

6 tips on how to connect with Gen Z

A recent Bloomberg survey found that Generation Z (Gen Z) has a purchasing power of \$360m (R560,737,296). While businesses would be foolish not to incorporate this demographic into their marketing efforts, engaging with this savvy generation necessitates a different approach.



Source: © raw pixel [123rf](#) Engaging with Gen Z requires a different approach

Born between 1997 and 2015 and in the age range of seven to 25 years old in 2022, Gen Z is a generation with enormous influence, for a business to reap the benefits, it is crucial to understand what resonates with this audience.

This generation values corporate social responsibility and brand advocacy. It is a generation sceptical of business and not hesitant to speak up to demand change.

As a customer, they want brands to join them in speaking out, and those that do will earn their loyalty - and money. GenZ feels they can make a difference, and they expect the companies they support to believe the same. This requires more than just words; it also requires action.

1. Ambassadors for change

For GenZ activism is not a recreational pastime. They are who they are because they recognise the value of social justice in their lives. As a result, brands that ignore them will suffer.

"Gen Z shares similar values and interests," Zuko Mdwaba, area vice president, Salesforce South Africa, says, "They understand the concept of a global society and are good at building connections, and communicating with clients where they live, which is online, especially on social media platforms, is critical."

Giving helps young people cope with the suffering they experience as a result of global disasters. It enables them to connect with one another and with the issues that matter to them.

This is a smart audience, says Mdwaba, who can detect insincerity or empty statements. "They are hoping for change. Once you've built these relationships, they'll become ambassadors for your message," Mdwaba explains.

2. Authentic connections

"Now, more than ever, we need to feel connected to one another. That feeling extends to our brands, and how they define our digital and real experiences. Gen Z has their finger on that pulse, knowing that what a brand does is more important than what they say they do," says Glenn Gillis, CEO of Sea Monster, an animation, gaming and AR company.

"It used to be that customers had to prove their loyalty to companies. Now it's the other way around. In fact, most loyalty schemes are only reward schemes, where your attention and spend are motivated by short-term, extrinsic motivation. That's not a bad thing of course; we all love free stuff and, thankfully, these offers are now more data-driven, relevant and contextual," Gills explains.

"But true loyalty comes when we are also intrinsically connected to a brand or organisation. Driven by creativity, self-expression and a sense of shared purpose, we seek out experiences which make us part of a community. We need to belong.

"Our time and attention matter to us (it's all we have really), and it should matter to our brands – not in a way that leads to exploitation, but one that leads to authentic connections. The kind of connections that Gen Z seem to want and respect from brands," says Gills.

3. Conscious consumerism

According to Jonathan Hurvitz, CEO of Teljoy, the shift to more conscious consumerism is primarily driven by Gen Z. Hurvitz adds that research shows that this cohort of consumers desires a minimalist, low-impact lifestyle.

"As users rather than owners, they want to enjoy a product without having to worry about its environmental impact. By subscribing to a product for as long (or as little) as it is needed, whether it is office furniture while they are working from home or a seasonal appliance such as a gas heater, they feel as if they are doing their bit to minimise their carbon footprint and reduce waste," says Hurvitz.

"Companies that offer this flexible model that meets customers' specific needs, will satiate Gen Z's desire for a more transient, experiential lifestyle while they do their best for the planet," adds Hurvitz.



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4. Environmentally conscious

Gen Z is keenly aware of causes and hugely environmentally conscious, says Tshepo Matlou, head of marketing and communications at Jurni, a local stay booking platform.

"If you haven't done so yet, implement smart eco-friendly initiatives at your establishment," he says.

"There are so many brilliant green tourism ideas out there, like installing a water-bottle filling station at reception, using sustainable furnishings in your rooms, sourcing food from nearby suppliers, donating leftover food to charities, composting, and water-wise gardening. As you improve your sustainability practices, get the word out. Share it on social media, using hashtags to appeal to eco-conscious consumers," he advises.

Aware of how tough the past few years have been for small businesses, Gen Z travellers will also be rallying to show their support by booking stays at locally owned guesthouses and B&B's.

"Businesses within the travel sector would do well to capitalise on this by highlighting the things that make them authentic and unique. Play to your strengths in your marketing, showcasing any aspects that will connect them to the area they are visiting," says Matlou.

5. Meet Gen Z where they are

Head of the digitally-based motor insurer, MiWay Blink, Christiaan Steyn says business needs to meet Gen Z at the place of their comfort.

"Gen Z doesn't like barriers. They've been exposed to an influx of information more than any other generation before them and their approach to business reflects it.

"Because of the enormous inflow of information coming their way from the moment they opened their eyes, compared to their Millennial sisters and brothers, Gen Z is used to having their world revolve around access to and processing of information. This generation is active in their quest for authentic services and customer experience when they spend and, as a result, they look up everything online.

"This is a generation that goes digital every day. Most of their interactions with brands, and the outside world in general, are digital. To resonate with them, we meet them where they already are - at their place of comfort, digitally. This is a convenient space for us because we are a fully digital insurance provider," he explains.

6. Savings savvy

Gen Z is the most savings-savvy generation, says Tony Mallam, managing director of microsavings platform, upnup.

"Not only are they looking for innovative ways to save, but they are also more likely to consider non-traditional investment options. In fact, cryptocurrency is the second most common investment for this generation, after stocks and ahead of mutual funds.

"Having grown up with digital technology, Gen Z embraces fintech and they are not afraid to engage with platforms that offer varied opportunities to build their investment portfolios," Mallam says.