

-Authentically-
**ENGAGE EVERY
GENERATION**

*Real ways to better connect with
Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers*



Churches continue to see membership, attendance, and financial support wane substantially in the post-Covid world. Every church would be well served to reach out to at least a reasonable sampling of its lapsed members to determine exactly why they're not returning to the pews and solicit suggestions and feedback on how to change that trajectory. That should inform the decisions your team makes on how to move forward.

Remember also, when it comes to engaging your members, understanding generational nuances is critically important. Not only do you need to meet them where they are spiritually, you also need to make sure your messages are delivered where they are, in the way they prefer you engage with them.

In this guide, we offer some valuable insights gleaned from the ongoing research conducted by ACST via its landmark [*American Beliefs Study*](#). The guide also highlights some very practical tips on how to bridge the divide across generations, particularly when it comes to communicating based on generational preferences.

The time to act ***is now.***

Let's start with the most concerning findings that the study uncovered:

- Americans are more likely now than ever to distance themselves from corporate worship by saying:
 - **'Believing in Jesus does not require participating in a church'** (63 percent now vs. 50 percent in 2017)
 - And **'people in the church don't behave as Jesus would have'** (61 percent now vs. 32 percent in 2017).

Unfortunately, Covid didn't do any favors to an already declining attendance rate. When churches had to close their doors to in-person worship, members had to learn to worship in new, unconventional — and uncomfortable — ways. Some persevered, but those who may have already started questioning it dropped off entirely.

The second point requires some introspection by church leaders to understand why members might be feeling that way. There's a very good chance it's generationally linked and could reflect a collective malaise among particular generations believing either that the Church is not conventional enough or that it's too conventional, not taking into account how Jesus may respond to individual situations.

To drill down on this, the study identified these top reasons why people are staying away from church:

1. **'Religious people are too judgmental,'**
1. **'Religion is too focused on money,'**
1. They, **'Don't trust organized religion'**
1. Or they **didn't 'trust religious leaders.'**

The lesson here is that societal influences and pressures are so much more pronounced now than they've been in a very long time. To be a faithful disciple today requires a level of courage, commitment — and grace — that even made Peter falter — three times. We must all remember the words in John 14:6, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" So be sure your church provides an open and welcoming environment to all who seek Him.



Regardless how you might feel about these findings — or critiques, really — the truth is that perception is reality. This is how people perceive their relationship with the Church at this point in time. That's not to say, you can't influence perception. On the contrary, you can. But it's going to require a concerted effort to be genuine and transparent, and it's going to require a communication approach that's tailored to the unique traits of each generation.

Recovery demands that you strive to engage and connect with members and constituents on a whole new level. Understanding the nuances of different generations and their communication preferences is crucial. In today's digital age, where social media, online and mobile platforms dominate the landscape of communication, it's essential to adapt and tailor your messaging strategy so you can close that divide.

Generational Breakdown & Communication Preferences

Let's get to know the characteristics and communication preferences of each generation according to the study and explore some practical tips on how your church can effectively communicate with Gen Z, Millennials/Gen Y, Gen X and Baby Boomers.



Gen Z

Authentic & super social

(born roughly between 1997 and 2012)

Gen Z is the youngest generation, also known as “Digital Natives,” since they’ve grown up in an era where digital technology and social media are pervasive. They’re tech-savvy, highly connected and, as such, have a short attention span. Here are some key communication preferences for Gen Z:

Preferred methods of communication: Gen Z prefers quick and direct communication methods like texting, instant messaging and social media platforms like Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok. They prefer bite-sized, visually engaging content that’s easily consumable on their smartphones.

Social media vs. television: Gen Z tends to prefer social media over television as a source of information and entertainment. For them, TV is only a means to binge watch the latest film or a complete series, from pilot to finale. So, hands down, Gen Zers are more likely to engage with content on social media platforms than traditional television.

Online news vs. printed newspapers: Gen Z prefers online news sources over printed newspapers. In reality, some may have never even held a newspaper in their hands.

Tips for communicating with Gen Z: When communicating with Gen Z, it’s important to get right to the point and use their preferred mode of communication. Consider sending them a text, updating their iCal or sending them a chat or Facebook message. Make your content bite-sized and fun to grab their attention. Avoid lengthy lectures at all costs. Gen Z is more likely to tune out quickly.

“Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.” — 1 Timothy 4:12



Millennials

Digital & on-the-move

(born roughly between 1981 and 1996)

Millennials, also known as Gen Y, are the first generation to come of age in the digital era. They are known for their tech-savviness, multiculturalism and desire for meaningful connections. Here are some key communication preferences for Millennials/Gen Y:

Preferred methods of communication: Millennials/Gen Y prefer a mix of online and offline communication methods. They rely heavily on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, as well as instant messaging and texting. They also value face-to-face interactions and appreciate personalization in communication.

On-the-go information: Millennials/Gen Y prefer to access information on the go, because they are always on the move. They are more likely to consume news and information through online sources rather than traditional television.

Online news vs. printed newspapers: Like Gen Z, Millennials/Gen Y prefer online news sources over printed newspapers.

TikTok usage: While TikTok has gained immense popularity among younger generations, only 16% of Millennials/Gen Y use TikTok on a daily or weekly basis, indicating that it may not be the most effective platform to communicate with this generation.

Preferred social media platform: Facebook remains the top social media platform for Millennials/Gen Y, followed by Instagram and Twitter.

Tips for communicating with Millennials/Gen Y: When communicating with Millennials/Gen Y, it's important to use a mix of online and offline methods. Use social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to share relevant and engaging content, but also prioritize face-to-face interactions and personalized communication. The most important part is to make sure your messaging is concise, relevant — meaningful — and easily accessible on mobile devices, since Millennials/Gen Y are always on the go and prefer information that can be consumed quickly.

“Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.” — Romans 12:2



Gen X

Malleable and adaptive

(born roughly between 1965 and 1980)

Gen X is the generation that bridges the gap between Baby Boomers and Millennials/Gen Y. They are often referred to as the “Latchkey Generation” as many of them grew up with both parents working outside the home. Here are some key communication preferences for Gen X:

Preferred methods of communication: Gen X prefers a mix of online and offline communication methods. They are comfortable with email, texting and instant messaging, but they also appreciate phone calls and face-to-face interactions. They just adapt.

News consumption: Gen X tends to consume news through a mix of online sources, television and printed newspapers. Some may still rely on traditional media outlets for news and information.

Social media usage: Gen X tends to use social media, but not as extensively as younger generations. Facebook and LinkedIn are the preferred platforms for Gen X, with a smaller presence on platforms like Instagram and Twitter.

Preference for professional communication: Gen X values professional communication and may prefer more formal and structured communication styles. They appreciate well-crafted emails and may prefer phone calls or in-person meetings for important discussions.

Tips for communicating with Gen X: When communicating with Gen X, it’s important to use a mix of online and offline methods. Use email, texting and instant messaging for quick updates and information, but also prioritize phone calls and in-person interactions for important discussions. Be mindful of their preference for professional communication and use a more formal tone when needed. Provide relevant and reliable information through a mix of online and traditional media sources.

“Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, as indeed you do.” — 1 Thessalonians 5:11



Baby Boomers

Personal and accountable

(born roughly between 1946 and 1964)

Baby Boomers are the generation that grew up during the post-World War II period, known for their strong work ethic and traditional values. Here are some key communication preferences for Baby Boomers:

Preferred methods of communication: Baby Boomers prefer more traditional methods of communication like phone calls, face-to-face interactions and printed materials like newsletters and bulletins. They may also use email and text messaging, but to a lesser extent than younger generations.

News consumption: Baby Boomers tend to rely on traditional media outlets like television and printed newspapers for news and information. They may also access news online but may prefer more established and credible sources. They tend to be more dubious of less traditional methods.

Social media usage: Baby Boomers have a lower presence on social media compared to younger generations, with Facebook being the most commonly used platform among them. They may also use platforms like LinkedIn for professional networking.

Preference for personal communication: Baby Boomers value personal connections and prefer face-to-face interactions or phone calls for important discussions. They appreciate personalized communication and may prefer a more formal and respectful tone.

Tips for communicating with Baby Boomers: When communicating with Baby Boomers, it's important to prioritize more traditional methods of communication like phone calls, face-to-face interactions and printed materials. Use a respectful and professional tone and provide relevant and credible information from established sources. Personalize your communication and focus on building relationships with them.

"And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs." – Mark 16:20

10 practical tips for effective church communication across generations

1. Be intentional and adaptable:

Recognize that different generations have different communication preferences and be intentional in adapting your communication strategies to meet their needs. Keep up with the latest communication trends and technologies and be willing to adjust your approach as needed.

2. Know your audience:

Take the time to understand the demographics of your congregation and community. Research the generational makeup of your church members and the broader community to better tailor your communication strategies. This may include conducting surveys or focus groups to gather feedback and insights from different generations.

3. Use a mix of online and offline methods:

A mix of online and offline communication methods is necessary to reach different generations effectively. Younger generations may prefer online platforms like social media, email and text messaging, while older generations may prefer more traditional methods like phone calls, face-to-face interactions and printed materials. Use a combination of these methods to ensure that your message reaches all generations.

4. Be concise and relevant:

In today's fast-paced world, attention spans are shorter than ever. When communicating with different generations, make sure your messaging is concise, relevant and easily accessible. Avoid jargon or complicated language and focus on delivering clear and impactful messages that resonate with your audience.

5. Provide multiple channels for communication:

Offer multiple channels for communication to accommodate different preferences. For example, provide options for in-person meetings, phone calls, emails, text messages and social media updates. This allows each generation to choose their preferred method of communication, increasing the chances of effective communication.

6. Personalize your communication:

Personalization is key to effective communication across generations. Take the time to understand the unique needs and interests of different generations and tailor your communication accordingly. Use language and examples that resonate with each generation and show genuine care and interest in their concerns and questions.

7. Foster two-way communication:

Encourage feedback and two-way communication across all generations. Create opportunities for church members to share their thoughts, ideas and concerns. This can be done through surveys, focus groups, town hall meetings or one-on-one conversations. Listen actively to their feedback and respond in a timely and respectful manner, showing that their input is valued and taken into consideration.

8. Embrace technology:

Technology is constantly evolving, and it's important for churches to keep up with the latest trends. Use technology like church management software, email newsletters, social media and church websites to communicate and engage with different generations. Embracing technology can help bridge the communication gap between generations and make communication more convenient and accessible.

9. Train and empower volunteers:

Empower volunteers from different generations to play an active role in church communication. Provide training and resources to help them effectively communicate with different generations. Encourage them to use their unique skills and talents to contribute to the church's communication efforts. This not only helps in reaching different generations but also fosters a sense of ownership and engagement among church members.

10. Evaluate and adapt:

Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of your church communication strategies and make necessary adjustments. Seek feedback from different generations and assess the impact of your communication efforts. Be open to change and adapt your strategies based on the feedback received and the evolving needs of your congregation.

In the end...

In the end, effective church communication across generations requires intentional efforts to understand the communication preferences of different age groups and adapt communication strategies accordingly. When you embrace and use a mix of online and offline methods, you'll get the best results.

Remember to continuously evaluate and adapt your communication strategies to meet the changing needs of your church members and community. With thoughtful and intentional communication, you can create a strong sense of connection and engagement among different generations, fostering a thriving and inclusive church community.

Get all the latest insights from the *American Beliefs Study* at americanbeliefs.com.

Choosing the Right Ministry Partner

The know-how you need from experts you trust.

ACS Technologies is the original pioneer of Church Management Software (ChMS). We are firmly dedicated to serving local churches all over North America by providing the best-in-class ministry software and service solutions that help you fulfill Christ's mission for your Church.

Tools and support to strengthen churches.

We build great software, but we don't stop there. We have a "service-first" approach that truly sets us apart. With hundreds of dedicated support and consulting personnel, your staff can reach our team 24/7. We're in your corner to help you with the ministry challenges you face every day.

Ideas and solutions powered by integrity.

Integrity is real for us, and it means consistently being faithful stewards by doing the right thing for church success. We have earned the trust of pastors, church staff, congregants, our employees, and colleagues for over 40 years.

A plan to meet your needs and move your ministry.


We're not just interested in satisfied customers. We see ourselves as your real ministry partner and will work with you to make disciples that will last for an eternity. We're excited to talk about your goals, create a plan together, and set you up with the software, service, and resources you need.

We believe in YOU!

ACS Technologies believes in the local church. Over 75% of our team has experience serving in their local churches. We know firsthand that serving the Church means serving people, and we take seriously our commitment to helping ministries like yours achieve their God-given mandate - to make disciples in their communities, states, and across the world.

Let's Talk

We know the challenges of switching or implementing new technology and how that can be intimidating. But we also know the unbelievable changes that have happened within churches that have partnered with us for their ministry needs. Let's connect and see how we can assist you in the greatest thing you do - grow God's Kingdom.

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