

# Meetings: The Next Generation

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# Next-Gen: A New Age in Meetings

*By Lisa Simundson*

This year, members of Generation Z—born between 1997-2012—are expected to outnumber Baby Boomers in the workforce for the first time. They bring with them different expectations, different attitudes toward upper management and different views on the importance of work in their daily lives.

Throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, each generation entering the workforce has to some degree rewritten the rules of the workplace. On the older end of the working spectrum, Boomers and Gen X were proud of their 60- to 80-hour work weeks... or if not exactly proud, then afraid to decrease their workload, lest they be perceived as goofing off.

Then Millennials (ca. 1981-1996) entered the picture, and the work vision changed as this generation rejected the idea of working late and on weekends, demanding a better work-life balance and enhanced technology to improve efficiency. At first, they were labeled “slackers” but eventually, their perspectives took hold as software replaced hardware, and burning the midnight oil was no longer the badge of honor it had been.

Of course, these are broad-brush descriptions; in each generation there are individuals who don’t fit the mold or may even resemble a different cohort altogether. But for our purposes, let’s get into the nuts-and-bolts of planning for younger attendees.

## **Gen Z and Millennials: Game Changers**

Many economists agree: Gen Z has had a rough go of it—born into the tech bubble, growing up during the Great Recession, graduating high school or being in college during the pandemic, and now, facing skyrocketing real estate prices that make the American Dream of buying a home out of reach.

However, many of those negatives have given rise to a trend now embraced by generations across the board—working from home and working from anywhere. While the industry initially feared in-person meetings would fade following the pandemic and the rise of remote working, the opposite has proven true. In-person meetings came back with a vengeance, but like anything after an absence, things aren’t exactly the same.



## Next-Gen Attendees: Where are They?

If you attend the average meeting or trade show, Boomers, Gen X and the earliest Millennials seem to be well-represented, but not so much their younger counterparts. So where is the next generation of attendees? Before you assume they are home on their phones, consider this—according to a recent Harris Poll survey, Gen Z workers feel isolated by tech and crave more in-person interaction.

So why are their numbers smaller at industry events? For one thing, many younger attendees just don't have the necessary income to pay what can be steep registration fees for some conventions and trade shows.

This is where corporate initiatives come into play, with scholarships that finance meeting attendance and corporate programs to mentor young planners and students. While it may not be possible for every organization, corporate mentorship is on the rise—according to Mentorloop and other sources—which can help bridge the gap between generations and boost attendance among younger groups.

Another issue faced by young professionals has to do with their company's internal pecking order. When an organization allocates time and money toward in-person opportunities, they tend to choose those higher on the company ladder. Gen Z respondents in the same Harris Poll said they wanted to see their companies allocate more spending on events to help them build stronger business relationships.

You need senior, experienced members at events, yes, but

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including younger team members—or increasing your travel budget to make that happen—will make those lower on the ladder feel valued because you're investing in their potential. It's a win-win.

## Meeting Design for a Younger Audience

With more Next-Gens in attendance at meetings and conferences, a few questions arise for planners:

- What style of programming is going to resonate with them?
- Do they need or want more downtime?
- How important are social media opportunities?
- And what do they want to eat?

Research has found that for the under-40 crowd, the convention starts well before the convention actually starts—with immersive digital experiences and effective social media leading up to and during events. This could be anything from virtual reality tours of the venue to behind-the-scenes content that engages them in real time.



## Dining: A Younger Menu

Make mealtime a visual feast, and your Insta-loving attendees will love you for it. Here are some more tips:

- Be health-conscious, with vegan and plant-based options
- Note ethically and locally sourced ingredients
- If you go grab-and-go, make it Bento boxes or snack packs
- Offer trendy coffee choices and imaginative dessert tables
- Dress up hydration stations with fresh fruit and flavored infusions



Younger attendees also want more of a say in what's being said—that is, the ability to offer instant feedback on a session via app, or the chance to contribute questions or comments during a session.

When it comes to the programming itself, Millennials and Gen Z will be expecting more than a speaker on a stage. With all the tech capabilities available, there are myriad ways to grab an audience's attention via music and soundscapes, captivating visuals, and even scents that can influence mood.

Younger attendees also respond when speakers share emotions as well as information, connecting with something personal vs being glued to a teleprompter. Next-Gen attendees want to see the human being behind the presenter. They also expect more inclusivity during a meeting or convention, with panelists from different backgrounds discussing topics that address social issues.

### Up With Downtime!

Because they're children of the digital age—never knowing otherwise—younger people are accustomed to consuming information in short bursts. In fact, with the advent of smartphones and rapidfire social media platforms, attention spans in general are getting shorter.

So a planner might want to consider trimming session length and offering more time in between sessions—allowing younger attendees to process the information they just learned in dedicated downtime and networking spaces. In addition, hands-on workshops might be preferable to school-auditorium-style lectures, especially after lunch when the ability to concentrate takes a hit.

But speaking of lunch, planners also need to remember their audience when choosing what to eat and how it's presented. True, in these days of shrinking budgets, it's more of a challenge to offer a plated meal or sumptuous buffet. But the important thing is to create a dining experience by making buffets of any kind Instagram-worthy, with a variety of colors and layered displays created by tiers

of food—perhaps punctuated by fresh plants and edible garnishes. Not expensive, but definitely photogenic.

Also, make sure to indicate anything locally or ethically sourced—very important to Millennials and Gen Z—and indicate such information as “vegan” or “dairy free” for those with specific preferences or allergies. In addition, try to choose compostable utensils and packaging.

No matter what, do not forget the caffeine, a must for any generation, but younger groups will appreciate options like cold brew, boba tea and matcha. Toss in a cupcake station with creatively designed goodies and your attendees will face afternoon sessions with renewed energy.

A few additions and revisions are sure to draw and delight your Millennial and Gen Z attendees, but don't forget, there's something else on the horizon: Gen Alpha.

## Change Up Conventional Formats

Next-Gen attendees respond to interaction and engagement, so consider the following:

- Pre-event social media opportunities
- Apps for scheduling, networking and session feedback
- Speakers who are authentic, relatable and come from varied backgrounds
- Downtime and collaborative spaces to process what's being learned during the sessions



As the expectations of meeting attendees evolve, so must the design of the events we host. Today's next-gen attendees—spanning younger professionals and digitally savvy participants—are looking for more than just content. They want experiences that are personalized, tech-forward and socially engaging.

At Caribe Royale Orlando, we've experienced firsthand how the most successful meetings are embracing technology not just as a tool, but as an enabler of deeper engagement. From event apps that streamline agendas and enable real-time feedback, to immersive experiences using AR/VR and AI-powered matchmaking for networking, the possibilities to elevate attendee value are growing fast.

Equally important is rethinking how we create opportunities for authentic connection. Gone are the days of one-size-fits-all networking receptions. Today's attendees prefer curated environments—whether it's small-group lounges, pop-up collaboration spaces or shared-interest meetups. The creative events team at Caribe Royale Orlando have become expert at partnering with our planner customers to design experiences with purpose-driven interaction in mind, fostering meaningful dialogue and lasting relationships.

Finally, flexibility is key. Next-gen attendees expect choice: hybrid options, wellness integration, and formats that allow them to engage on their terms. Our team understands these needs and our experts—from room layouts to session styles—are best positioned to capture and keep their audience's attention.

The team at Caribe Royale Orlando are experienced at creating meetings and events that meet the needs of the next generation of attendees: dynamic, experiential and attendee-centered. Let's explore how to meet the moment together.

### About Caribe Royale Orlando

Break the mold on traditional Orlando meetings and conventions. Innovation is only the beginning, with an incomparable resort experience, exceptional indoor and outdoor venues, and luxurious all-suite accommodations. Designed for the disruptors and rule-benders among us, Caribe Royale Orlando is a groundbreaking AAA Four Diamond destination where inspiration reigns, and a new standard is set.

### CaribeRoyaleMeetings.com

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As a key destination for hosting business events, Toronto is redefining how business events appeal to Gen Z by embracing the art of “festivalization”—transforming meetings into immersive, high-energy experiences that spark creativity, community and connection.

The Metro Toronto Convention Centre (MTCC) activates events with unexpected touches—from snack carts to silent discos. Maximizing booth activations through little components like popcorn makers and claw machines can make a huge difference in getting people's attention, getting them involved, and capturing fun memories for revisitation.

Gone are static lectures, instead turning to multiple mini stages, fireside chats, and rapid-fire panels to maintain energy and interactivity. Short sessions and fluid agendas empower attendees to curate their experience.

As one of the most diverse cities in the world, Toronto's multicultural identity translates into vibrant, varied food experiences—from food truck villages to globally inspired catering. This culinary inclusivity mirrors Gen Z's values and appetite for authenticity.

Toronto's thriving neighbourhoods, eclectic venues and vibrant nightlife make offsite activations and afterparties more than just add-ons—they're unique networking opportunities that deepen engagement and keep attendees talking beyond the convention floor.

Destination Toronto collaborates with planners and partners to push boundaries and create meetings that reflect the dynamic needs of new generations. In doing so, the city affirms its role as a trailblazer in attendee-focused meeting design.

### About Destination Toronto

As North America's fourth-most populous city, Toronto is Canada's largest and most visited destination. The city is built on diverse communities that thrive on economic, innovative and cultural inspiration and are open to embracing talent and opportunities. Plan your meeting in a city that's 100% all in, all the time.

### DestinationToronto.com

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# Fiesta Americana Travelty

MEETINGS  
& EVENTS

Meetings for next-generation attendees aren't just about the schedule of events. They're about connection, culture, and creating unforgettable experiences at resorts and hotels that prioritize social responsibility and sustainability. At Fiesta Americana Travelty Meetings & Events, we call this Meaningful Travel. We practice what we preach in Mexico and the Dominican Republic by creating flexible environments, immersive local experiences, and delicious cuisine—all grounded in sustainable practices, respect for the environment and our local communities.

Each of our resorts offers something different—because no two groups are the same. Whether it's a rooftop rum tasting, an oceanside cevichería, or an eco-conscious team-building activity, we collaborate with you to create events that inspire.

Our chefs embrace each region's culinary identity, turning every group meal into a celebration of local flavors, with plant-forward, healthy choices. For wellness seekers, our tranquil spas and relaxing amenities offer the perfect opportunity to relax and recharge.

Recent upgrades, from a reimagined SOMMA Wine Spa in Los Cabos to vibrant new dining venues in Cancún and Puerto Vallarta, highlight our commitment to continuous innovation. This summer, look forward to a new fun and unique place to meet—Fiesta Americana Funeeq Punta Cana. This all-ages, all-inclusive resort embraces vibrant colors, dynamic modern design and out-of-the-box activities creating an energetic and inspiring atmosphere—perfect for group events.

Fiesta Americana Travelty Meetings & Events invites you to experience meetings reimagined for a new generation that value purpose and innovation.

## About Fiesta Americana Travelty Meetings & Events

Warm up to Mexico or Punta Cana for your next meeting or event. Explore over 200 resort and hotel experiences. Each is unique and extraordinary, and all are ideal for inspiring creativity and productivity while providing ample opportunity to enjoy the spectacular views, luxe spas, and attentive service.

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## Charters, Meetings and Incentives

Epic events are on deck when you send your groups to sea with Virgin Voyages.

Award-winning, exclusively-adult cruise ships featuring Always Included Luxuries with WiFi, tips & gratuities, all dining (including specialty dining), soda & water, fitness classes and entertainment with \$1,000+ in value per attendee. Perfect for your next corporate meeting, incentive travel, and full ship charters where we provide complimentary meeting space (with small bites and refreshments), all AV equipment\*, a dedicated operations team on land and at sea, plus more, ensuring seamless execution.

Virgin Voyages has earned top accolades, including a Silver Visionary Award from Prevue for "Best Ocean Cruise Line Experience." Send your groups to sea on the ocean cruise line voted #1 for 2024 by Travel + Leisure readers, and was named Best Dining, Best Service, Best Value-for-Money, and Best Overall Ship by Cruise Critic Cruisers' Choice Awards.

Beyond just sailing the seas, these voyages are unforgettable experiences. From live music and immersive shows to karaoke in "The Groupie," sunsets at "The Dock," and dancing at the iconic two-story "The Manor," your event will be the talk of a lifetime.

The Virgin Voyages app makes planning seamless, with tools for pre-voyage prep, easy check-in, booking restaurants or shows, and staying connected with fellow Sailors.

Groups for meetings, incentives, or celebrations enjoy up to \$200 in onboard credit per cabin (including the group leader), plus a complimentary cocktail event. With flexible policies and a dedicated concierge to help plan every detail, your group will enjoy an experience that's truly extraordinary.

## About Virgin Voyages

Virgin Voyages' fleet of luxury, yacht-inspired ships are the perfect settings to host your group or client's incentive voyage or complete takeover of a ship with a charter. We provide meeting space (with small bites and refreshments), AV equipment, and a dedicated operations team on top of our standard above and beyond service and amenities to guarantee an unforgettable voyage for your team.

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At Soliman Productions, we believe that the future of meeting design hinges on more than formats and technology—it's about human connection. Today's next-gen attendees are visually driven, emotionally intelligent, and constantly seeking meaning in the experiences they choose. That's why our work centers on powerful, purposeful storytelling through compelling video content.

Video isn't just a medium—it's the heartbeat of modern engagement. We specialize in crafting cinematic, emotionally resonant stories that connect attendees to the event's mission, values and community. Whether it's an opening sizzle reel that sets the tone, highlight videos that reinforce key moments, or real-time content that amplifies energy, our storytelling approach elevates the attendee journey from passive to personal.

We collaborate with event organizers to embed narrative strategy into the very fabric of their meeting design—ensuring that content isn't just informative, but transformational. By visually capturing the essence of a gathering—its people, ideas, and purpose—we help brands create experiences that linger well beyond the closing session.

As this white paper explores, next-gen meeting design requires a fresh, dynamic approach. At Soliman Productions, we're proud to be a creative force behind that shift—translating brand messages into stories that spark emotion, foster connection, and inspire action.

Because when attendees see themselves in the story, they don't just watch—they engage, they believe, and they come back.

### **About Soliman Productions**

Soliman Productions is an award-winning boutique production agency and creative content house who curate compelling stories that build brand loyalty for organizations and events worldwide. In our work, we partner with companies and event organizers to deliver refined video marketing content to engage prospective audiences.

**[solimanproductions.com](https://solimanproductions.com)**



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