

### Communicating with Gen Y Employees

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Gen Y employees (often described as those born after 1980) are typically technologically savvy and creative, with lots of energy, strong informal networks and a fresh perspective. They can be great employees for any organization; however, Gen Y employees have a different set of needs to the generations of employees preceding them.

#### Generation Y employees – communication preferences

From a communications perspective, Gen Y employees tend to prefer technology over face-to-face communication and are good at multi-tasking. Other characteristics and preferences include:

**Information in very small chunks.** Gen Y employees prefer to absorb information in small chunks. Concise updates with further information available via hyperlink suit this generation well. Consider scrolling news feeds, short articles in electronic staff magazines (even better if content is user generated as it can be with SnapMag) and short video updates.



**Communicate through photos and video.** Gen Y employees, as the biggest users of sites like YouTube and Flickr engage well with images and video. Turn corporate screensavers into interactive bill boards and bring internal communications messages to life by communicating visually. Stock photography sites provide a wide range of images to convey any type of message for as little as \$1.

The SnapComms screensaver messaging tool allows you to embed hyperlinks into screensaver billboards allowing staff to interact with messages and follow links to more information.

The SnapComms video tool delivers short video updates directly to targeted staff groups. Set video recurrence options so that unviewed video alerts 'pop up' a specified number of times as a reminder to watch.

**Visually rich messaging.** All of the SnapComms channels allow you to brand internal communications templates to provide visually rich messaging formats.

**Humor and irony.** Gen Y employees typically love the use of humor and irony. Allow them to produce their own short humorous videos to show what they are doing to support a particular initiative and use the SnapComms channels to distribute the final videos to targeted employee groups.

Use the SnapComms Staff Quiz tool to send targeted staff quizzes to support internal communications messages or to reinforce learning. Include a humorous option to ensure that Generation Y employees enjoy participating.

**Instant rewards.** The Generation Y employee typically wants instant gratification. Use the staff quiz tool to reinforce key corporate messages and to build knowledge and capability. The SnapComms staff quiz tool is designed to allow you to offer staff prizes based on correct answers and/or speed of response.

**Cynical of corporate spin.** The unethical behavior of corporate organizations has become more visible online due to the rise of social media. Everything from a single instance of poor customer service to massive corporate scandals are under the social media microscope. Gen Y employees tend to be idealistic and judgmental and, as a result, corporate mouth pieces and top down formal communications can be viewed with cynicism.



Avoid polished formal internal communications with little interaction and provide a more 'unvarnished' message with lots of opportunities for questions, discussion and interaction. Sometimes, not having all the answers ready but saying, "we'll get back to you on this" can make internal communications seem more genuine (as long as you actually follow up).

SnapComms provide a range of internal social media tools that can be easily targeted to specified groups of staff. They can easily be used to back up more traditional internal communications. Use them to allow staff to provide feedback, ask questions and have their say around a particular initiative or formal communication.

**Need to be consulted and involved.** Generation Y employees want to add value from day one. They like to be consulted and involved. Two way communication is critical for Gen Y employees who will be turned off by top down, one way communications.

Provide opportunities for dialog, for example a CEO blog needs to have a tone that is genuine and open, where questions and comments are welcomed and responded to.

The SnapComms pop-up staff invite tool integrates with Outlook and allows you to invite targeted staff to face-to-face briefing sessions. The format allows you to offer smaller face-to-face meetings with multiple time slot and venue options as well as to gather questions and issues prior to the face-to-face session.

In addition to internal social media channels to consult and involve staff, the SnapMag tool is a unique electronic magazine that utilizes user generated content - the perfect way for Gen Y employees to have a voice in a more structured format than an employee discussion forum.



**Value ideas.** Create an open environment where Gen Y employees feel like their ideas are valued. The SnapComms Staff Quiz format allows you to involve staff by running quizzes around the naming of new initiatives, projects, products etc. The tool allows you to push out short staff surveys to targeted employee computer screens to gather opinions and feedback on a wide range of issues.

**Regular feedback.** It is pointless to gather ideas and feedback unless Generation Y employees see how the information is being used and making a difference. Keep staff up to speed on progress using tools like SnapMag, Scrolling News Feeds and Desktop Alerts.

### Engaging Generation Y employees

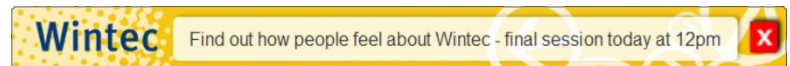
Many Gen Y employees aren't as willing to sacrifice as much as the Baby Boomers for their work so engaging them is particularly important.

**It's more than money.** Gen Y employees tend to think like entrepreneurs but value relationships over money. Find ways to capture ideas and innovation in formats that allow staff with similar interests to connect. The SnapComms tools make it easy to set up, target and manage a range of employee discussion forums to allow this process to happen.

The SnapComms Internal Social Media channels auto-authenticate to the local Snap client residing on employee's computers meaning that; passwords are not required, forum access rights can be targeted to specific groups, forum content is not available to individuals who have not been targeted with rights (including those outside of the organization) and comprehensive reporting is available (such as the time that each employee is spending within discussion forums).

**Gen Y employees work hardest for a cause** or an end result where they can see how they have made a difference. Provide Gen Y's with regular updates on the progress of projects and initiatives. SnapMag provides an easy to use format that allows teams or individuals to submit their own updates. Scrolling News Feeds offer a way to deliver content onto targeted employee computer screens.

**Environmentally conscious.** Of all the generations, Gen Y employees are the most environmentally conscious. Internal sustainability messages can often become buried due to information overload. Raise the profile of sustainability initiatives by promoting them visually using interactive screensaver messages and back them up with appropriate articles in SnapMag.



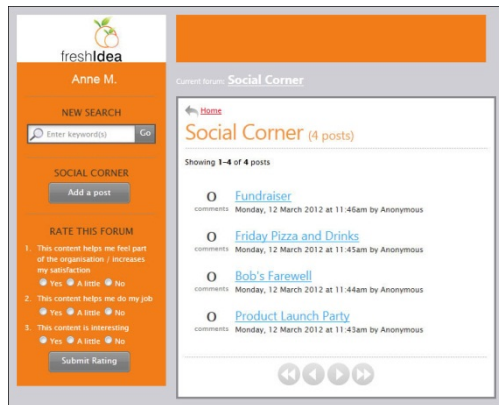
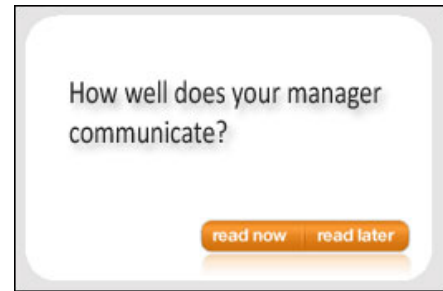
Use Pop-up Staff Surveys to benchmark awareness and behaviors around sustainability both before and after an internal communications campaign. Promote and celebrate the shift in behaviors visually using digital signage on screensavers and by getting staff to submit appropriate articles into SnapMag.

### The risks of Generation Y employees

Gen Y employees bring a great many benefits to employers prepared to take the necessary steps to engage them. However, there are some risks:

**Generation 'Why Not?'** Gen Y employees are more likely than others to see unethical behavior as justifiable in pursuit of their goals. They may believe it is sometimes necessary to cheat, plagiarize or lie in order to succeed.

The SnapComms Internal Communications channels are a unique format that is hard to forward to unintended parties (unlike internal emails). The communications channels also offer a means to 'burn after reading'. I.e. once sensitive content is read, it can be automatically deleted from employee's computers.



**Difficult to manage.** Middle managers are often ill equipped to manage Gen Y employees. It is important to train managers in this skill, to gather feedback from their teams and to measure their effectiveness.

**Not loyal to their employers.** Gen Y Employees are the least loyal generation and it is common for them to leave or change jobs after 2 to 3 years. This has an impact from recruitment, training and knowledge management perspective as well as increasing the risk of intellectual property leakage.

The SnapComms channels are secure internal communications channels that deliver information only to the staff targeted as recipients. Tools like the Staff Quiz tool help to manage and build capability, and the Interactive Helpdesk/ Q&A channels provide the means to offer helpdesk functionality to newer staff.

**Very idealistic.** It's easy to disillusion Gen Y employees with behaviors that other generations are more willing to dismiss as 'typical and normal' for corporates. For example: poor change management, politicking and silo behaviors. Plus Gen Y employees tend to have unrealistic expectations about career advancement and salary and can mean that a Gen Y employee is more likely to leave an organization disenchanted.

**Highly connected and vocal online.** Once a Gen Y employee becomes disenchanted, the risk to an organization's brand is higher due to the fact that Gen Ys tend to be highly connected and vocal online. Negative messages can spread quickly and be hard to clean up. One blogger can trigger a news cycle which stays in Google's listings for years. It is therefore important to gather regular feedback from Gen Y employees and to keep lines of internal communication open.

It is no longer acceptable to avoid using social media internally with the excuse that "it turns into an online complaints department". It is important to provide communications channels such as secure employee discussion forums where people can voice issues and concerns securely (and anonymously if necessary). This way an organization can address and manage issues internally before they become an external PR nightmare.

The SnapComms social media channels allow the internal communications team to set up and manage interactive channels with appropriate security settings (e.g. moderation for anonymous posts or for all posts). These special security features mean that it is difficult for online conversations to become visible to those outside of the organization.

Communicating with and engaging Gen Y employees can be a daunting task, but with the right communications channels and approach in place, Gen Y employees can offer organizations an innovative, energetic and tech savvy addition to the workforce.

### Related Resources

- Bringing line managers on board
- How ihug communicates with its predominantly Gen Y employees.

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