

THE UNSPOKEN STAND-OFF

Gen Z v/s Leadership



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There's a silent stand-off unfolding in Indian workplaces.

*You can't hear it. You can't quite see it.
But you can feel it.*

*Leaders are frustrated. Gen Z is disillusioned.
Both sides are talking, but neither is listening.*

The result?

*Toxic misunderstandings. High attrition. Quiet quitting that's not
so quiet anymore. A culture that is running on fumes while still
trying to sell itself as 'future-ready'.*

But here's the hard truth that no one wants to acknowledge aloud and resolve: India's businesses are leading a workforce they don't fully understand and they are using a leadership playbook that no longer works. That's why <percentage> of decision-makers today are struggling to engage, inspire and retain Gen Z talent.

At **Engaged Strategy**, we spent weeks diving into a groundbreaking research study that includes deep conversations with industry leaders, survey data and firsthand accounts from **Gen-Z-ers** and senior leaders primarily across India and Australia. It is all in our latest study, what I would rather term as a wake-up call, **Gen-Z Crisis at The Workplace Calls For Urgent Alignment**.

Scan here to know more:



Let me pull back the curtain and give you a peek into what's this disconnect between the Gen Z workforce and their leadership because what's happening in boardrooms and break rooms right now is anything but business as usual. This generational disconnect is a ticking time bomb that needs to be unplugged now or the repercussions will have a long-term impact.

The Leadership Illusion of Confidence

Indian business leaders are not lacking in confidence. In fact, 84% business leaders believe that they are leading with empathy and authenticity. And from a distance, the picture looks aligned: 77% of Gen Z employees agree that leadership demonstrates these traits. So what's the problem?

The gaps lie in how Gen Z experiences leadership, and not whether leaders believe they are doing a good job.

- 30% of Gen Z employees say their leaders do not discuss career progression.
 - 25% say they lack mental health resources.
 - 42% of Gen Z men report that flexible work support is missing.
 - 33% say their work doesn't align with their values.
- Leaders are checking the right boxes, but Gen Z isn't feeling the impact.

This isn't just a perception gap. It's a missed opportunity that is costing Indian organisations in loyalty, innovation and retention.

And for leaders reading this: You can't afford to guess where your culture is losing its grip. You need hard data. You need to know where to act because India today is home to the world's largest Gen Z workforce!

And that's what this report delivers.



Gen Z: The First Generation Born Tired

Now let us flip the lens.

Gen Z grew up during Climate Fear, Global Uncertainty, Social Media Pressure and Career Anxiety - often before their first full-time job.

They are not lazy. They are just done with outdated systems.

- They want growth, but not at the cost of their sanity.
- They seek purpose, but not the kind printed on a wall.
- They crave feedback, not once a year — but now.

If that sounds entitled to you,
you may be part of the problem.

The Fracture Points

Let us get into the real cracks that are threatening the foundation of modern work.

1. Line Managers: The Accidental Saboteurs

Middle managers were once the bridge. Today, many have become the bottleneck. According to **Unstop's 2024 survey**¹, nearly 1 in 2 Gen Z professionals in India plan to leave their current roles within two years. That's an exodus waiting to happen. But note here that they are not fleeing paychecks, but are rather running away from stagnation.

While the study does not single out line managers as the primary culprit, it is impossible to ignore their influence because:

- Who controls career conversations?
- Who creates day-to-day work culture?
- Who either empowers or shuts down innovation, flexibility and feedback?

The obvious answer is the line manager in most cases.

Your line managers play a make-or-break role here. They own career conversations. They shape daily culture. Hence, they have the power to either inspire or alienate.

And yet, many are still managing Gen Z with outdated KPI-chasing, micromanagement and checkbox feedback systems. Until we re-skill the 'middle', no retention strategy will survive contact with Gen Z.

2. Meaning Over Money

Indian Gen Z is not allergic to effort. They will work hard if they understand the "why?"

Leaders ask: *"How do we make them loyal?"*

The real question to ask though is:

"Are we giving them a reason to stay?"

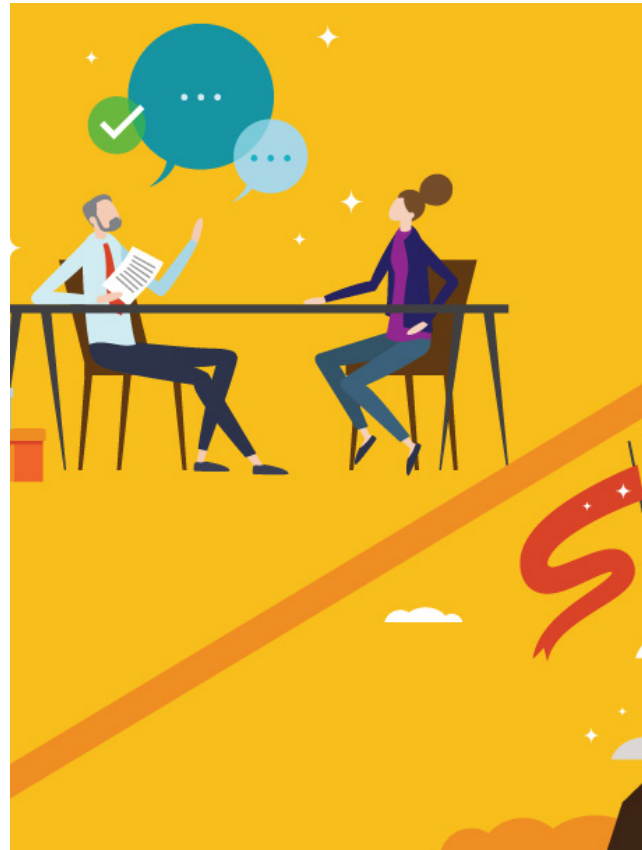
If you don't connect their work to something larger, no amount of perks will save you the financial drain and the pain of losing great Gen Z talent.

3. The Feedback Crisis

Today's Gen Z lives in a real-time world of instant feedback and instant updates. And then, they walk into a workplace where their performance is reviewed once a year. This is a clear case of an epic clash between outdated and present-day cultures.

Hence, either you fix your feedback loops or prepare to lose your future leaders.

¹ <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/47-gen-z-professionals-plan-to-leave-their-jobs-within-2-years-survey-6557596>





Why This Should Keep Indian Leaders Up at Night?

You might think, “*This is just another generational cycle.*” But Gen Z is not the cohort that will stay quiet and swallow the bitter pill. They talk- On LinkedIn, On Glassdoor, On social media.

They are watching your culture, not your campaigns. And they are asking:

- Is DEI a policy or a performance?
- Are leaders visible only in strategy decks or also in hard moments at work?

It is obvious and evident that your employee engagement brand is no more your logo. It is your leadership behaviour.

This Is Where Engaged Strategy’s Study Comes In Handy

If you are serious about future-proofing your workplace, this study is your effective blueprint.

- It decodes what **Gen Z really wants**, and where Indian organisations are missing the mark.
- It highlights **the blind spots of leaders** who think they are aligned to the 15 critical gaps, but are losing Gen Z’s trust.
- It provides **data-backed insights** that help you take action with confidence.

The insights are sharp with a drill down to even gender-based analyses. Backed by quantitative data and driven by outcomes, this study empowers leaders to transform Gen Z engagement with clarity and confidence. The recommendations are practical and actionable immediately. And the value is immediate.

Don’t wait for another exit interview to realise where things went wrong. Act now.

The Final Word

Remember that the corporate world today does not have a Gen Z engagement problem. What we have is a clear **leadership transformation problem**. And the organisations that solve it will attract the best minds, the boldest innovators and the most committed future leaders.

If you want to be one of them, this study with its practical recommendations is your next step.

Not because I say so, but because your future workforce already has.