

Gen Z vs Millennials

Survey

What impact is the generational divide between Gen Z and Millennials having on the workplace? We surveyed over 1,000 employees across different industries to understand the contrasting attitudes, behaviours and expectations of Gen Z and Millennial employees. The report shares practical advice on how businesses can bridge the generational divide for a more productive work environment with insight from workplace psychologists.

Introduction

We have launched this report into Gen Z and Millennial behaviours and attitudes at work to help businesses and managers understand how they can adapt business practices and outdated processes to suit the evolving requirements and demands of the growing section of the workforce who are digital natives and standing up for their wellbeing at work.

Our survey asked over 1,000 Gen Z and Millennial employees in the UK about their attitudes to work as well as how they perceive other generations at work.

We asked for expert commentary from two organisational psychologists who have vast understanding of the younger generations and how they fit into the workforce, as well as how each generation brings their own stereotypes and demands for change.

These experts have provided actionable insights for businesses and managers, offering different perspectives and practical ways to enhance the employee experience, work-life balance and create enjoyable workplaces where cross-generational teams can work harmoniously together.

This report offers some new ways of understanding Gen Z and Millennials at work, whether you fall into either category or work alongside them. Working people of all ages can take something away from this research and its accompanying insights.

Thank you for your interest in understanding more about cross-generational workplace attitudes, relationships and behaviours to ensure your place of work thrives on a culture of inclusion, productivity and positive relationships.

We hope it makes an impact.



Will Murray - CEO Oak Engage

Our research

We commissioned a survey between 30th August 2024 - 5th September 2024 with 1,001 employed respondents from a nationally representative sample of UK adults who are either Gen Z (aged 16-27) and Millennials (28-43).

 Over 1,000 employees surveyed across the UK

 Two different age groups, from 16-43

Z Gen Z (16-27)

M Millennials (27-43)

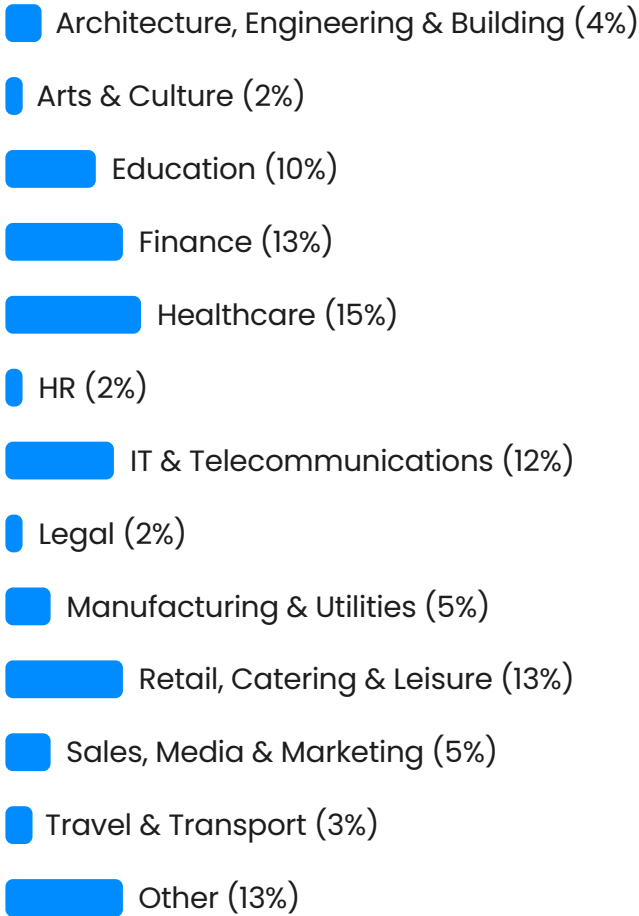
Identified as

Female (63%)

Male (36%)

Non-binary (1%)

Across a wide range of industry sectors:



Our expert contributors

We asked experts in the field to offer practical tips that you can implement across the business in order to increase engagement across both Gen Z and Millennial generations and to bridge the divide. The following experts have shared their insights.



Leanne Elliott, Business Psychologist and co-host of 'Truth, Lies and Work' podcast

Leanne is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist, Consultant and Coach with a proven track record of building workplaces that empower teams and enable performance.

She is also Co-host of the award-winning psychology podcast, Truth, Lies & Work. Breaking into the prestigious HubSpot Podcast Network in 2022, the show is dedicated to helping business leaders simplify the science of the workplace.

As a Psychologist and Consultant, Leanne has built a reputation for recruiting top talent, nurturing well-being and developing high performance cultures in leading private and public organisations, including the NHS, Department of Work & Pensions, Pinnacle People, Arielle Executive and RBS.

More recently, Leanne has dedicated her time to bringing best practice to small and medium sized enterprises as Co-Founder of people and culture consultancy, Oblong.



**Anna Hislop, Leadership coach,
facilitator, and author**

Anna Hislop is an experienced leadership coach, facilitator, and author known for her expertise in understanding and maximising the potential of Generation Z in the workplace. In her book “You Only Have to Ask! How to Realise the Full Potential of Gen Z at Work” she shares a comprehensive guide for organisations seeking to harness the unique strengths of Gen Z employees.

Drawing from her background in leadership, employee engagement, talent management, and cross-cultural collaboration, she empowers leaders to create environments where Gen Z employees can thrive and contribute meaningfully.

She collaborates with leading companies across sectors such as Media & Communication, Retail, Med Tech, and Healthcare, and works with leaders and organisations across EMEA, the UK, and the US.

Key findings from the research

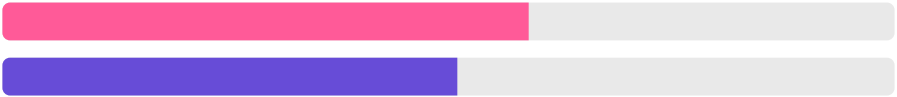
50% of both Gen Z and Millennial employees report burnout



48% of employees 'frequently' feel burned out at work



59% of Gen Z employees said they plan to leave their job within the next two years, vs 51% of Millennials



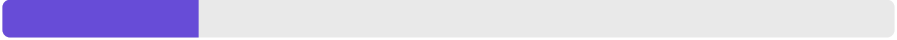
Almost two thirds of Gen Z intend to resign in the next two years, blaming outdated workplace tech and seeking career growth opportunities over salary and flexible working



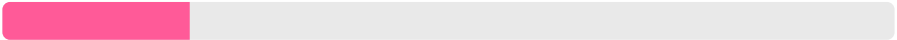
26% of Gen Z employees believe their Millennial colleagues normalise working long hours



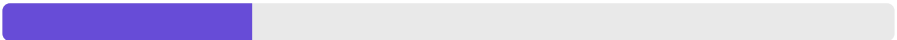
22% of Millennials describe Gen Z as 'entitled'



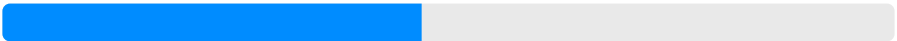
21% of Gen Z prioritise career progression



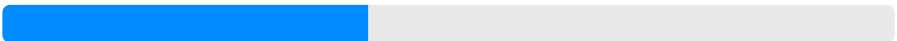
28% of Millennials chase salary



47% of employees believe a generational divide in the workplace leads to miscommunication



Of those above, 41% say it is due to differences in work ethic



60% of Gen Z and Millennial employees would consider quitting their job if a better workplace culture was available

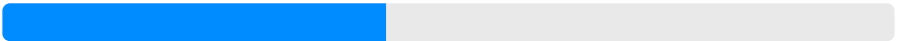


How different are Gen Z and Millennials at work?

We asked our Gen Z survey respondents to describe the traits of their Millennial colleagues*.

Approximately 4 in 10 agreed that their Millennial counterparts are team players and multi-taskers, but over 25% agreed that Millennials normalise working long hours.

Team player: 43%



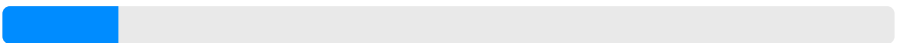
Multi-tasker: 39%



Normalises long working hours 26%



Difficult to work with 13%



In contrast, when we asked Millennials to describe their Gen Z colleagues, 44% agreed that they were tech-savvy, but over 22% thought that Gen Z were entitled, with 18% agreeing that they are 'lazy' and have 'no work ethic'.

An interesting statistic that proves a disconnect in work ethic is that 18% of Gen Z believed that Millennials have no boundaries between work and personal life, whereas Millennials thought 28% of Gen Z are work-life balanced focused.

We asked two workplace psychologists whether ‘entitlement’ in the case of work–life balance is in fact a positive trait of the newest working generation.



Leanne Elliott, Business Psychologist and co-host of ‘Truth, Lies and Work’ podcast

“I’m not at all surprised by this finding! Every generation has been labelled by the one before it. Gen-Z are entitled, Millennials were self-absorbed, Gen X were slackers and Boomers were rebels. The truth is this: The youth of every generation feels entitled and frustration with the status quo has always been the driving force of change for generations.

The Baby Boomers protested for improved health and safety in the workplace, Gen-X campaigned for national minimum wage and millennials pioneered flexible working agreements.

And now, because Gen-Z are demanding ethical business practices and better mental health support they are labelled as ‘entitled’.

Yes, Millennials may see Gen Z’s expectations as unrealistic or entitled, but this is likely just another shift in the ongoing evolution of workplace culture. Like every generation before them, Gen Z’s demands can be a catalyst for positive change. Their insistence on fair treatment and support for mental health forces companies to rethink outdated practices.

For Gen Z, and many Millennials, work is not just about a paycheck; it’s about finding a role that aligns with their values, offers opportunities for personal growth and allows for a healthy life outside of work. This attitude is pushing companies to adapt their cultures and policies to meet new expectations around flexibility, meaningful work and support for mental well-being.

The idea that Gen-Z are 'entitled' is actually helping to create a healthier, more sustainable workplace for all generations - I'm okay with that, and businesses should be too! Rather than focus on the divide between generations, consider how adapting to the reasonable expectations of this new generation could help leaders to build a workplace culture that not only attracts and retains Gen Z talent but also sets a higher standard for overall employee well-being."



**Anna Hislop, Leadership coach, facilitator,
and author**

"Gen Z, they're often portrayed as being entitled, having unrealistic expectations, being impatient and difficult to manage, particularly in the media narrative. I believe this rubs off on how people at work experience this generation.

But is being entitled only a negative trait? I don't think so. Unlike older generations, Gen Z aren't shy about voicing their needs, but it can sometimes clash with the 'pay your dues' mindset and mentality of the past.

From a psychological perspective, this self-advocacy is crucial. In fact, this assertiveness can really shift workplaces towards prioritising employee wellbeing and Gen Z can pave the way for other generations to be really successful in asking to have their needs met. So if Gen Z's entitlement helps challenge outdated norms and push for a healthier, more balanced, work environment, it's not only positive, it's essential for progress."

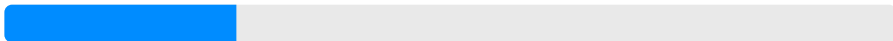
Millennial management styles

Thinking back to when the first Millennials entered the workforce they would have had Gen X or Boomer managers, each of whom would have had their own management approaches. What is clear in the older generations' attitudes to work is that they weren't shy to work long hours to get the job done. Mental health and wellbeing at work certainly was nowhere as prominent as it is now, and often, sacrificing work-life balance seems to have trickled down when Millennials have entered managerial roles.

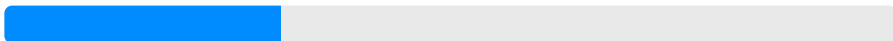
Our research shows that Millennial managers are just as, if not more, overly demanding to their Gen Z teams as their Gen X managers are to them.

Respondents were asked to describe their manager's demands on their work, rating them on a scale from 'not demanding at all - expectations are realistic and manageable' to 'extremely demanding - often sets unrealistic expectations and deadlines'

Gen Z: 25.95% ('very demanding' & 'extremely demanding')



Millennials: 30.8% ('very demanding' & 'extremely demanding')



We asked psychologist Leanne Elliott whether Millennial managers need to adapt, and have they inherited toxic traits from their older managers throughout their career?



Leanne Elliott, Business Psychologist and co-host of 'Truth, Lies and Work' podcast

"The fact that Millennial managers are as demanding on their Gen Z teams as their Gen X bosses were to them does suggest that outdated management habits are still being passed down.

Many Millennials grew up in workplaces where long hours and the always-available mindset were considered signs of dedication. Now that they're in charge, they might repeat these behaviours without thinking, because this is exactly what they experienced.

This follows what psychologists call 'Social Learning theory', which dictates that we learn by copying the behaviours of those in authority.

If their own managers relied on pressure and high expectations, Millennials might naturally do the same.

It's important to remember that the quality of management has been unacceptably poor in the UK for decades. That's because many managers are 'accidental managers'; they're promoted for being good at their technical jobs, not because they would make a great manager, and often have never had any leadership training.

In the UK, about 82% of managers fit this description, meaning they took on management roles without the skills needed to succeed.

What's worse, is that businesses aren't investing in management development. Studies show that fewer than one in three UK managers have received any kind of management training.

In comparison, the U.S. and Germany have higher standards, with 40% or more of managers trained before taking on leadership roles. When managers aren't given the right tools, they often fall back on familiar but outdated methods.

The only way to break this pattern is for businesses to change how they develop leaders. Training shouldn't just cover technical skills but also include people skills like emotional intelligence, communication and conflict management.

This training should be available throughout a manager's career, not just at the start. By making leadership development a core part of company culture and preparing managers at all levels, businesses can move away from outdated practices and create a healthier - and higher performing - workplace.

Like I said earlier, if you only do one thing, train your line managers!

In contrast to the 'demanding' nature of some managers, our research identified that Gen Z are half as likely as their Millennial counterparts to offer busy colleagues help (12.20% vs 25.55%)

Our psychologists weighed in on whether they should be expected to share the load or let their colleagues struggle, and what cultural shifts may have influenced these attitudes?



Anna Hislop, Leadership coach, facilitator, and author

“Gen Z sets really strong boundaries. They have seen burnout that is really common in older generations and they are determined not to follow that same path so they naturally try to protect their time, energy and wellbeing to avoid burnout at all costs.

Does this mean they don't care about others? Absolutely not. It just means that they are approaching this excessive workload with a healthier mindset and they'd rather point out the inbuilt structural problems in the organisation than picking up the extra work themselves.”



Leanne Elliott, Business Psychologist and co-host of 'Truth, Lies and Work' podcast

“Gen Z being half as likely as Millennials to help busy colleagues highlights some important changes in workplace culture, but the data needs more digging into to fully understand what's driving this behaviour.

It's true that cultural shifts, such as a focus on individual achievement and the rise of remote work, do play a role.

Remote environments can make it harder to see when a coworker is struggling, and growing up in a world where personal goals are highly emphasised, Gen Z might naturally prioritise their own tasks first.

However, there's another factor that may be at play - Gen Z's level of experience and confidence in the workplace.

As the youngest generation in the workforce, many Gen Z employees are still early in their careers. They may not always feel confident or experienced enough to step in, and help with tasks that they perceive as outside their expertise.

This hesitation isn't an unwillingness to help, but rather a feeling of uncertainty over whether they have the skills or knowledge to offer meaningful assistance. When you're still figuring out your own role, it can be daunting to try and support someone else.

Burnout and blurred boundaries between work and personal life also add to the challenge.

Remote work can make it difficult to switch off, and for a generation still learning to set boundaries, the pressure to keep up can make balancing their own workload with supporting others feel overwhelming.

This doesn't mean Gen Z isn't interested in being team players, but it does suggest they may need more encouragement and support in feeling capable enough to lend a hand.

To address this, leaders should look beyond the numbers and dig deeper into why Gen Z might be less likely to offer help.

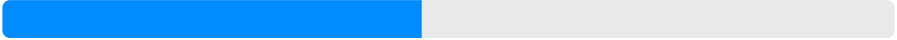
Creating a culture where collaboration is the norm starts with promoting teamwork in ways that build confidence. Leaders can encourage group projects where people of different experience levels work together, recognise and reward acts of support and provide guidance on when and how to step in.

When the idea that 'helping each other' becomes a highly-valued part of work culture, companies can ensure Gen Z feels both empowered and prepared to contribute, all while balancing their own well-being."

The generational divide

Following on from generational management styles and working within the job description, let's look at how the generational divides impact workplace experience.

47% of employees surveyed agree that the generational divide leads to miscommunication in the workplace.



Our psychologists offered their insights on how these generations can work harmoniously together, considering they'll be working together for many more years to come.



Anna Hislop, Leadership coach, facilitator, and author

“What we need is cross-generational understanding and high generational intelligence. Older generations may prefer the face to face meeting and they see time spent at work as a marker of dedication. Young generations might prefer digital collaboration, focusing on the output rather than the hours logged. Neither approach is better, necessarily, they're just different. As a manager you need to cater for these differences, adjust your communication style and adjust your systems to match the preferences of the different generations. Ensure that all voices are heard and that every generation feels included in the decision making process.

Encourage cross-generational mentoring where younger employees can share their perspectives and older ones can share their wisdom and experience. This not only builds skills, but it also fosters that mutual respect and understanding, as well as a curious mindset of ‘what can I learn from my peers?’ or, ‘what might I be able to teach my colleagues?’”



Leanne Elliott, Business Psychologist and co-host of 'Truth, Lies and Work' podcast

"This data definitely highlights some real challenges, but it might also be oversimplifying things.

Sure, different generations have different preferences. Gen Z might lean more towards digital communication, while older colleagues could be more comfortable with in-person chats.

But pointing fingers at generational gaps can distract from bigger issues.

A lot of miscommunication actually comes from common problems like unclear expectations, inconsistent feedback or poor management practices - issues that cut across all age groups.

Plus, the way we work has changed dramatically, especially with remote work and digital tools. It's not just one generation struggling to adapt. Everyone is adjusting to new ways of connecting.

And when it comes to work ethic, let's remind ourselves - every generation has been labelled 'entitled' by the one before it!

At the end of the day, we all want the same things: meaningful work, a sense of purpose and a feeling that we belong. The supposed differences in work ethic often come down to changing norms, not changing values.

So, how do we bridge these gaps? It starts with improving communication for everyone, not just targeting certain age groups.

Setting clear expectations, offering consistent feedback, and using a mix of communication methods can help cater to different preferences.

Encouraging mentorship across generations and forming mixed-age project teams can also help. When employees share knowledge and learn from each other, it breaks down stereotypes and builds a stronger sense of unity.

The key is to focus on shared goals and foster a culture where communication is open, feedback is valued and everyone feels included.

By looking beyond generational labels and addressing communication issues more broadly, we can create a workplace where all employees, regardless of age, can connect and collaborate effectively.”

What do Gen Z and Millennials value most from their employer?

We asked our survey participants if they intend to resign in the next two years.

59% of Gen Z said yes



51% of Millennials said yes



Why?

- 1 in 5 Gen Z prioritise career growth over salary and flexible working
- Work-life balance is the second-most important in Gen Z's eyes
- 39% of Millennials put work life balance and flexible working options at the top of their priority list
- 28 % of Millennials prioritise a competitive salary above all else, and will happily chase this

It makes sense that people at different points in their career will value different things. It also makes sense that if employees aren't getting what they expect or value from their employer, they won't hesitate to leave and find a role, culture or development opportunity that better suits their needs. We asked our experts what Millennial managers and wider business leaders can do to retain their budding yet frustrated Gen Z talent.



Anna Hislop, Leadership coach, facilitator, and author

“Focus on modernising workplace tech and career development. Gen Z thrives on continuous learning and rapid career progression. Implement really clear career paths, mentorship programs and personalised development plans”



Leanne Elliott, Business Psychologist and co-host of 'Truth, Lies and Work' podcast

“The reality is an average tenure of about two years is common for younger workers who are often keen to explore new opportunities.

Career growth is a major frustration – and always has been for whichever generation is joining the workforce.

While salary and flexible work options matter, Gen Z places more emphasis on opportunities for learning, development and career advancement.

They want roles with clear growth paths and the chance to take on new challenges. For them, feeling 'stuck' in a role without prospects for skill-building or advancement is a strong reason to move on.

However, there are plenty of things that millennial managers and other leaders can do to engage Gen-Z talent beyond the two-year mark. If budgets allow, start by upgrading technology. Gen Z expect modern tools, not outdated systems, and investing in the latest tech shows you value their experience.

Career development is also crucial. Offer clear growth paths, mentorship and training to keep them excited about their future at the company.

Pay transparency matters too. Gen-Z are big on fair compensation and open discussions around salaries, which helps build trust and align with their expectations.

In fact, data shows that the majority of Gen-Z won't even apply for a job if the salary isn't listed.

Remember, Gen-Z wants more than just a boss. They want a mentor who gives guidance, encouragement and regular feedback. Adopting a coaching approach to management, where you focus on their growth and development, can help to foster a deeper connection, and ultimately, increase engagement with the company.

Finally, make their work feel meaningful by showing how their efforts contribute to the bigger picture. We all want to be part of something that is making a positive contribution to the world."

Mental wellbeing

Over a quarter (26%) of Millennials and Gen Z have sought therapy or counselling for work related stress.

This is an alarming figure, so we asked the experts if this an issue of modern working practices, or if these are just services more accessible for the younger generations?



Leanne Elliott, Business Psychologist and co-host of 'Truth, Lies and Work' podcast

"It's a bit of both. Modern working practices like long hours, constant connectivity and blurred work-life boundaries, are definitely adding to stress levels.

At the same time, younger generations have grown up in a world where mental health is openly discussed and accessing support services such as counselling or therapy is more acceptable, so it makes sense that our young people are accessing this support more regularly."

What can businesses do to help their staff to reduce stress?



Leanne Elliott, Business Psychologist and co-host of 'Truth, Lies and Work' podcast

"There are many ways to reduce stress in the workplace, at an organisational, operational and individual level.

However, if you do just one thing as a business, train your line managers! Managers have the single biggest impact on employee health, wellbeing and performance.

In fact, recent data suggests that almost 70% of people believe their manager has more impact on their mental health than their therapist or doctor.

Training managers in prosocial behaviours such as civility, empathic concern and collaboration can help to build resilience and optimism in teams - a key defence against stress in the workplace.

Managers should also be trained to recognise signs of stress and intervene early - a mental health first aid course is a great way to build this knowledge and understanding.

From an operational perspective, ensure your employees have a manageable workload, streamline clunky processes to release time for more value-added activities, and reinforce the 'rest and recovery' policies you already have in place.

That's as simple as making sure your employees take their full holiday allowance or discouraging 'presenteeism' - if an employee is sick, allow them the guilt-free time off to recover.

At an individual level, it's important that you offer mental health support as a business, like counselling or mental health days. And as leaders, try to be a role model for how you look after your personal mental well-being - whether that be taking a walk every morning or setting clear boundaries when disconnecting from work.

You may also want to consider introducing more flexible ways of working. Allowing staff to manage their time and work in ways that suit them best, can help to better manage work and life demands that may be causing stress.

But remember, stress is a part of working life – and some stress is good for our mind and body.

A lack of meaning or challenge in our work can lead to ‘rust out’ which exhibits similar symptoms to burnout, such a lack of motivation and disengagement from work.

Creating a culture that openly supports mental health can help employees feel supported and more likely to seek help before things escalate.”

Workplace tech

73% Gen Z are frustrated with outdated workplace tech



63% of Millennials agree



With digital natives expected to make up 70% of the workforce by 2030, if workplaces haven’t adapted to modern tech already, they need to do so now, or they risk losing top talent.

Investment in technology is likely cheaper than the knowledge and expertise loss of losing your best performers and having to recruit to replace them.



**Anna Hislop, Leadership coach, facilitator,
and author**

“Gen Z expects seamless, efficient technology and they value constant learning. If they don’t see opportunities for growth or they experience inefficiency, then they’re out the door. So how can managers retain frustrated Gen Z talent? Firstly, upgrade your technology. Gen Z interprets outdated systems as inefficiencies on the company’s part and it really frustrates them, so investing in modern, user-friendly tools really improves their day to day experience and increases their job satisfaction.”



**Leanne Elliott, Business Psychologist and co-host
of ‘Truth, Lies and Work’ podcast**

“Gen Z’s frustrations point to deeper workplace issues beyond normal turnover.

Gen-Z are the first digital natives. They’ve never known a world without high-speed internet and smart devices, so they expect workplace tools to be modern, efficient and user-friendly.

When they encounter outdated systems, it not only feels frustrating but also leads to disengagement, as it directly impacts their ability to work effectively.

For Gen Z, technology isn’t just an add-on; it’s a basic expectation that can determine their motivation and productivity.

Companies that invest in up-to-date technology show they value their employees’ experience. Upgrading systems, automating repetitive tasks, and using digital tools that support remote work aren’t just productivity boosters, they’re crucial for retaining top talent in a tech-savvy generation.”

“Our research shows that organisations must do more to understand and address the unique needs of each generation in the workplace. By implementing the above strategies and leveraging communication and engagement tools like Oak Engage, companies can create better collaboration between Gen Z and Millennials, reduce burnout and create a more inclusive and productive work environment.”



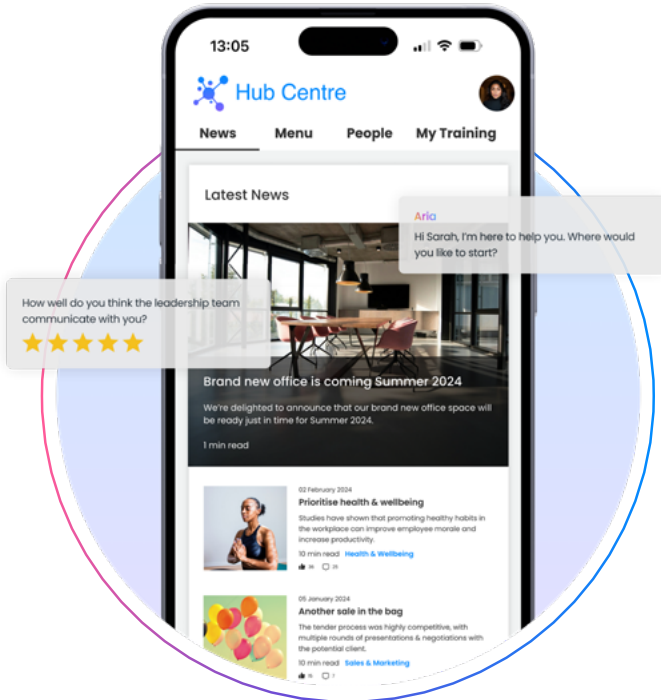
Will Murray, CEO at Oak Engage

An award-winning employee app and intranet solution

Oak Engage empowers your teams to get the right message, to the right people, at the right time.

We're here to make communication simple. We believe there is a better way to use technology to engage employees, cut through the noise, and inspire action that puts people at the heart of organisations.

The customer is at the heart of Oak Engage, with an attentive support team on hand to help with any customer queries.



Trusted by the world's biggest brands



Ready to get started?

We offer a free and personalised demo service, showcasing our intuitive and easy-to-use platform. Tailored to meet your specific needs.

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