



2025

Gen Z Report

The value of
live events in
a digital world

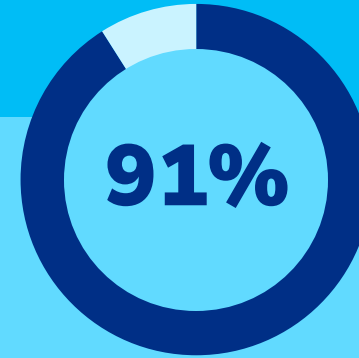
Plot Twist: The Most Connected Generation Feels ... Disconnected



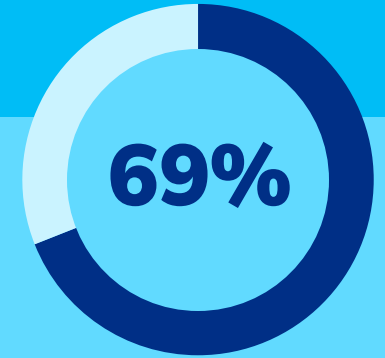
Gen Z was born into a digital world that connected their lives from the start.

So it's easy to assume they prefer online worlds to the real one.

But did you know there's more to the story?



would like a balance between technology and in-person opportunities to connect with others at their company/in their industry.



say technology has made them feel less connected and more isolated from others at their company/in their industry.



Gen Z wants to connect IRL to improve their careers.

Moving Beyond Gen Z Generalizations



As a global leader in live events who sees the power of in-person connection every day, we had a hunch about this twist.

But we needed the backstory.

So we partnered with The Harris Poll to find out how Gen Z professionals view live events, how their feelings compare with those of their older peers, and how event marketers can apply the insights to better reach this group.

Connections Build Careers



This digital-first group actually craves in-person connection.

Gen Z believes attending live events will benefit their careers, business relationships, and personal growth because technology has been hindering their ability to effectively communicate and connect.



TLDR for event planners: Brands and organizations have an opportunity to deepen bonds with Gen Z by helping them build skills and career connections at live events.

Let's dig into the findings and key takeaways ...

Tech Tanks Personal Interaction

Gen Z has grown up using screens in everyday life. And that includes remote school during the pandemic and first-time jobs that were often virtual.

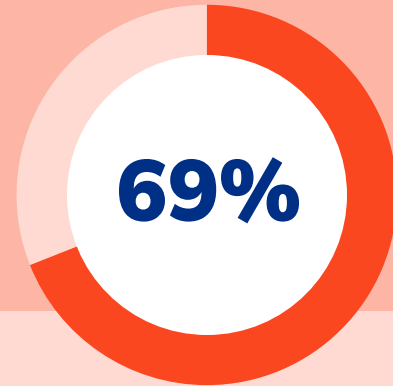
But despite this constant immersion, they are cognizant of tech's negative impact, personally and professionally.

These isolating effects have left them yearning for connection.



Half of Gen Z wishes social media platforms like X and TikTok didn't exist.”

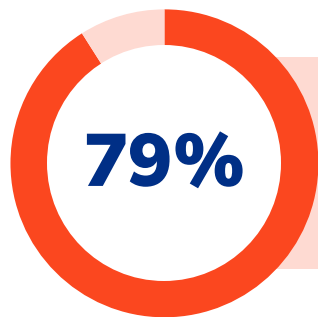
— Harris Poll Forbes CMO Summit, 2024



69%
of Gen Z say that tech has made them feel less connected and more isolated from others at their company/in their industry.

Tech Disconnect

Because Gen Z is both self-aware and observant, they're noticing how companies often rely on digital tech and social media to grab their attention.



of Gen Z feel like companies focus more on technology to connect to people than building in-person connections.

Like most things in life and business, balance is key.

One of These IS Like the Others

Gen Z, Millennials, and Gen X

There's an assumption that Gen Z is an island when compared to their more seasoned peers. In reality, they have similar perspectives on tech isolation and the value of in-person connection.

Gen Sync — Tech Crimps Connection

	GEN Z	MILLENNIAL	GEN X
“It would be nice to have a balance between technology and in-person opportunities to connect with others at my company/in my industry”	91%	90%	93%
“It feels like companies focus more on technology these days to connect to people than building person-to-person connections”	79%	82%	82%
“The rise of technology has made me feel less connected/ more isolated from others at my company/in my industry”	69%	61%	62%

 Gen Z (along with Millennials and Gen X) are okay with and appreciate putting their phones down. [Read more](#)



Create Connection, Balance the Tech

TAKEAWAYS

- Design analog experiences that generate live connections.
- But don't shy away from digital elements in activations and experiences entirely.
- Use tech thoughtfully to facilitate and enhance real-world interactions and in ways that make sense to digitally fluent generations.
- Go for balance across the board, with scales tipped toward face-to-face connection.

From Tech Crunch to Career Crunch

Gen Z is only a few years into their career, but they're already expressing concern about their trajectory and growth.

While they recognize that making personal business connections will help their careers, they're trailing Millennials and Gen X.



Only around half (57%) of Gen Z say they feel successful in their careers which falls behind their more experienced peers.

Perceived Career Success



57%
Gen Z

70%
Millennials

66%
Gen X

Average Number of Strong Business Relationships



16 Business relationships for **Gen Z**

21 Business relationships for **Millennials**

40 Business relationships for **Gen X**

Business Connections Build Careers

Gen Z may be trailing seasoned peers, but they're ready to act. They see the value of growing networks and have the desire to make that happen.

95%

of Gen Z understand the importance of making personal business connections in order to be successful at their jobs.

30%

of the workforce will be Gen Z by 2030

Today, there are approximately 50 million Gen Z employees in the workforce, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that they will constitute around 30% of it by 2030.

So, there's time to turn the tides on these career perceptions and smaller business networks — events can provide the swell Gen Z needs.



TAKEAWAYS

- Deliver targeted experiences that expand Gen Z's professional networks.
- Organize speed networking with timed introductions, allowing participants to meet several people in a short span.
- Orchestrate mentorship matchups so Gen Zers can receive counsel and guidance from older and wiser industry colleagues.
- Design sessions and networking that appeal to specific age groups while also incorporating cross-generational meetups.

Confidence Takes a Hit

Baked into Gen Z's career uncertainty is a lack of confidence. Between isolation and constant connectivity, this group often doubts their communication skills when interacting in the real world.



You go into a conversation with people, then you walk away and think, ‘Why did I say that? Why did I do that?’ Because for two years, we haven’t interacted much. It’s harder to talk to people face to face who you don’t know.”

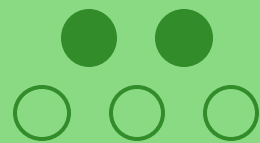
— Sr. Event Manager, CA, Harris Poll 2024



Day-to-Day Interactions

“About half of Gen Z employees say they feel not very confident communicating about work-related tasks with senior members of their team or even just engaging in small talk with them.”

— Harris Poll/Fortune, 2024



Only around 2 in 5 Gen Zers express high confidence in networking with people in their industry or building strong business relationships.



Confidence Meter Across Gens

	GEN Z	MILLENNIAL	GEN X
Presenting or leading internal calls/meetings	49%	64%	61%
Presenting or leading external or client-facing calls/meetings	51%	60%	61%
Communicating about work-related tasks	54%	57%	58%
Engaging in small talk	42%	52%	52%
Building strong business relationships with people in my company/industry	42%	45%	48%
Networking with people in my company/industry	39%	47%	48%



But they're eager to move past the cringe and hone their interpersonal skills.

Events Bolster Connection and Confidence

Gen Z sees live events as the perfect setting to check both the connection and confidence boxes.

In fact, they believe attending live events is a key part of their professional development.



91%

of Gen Zers agree that in-person events are some of the best ways to build social and interpersonal skills.

89%

of Gen Zers agree that the relationships made at in-person events are a critical part of building professional confidence.

86%

of Gen Z agrees that opportunities to attend in-person events are an important part of professional employees' career development.

82%

of Gen Z want to feel more comfortable expressing themselves and being with others IRL.
— The Harris Poll, Gen Z Social Media and Smart Phones, 2024

79%

say that it is their goal to be able to interact with people more in the real world.
— The Harris Poll, Gen Z Social Media and Smart Phones, 2024

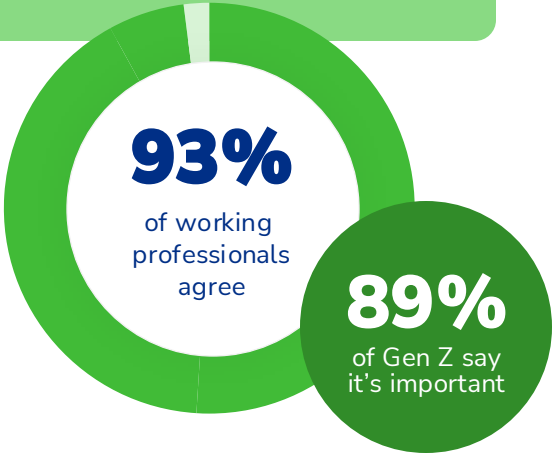
Events for the NowGen Win

Attendees across key demographics agree that live experiences enhance their growth.

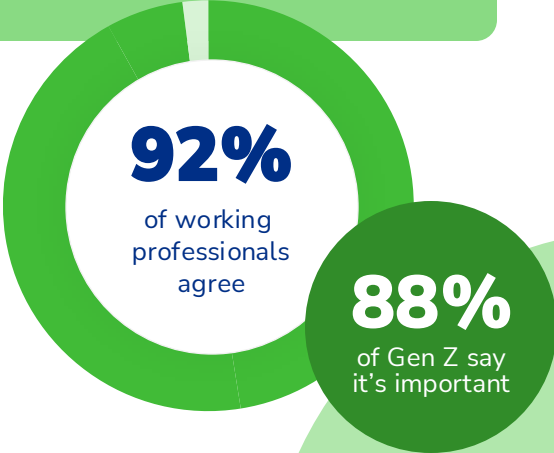
TAKEAWAYS

- Design networking opportunities that get Gen Z talking!
- Help them practice connecting by offering moments geared toward interpersonal communication.
- Create interactive workshops on soft skills:
 - Public speaking
 - Icebreakers using improv exercises
 - Group problem solving
 - Q&As where younger attendees are encouraged to interact or even lead discussions.
- Form young professional groups to encourage ongoing engagement and sharing with their peers.

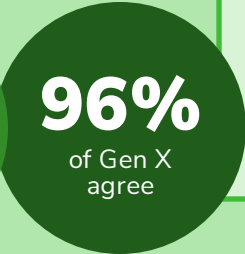
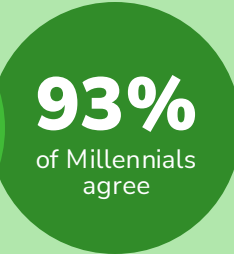
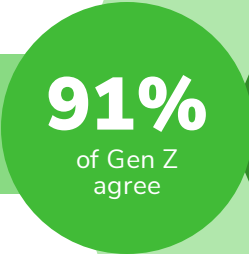
“The relationships that you make at in-person events are a critical part of building professional confidence.”



“In-person events help me stay ahead of what is happening in my industry.”



“In-person events are some of the best ways to build employees' social and interpersonal skills.”





Empower Your Events, Empower Gen Z

Despite their youth, this gen recognizes their own development needs. Like their older peers, Gen Z believes in-person experiences are key to professional success and hopes their employers will invest more in live opportunities to foster better relationships.



84%

of Gen Z working pros cite in-person/face-to-face as the best setting for building strong business relationships, in line with Millennials and Gen X.

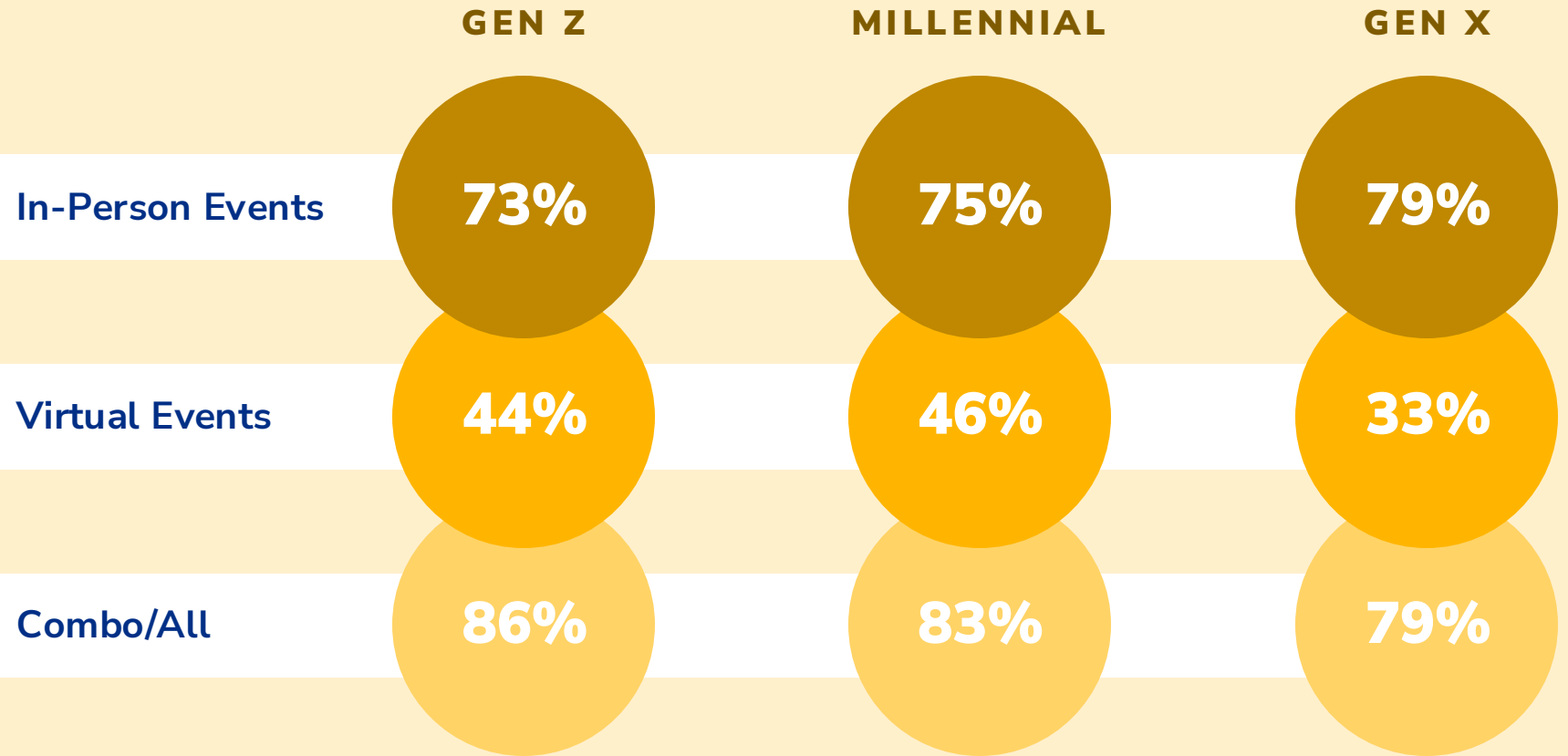


86%

of Gen Zers want their company to allocate more spending to events as a means of helping them build stronger business relationships.

Survey Says: Invest in Relationship-Building Events

Working professionals want their company to allocate more time and money on in-person opportunities.



Take Events to the Bank

Where working professionals want to see more funding allocated.



73%
In-Person
Events



TAKEAWAY

Live events hold the key to helping Gen Z build their professional and personal confidence as well as propel their career development.

Help them advance by tailoring your events accordingly. Find out how on the next page...

Experience Rizz

Armed with the twist of these new findings, here are 6 actions you can take to deliver events that Gen Z craves:



PERSONALIZE THE EXPERIENCE: Develop pre- and post-show questionnaires/surveys to better understand Gen Z's interests and aspirations. Apply the data to personalize programming and year-round comms.



ENERGIZE ENGAGEMENT: Design meaningful experiences across the agenda (reminder to include breaks!) that encourage interaction between generations.



CONNECT PEERS: Offer activities and experiences geared specifically toward their age group (young professional parties, meetups, etc.), and tailor programming for specific interests and career aspirations.



BROADEN NETWORKING: Think outside the happy hour box with informal social meetups and mixers in relaxed environments where they can practice their connection skills in a less structured setting.



BALANCE TECH AND IN-PERSON CONNECTIONS: Offer immersive activations that allow Gen Z attendees to connect with others. Remember to only incorporate tech that's purposeful (think apps, cool tech add-ons, gamification, etc.) since this group values balance.



INVEST IN GEN Z PROGRAMMING: Build in budget for Gen Z-targeted programming, and continue designing live experiences geared toward this up-and-coming audience segment.

Want to design engaging events that captivate all audiences?



Let's talk

Research Methodology

The research was conducted online in the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of Freeman among 1,824 U.S. adults aged 18–59 years who are employed in a white-collar job or work in a professional setting and have attended an in-person event at work or outside of work for business/professional purposes in the last 12 months. The survey was conducted between the 10th and the 22nd of September. Data are weighted where necessary by education, age sex, race/ethnicity, region, income, size of household, marital status, employment status and smoking status to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within + 3.4 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest. All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error, which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.