

TAILOR YOUR ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY TO EACH GENERATION

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Different Generations, Different Engagement Drivers

Due to record low employee engagement levels, employers are wisely shifting their priorities and resources to improving engagement. Companies do so by focusing on certain employee experiences, or “drivers,” that are thought to have a significant impact on engagement.

When it comes to prioritizing engagement drivers, however, most organizations fail to take generational differences into account. Instead, they manage engagement under a one-size-fits-all strategy without differentiating between the intrinsic motivations and values of each generation in the workforce today. This is a costly mistake that diminishes an employer’s value proposition, and actively contributes to employee attrition and revenue loss.

To effectively increase employee engagement, a deeper understanding of and investment in the personal and professional motivations of each generation is critical.



Baby Boomer Drivers – Professional Identity, Prestige & Wellness

Baby Boomers (born 1944-1962) have always worked and played hard, often competing with their numerous peers to get ahead and display outward symbols of success. As a result, their values center around professional identity and prestige while staying youthful and healthy. The way to increase Boomer engagement is to implement strategies and tactics that will improve their:

- Core Career Identity – Do they love what they do and feel deeply connected to their job?
- Professional Status – Do they feel externally validated and rewarded for their efforts?
- Physical & Mental Health– Are they optimistic about their own well-being?

Generation X Drivers– Mobility, Security & Balance

Generation X (born 1963-1981) grew up during a time when life seemed to be falling apart. As children, they watched the events of the energy crisis, Watergate, corporate downsizing, and AIDS unfold in front of them. These were the “latchkey kids” of divorced, dual-income, late-working parents. As a result, Gen Xers value security, mobility (which they see as a means to security) and work/life balance. To improve engagement in this generation, focus on their outlook toward:

- Professional Development – Do they believe there are real opportunities to advance within the company or increase their transferable skills?
- Job Security & Autonomy – Does their employment situation feel secure and within their own control?
- Work/Life Balance – Do they feel alignment between their professional and personal lives?

Millennial Drivers – Feedback, Flexibility & Meaning

Millennials (born 1982-2000) experienced educational and parental systems rich in praise. They are accustomed to and expect frequent encouragement and acknowledgement. Having grown up in a 24/7 world of global events and communication, they are motivated to solve large-scale problems and see blurred boundaries between work and the rest of their lives. To improve engagement in this generation, focus on strengthening Millennial attitudes toward:

- Feedback & Growth – Do they perceive their supervisors as mentors who actively support and guide them in their careers?
- Meaningful Brands & Work – Are they enthusiastic about their employer’s impact on the world and the opportunities available to solve “real” problems?
- Flexible Work – Does their work arrangement allow them to manage their professional and personal obligations fluidly?

The Bottom Line

Generational differences in values, motivations and behavior are significant and directly inform perceptions about work and the workplace. Employee engagement is a necessary investment of resources, and can succeed if companies are willing to adopt a more strategic approach tailored to each generation.