

The Four Generation Workforce

Overcoming friction
and building strong
team dynamics



Foreword

TODAY'S BUSINESS LANDSCAPE presents a number of interesting challenges and opportunities. We've reached a pivotal time where, as the retirement age creeps up, many organisations now have four generations co-existing in the same workforce. Research from the [Work Foundation at Lancaster University](#), in collaboration with the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking, showed almost three quarters (73%) of senior business leaders have multiple generations in their workplace. And, while 70% agree that organisations benefit from the diverse perspectives brought by a multigenerational workforce, two in five (39%) report it leading to difficulties in communication and collaboration.

Each generation in the workforce – from Gen Z to so-called 'Baby Boomers' - have very different experiences of the workplace, expectations of employers, skills, priorities, and values. Employers must learn how to balance these varying needs and preferences, while maintaining a cohesive workplace culture and positive team dynamic.

It's impossible to comment on the issues facing the workforce today without acknowledging the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the widespread change it made to our ways of working. The rise of remote and hybrid working has made for an interesting

inauguration to the working world for Gen Z colleagues, and while those at the latter end of the generational bracket had a good few years of 'normal' work under their belts before the pandemic struck, younger Gen Zs were starting their first roles in the midst of the madness. They've most likely had to learn the business, their role and expectations, and acquaint themselves with colleagues, while having little or possibly no office time.

This accumulation of factors can make for a fractured team and dynamic. With all of this in mind, we wanted to explore the current working landscape in more detail, finding out how full-time UK office employees (those that spend at least some of their working week stationed from a company HQ) are finding their colleague relationships, and what they see as the main challenges. At a time that team building is arguably more important than ever before, we also explore employees' perceptions and experiences of these activities, and the true impact they have on the team and business. I hope you find our findings useful.



TINA BENSON
Founder and managing
director at Team Tactics



About the research

THE NATIONALLY representative survey of 1,025 UK office workers (in at least 25% office-based roles) was conducted by Censuswide on behalf of Team Tactics. Generations referenced in this report are defined as Gen Z (aged 18-27), millennial (aged 28-43), Gen X (aged 44-59) and Baby Boomers (aged 60-78).



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What do workplace relationships look like in 2025?

WITH MANY ORGANISATIONS now operating with a four-generation workforce, we asked our sample of UK office workers about their colleague relationships, and where they're not always positive, delved into the main sources of friction.

Concerningly, the research showed that over a quarter (27%) of Gen Z office workers would describe their workplace relationships on the whole to be negative. This contrasts to just 16% of millennials, 20% of Gen X, and 13% of Baby Boomers.

Considering that the majority of Gen Z employees had an unusual introduction to the workplace over the pandemic, and many still split their working week between home and the office, it's entirely possible that younger workers still don't feel as well integrated with the business and their colleagues.

Interestingly, aside from communication, Baby Boomers' main colleague bug bears differed somewhat to their younger co-workers.



More than 1 in 5 (21%) said they would describe their relationships with younger colleagues on the whole as negative, while this was the case for 18% with older colleagues.

We also asked each generation what their main sources of friction were with their colleagues – and the results made for interesting reading, with 'differences in communication' coming up as a top-three challenge across every generation. This was felt most widely by Gen Z office workers, with almost three quarters (74%) feeling this played a role in their negative colleague relationships.

Differences in work styles also came up frequently, cited as a top-three source of friction by Gen Z, millennial and Gen X office workers. Interestingly, aside from communication, Baby Boomers' main bug bears with their colleagues were quite different to their younger colleagues. Their top challenge with colleagues was identified as 'competing priorities and workloads' (57%), followed closely by 'work ethic and commitment' (56%).

Top challenges with colleagues*

*where relationships with colleagues are not always positive

Gen Z

1997-2012



Differences in work styles or approaches

Differences in communication styles

Lack of trust or collaboration

Gen X

1965-1980



Differences in work styles

Differences in communication styles

Workplace hierarchies and authority

Millennials

1981-1996



Differences in work styles

Differences in communication styles

Personal boundaries and work-life balance

Baby Boomer

1946-1964



Competing priorities or workloads

Work ethic and commitment

Differences in communication styles

TINA'S TAKE

“A four-generation workforce can bring many advantages with a vast accumulation of different perspectives, experiences,

knowledge and skills – but there are fundamental issues that need addressing before businesses can effectively tap into this potential. Communication is clearly a key sticking point for workplace relationships in 2025, and while some generational differences are normal, we must find ways to avoid this causing confusion and conflict in the workplace. Helping colleagues form a better understanding of one another as people, and uniting them behind a shared task or goal, can be a powerful way to help break down some of these barriers, and demonstrate just how important everyone's contributions are.”

THE RESEARCH ALSO revealed some workplace tension stemming from differences in wider beliefs and values. Of the Gen Z office workers experiencing negative workplace relationships, 7 in 10 said that colleagues' attitudes towards sustainability were a source of friction, and 64% of millennial office workers said the same. This contrasts to just 48% of Gen X and 34% of Baby Boomers that identified this as a source of friction.

We see a similar pattern in the research with diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI). Two thirds (66%) of Gen Z and 64% of millennial workers identified different attitudes towards DEI as a source of friction with colleagues, compared to just 47% of Gen X and a third (33%) of Baby Boomers.



CASE STUDIES

○ ○ [Give a Helping Hand] exercise was very fulfilling. Being able to as a team work together where we have built a good relationship for something to help someone else was a humbling experience and very glad I got to do it with people who I have made a close connection with after a year together. ● ●

IFLP

○ ○ The variety ensured that most delegates could participate, and the collaborative effort at the end to make [The Rat Trap] the contraption work was particularly enjoyable. ● ●

RICOH UK

○ ○ I loved it. Not only did it involve team building skills, it also meant we could give back. It revealed strengths within our teams, leadership qualities, and also gave us a fuzzy feeling for doing something good for others. ● ●

IFLP



Building relationships and team dynamics

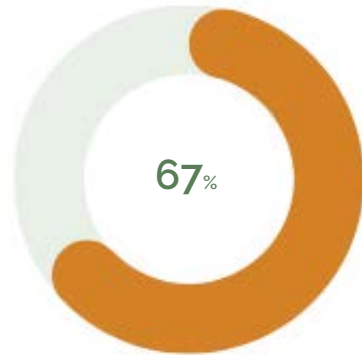
WITH SOME EMPLOYEES – particularly younger entrants to the workplace – feeling as though their workplace relationships leave a lot to be desired, employers cannot afford to let their fractured team dynamics go unaddressed. With this in mind, we asked UK office workers about the last time they took part in a team building activity, how they found it, and what (if any) impact they saw as a result.

Interestingly, despite some of the 'forced fun' and 'cringe' narratives sometimes associated with team building, attitudes towards these activities are largely positive. More than two thirds (67%) of UK office workers surveyed said they find team building activities enjoyable and 65% say they help them to perform better as a team.

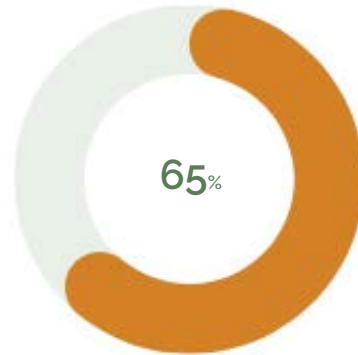
Respondents find team building effective for improving inter-generational workplace relationships (65%) and helping employees feel closer to their colleagues (63%). It also helps them form a better understanding of their colleagues, with 64% in agreement that team building helps them to improve their knowledge of individuals' strengths on the team, and 62% saying that it helps them to learn more about their teammates' interests outside of work.



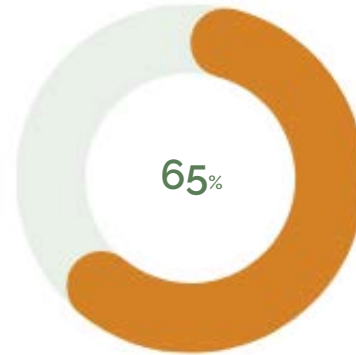
Team building impact. Amongst UK office workers.



Agree they are enjoyable



Agree they perform better and a team after



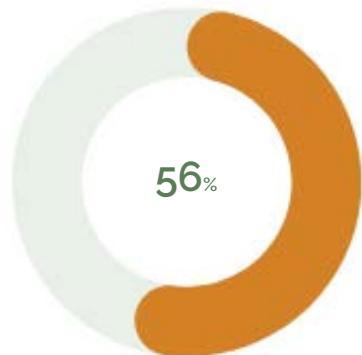
Agree inter-generational workplace relationships improved

Additionally, 63% agree team building is a good use of everyone's time, and 59% believe they're a good use of company money. These statements were more widely supported among senior management, suggesting they recognise the value team building brings to the organisation as a whole. 86% of directors and 80% of senior managers think team building is a good use of time, while 88% of directors and 74% of senior managers believe it to be a good use of company funds.

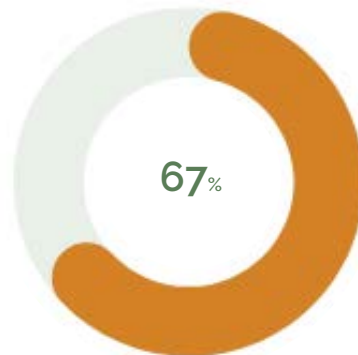
The widely positive perceptions towards team building activities are reflected in the numbers of those participating. 56% said they had taken part in a team building activity in the last 11 months, while two-thirds (67%) had within the last two years. Meanwhile, 64% of employees said they had taken part in a work social activity in the last 11 months, and this rose to three quarters in the last two years.

The findings also suggest an appetite from some colleagues to spend time with one another even when it's not being instigated by employers, with 61% saying they'd attended a social event with colleagues organised independently of work in the last 11 months, and 74% saying the same of the last two years.

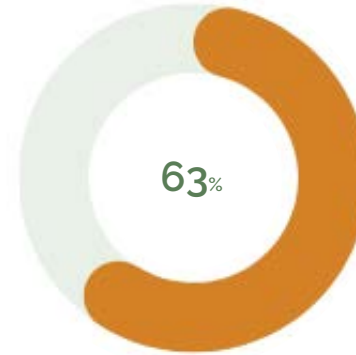
Team building popularity. Amongst UK office workers.



Had taken part in a team building activity in the last eleven months

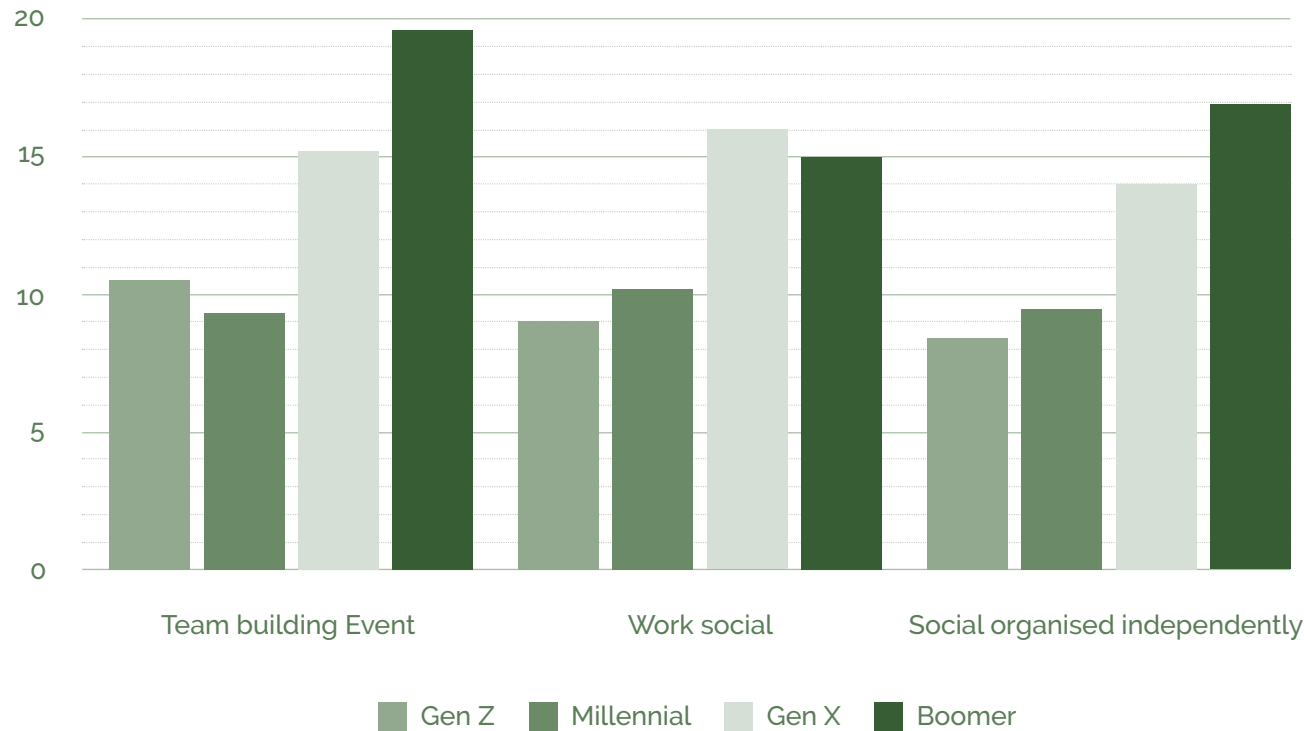


Had taken part in a team building activity in the last two years



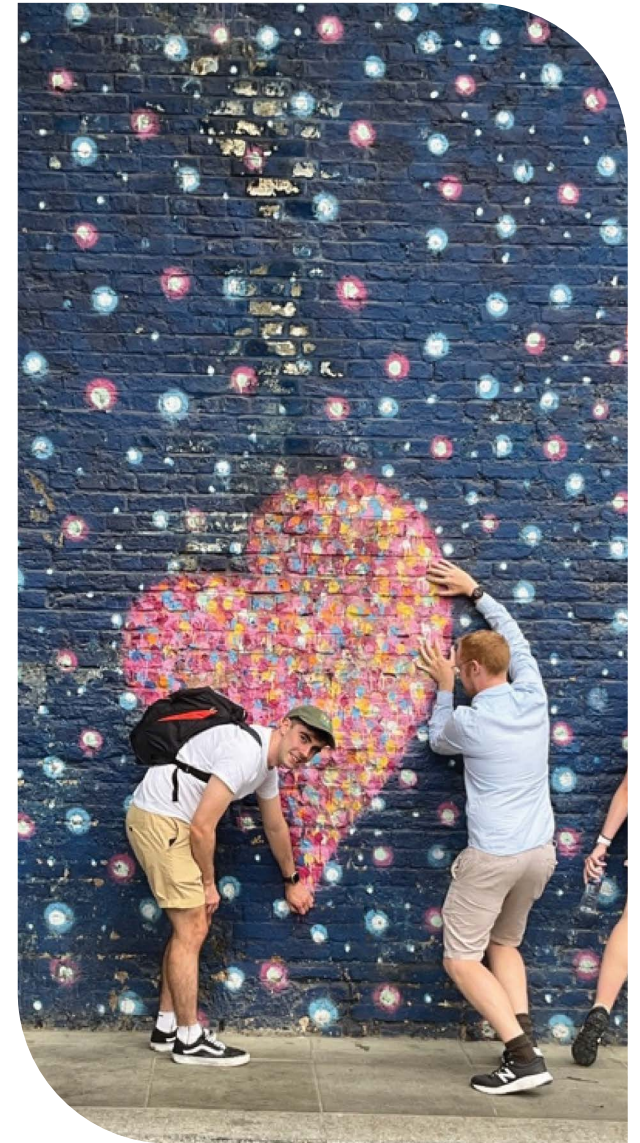
Agree team building is a good use of everyone's time

Graph shows average months since cohort last took part in activity

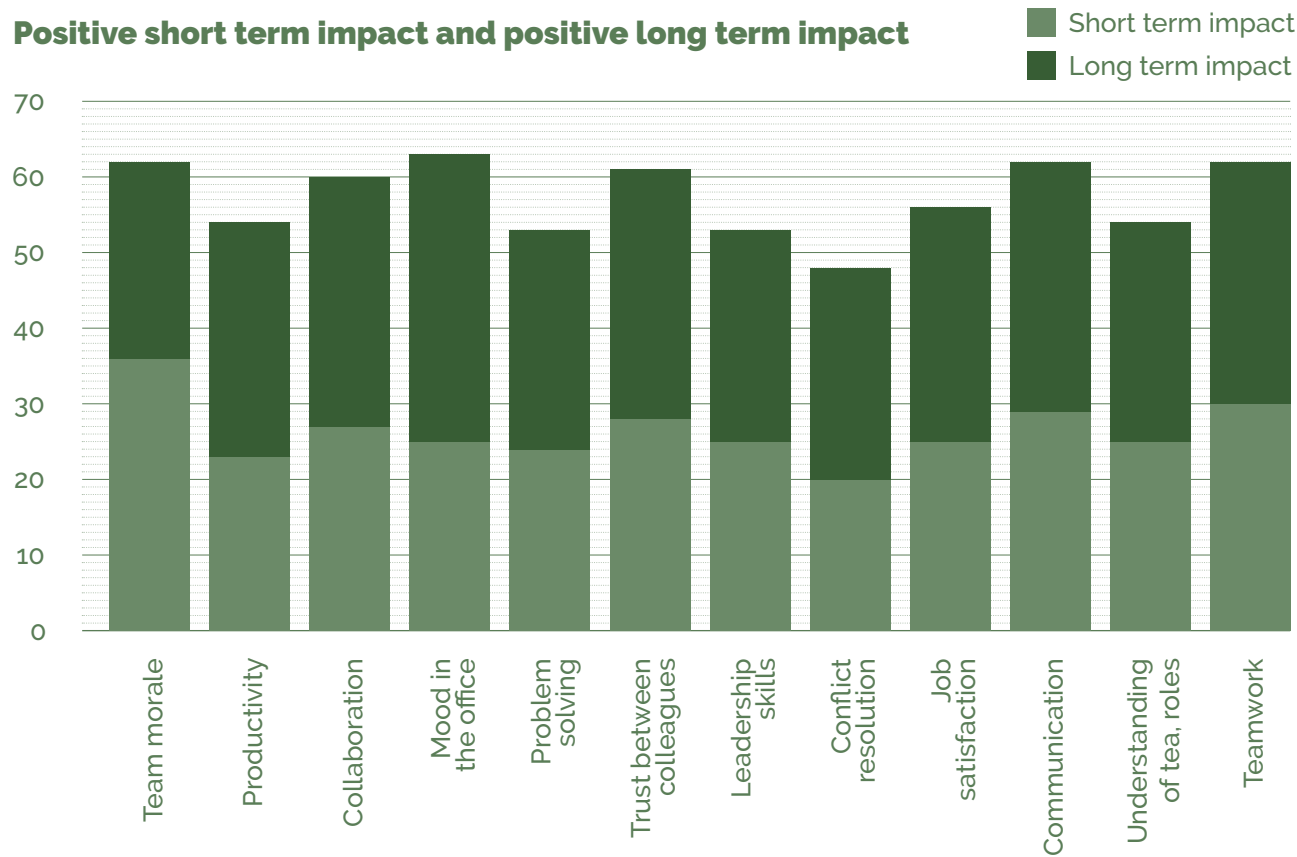


Interestingly, Gen X and Baby Boomer employees are less likely to have attended any of these events as recently as their younger colleagues. However, with 18% of Gen X and 22% of Baby Boomers saying they don't feel comfortable participating in team building activities (compared with 13% of Gen Z and just 6% of millennials), it appears some older colleagues are opting out altogether.

Elsewhere, almost 1 in 5 (19%) employees surveyed said they have never attended a team building event, while a further 10% claim to have done so, but over three years ago. Whether this is because their employer isn't hosting these events, or they're choosing not to attend, these employees are missing out on vital opportunities to improve team dynamics, skills and relationships.



Positive short term impact and positive long term impact



TINA'S TAKE

It's interesting to learn that, while attitudes towards team building are positive on the whole, older generations in

the workplace are more likely to have their reservations. However, it's possible that their experiences of team building has been limited, and as the scope of activities on offer constantly diversifies, there are more fun, engaging and meaningful ways to bring teams together than ever before. We find colleagues of all ages particularly get stuck into charity and purpose-led team building activities, as it requires them to work together to pool their efforts, skills and strengths, to achieve a positive outcome for a deserving cause or community."

When respondents were asked what impact, if any, team building had across the following areas, the majority identified positive, wide-ranging changes.

62% said team building improves communication among the workforce – with 29% citing a long-term positive impact, while 3 in 5 link

improvements in collaboration, with 27% noticing the change long-term.

Positive changes were also widely noted on mood in the office (63%), team morale (62%), teamwork (62%) and trust between colleagues (61%).



CASE STUDIES

○ ○ We have seen some incredible results with 100% of people saying the day increased their awareness of the benefits of a diverse workforce, 100% people rated the event 10/10 and we achieved an NPS score of 100. These are remarkable results, and you were a huge part of creating this magic! ● ●

BUPA

○ ○ I would just like to say a massive THANK YOU from us all for our amazing team building day. The location, organisation, events and staff were fantastic, there was something for everyone and we all had an amazing day. ● ●

DHL

○ ○ A fantastic experience all round. It was well-organised, great fun and thoroughly appreciated by all involved. ● ●

MACMILLAN EDUCATION

○ ○ Sometimes team building exercises can make some members of the team feel insecure or challenged. Not on this occasion. It enabled teams to get mixed up, it needed people to work together - which was great as people had to work with people from different areas of the business and we had a mix of new recruits and those that had been here a while. It helped create connectivity. ● ●

IWFM



We offer an extensive selection of [CSR team building activities](#), including:

WHEELS FOR WALKIES

Building canine wheelchairs for a partner charity to help dogs that have been in an accident, paralysed or struggled with old age and other degenerative diseases to walk, jog, play and fetch as they did before.

GIVE A HELPING HAND

Building a prosthetic hand for people in need in developing countries - there are then delivered to recipients in developing countries together with the team of doctors and volunteers who fit the hands to each person.

THE APPRENTICE CHARITY TREASURE HUNT

Teams compete against each other to source and collect items from the designated list in the fastest possible time, before items are donated to charities for the homeless to help improve the quality of life for those without a fixed address.



About Team Tactics

TEAM TACTICS is a leading provider of unique corporate team building and corporate events across the UK. It provides bespoke corporate entertainment events, team building days, fun business events, staff entertainment, team exercises, company outings and incentive days, as well as corporate team building solutions and hospitality for some of the UK's major sporting and cultural events.

Founded in 1995, the business has built up an impressive portfolio, working with the likes of Barclays, Google, Ford, LinkedIn, M&S, Sky, Visa and Nestle. It prides itself on creating fun, interactive and often quirky events to engage teams, aid interaction, reward staff, improve morale and relationships, and encourage fun and enjoyment.

Team Tactics is pioneering CSR and charity events in the sector, helping organisations to give back to their communities and bring colleagues together.



For more information on the research,
or to talk to us about your next team
building event, simply get in touch.

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