your money in a marketing activity that will actually provide a positive ROI for your business – converting your target market into customers.

2. Create a Community

Millennials like to feel as if they are partaking in something special – something that provides them with an actual purpose. Just selling a product or service to them without a distinctive message will not work in your favor. They don't like being sold to, instead they like engaging within a movement that feels authentic and fun. Experiences are what they crave, so your business must work to involve them within your company's vision and mission.

Develop an interactive community that [puts your millennial consumers to work](#). Give them something distinctive to do, such as working within their local community. Or have them do something different every month, such as a new challenge to complete that will be scored against others in the community. The fun and engaging factor of your business will provide it with more attention, pulling in other millennials who want to be an active member of your growing community.

3. Leverage the Power of Social Media

Millennials are always on social media communicating and engaging in conversations that resonate with their interest. Beyond texting, [social media](#) is the form of communication that millennials frequently use to socialize. Social media platforms are where millennials receive their news and other important information. They also make their [purchasing decisions](#) based off of social media feedback and brand engagement.

Your brand must engage with [millennial consumers](#) by making them a key focus of the conversation. Ask what they like and don't like about your product or service. Make them brand ambassadors – placing them in a position of empowerment. Once they feel you actually care about what they feel and have to say, they become more loyal and willing to promote your brand to their friends.

4. Demonstrate You Understand Their Values

Millennials will only do business with those that [understand their values](#). Among these values are: connections, experiences, purpose, encouragement, and innovation. Your company has to communicate its understanding of these values and illustrate that it considers them to be very important within its culture.

Your company should have millennials as employees who are in a position of leadership. It shows your millennial consumers that you trust their ability to perform and make decisions. Their generation is constantly being talked down upon, so it gives them great satisfaction when people are willing to give them a chance to prove themselves.

5. Don't be so Serious

Millennials understand that life is serious, but that doesn't mean that they want to be so serious that they can't have fun. Being too serious stifles their creativity and freedom, two things that they absolutely need to function well. Once their positive vibe is smothered, they tune out and become less productive.

Show that your brand is all about fun and enjoyment. Add humor into your marketing messages and illustrate that you love for your consumers to enjoy life. Don't make business strictly business – it has to make people feel excited to be a part of it.

Conclusion

While millennials are vastly different from previous generations, they are not impossible to reach and engage with. Take the time to understand how they communicate and what motivates their behaviors and actions. Once you truly understand how to communicate with them, the easier it will be for you to convert them into your customers.

Gen Z Values (source: <https://www.wikihow.com/Understand-Gen-Z>)

Acknowledge their diverse backgrounds.

Gen Z is the most racially diverse population in the U.S. Around 52% of Gen Z is white, and the rest of Gen Z is racially and ethnically diverse. They are no strangers to meeting people who are different from them, which often leads to more acceptance and less hate. In order to get along with Gen Z, you'll need to be open to being around people from all different backgrounds, economic statuses, and cultures.^[2]

- In populations around the world, the numbers vary slightly, but still lean toward a diverse crowd.

2

Respect their side hustles.

Many Gen Zers have a business going on the side. With the job market constantly ebbing and flowing, Gen Z has decided to take their income into their own hands. Small businesses, art portfolios, and money-making opportunities are all over, with many people from Gen Z making money online. Try not to trivialize these opportunities, and instead encourage Gen Zers to branch out and do what they love.^[3]

- Selling homemade goods on sites like Etsy is also very popular.
- While this is true of many people from Gen Z, not everyone wants to own their own business. A lot of kids just want financial stability, and they'll go about it any way they can.

3

Encourage their social activity online.

They were born into the social media age, after all.^[4] Yes, the rumors are true: most Gen Zers are plugged into their phones or computers for most of the day. While taking a break from screen time is always good, most Gen Zers aren't just aimlessly scrolling—they're making connections, chatting with friends, and taking in new info.^[5]

- The online footprint of Gen Z has only increased in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. With so many of them having to stay home to do

online school, heading to social media was one of the only ways they could get any social interaction that day.

- As with most facts about Gen Z, being overly online doesn't apply to everyone. Some kids aren't a fan of social media, even if all their friends are.

4

Support their human connections.

Gen Z doesn't want to text or DM all the time. In fact, studies show that the majority of Gen Z prefers face-to-face communication to online chats. This is especially true when they're talking to their friends or loved ones. If your child or younger sibling wants a ride to a friend's house, be open and willing to help them out.[\[6\]](#)

- While video chatting is fun, nothing beats hanging out with your friends or family members in person.

5

Encourage them to learn about new technology.

They're no strangers to learning new things. In fact, they often seek out technology that can help them do simple tasks much easier. If you run a business and you're planning on hiring this generation, be prepared to update your tech to match their skill sets.[\[7\]](#)

- Gen Z can probably also teach you a thing or two about new technology. They're used to learning new stuff, and they might also do it in their free time.

6

Try to give them feedback as quickly as you can.

Many Gen Zers are used to instant gratification. If you're a teacher, you might have experienced students asking for their grades mere hours after they submit an assignment. Don't be nervous—they're usually just excited![\[8\]](#)

- Instant feedback isn't always an option. If you're in that position and get asked for feedback too quickly, gently remind them of your workload and give them a realistic timeline.

7

Respect their wishes to own a home and a car.

In general, Gen Zers want the same things we all do. A steady income, a nice home, and a reliable vehicle are goals for many of them. They know that mortgages and auto loans often come with high interest rates, and many have vowed to save up their money instead of taking out high-interest loans.[\[9\]](#)

- There's a huge misconception that younger generations don't want to "settle down." The truth is that many of them do, but with housing prices skyrocketing, they just can't afford it yet.

8

Talk about current events with them.

Their online presences tune them into a lot. While they might not look at traditional news sources (like cable TV), they know a lot about politics and legislation.[\[10\]](#) Many Gen Zers are very passionate about human rights, climate change, and racial justice, and they aren't afraid to speak out, either.[\[11\]](#)

- Most members of Gen Z are fairly similar to Millennials in their political views.

9

Support their mental health struggles.

Depression and anxiety have skyrocketed in recent years.[\[12\]](#) In fact, one study shows that depression and suicide rates in teen girls have increased by 150% in the last 10 years. If you know someone in Gen Z who struggles with mental health issues, let them know that you're here to talk or help if they ever need it.[\[13\]](#)

- Gen Z is also more open to talking about mental health with their friends and family members.

10

Be willing to talk about social change.

Most of them see social change as a good thing. Polls show that around half of Gen Zers think that legalizing gay marriage is a good thing, compared to 1/3 of Gen Xers and 1/4 of Boomers. Gen Z is more likely to take a stance for social change, so they might be more open to having a discussion about it with you.[\[14\]](#)

- Gen Z is also more likely to get involved with social change by going to protests and signing petitions.

Don't worry if you don't understand their jokes.

Their humor is very ironic (and a little absurd). Gen Z humor is constantly evolving, and being online means they can stay up to date on jokes even more.^[15] Dark humor is very popular with Gen Z, and many of them say it helps them deal with trauma and stressful situations.^[16]

- Unfortunately, Gen Z has been exposed to a lot of gun violence already. Many of them use dark humor to cope with that fact.
- There are also usually layers to their humor that might go back years. Oftentimes, jokes will reference a meme from 10 years ago, a video posted 2 days ago, and an ironic twist that they just came up with. If it sounds complicated, that's because it is!

How Gen Z Prefers to Communicate: (source:

<https://campusrecmag.com/how-to-communicate-with-gen-z/#:~:text=In%20fact%2C%20research%20shows%20while,in%20our%20communication%20with%20students>)

Communication with Gen Z Needs to be Concise

Research shows Gen Z has an even shorter attention span than previous generations and often split their time between five different screens — note: millennials only use up to three screens at a time. While Gen Z is skilled at multi-tasking, it leaves them hyper-selective of the information they retain. This means it's likely some of the things we communicate with our students could be easily lost in the information they choose to retain. To overcome this, we need to be able to provide the need-to-know or most important information while leaving out the less important details.

How to Implement This

In written communication, using lists instead of long paragraphs and bullet points versus drawn out sentences allows Gen Z workers to more easily scan the information and remember the information that pertains to them.

Communication with Gen Z Should be Visual

Using visuals can also be an effective way for communicating with our student workers. Gen Z spends a lot of their time absorbing visual and video media, and they are more likely to share visual content over written content on their own social media channels.

How to Implement This

- Next time you want to send an announcement or reminder — for example, about an upcoming staff meeting — try sending a visual that looks like a social media post with five words or less.
- Instead of writing down directions on how to perform a task, try recording a video and sharing it with your staff.

Digital Preference Doesn't Mean Impersonal

Young people are constantly surrounded by messaging, whether through TV or internet advertisements, social media, or text messages and alerts. One key for communication is to cut through all of the noise to capture the attention of Gen Z. In fact, research shows while texting may be the preferred method of communication for Gen Z, one-on-one communication is the most effective way to reach them.

As leaders, it is important we remember to provide a personal touch in our communication with students. It can be easy to get lost in the use of technology as a means of communicating as it often makes it easier for both ourselves and the students.

For instance, when something needs to be addressed with a student worker who is not at work at the same time as us, we may want to shoot them a text message. And in some situations, texting is still an appropriate way to communicate. However, in situations where we want our communication to be meaningful, it is necessary to remember that face-to-face is more important than it often gets credit for.

In addition, it is important we give our young adults quality face-to-face time in order to really get to know them. Their communication from leadership should go beyond emails and texts with work announcements.

How to Implement This

- It is a good idea to walk around our recreation facilities and get to know the staff by asking them how their semester is going, what projects they are working on and what interests they have outside of work or school.
- When an issue needs to be addressed, try messaging a staff member and asking them to come by and meet face-to-face to discuss it. This will not only help them remember the conversation versus just reading a message, but it will be easier for them to understand certain tones and expectations.