

How to engage employees (Generation Ys or Generation Zs) throughout the employee lifecycle?

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Engaging and keeping Millennial (Gen Y) and Generation Z employees has become a strategic objective for hospitality human resource departments. With Millennials born between 1981 and 1996 now constituting the majority of the U.S. workforce and Generation Z born from 1997 onwards constituting the emerging talent pool, hotels must adapt HR practices to meet the desires and expectations of these cohorts in order to remain competitive employers. It is estimated that by 2025, Millennials will make up 75% of the global workforce (Smith & Nichols, 2015). Hotels that fail to update traditional engagement strategies and provide a positive employee experience risk losing top young talent to other progressive organizations.

When compared to prior cohorts such as Generation X and Baby Boomers, Gen Y and Gen Z demonstrate significant generational variations in their attitudes, values, and motives. Both generations are extremely ambitious, self-assured, and tech-savvy, and they value greater work-life balance, collaboration, and flexibility from employers than older workers (Schullery, 2013). They want meaningful employment, opportunity for speedy progress, and frequent feedback and acknowledgment. Corporate social responsibility and diversity/inclusion strategies are also popular among this age. However, the two groups are not identical; Generation Z is more socially concerned, entrepreneurial, and financially savvy than Millennials (Schawbel, 2015).

To attract, motivate, and retain younger talent, human resource departments must collaborate with leadership and adapt engagement strategies over the employee lifetime. Redesigning recruiting marketing to emphasize development and purpose,

phasing out antiquated orientation processes in favour of mentorships and online onboarding, providing access to continuous learning and career mobility opportunities, embracing flexibility and work-life balance policies, and publicly recognizing contributions

through merit rewards or peer recognition programs tailored to Gen Y/Z preferences (Stewart et al., 2017) are key focus areas. Those who modernize their cultures and workplace practices to match with the values of Millennials and Generation Z will have a competitive advantage.

Human resources (HR) play a critical role in engaging employees, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, who now make up the majority of the global workforce. Human resource departments must adjust their tactics to attract, develop, and retain younger people across the employment lifecycle (Schullery, 2013). Understanding the distinct qualities of Generations Y and Z is essential for engagement.

Millennials tend to be confident, ambitious, and tech-savvy, valuing work-life balance, collaboration, and meaningful work (Ng et al., 2010). They desire rapid advancement, personalized growth opportunities, and frequent feedback from managers (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Generation Z shares similarities with Millennials but tend to be even more oriented toward social issues and purpose-driven work. They favour companies with diversity and inclusion policies (Barnes, 2009). Both generations expect open communication, work-life balance, and flexibility from employers more than older workers did (Schawbel, 2015).

In order to engage these groups, established HR practices must be updated. Highlighting training programs, progression timetables, and corporate social responsibility efforts during attraction and recruitment appeals to Gen Y/Z's desire for growth and purpose (Espinoza et al., 2010). Work-life policies should be promoted. Mentorships and buddy systems aid in the smooth transfer of new hires (Ferri-Reed, 2013). Ongoing involvement necessitates HR collaborating with managers on customized growth plans, regular feedback sessions, and a wide range of responsibilities (Stewart et al., 2017).

Flexibility in when and where work gets done boosts engagement by supporting work-life balance (Schullery, 2013). Public employee recognition programs utilizing peer awards and rewards like new assignments are ideal for Millennial/Gen Z retention, as is emphasizing corporate vision (Ferri-Reed, 2012). Separation should include thorough exit interviews to learn engagement insights.

Offering employee volunteer days is one example of a hotel engagement strategy. This provides substantial community involvement and networking possibilities for Generation Y/Z. During slower seasons, rotating front-line personnel through different tasks provides them with fresh skills and challenges. Secondments across hotel locations satisfy mobility aspirations by allowing employees to explore recent places and brands. Introducing reverse mentoring programs so that younger employees may exchange technical knowledge with senior leaders takes advantage of their skills. Creating a work-from-home policy demonstrates a dedication to flexibility.

The JD-R model provides a framework for employee engagement initiatives. The model posits that work engagement results from the fit between an employee's job demands and job resources provided by an organization (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Job demands are aspects like workload, expectations, and emotional demands. Job resources include things like feedback, autonomy, and learning opportunities. The higher the job resources, the more likely an employee will experience work engagement characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy. HR should aim to minimize job demands that overwhelm younger staff, while maximizing key job resources like development, flexibility, and work-life policies that appeal to Gen Y/Z.

Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt are examples of significant hotel companies that have successfully implemented Millennial/Gen Z engagement tactics. Marriott's "GenNOW" program educates managers on the best ways to communicate with youthful employees. They value community, use mobile apps to engage employees, offer volunteer opportunities, and allow employees to swap positions or places on a yearly basis (Meola, 2016). Hilton establishes clear standards and then gives Gen Y/Z employees liberty in how they accomplish those expectations. Recruiting highlights their adaptability and mobility choices. Hyatt created the "Colleague Connect" online community portal for employees to engage, share feedback, and participate in culture building.

Further strategies human resources can employ to engage Millennials and Gen Z across the employee lifecycle include:

Create internship and apprenticeship programs to provide students and recent graduates with hands-on experience. This delivers accurate job previews. Attend local

college/university career fairs to raise business recognition among younger talent pools. Highlight corporate social responsibility initiatives that cater to the values of Generation Y/Z. Establish employee ambassador or "buddy" programs in which current employees volunteer to mentor future candidates during the hiring process. It gives genuine understanding. Promote job vacancies on platforms chosen by Millennials/Gen Z - Optimized job boards, tailored social media campaigns on Instagram/TikTok, and employee networks. Make the company's mission, values, diversity, and inclusion policies clear in job advertising and on the careers website. These qualities are appealing to Generation Y/Z. Implement referral reward programs, as Millennials and Generation Z value peer validation.

Centre onboarding on relationship and cultural development. Introduce new hires to potential mentors and assign "buddies" as soon as possible. Provide additional onboarding help for young managers who are directing direct reporting for the first time to ensure leadership success. To appeal to the tech-savvy Gen Y/Z proclivities, leverage technology like as applications and online portals that provide onboarding resources on-demand. Survey new hires on their experiences periodically during onboarding and act on input to convey a listening culture. If possible, provide flexibility in onboarding schedules, allowing for remote components and self-paced learning.

Implement formal mentoring and reverse mentoring programs to promote multidirectional learning and growth. Give Millennials/Gen Z access to numerous e-learning modules, webcasts, and online training programs that allow for self-directed learning. Provide tuition support or reimbursement to assist in funding advanced degrees, which Generation Y/Z values for advancement. Conduct frequent pulse surveys to solicit input and ideas from employees. Shows the company's dedication to continuous improvement. Create clear advancement and mobility paths across business sectors, brands, and locations. Record succession plans. Provide development venues such as innovation centres and "future forums" for Generation Y/Z to collaborate and suggest innovative ideas.

Officially recognize Gen Y/Z achievements through awards, events, newsletters, and the company intranet. Peer approval is highly valued. Set benchmarks and maintain pay competitively. Pay is important to Millennials/Gen Z, but it is not the sole one. Encourage

work-life balance and wellbeing by implementing policies such as remote work, flexible scheduling, additional paid time off, exercise stipends, and mental health benefits. Use town halls, vlogs, and chat platforms to promote open communication and openness about corporate goals, decisions, and finances. Conduct stay interviews on a regular basis to uncover what drives and engages younger employees to advance their careers internally. Provide chances for giving back, such as paid volunteer days and corporate fundraising activities that appeal to Generation Y/Z's feeling of purpose.

Conduct in-depth exit interviews to determine the reasons for departure and chances to improve the employment experience in the future. Create alumni networks to stay connected with departing Gen Y/Z personnel for prospective rehiring. Give departing employees access to career services such as résumé evaluations and interview coaching so they can leave on good terms., Gather feedback from surviving Gen Y/Z employees following separations in order to address any negative effects on engagement or morale. Keep an open mind about boomerang employees who may desire to return to the organization after earning outside experience.

In the hotel business, the importance of HR adapting engagement strategies for the growing Millennial and Gen Z workforce cannot be overstated. Adapting the employee experience to younger generations' values such as transparency, autonomy, mobility, work-life balance, diversity, and a desire for purpose and development opportunities will be critical to long-term attracting, motivating, and retaining top talent from these cohorts. Companies that are slow to adapt traditional HR practices to the needs of Generation Y/Z may struggle to retain young workers, who now dominate the employment pipeline.

To summarize, human resource departments in the hotel industry must prioritize changing their engagement and retention tactics to meet the tastes and expectations of Millennial and Generation Z employees. Companies that fail to update old HR practices established for previous cohorts may struggle to attract and retain fresh talent now that these generations make up the bulk of the labour pool. Leading hotel chains such as Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt have pioneered the modernization of recruiting, onboarding, development, compensation, and company culture to meet the needs of ambitious, tech-savvy Millennial and Gen Z workers who value purpose, continuous growth, work-life balance, and flexibility from their employers.

Other hotels must follow suit throughout the employee lifecycle, emphasizing development, advancement, and mobility opportunities during recruiting, transitioning away from antiquated orientation models in favour of mentorships and social media-enhanced onboarding, providing access to self-directed and mobile learning for continuous skill growth, offering remote work and flexible leave policies that support work-life balance, and recognizing contributions through prompt feedback and peer A one-size-fits-all strategy will not work. The JD-R model provides a valuable framework, emphasizing the need of providing important job resources like as career development, work-life balance regulations, and leadership assistance in order to minimise workload difficulties and foster important levels of engagement among younger talent pools. To remain competitive, hotel people's strategies must be as inventive and forward-thinking as other areas of business. Hotels can cultivate an atmosphere where young talent can thrive and reach their full potential while driving economic success by proactively changing workplace practices and culture to the new reality of a Millennial and Gen Z dominated workforce.

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