



Influencers in the Field

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Millennials and Beyond: Winning Over the Next Generation of Association Members

Did you know that millennials and Generation Z make up **46%** of all employees? These two generations are reshaping workplace dynamics with their emphasis on flexibility, technology integration and work-life balance. Plus, they prioritize purpose-driven work environments and employers who invest in their development and well-being.

The differing workplace values of millennials and Gen Z compared to their predecessors are driving changes in workplace trends and lifestyle habits, ushering in **a new era for associations**.

Although this shift in member demographics may seem challenging, leaders should consider adjusting their association's strategy in reaching new members by keeping these key components in mind.

Understanding the Next Generation

To adjust your marketing, engagement and retention strategies to target these groups, you need to get to know them.

Conducting Research

Take full advantage of the information accessibility and interconnectedness of our digital world. Use the internet to uncover younger members' values, interests and goals.

Reaching your current and ideal prospective members at different touchpoints is important. You can directly communicate with them by emailing **surveys** and feedback forms, organizing **focus groups** and **analyzing their engagement** with your association's website and programs.

It's also essential to gather **indirect feedback** and conduct **secondary research**. There is an abundance of reports from researchers studying these generations and their values and habits — such as flexibility, social impact, career development and more.

You can also engage in **social listening**, a luxury of the digital age that allows organizations to conduct free research on millennials, Gen Z and even Generation Alpha.

Think of social listening as going on digital member or prospect safaris; observe their authentic thoughts and behaviors when communicating online. Find them in relevant spaces — such as social media, Google reviews and similar customer-rating platforms, chat rooms and other forums — and dissect the conversations they have about their daily lives.

Leveraging Data-Driven Insights

With the practices mentioned above, collect the following information on your current members and ideal prospects:

- Demographics
- Psychographics
- Values, attitudes and beliefs
- Lifestyle
- Current member program engagement, such as website traffic, benefits and events
- **Prospect interactions** with digital ad campaigns

Use your existing and newly collected information to analyze and organize your database. Look for patterns in this information to determine the best ways to promote your association with these younger groups and create ideal member personas.

This will help inform your broader membership strategy and refine your brand personality and voice in your messaging to millennials and Gen Z.

Tailored Educational Resources

Many of the youngest in Gen Z are still in the early stages of their careers and have much to learn about their field.

Sharing Educational and Informative Resources

Create educational resources addressing specific interests, such as professional development and industry trends.

You can do this through several mediums:

- Long-form industry reports
- Articles and blog posts
- Webinars
- Educational exhibitions and demonstrations at events and conferences
- Continuing education (CE) courses

You can also post short-form, small-scale educational information on social media — positioning your association as a thought leader — and boost content from other sources. Many members may use TikTok not only for entertainment but also for **research** and educational purposes. Meet them where they are by posting short-form news and insights videos as well as educational campaigns.

Developing Modern Learning Approaches

Millennials grew up when **online learning** was becoming more popular, and almost all of Generation Z was in school when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, and learning was solely virtual. With this sudden shift to remote

education, people realized its flexibility and convenience. The landscape has changed, and this younger age group expects multimedia and interactive formats to be an option.

Digital learning can be run in two different ways:

- **Asynchronous** – These courses do not happen in real-time; they can be designed to be self-paced and “on demand.”
- **Synchronous** – The instructor and students gather at the same time and participate in learning activities together.

There are many other aspects to consider when **building your online program**, such as the structure and curriculum planning, forums and modules used and topics in demand from your members.

Here are learning management systems (LMSs) you can explore to help you get started:

- Association Learning and Training LMS by D2L
- Association LMS by Crowd Wisdom
- LearnDash
- LifterLMS
- Inspire360
- Absorb
- Tovuti
- SC Training

Digital Accessibility

As “**digital natives**,” millennials and Gen Z prefer organizations to offer adequate tech-accessible solutions.

Utilizing Digital Tools

It is important to modernize your entire member and prospect experience. Implement online platforms that provide easy access to resources, events and member benefits.

Here are a few places to start:

- Maintain a fully functional, up-to-date and easy-to-navigate website.
- Ensure your third-party partners also utilize modern digital infrastructure that is compatible with your association’s platforms.
- Optimize targeted ads and touchpoints that easily lead viewers to your website and digital platforms.
- Use **AI chatbots** to offer **24/7 service** and save your

customer service team from spending time handling simple queries, making them more available for complex member issues.

- Post frequently, incorporate different formats and take an **interactive approach** with users on all social media channels.

Engagement Through Social Media

Utilize all social media channels, as these platforms are a huge part of the younger audiences' daily lives. Use your target personas and your organization's mission and values to develop a **comprehensive social media strategy**.

Your association's feed should be a mixture of various post types to inform and engage your audiences in different ways, such as:

- Promotion of offerings and events to include member benefit programs.
- General evergreen content related to the important topics and interests in their lives.
- Real-time reaction to news and stories relevant to your association's industry and programs.

Creating Community and Networking Opportunities

Bring like-minded people together and give younger people a chance to form friendships and meet senior professionals — and potential mentors — that will open doors to their future success.

Build a Sense of Belonging

Generation Z is often labeled as a lonely generation, and there is **research** backing up this generalization. Your association can offer these members a chance to improve their social lives by encouraging collaboration and **community building** through shared interests and goals.

Finding ways to bring individual members into a more connected group can bolster your membership experience and make members more likely to recommend it to people they know; you can further encourage this **word-of-mouth marketing** by creating a **referral program**.

Here are a few **insights from the ad agency Sid Lee** on what belonging means to millennials and Gen Z:

- Communities are no longer geographically dependent.
- Values-based communities are the most important; family is second.
- Those who feel they are a part of a brand's community feel they identify with the brand.

Organizing Networking Events

One of the top reasons people join an association is the networking opportunities. Even when well into their careers, **millennials still realize the benefits** of continuing

to network. As for Generation Z, they are young and looking to make connections to launch their careers.

To foster these connections, you can:

- **Frequently host events** – Offering a consistent schedule of events keeps members engaged and always gives them something to look forward to; having them in **different formats** keeps the experience from getting stale.
- **Launch mentorship programs** – These groups favor personalization, meaning building a **robust mentoring program** can be a big draw for your association.

Hold online forums – Post conversation starters; act as an admin on the forum and bring people with similar ideas and interests together.

Empowering Leadership Opportunities

Young, ambitious professionals are eager to one day become leaders. They want to be in the pipeline for those opportunities later on, and recognizing their potential keeps them motivated and builds their confidence. Associations can play a role in this.

Encourage Young Member Involvement

Provide platforms for younger members to develop as leaders within the association.

Here are a few ideas to help you get started:

- Create a leadership program or connect them to **existing programs**.
- Launch a **committee that organizes initiatives and events for young members** of the association, which is run by millennial and Gen Z leaders.
- In addition to the previous idea, that committee can have representatives advocate for the interests of younger members in the broader organization.
- Encourage participation at events and conferences, such as offering slots for younger members to give presentations on relevant topics about which they are passionate.
- Launch a project competition for young members to lead and manage their research and initiatives.

Recognizing Contributions

Millennials and Generation Z want their hard work and contributions to be acknowledged. Associations can recognize professional achievements and celebrate the involvement of younger members.

You can:

- Include them in your annual awards or have an entire category for young professionals.

- Write profiles and features about them [in your association's newsletter](#).
- Post about their achievements on social media.

Flexible Membership Options

A theme in the lives of younger generations is flexibility, and organizations of all types should consider adapting to these changes.

Offering Tiered Packages

Some young members want to be very involved, while others may only join for certain benefits. You may need to adjust your membership structure to ensure that different options are offered for different levels of engagement.

You can create different tiered plans based on:

- Price
- Desired participation
- Accessibility to benefits, programs and events

You can also offer trial memberships to those who do not want to fully commit to a membership without first testing it out.

Addressing Financial Barriers

You can offer [flexible payment plans](#) to attract those who want to be more involved and have access to more programs but can't afford a full membership. One way to do this is to offer bi-annual or quarterly dues options.

It's important to clarify to all prospective members that you are willing to work with them if their financial situation is more nuanced. Encourage them to meet with your membership team to work out a custom plan that works for both parties.

Take Care of Their Insurance Needs

Millennials and Gen Z are [struggling with insurance](#). Many are underinsured, undereducated and dissatisfied with their employers' plans. They need support to guide them through the process and access adequate options.

Offering insurance solutions — such as life and health benefits, business protection and homeowners or renters coverage — adds more value to your membership. With the support of Gallagher Affinity, you can build affordable and customizable programs that meet their unique personal and professional needs. Our experienced team of insurance advisors can help you engage your members with these products and assist you through shopping options from multiple carriers.



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