

Engagement in the Always-on Era

How humans and technology work hand-in-hand to meet rising expectations

A Verint® Research Paper

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Executive Summary

As our lives become more connected and reliant upon technology, our expectations evolve – not just for how we interact with organizations, but also for how we work. The nine to five workdays are in the past. Now, organizations that restrict operating and service hours to this eight-hour window are almost the anomaly. Powered by social media, chatbots, artificial intelligence (AI) and contact centers across time zones, customer engagement is always-on. If customers have a question, or a problem, they want it fixed now. If they cannot get what they want, then the likelihood of them going to another brand or service increases dramatically.

These changes are having a huge impact on how organizations deliver customer experience, as well as how to implement technology in the workplace. Employees are also consumers, and the omnipresence of technology in everyone's personal lives also has an impact on the expectations on technology offered in the workplace. There has been much debate about the role of robots and automation tools – the most vocal critics suggest that the digital tools that support the customer and employee experience, will do so at the cost of millions of jobs. Yet is that really the case?

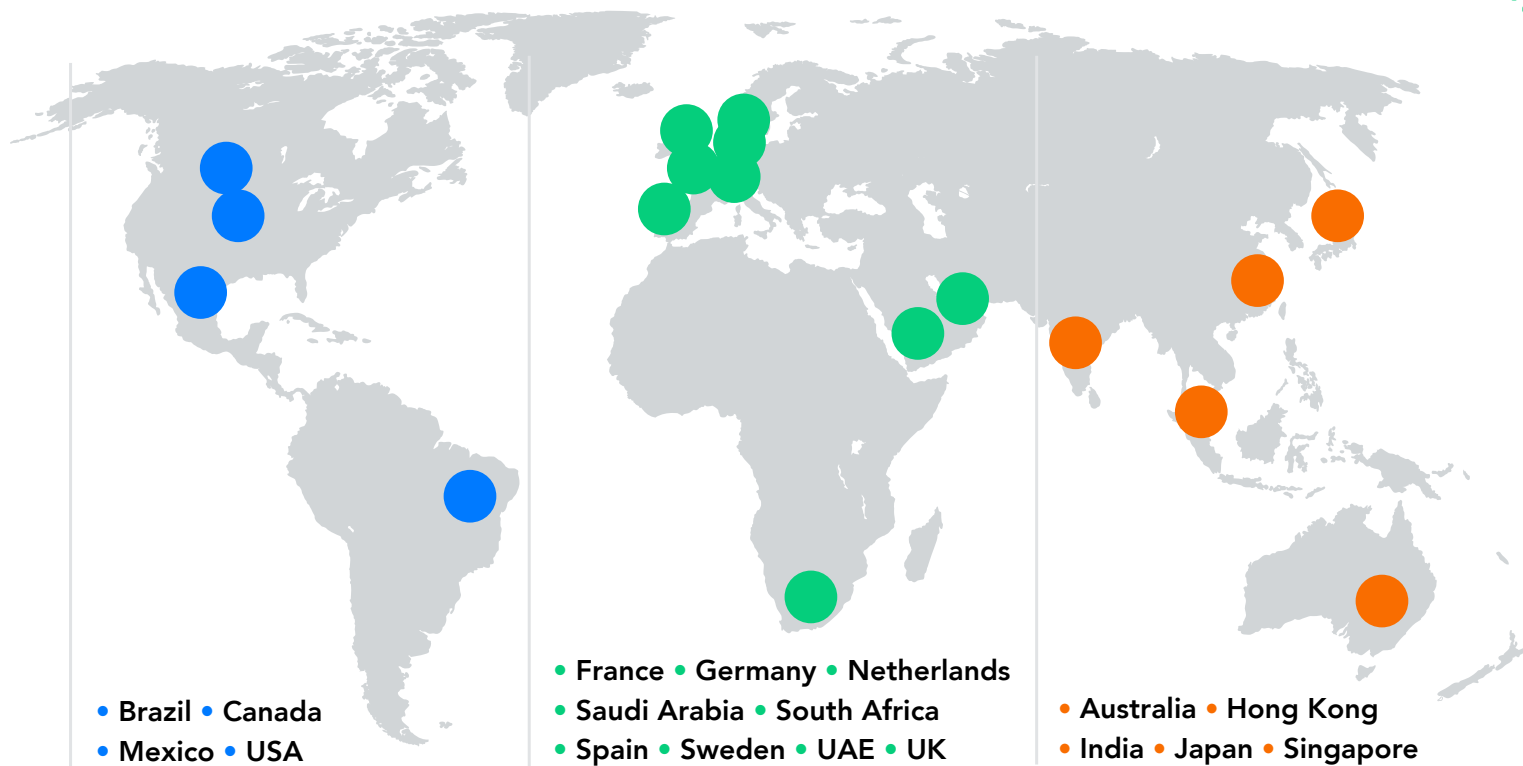
The results are clear: the demand for always-on service is very real...

We surveyed over 34,000 adults from 18 countries across the world to understand how the demand for always-on engagement has evolved, along with their attitudes towards technology in the workplace. While preferences and customer journeys vary greatly depending on circumstances, the results are very clear – the demand for always-on service is very real, the importance of humans to deliver personalised service is very high, and employees crave the latest technologies to improve their working lives.

...which can be delivered by people and technology working hand-in-hand

In this paper, we will explore what the results mean for businesses, the opportunities available and the challenges to be overcome. What comes across clearly is that there is a demand not for a world in which our interactions are solely with machines, but for one in which people and digital tools work hand-in-hand. This hybrid workforce approach is key to delivering an enhanced customer experience that keeps customers loyal and engaged.

We surveyed over 34,000 adults from 18 countries across the world



1. Service is always-on

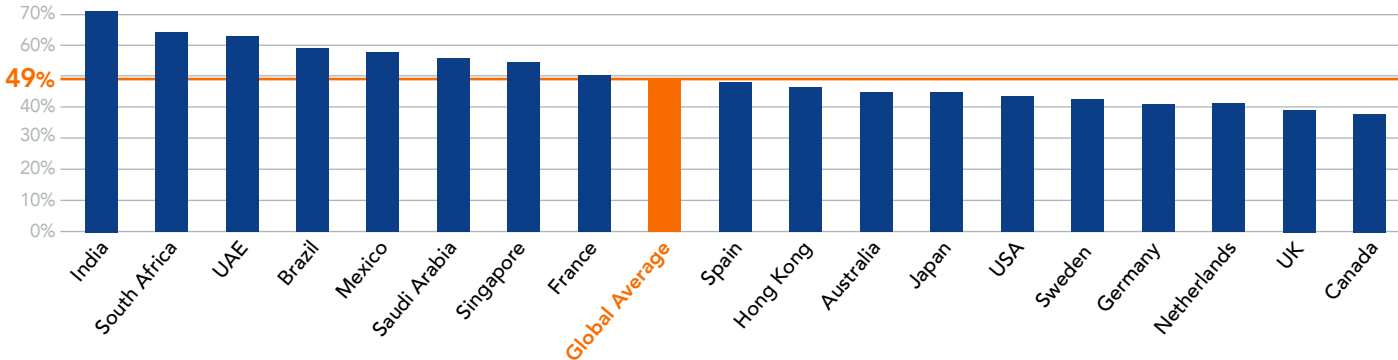
In the three years since our *Digital Tipping Point* research first explored the relationship between human and digital service, digital channels have become a mainstay of the customer engagement landscape. In the past year alone, demand to engage with organizations primarily through a mobile app has increased 57 percent and video chat by 50 percent.

While digital channels are rising in popularity, the value of human interaction remains – even amongst younger generations. Unsurprisingly those under 35 use these digital channels more than the others – but it is not universal. In fact, those aged between 18 and 34 are less likely to use online self-service tools (36 percent, compared with the global average of 46 percent).

And in contrast to the stereotype of younger generations being digital-first, the research found that they do value human interaction, with 29 percent of those aged between 18 and 34 stating that going in-store is their preferred communication method (in line with the global average) and 28 percent said speaking on the phone (against a global average 30 percent).

Adoption of these digital and automated channels has been driven in equal measure of customer demand and organizations’ desire to differentiate their customer experience while managing costs. But, combined with the broader technology transformation that we are in the midst of, these digital channels have ushered in a new era of convenience. And with it, comes higher expectations.

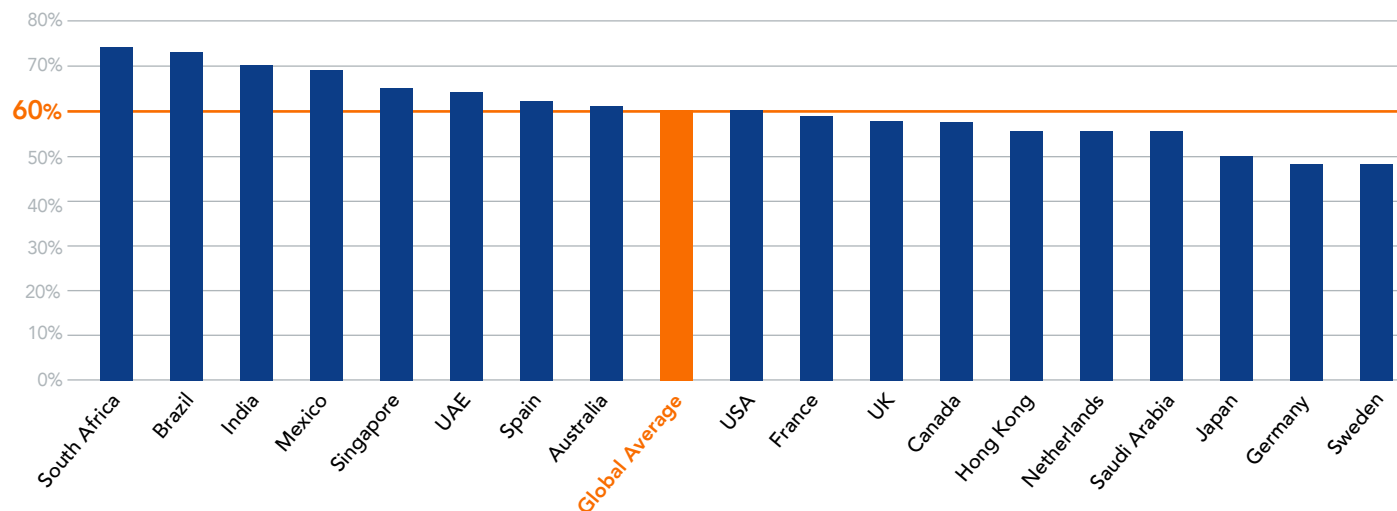
Convenience and ease to engage is more important than price



In fact, convenience trumps price for over half of those 18-35 years old, with 53 percent saying they consider ease to engage as more important than cost when selecting service providers or organizations. That compares to 49 percent of all respondents globally, and 42 percent of those over 51. Breaking it down by country, just 39 percent of UK consumers and 43 percent of US respondents choose convenience over price, compared to almost three quarters (71 percent) of Indians and 62 percent of those based in the UAE.

The opportunity is clearly there for businesses that can offer an easy way of interacting with them. The cost of not being 'always-on' could be extremely high – 60 percent of consumers globally expect to be able to engage with an organization on any channel and at any time, with little variation across age groups. On top of that, 77 percent said convenience was a major factor in choosing a service provider. This suggests that if they do not meet that expectation, brands will lose a large chunk of their customers.

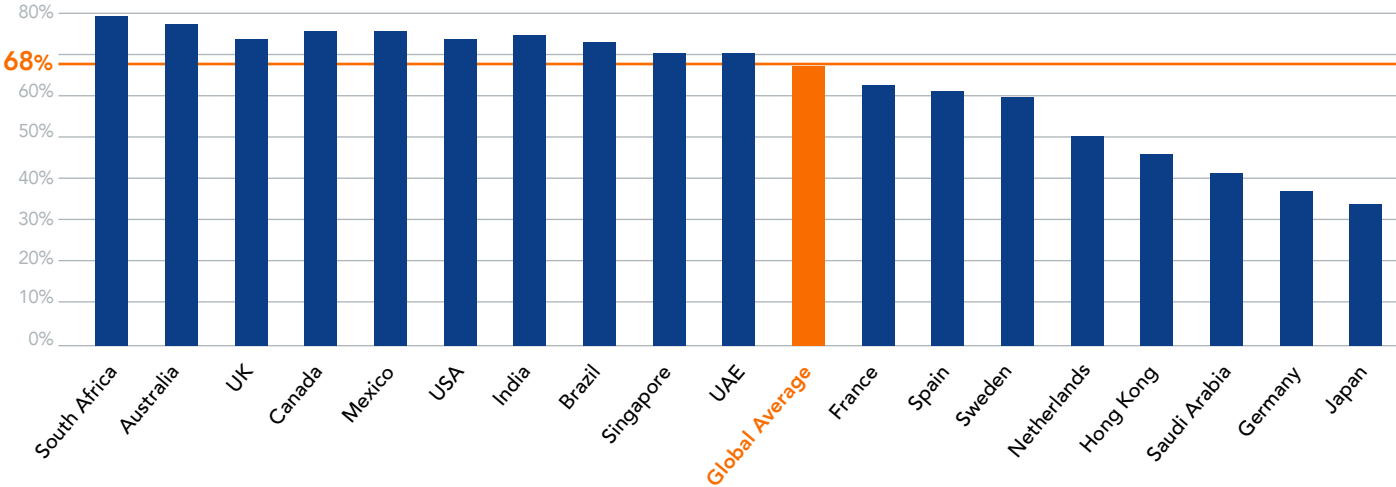
I expect to be able to engage with an organization on any channel and at any time



Those that are able to deliver always-on service can expect to enjoy greater levels of loyalty. More than two thirds (68 percent) say they feel more loyal to brands that make it easy and convenient to engage with them –

this is as much as 80 percent in South Africa, 76 percent in Australia and 75 percent in the UK, USA and Canada. This was less important to consumers in Japan (54 percent) and Germany (59 percent).

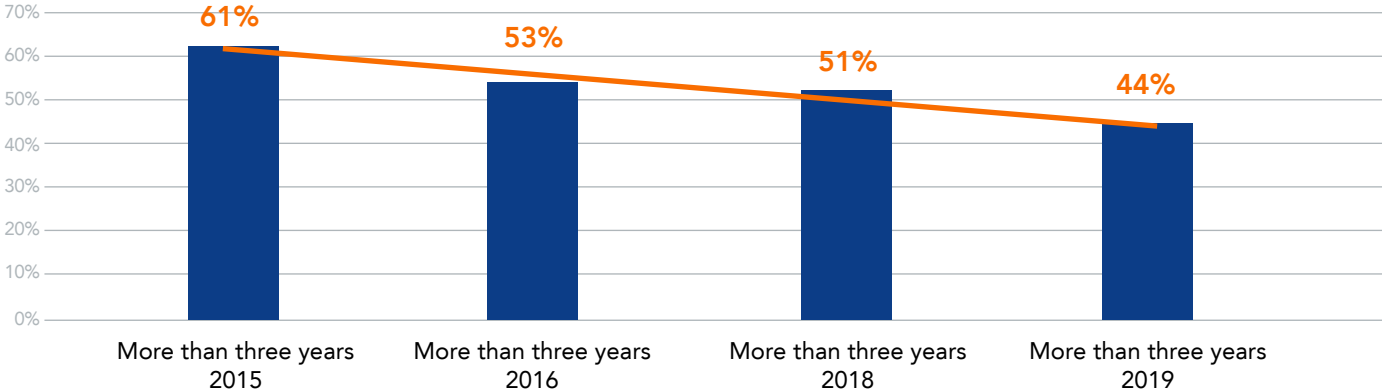
I feel more loyal to organizations that make it easier and convenient to engage



While the majority of consumers place high importance on convenience, they do not necessarily expect a human at the end of a phone every time they need help – of those that felt more loyal through convenience, 83 percent were loyal to brands that use digital tools as the primary way to engage with them.

As if to underscore the challenge for organizations, loyalty is at an all-time low. Consumers are switching providers when their expectations are not being met, seemingly at the drop of a hat. Just 44% of consumers across the globe have been with their service providers for three years or more; a 39% drop since 2015.

Customer retention 2015-2019



The message from consumers is clear – they want to be able to engage with organization across a wide variety of channels and at any time. Digital engagement is key to meeting this always-on demand. But, if organizations don’t deliver on their expectations, they will take their business elsewhere. What do these ever-changing consumer expectations mean for the employees i? Are they welcoming technology-driven assistance, or fearful of being replaced by robots?

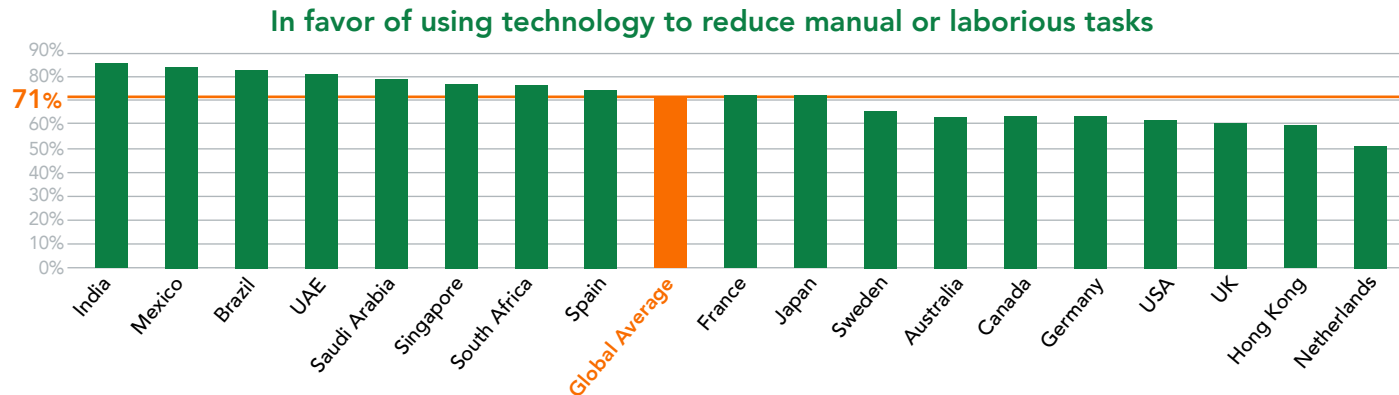
2. The impact of changing expectations on work

Delivering an always-on experience to the high standards customers demand requires new approaches to engagement. Simply increasing the number of agents in a contact center or employees on the front line is not economically viable nor particularly scalable.

It's important to consider your employees use technology everywhere in their lives outside of work – which is driving demand for modern technology in the workplace. A hybrid workforce, where technology and the humans work hand-in-hand is key to meeting your employees' and consumers' need.

Debate about automation in the workplace has raged on for years. The first major study into this space in 2013 predicted

that almost half of all jobs in the US would be lost due to automation¹, while an OECD study from 2018 placed this figure at 14 percent². For all the negative headlines, automation tools have been deployed successfully in a variety of sectors and now it seems people are becoming more comfortable with the technology in the workplace. In fact, 69 percent of workers believe that technology will enhance, not replace their jobs.



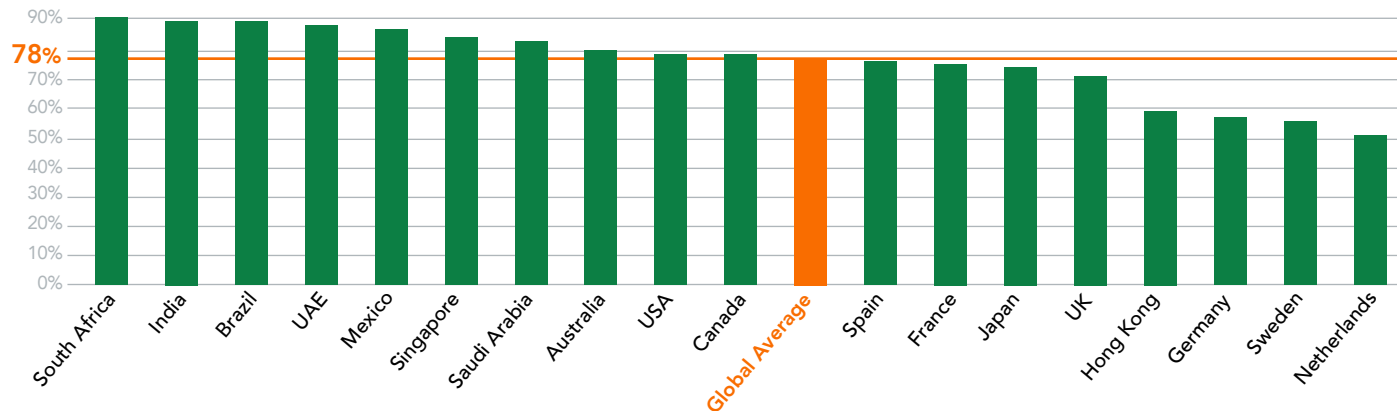
¹ Frey and Osborne (2013). The future of employment: how susceptible are jobs to computerization. Oxford University. Accessed: https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/academic/The_Future_of_Employment.pdf

² Nedelkoska and Quintini (2018). Automation, Skills use and training published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The data also shows that employees would welcome the opportunity to have technology either support them to do their jobs more effectively or take work from them if it meant freeing them up to do more fulfilling work. In fact, 71 percent of respondents are in favor of using technology to replace manual and laborious tasks. Those aged 18-24 responded below the average at 68 percent – in line with the OECD's 2018 report on automation³, the youngest generations those fear technology taking their jobs the most. Those aged between 25 and 44 were above the average in favor of using technology to replace tasks at 73 percent – perhaps because this cohort has had more time to establish and progress their careers.

Slightly more (78 percent) are in favor of using technology that helps give them the right information at the right time. However, there are several regions that were more reticent to technology in the workplace than others – suggesting more work is needed in certain locations to educate employees on the value of technology and the impact on their job. Interestingly, participants from countries whose economies typically rely on more laborious tasks are in favor of automation – demonstrating that technology can remove laborious and menial tasks to free workers up for more rewarding and interesting work.

I would welcome technology that helps give me the right information at the right time



³ Nedelkoska and Quintini (2018). Automation, Skills use and training published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Not only has sentiment towards job security improved, the majority of employees now want their employers to use more technology. In fact, 58 percent said they want their employer to use more automation technology such as AI, and 55 percent have asked their employer for better technology to help them work more effectively.

While it may not be surprising that the younger generations are driving this desire for technology in the workplace, the variation is significant. Workers aged 35 or younger are 260 percent more likely to ask for technology to help them work more effectively than those older than 50, and 100 percent more likely to want their employer to use technology such as AI.

Digital and automation tools have become a differentiator, not just for customers, but employees too. Almost two thirds (64 percent) say that automation technology helps reduce their workload and stress. In fact, having access to technology is a key factor in how relaxed people are, according to respondents. On average, our survey found that people are happy and fulfilled at work, but also stressed.

Yet consistently, there is a strong correlation between technology in the workplace and employee happiness and low stress. For example, two thirds of workers (66 percent) said they had all the technology they need to work effectively, but this jumps to almost three quarters (72 percent) for those who say they are happy at work and those who have a low base level of stress.

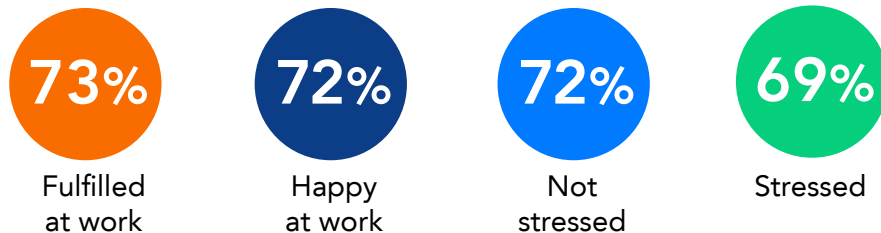
Happiness, fulfillment and stress



Furthermore, 62 percent of workers agreed that technology helps provide them with more information or knowledge to do their job more effectively – this increases to 69 percent of respondents that have a low base level of stress. The same percentage (62 percent) said they are willing to try new ways of working, but this jumps to 70 percent for those who are not stressed.

More than three quarters (78 percent) of workers said they would welcome technology in the workplace that would provide them with the right information at the right time – however this jumped to 82 percent of people who have high base levels of stress, emphasising how technology can help improve employee wellbeing.

I have all the tools and technology to work effectively



Clearly, a hybrid workforce approach, where technology and humans are working collaboratively is the best way forward for your employees, especially in the always-on era. When deployed correctly, and of relevance and use, technology supports employees to be happier, less stressed and more effective at work. Happy workforces make for better results – according to Gallup, companies with highly engaged workforces outperform their peers by 147 percent in earnings per share.⁴ This is because engaged employees make for more positive customer experiences. With the value of human interactions still highly prized by consumers, this is a critical part of the hybrid workforce.

⁴ The Engaged Workplace, Gallup

Our 'always-on' society

83%

of consumers say that **customer experience** is a major factor in selecting their service providers
(convenience 77%)

68%

of consumers globally say they feel more loyal towards organizations that **make it easy** and convenient to engage with them

54%

are happy to be served by a **chatbot**, but always want the option to move the conversation to a human

48%

are more likely to be **loyal to brands** that offer the latest technology to help engage with them

55%

have asked for a **technology upgrade** to work more effectively

71%

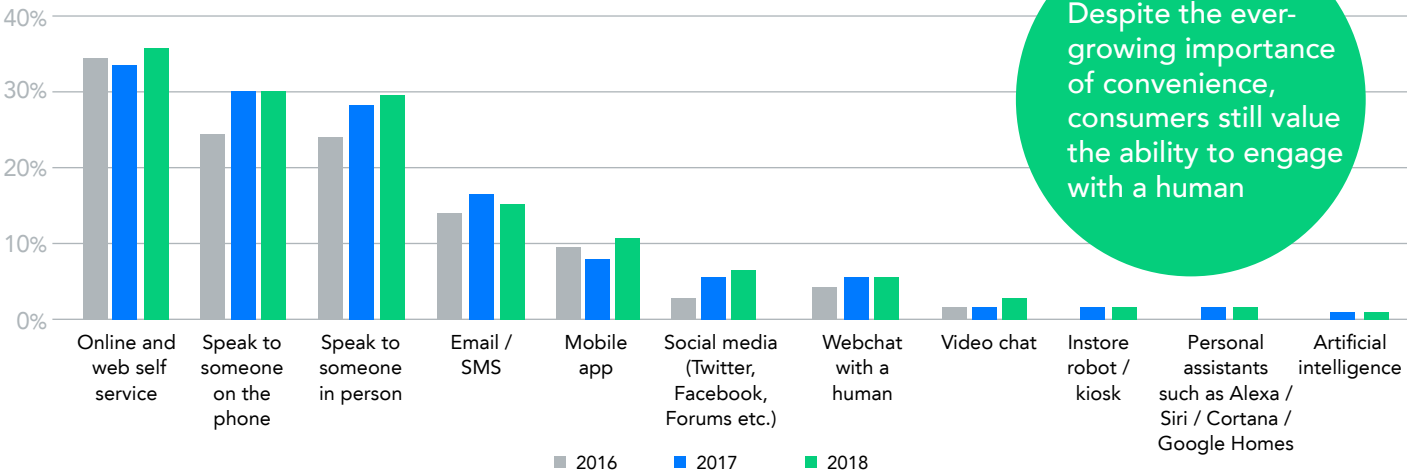
are in favor of using technology to **reduce manual/laborious tasks**

3. The value of human interaction

While the data has shown that a hybrid approach has a positive impact on the workplace – it is vital to delivering a positive customer experience. Digital channels have become a central part of the modern customer experience, but they have not decreased the volume of interactions and calls to contact centers or branches significantly.

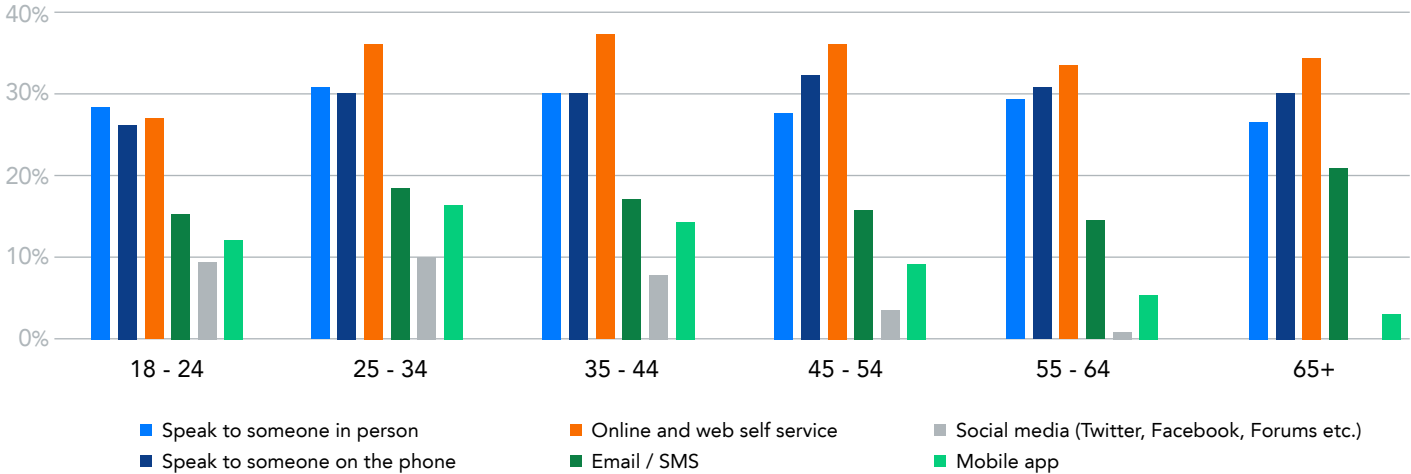
Despite the ever-growing importance of convenience, consumers still value the ability to engage with a human. When we asked consumers how they prefer to engage with organizations across 10 different sectors, online account management and self-service was the primary route (average of 34 percent) followed by calling on the phone (30 percent) and going into a store or branch (29%). In fact, since 2016, the preference to engage with a human, either on the phone or in store, has increased.

Channel preference to engage with providers



While it may not be surprising that the younger generation is driving the increase in digital tools such as mobile apps, it does not come at the expense of human interaction. Rather, it confirms that they prefer to use mobile devices rather than desktop – opting to use a provider’s app rather than its web-based or online account management tools.

Generational preferences for key contact methods



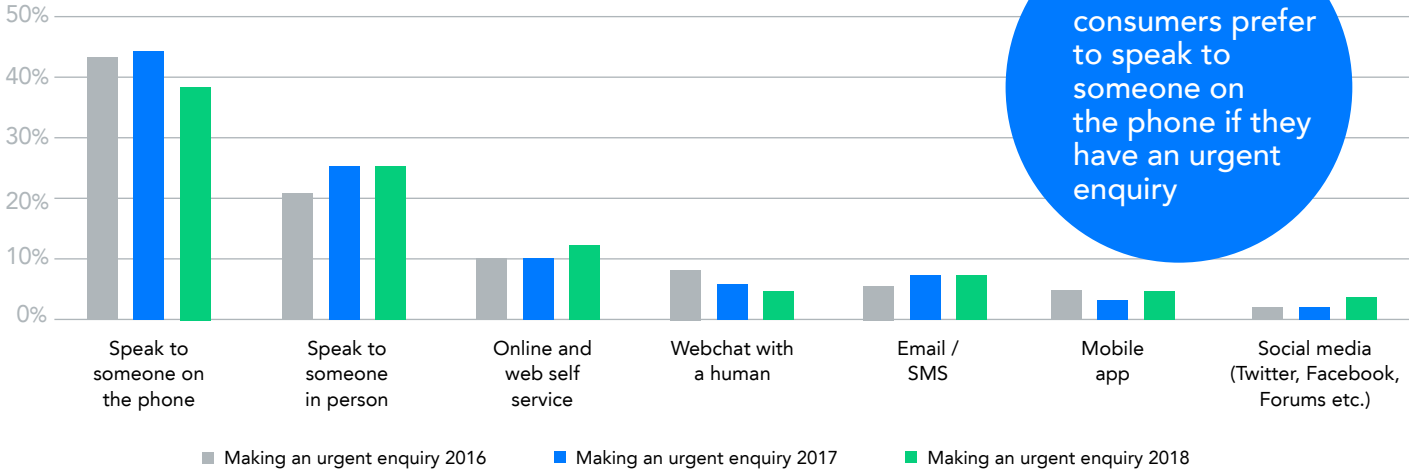
When we dive in a little deeper, the importance of the human touch becomes even more important. For example, 83 percent of consumers said that customer experience was a major factor in selecting their service providers. However, only 45 percent said that digital channels provided the best overall experience.

To add to this, just 43 percent said that the convenience of digital channels is more important than interacting with a human, while half said they would engage less with brands that replaced humans with digital alternatives (such as robots or AI). This is a clear warning to those brands that would be tempted to use technology as a means to cut the cost of human workers.

Importantly, replacing humans with technology across all channels wouldn't just be unpopular with consumers, it would likely result in poorer business performance. For all those high-value interactions where there is an opportunity to really win the loyalty of customers, or upsell products – consumers prefer to engage with a human.

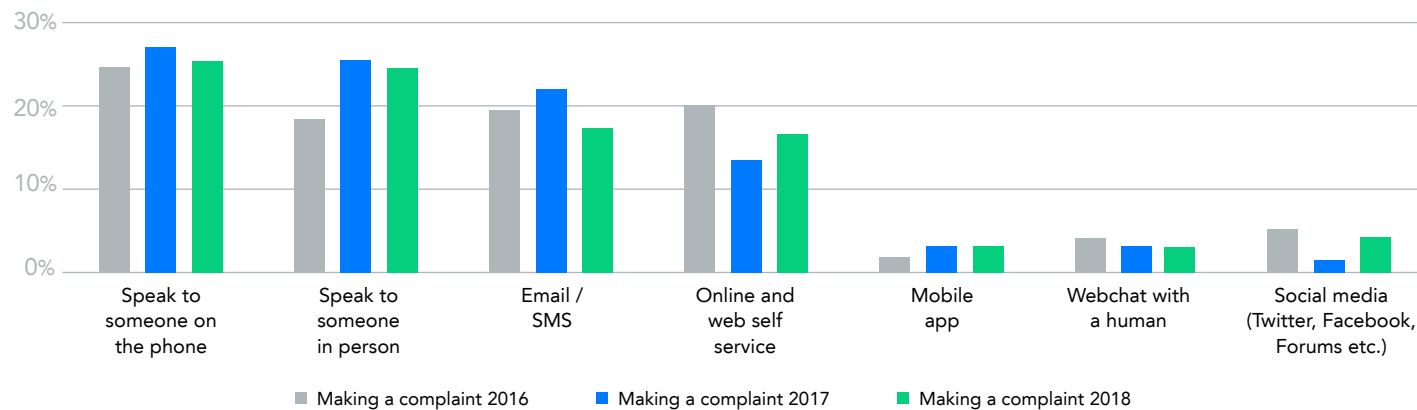
When it came to wanting answers urgently, interacting with a human was given precedent. Over a third chose to do so on the phone, with a quarter selecting in person as their preferred channel. Indeed, these channels were more popular than all digital tools (including web self-service and accounts, email and SMS, social media, webchat and mobile app) combined.

Channel for an urgent enquiry



With complaints, it is a similar story, though not quite as pronounced. Web self-service and online accounts and email or SMS were the channel of choice for 16 and 17 percent respectively, but over the phone (25 percent) or in person (24 percent) were the main preferences. No other digital channel was above four percent, suggesting that customers prefer less public, more controlled ways to raise a complaint, with the possibility (particularly in the case of email) to detail their issues.

Channel for making a complaint



Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the prescribed view that younger generations eschew human interactions, those in the 51-60 (74 percent) and 71+ (81 percent) age brackets were most likely to prefer speaking to someone in person or on the phone if they needed something urgently. However, these channels were still the preferred method of getting answers fast for over half (55 percent) of 18-35 year olds.

The confrontational nature of complaints may account for the drop in younger age brackets using people-led channels to resolve issues, with just 44 percent favoring it over 67 percent of those in the 71+ group. This is perhaps owing to the fact that this generation has more time to discuss complaints in person.

Looking at regional variations, both US and Mexican respondents were more likely to voice their complaints over the phone or in person (60 percent and 64 percent respectively), compared to a global average of 49 percent. India (35 percent), Saudi Arabia (36 percent) and Singapore (38 percent) were amongst those least likely to air issues in person or over the phone. The varied geographical responses highlight the need for regional variation in how both people and technology are deployed in global organizations.

Humans and technology need to work hand-hand to meet rising expectations

hybrid workforce approach, both on the front line and in supporting employees. For basic purchases, having a straight forward self-service option is vital, backed up by knowledgeable staff. When queries are urgent or potentially negative, that is where the human element of the hybrid workforce needs to come to the fore, supported by intelligent technology. If we have a problem, we want to know someone is handling it, even if it is not resolved straight away. By speaking to someone, we get a level of reassurance that filling in a web form will struggle to deliver.



The customer experience is not simply about managing customers, however. It should also be seen as a way to increase value. The maturity of online shopping comes to the fore here, with 35 percent of consumers choosing web self-service or an online account as their favorite channel. In person and on the phone were second and third, respectively.

Does that mean reinvesting in employees at the expense of digital? No – it underscores the importance of having a complete omni-channel and

Clearly technology is needed if engaged human employees are to be deployed in high value work. How consumers choose to interact with an organization is just one force driving the adoption of technology in the workplace. The other key factor is how employees engage with technology in their daily lives outside of the workplace. As technology becomes central to everyone's daily lives, the expectation that these tools will be available in the workplace to assist them.

For employers this means offering new ways of working and leads to the rise of a new type of worker.

4. The future worker By Dr Paul Redmond



Understanding generational differences is a key business imperative, particularly when devising and implementing organizational HR and digital transformation strategies. An engaged and motivated workforce is a critical driver of business success – particularly in highly competitive markets – and can lead to greater levels of productivity, increased loyalty and better talent retention.

The aim of this chapter is to look at the results of the survey from the perspective of the two youngest generations to enter the job market – Generations Y and Z. Based on an analysis of cohort data, the chapter will focus on the defining characteristics of these future workers, their aspirations, preferences, preferred communication media, loyalty to their organizations and in particular, the extent to which these attitudes are being driven by digital technologies.

By using the organising framework of ‘generations’, the chapter will look at how these ‘always-on’ digital natives are rewriting the organizational rule book and rediscovering the value of human face-to-face interaction – even if this means, albeit momentarily, putting their phones down. The chapter concludes with practical tips to help managers and business organizations apply the findings of the research to help them engage more effectively and productively with these new consumers and employees.

The digital revolution

Digital technology is revolutionising the world of work. Indeed, evidence suggests that the pace of this revolution is about to accelerate. Once it becomes fully available, 5G data speeds are expected to be up to 1,000-times faster than today. In turn, the ‘Internet of Things’ will become a daily reality as products and services in the home and workplace will combine together seamlessly to provide a coherent, data-led, personalised consumer and employee experience. Data algorithms based on real-time predictions and behavioral economics will offer consumers a range of personalised products and services – when and where they need them.⁵ Life, for millions of people, is about to be digitally transformed. By the end of this year, more people will own a mobile device than a toothbrush, and by 2020 the average person is likely to have more daily conversations with ‘bots’ than their spouse.⁶ As sales of newspapers decline, already two-thirds of adults source the daily news from social media rather than an official media outlet – not altogether surprising, given that 90 percent of online data was only created in the last two years.⁷

‘Every generation is a new people’

– Alexis de Tocqueville

⁵ Canadian Wireless Trade Show, ‘2017 Predictions: Behind the scenes with 5G – 2017 lays groundwork for telecom revolution.’

⁶ Socialnomics, 2019

⁷ ibid

But it is in the workplace that digital technology is having its greatest transformational impact. According to an OECD study from 2018, 14 percent of jobs in OECD region are at high risk of automation.⁸ In the firing line, for the first time, are white-collar professional jobs.

- In initial tests, a machine-learning algorithm created at Carnegie Mellon University has been able to predict heart attacks four hours in advance, with 80% accuracy.⁹
- After watching 5,000 hours of TV, Google's DeepMind AI can lip-read 34 percent more accurately than a professional lip-reader.¹⁰
- After watching just 600 hours of TV, an MIT deep-learning AI algorithm can predict future human interactions after two people met, 60.5% as accurately as human subjects.

The new multigenerational workplace

Parallel to the digital revolution, another revolution has been raging in human longevity. In the year 1900, the average lifespan for a European man was forty-seven and for a woman, fifty. Today, according to the London Business School, a child born in the West has a 50 percent chance of living to be 105.¹¹ From a work perspective, longer lives pose radically new challenges. If today's future workers are to live to see the next century – and retire with a pension – the chances are they will have to work into their eighties.¹²

In the business world, the impact of this increased longevity can be observed in the employee demographics. There are now up to five generations in the workplace, ranging from the 'Silent Generation' to 'Generation Z'. While these generations may share the same offices, rub shoulders at the same meetings, and collaborate on the same projects, each generation will maintain its own generational outlook; its way of viewing the world.

Born during the same time period, members of each of the generations share with their demographic counterparts a set of defining social, economic, technological and cultural 'touchstones'. It's these touchstones that give each generation a certain shared outlook or lens through which they look at the world. This gives each generation its own unique defining characteristics, and as social scientists will attest, it's in the workplace where these characteristics are often best observed.

For this research project, we are characterising our five generations as follows:

- **Silent Generation (born pre-1945)**
- **Baby Boomers (1945 - 1963)**
- **Generation X (1964 - 1979)**
- **Generation Y (1980 - 1999)**
- **Generation Z (2000 -)**



⁸ Nedelkoska and Quintini (2018). Automation, Skills use and training published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

⁹ The Economist

¹⁰ New Scientist

¹¹ 'The 100-Year Life', Grattan & Scott, 2016

¹² ibid

Table 1: Defining characteristics of the five generations

| Generation | Birth Dates | Defining Global Events | Communication Preferences | Financial Drivers |
|--------------------------|-------------|--|--|---|
| Silent Generation | Pre - 1945 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second World War • Rationing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter writing • Radio | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security • Austerity |
| Baby Boomers | 1945 - 1963 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold War • Vietnam • JFK | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Television • Newspaper | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loyalty • Family |
| Generation X | 1964 - 1979 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodstock • Berlin Wall | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sony Walkman • Early 'digital immigrants' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-life balance • Independence |
| Generation Y | 1980 - 1999 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live Aid • Challenger disaster • Economic crash | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital natives • Smart phone | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurship • Values • Flexibility |
| Generation Z | 2000 - | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9/11 • iPhone • Financial crisis (2008) • 'Fake news' • Environmental concerns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook • WhatsApp • Tinder | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Cashless |

Table 1 provides a brief synopsis of some of the defining global events which are likely to have contributed to the establishment of each generation's defining characteristics. Also revealed are each of the generations' preferred communication preferences and financial drivers.

Digital immigrants and digital natives

Also shaping each generation's outlook on the world is the impact of technology. In 2001, Mark Prensky introduced the term 'digital natives,' which he used to describe those for whom the rise of digital technology was a defining feature in their development.¹³ These digital natives have a level of comfort and familiarity with technology that goes beyond anything experienced by older (e.g. pre-digital) generations. These generations Prensky called 'digital immigrants.'



For Prensky, the challenge for digital natives is to remain motivated within a work environment that is managed predominantly by digital immigrants. What Prensky may have underestimated, however, was the extent to which digital natives retained an emotional attachment to face-to-face interactions. And yet, as we will see from the findings of this research, as business processes become ever more digitised, the perceived value of personal contact amongst younger employees is rising exponentially.

Characteristics of the future employee

Generation Y and Generation Z are on track to become the world's largest generational cohorts, representing over 2 billion members. By 2025, it is estimated that Generation Y alone will account for 75 percent of the global workforce.

Growing up in a digital era these generations are ubiquitous 'digital natives. For Generations Y and Z, the Internet has always existed; telephones have always been mobile; cameras never anything but digital. This poses a question: from now on, should computers be considered 'technology?' As author Douglas Adams argued,

'[...] anything that is in the world when you're born is normal and ordinary and is just a natural part of the way the world works.'¹⁴

But in a workplace still dominated and managed by predominantly digital immigrants, how will these future digital native workers perform? As this research demonstrates, not only will Generation Y and Z behave differently from previous generations; they will expect a new 'psychological contract' between them and their managers. The question is: are their future managers prepared?

New employees, new psychological contract

Understanding this new psychological contract between future workers and organizations is critical if businesses are to make the most of their Generation Y and Z workers.

For younger generations, independence, entrepreneurship and working in teams are essential, non-negotiable attractors (Table 2). Such attitudes represent a departure from those of previous generations which have traded time for the relative security of employment contracts. Younger generations are

¹³ Prensky, M., 'Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants,' On the Horizon Journal (MCB University Press, Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001).

¹⁴ Douglas Adams, 'The Salmon of Doubt'

motivated primarily by opportunities for career development and personal growth. They are also less likely to build long-term careers within the same organization. Generation Y and Z work ‘with’ organizations rather than ‘for’ them.

Employers that can make the shift from the traditional to the new psychological contract will have a head start in recruiting and retaining future worker talent.

Table 2: Characteristics and motivations of Generation Y

| Generation Y and Generation Z characteristics | Motivations |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Independence | Personal and career development |
| Entrepreneurial | Self-expression |
| Global | Access over ownership |
| Team player | Experience-orientated |
| Civic-minded | Seeking authenticity |
| Digital natives | Group acceptance |

Lateral advancement

Crucial to the Generation Y and Z mind-sets are authenticity and a concern for shared values. In a survey by PricewaterhouseCoopers, 52 percent of new UK graduates said that the defining quality that would make a prospective employer attractive to them was the possibility of career advancement. Sixty-five percent identified the opportunity for personal development.

The growth of this new ‘sharing economy,’ coupled with younger generations’ propensity to focus on experiences is driving markets in which sharing opportunities are possible. Examples include (shared) finance, accommodation (e.g. Airbnb), car sharing, music and video streaming, property sharing, self-storage and asset sharing.



How to engage a multi-generational workforce

By capturing the personal and lived insights of over 34,000 people across all five generations, this research offers a unique insight into the attitudes, characteristics and priorities of the future worker. The following key take-aways have been developed to help organizations utilise the research to engage more effectively and successfully with their multi-generational workforces.

Boomers possess a loyalty gene

Remember, when it comes to organizational loyalty, the research has found that loyalty to organizations is a predominantly Baby Boomer trait. If you're an employer, you can use this insight in a number of ways. Boomers are integrated into local communities; they are the stalwarts of clubs and societies; unlike other generations, Boomers know their neighbors. This level of untapped social capital can be invaluable for businesses searching to embed themselves with new consumer groups.

Boomers have wisdom: In a fast-moving work environment, knowledge about the organization's 'story' can be an important motivator for younger workers. Tap into Boomers' experience of the changing world of work and the strategies they've needed to keep up to date to help younger staff think about how their own career strategies will need to be refined and changed in the coming years.

Finally, make it easier for Boomer customers and clients to access your business by investing in your customer service operation. For Boomers, it's not your website that will impress them, but the friendliness and authenticity of your customer service staff.

Make it easier for the always-on generation to come back to you

Generation Y is the first generation in history that expects a career break within five years of starting work. Generation Z is unlikely to be any different. Retaining younger staff is going to get harder. So when they inevitably leave – as they will – why not make it easier for them to return in a few years' time? You can do this by keeping them on an in-house mailing list, sending them new editions of the company magazine, treating them like alumni, not as ex-employees. Not only will this radically new approach help recoup your initial hiring costs; by making it easier to hire and re-hire younger workers, you will also save yourself recruitment costs and benefit by taking on a more experienced employee.

Harness the power of reverse mentoring

Business leaders have long recognised the power of mentoring, but few have yet discovered the benefits of reverse mentoring – in other words, arranging to be mentored by a colleague from a younger generation. If carefully arranged, the benefits can be considerable. Not only do you get to see your own organization from the perspective of a much younger member of staff; you will also gain a much better and more informed insight into how younger generations view the world of work. And all you have to do is listen to them.

The always-on value non-digital transactions

One of the key findings to emerge from the research was the insight into the importance that younger generations of employees attach to personal interactions. This contradicts many

of the previous studies into generational behavior, which have tended to assume that digital natives always prioritise digital solutions. Our research illustrates just how much value younger employees attach to 1:1 interactions with their managers – particularly when dealing with difficult or personal issues.

Don't overlook Generation X

As this report illustrates, the world of work is changing, with organizations becoming flatter and more agile. For younger generations, this is providing many new and unforeseen opportunities. For Generation X, however, the pace of change is causing stress and anxiety, particularly when evidence is emerging to suggest that Boomer chief executives are increasingly 'talent-spotting' amongst younger generations (thereby skipping Generation X entirely).

No manager can risk accidentally creating teams of disengaged Generation X staff. So even if promotion opportunities are not available, make sure that opportunities for developing 'lateral' skills and knowledge are available – particularly to those in the Generation X cohort. On-going training and funded continuing professional development can help retain and motivate Generation X, as can opportunities for secondments and work shadowing. Ask Boomers to advise them on how to build and maintain networks of contacts; better still, give them time and resources to develop career enhancement strategies to take them into their seventies.

The importance of wellbeing

The research highlights the role that technology in the workplace can have in reducing workplace stress. Employees from all generations felt strongly that better technology at work can reduce low-value transactional activities while at the same time generating additional space for deeper value work. Taking steps to improve employee happiness and wellbeing is not just a personal benefit; it can radically improve business productivity. What's your organization's wellbeing strategy?

5. Six considerations for customer and employee engagement in the always-on era

With the growing expectation that organizations should be always-on and contactable, employees' expectations for how they should be working is changing. A hybrid workforce where technology and humans work seamlessly together is key to meeting both consumer and employee demands. It enables consumers to contact organizations how and when they want and frees your employees up for the more rewarding and engaging work. But the fundamental principles of engagement remain – you can not treat your customers or employees as one large cohort. Engagement and dialogue at an individual level is key, especially as customers and employees span a larger generational divide than ever before.

You must consider the following:

- 1 Experience is an evolution**
Best practice customer experience is constantly changing – what was innovative two years ago will barely pass now. Continue to invest in the experience to keep up with customer expectations.
- 2 Keep your eye on the prize**
Digital transformation and new technology can be key to meeting the always-on expectations. But keep your customer at the heart of everything you do. Thoroughly review all processes, as digitising a bad process will simply result in a bad digital process.
- 3 Adding value and managing the mundane**
By automating tasks, managing volumes of interactions and providing instant intelligence, co-bots and technology can free your teams from the mundane to focus on providing true customer experience excellence.
- 4 Engagement remains key in the hybrid workforce**
Employee engagement is the key to a successful hybrid workforce. Communicate the importance of both technology and human contributions in the workplace. Consult both employees and customers on the technology needed to improve employee wellbeing and customer experience.
- 5 Look beyond your horizon**
Look beyond your direct competitors or industry for inspiration to innovate the customer experience and ensure your organization stands out from the crowd.
- 6 Mind the generation gap**
The workplace is changing, generation X, Y, Z and baby boomers are all working together. It is vital you understand the strengths and weakness of all employees and upskill your entire teams, and cater to all your consumers, regardless of their age or preferences.

About the Research

This research was commissioned by Verint from 1st -11th of February in association with research company Opinium Research LLP. Interviews were conducted amongst 34,068 consumers in the following countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and the United States. The research was conducted online in the local language for each country, and respondents were incentivized to participate. Sectors involved in the survey included banking, bricks-and-mortar retailers, credit card, insurance, mobile phone provider, online retailer, telecommunications, travel and utilities.

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