Decoding generational behaviours, motivations and myths

Why organisations must rethink what drives audience engagement.

Decoding generational behaviours, motivations and myths.

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Introduction

At mci group, we believe the future of growth lies in how well organisations understand and activate key audiences. But the rules of engagement are shifting. Audiences are not defined simply by age or demographics – we have learnt they are shaped by values, behaviours, and expectations of trust, sustainability, and purpose.

Based on the experience we have built up over the years and two global surveys, we have compiled our learnings to create *Decoding generational behaviours, motivations and myths* to explain how every generation – Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers – connects, decides and participates in today’s professional and association ecosystems. By cutting through myths with evidence-backed insights and translating them into practical playbooks, we aim to give marketing and organisational leaders clarity in today’s fast-changing environment, as well as a vision of the future impact of Gen Alpha.

It’s important to note that generational segmentation should be seen as a guide rather than a stereotype that limits decisions or creativity. It’s also worth noting that differences don’t always rise evenly from one cohort to the next. Our motivations are often defined less by our age than by our behaviours and what we respond to. This report therefore provides a general framework for understanding trends and preferences – a practical compass to navigate complexity, not a rigid map.

Our goal for this report is to share our expertise as a guide when designing your audience engagement activations. Inside, you will find:

- Myth-busting insights that challenge assumptions about each generation.
- Engagement playbooks with actionable steps you can apply tomorrow.
- Cross-generational design tips to create inclusive campaigns, events, and communities.
- Our success case stories highlighting what works in practice.
- Future casting to help you anticipate shifts over the next five years.

Whether you are engaging members, delegates, partners, stakeholders, sponsors, employees or customers, this report will help you to navigate the generational complexity with confidence.

With thanks to mci group brands:

insidery, our consulting and market research agency, whose insights specialists led the analysis and developed the methodology for their own Signature Patterns for Generational Subgroups Survey and for mci group's Internal Global Experts Survey. They also analysed the responses for this report.

MCI, our global engagement marketing agency, whose account leaders and intelligence consultants contributed decades of knowledge and experience.



Sylvia Andre
mci group Chief Marketing
& Creativity Officer



Chapter 01

"We can't assume that Gen Z is going to grow into these legacy models we have"



Erin Fuller
mci group Global Head
of Association Solutions

The great engagement shift

Organisations everywhere are re-examining how they earn attention and trust. The usual metrics no longer tell you who will actually show up and even successful events and organisations struggle to explain why certain formats work. Big numbers don't guarantee real engagement anymore. The goal of this report is to bridge that gap to provide a clearer read on human motivation behind engagement data.

Drawing on mci group's global experience and external perspectives, we approach participation as a human system, shifting analysis from organisations and brands to individuals. This highlights that people, not structures, make the decisions that shape participation trends and influence event design across industries and regions. Together these frameworks help explain why audiences act, or don't act.

mci group Internal Global Experts Survey reinforces this shift. Mixed-generation audiences are now the norm, yet many event formats still assume a single participation logic, with similar confidence levels, motivations and ways of engaging. That gap helps explain why friction shows up even in well-run events: the challenge is whether the experience fits how different people want, and feel able, to participate.

Key shifts are reshaping how people participate: AI-enabled personalisation, sustainability as proof of values, hybrid as the new normal and a stronger demand for trust and transparency. Together, they are shifting audiences from passive consumption to active co-creation. For events, each force is a design lever:

- use AI to make content more relevant,
- make sustainability part of why people choose you,
- use hybrid options to widen access,
- build trust so people feel confident to commit and participate.

People and money are moving to short videos and online creators, which is taking attention and budget away from traditional media. Events work best when your attendees do more than watch and listen. They need to take active part in the event. Stop chasing reach. Design for participation. Think: fewer touchpoints, higher quality, clearer next steps. Make your event one strong moment inside a year-round loop of content and community.

Erin Fuller, mci group Global Head of Association Solutions, speaking to the *Member Engagement Show* with Higher Logic, noted that the past 10 years of research undertaken for MCI's Association Engagement Index has shown that Baby Boomers and Gen X have had the strongest emotional connection to organisations, but she warns: "We can't assume that Gen Z is going to grow into these legacy models we have. We have to let their interests influence how we design our engagement models going forward." Remember, Gen Z and younger Millennials are cost-pressured; Gen X is time pressured. All are more likely to trade down or delay purchases, but all reward brands that speak with authenticity, transparency and utility, especially when discovery is community-led.

Participation is a leading sign of ROI. When people contribute (by submitting work, earning a credential, mentoring or co-creating) they are more likely to come back, renew and progress faster through your pipeline. This is consistent with mci group's 2024 Association Engagement Index for associations. While 31% of members and customers said they were highly interested in contributing more actively, only 22% felt their association encouraged them to do so and just 15% found it extremely easy. The gap is clear: the appetite is there, but organisations still need to make participation easier to enter and easier to act on. Sponsors also get more value when interactions are measurable, not just "impressions".

The place to meet our audiences is where collaboration happens. In events, that means creating spaces where individuals, communities and brands can co-create relevance through multi-format storytelling, and designing these spaces so that participation leaves measurable traces that connect to a business result.

Oscar Cerezales, mci group Global President, offers a useful reminder at this point: while the context around participation keeps changing, the fundamentals of engagement remain remarkably steady. Organisations still need to activate audiences, create value, shape strong user experiences, build quality touchpoints, measure what matters, grow communities and execute well. What changes is how those fundamentals are delivered, and how different generations respond to them.





Why audience decoding matters now for associations and brands

It shapes how events are designed, how value is demonstrated, how communities are built and how people move from passive attendance to active participation. The more clearly we understand what different audiences need to take part, the easier it is to make better decisions on format, messaging, recognition, investment and measurement.

Participation over presence: With attention concentrated in creator ecosystems, audiences engage when they can contribute. Decoding motivations by audience segment (often age-led) lets you design roles, recognition and formats that convert attendance into participation. Our research data suggests a clear “substance vs showcase” divide in how audiences use events: Baby Boomers are less likely to see events as a stage for visibility, while Millennials and Gen Z are far more likely to use events to build recognition and presence.

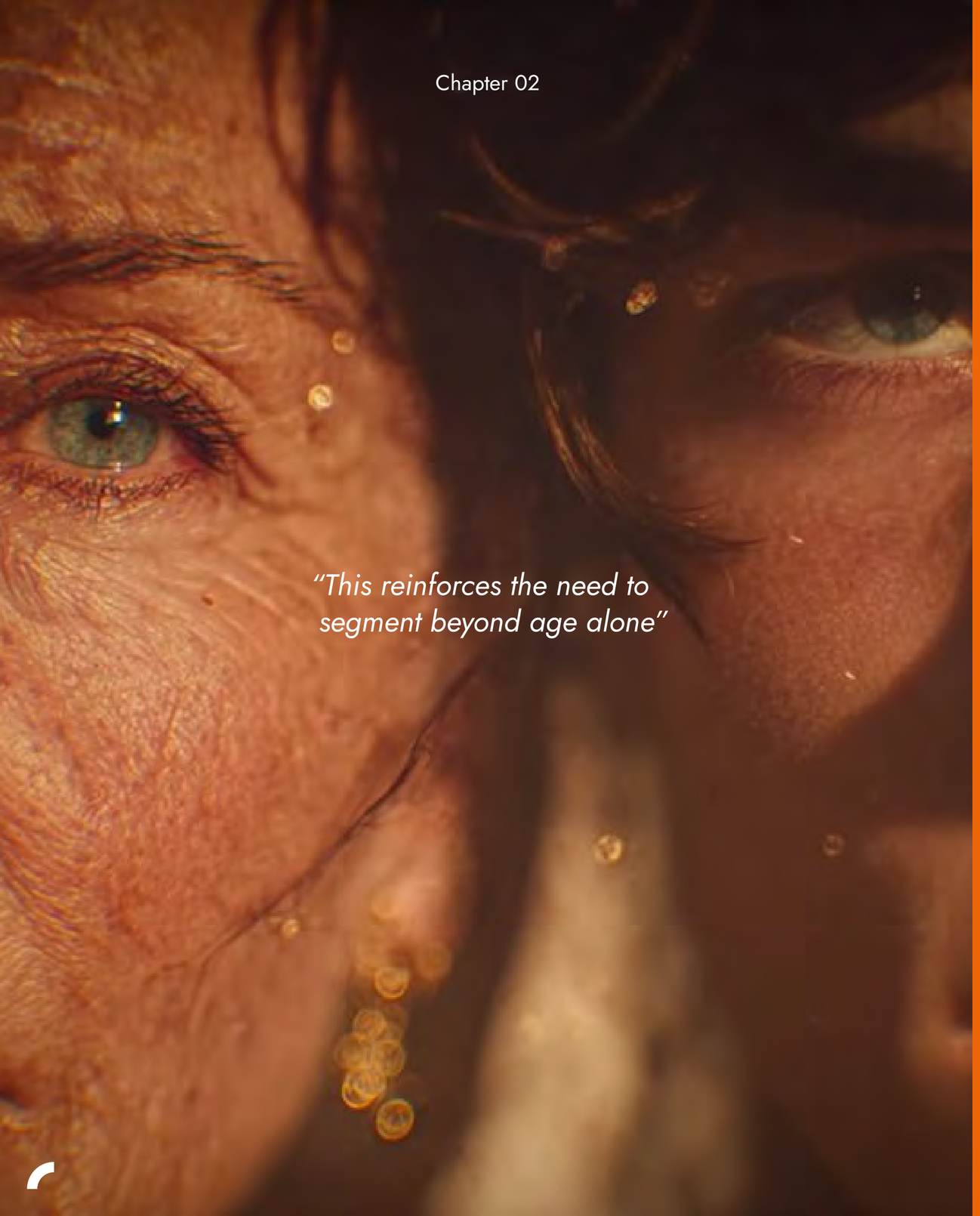
Budget pressure, higher scrutiny: Budgets are tight and every decision is under the microscope, so you can’t afford guesswork. When spend is harder to justify, audience insight helps you focus on the channels and content most likely to pay off, rather than on what’s familiar.

Cross-gen teams are the norm: Most programmes now serve mixed-age groups, but many formats still privilege one style of participation over others. mci group’s Internal Global Experts Survey shows that friction most often comes from differences in content expectations, confidence levels, motivations and comfort with technology. When you design for shared needs while creating multiple entry points into participation, you reduce friction and lift satisfaction across the board.

Talent and membership pipelines: Younger professionals want to see how participation helps their careers. More senior members want to contribute in ways that matter. If you meet both needs, you protect your pipeline of future members, volunteers and leaders.

Trust, sustainability and proof: Younger audience members filter by values; older attendees look for credible delivery. Knowing what each group needs will help you communicate sustainability, privacy and impact in a way they will actually believe. In other words, decode what different groups consider “proof” and you will build stronger confidence in your brand and your event.

Measurement that matters: When you design for real outcomes, you can measure real progress. That moves KPIs beyond reach and clicks to things stakeholders care about, like skills gained, credentials earned and advocacy created.



Audience segmentation: beyond age

Age doesn’t tell the full story; behaviour does. More projects now mix young professionals with experienced leaders, and teams that clearly define roles and give recognition across generations see higher engagement and satisfaction than those separated by age.

Our starting point for this report was mci group’s day-to-day experience, our project observations, client insights and customer feedback to describe our audience segments. We categorised our audiences by career stage, then tested our hypotheses against reality through our dedicated research. This framing supports inclusive experiences: it avoids stereotyping while giving teams a shared language for decisions on formats, channels and recognition.

mci group’s Internal Global Experts Survey supports this approach. Across regions and client types, respondents reported that mixed-generation audiences are now standard but event formats often struggle to accommodate different expectations around content, technology, motivations and participation styles. This reinforces the need to segment beyond age alone and design for the behavioural conditions that enable people to happily take part.

Our audience

- **Rising influencers**: Students, young professionals, early-career digital natives (typically but not only Gen Z; born 1995–2012)
- **Purpose-driven pragmatists**: Mid-career professionals, purpose-driven career builders (typically but not only Millennials; born 1980–1994)
- **Pragmatic decision-makers**: Senior professionals, C-level executives, pragmatic decision-makers and balance-seekers (typically but not only Gen X; born 1965–1979)
- **Legacy leaders**: Senior professionals, emeritus members and mentors (typically but not only Baby Boomers; born 1946–1964)

Of course, many of our audiences have inter-generational dynamics (blended teams and cross-gen collaboration) and we have a chapter on this, too.

The Global Audiences Trends Surveys by insidery, part of mci group

To test and refine this model, mci group launched the Global Audiences Trends Surveys combining both an internal pulse-take and global audience survey. The surveys examine the factors shaping participation: AI, sustainability, hybrid preferences, trust, format performance, personalisation and future-year drivers. Each dataset is cross tabulated by audience segment to reveal how motivations vary by stage, role and region.



mci group's Internal Global Experts Survey

The internal survey captured the experience of our experts working across corporate and association clients, regions and event formats. It was designed to test what practitioners are seeing in the field: where participation friction arises, which audience groups are least well served by current formats, and which shifts are likely to shape engagement over the next two to three years. Rather than measuring generational identity in isolation, the survey focused on the realities of mixed audiences, behavioural differences and event design choices.

Methodology

The findings are based on an internal survey of 125 mci group event and engagement professionals conducted in March 2026. Respondents represented Europe, North America, APAC, Latin America and IMEA, and worked across corporate, association and intermediary client contexts.

Survey structure

The survey explored how our experts experience mixed-generation audiences in practice, including differences in content expectations, technology comfort, motivations, participation styles, underserved audience needs and likely future shifts in engagement design.

Analysis approach

The results were analysed by insidery to identify recurring patterns and where event formats create friction, which audience groups are hardest to engage meaningfully and where current design models fail to match participant needs. Particular attention was given to differences by career stage, confidence, motivation and expectations of value.

insidery's PSE Signature Patterns for Generational Subgroups Survey

insidery's analysis presents the signature behavioural and personality patterns of four generational subgroups – Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials (Gen Y) and Generation Z – based on robust, representative survey data. The goal is to move beyond stereotypes and surface the distinctive strengths and tendencies of each cohort, using statistically significant differences to inform practical segmentation, messaging and program design.

Methodology

The findings are derived from a large-scale, cross-country online survey conducted in 2025, covering Germany, the United States, Brazil and Australia. Respondents were segmented into generational groups according to standard definitions (Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z).

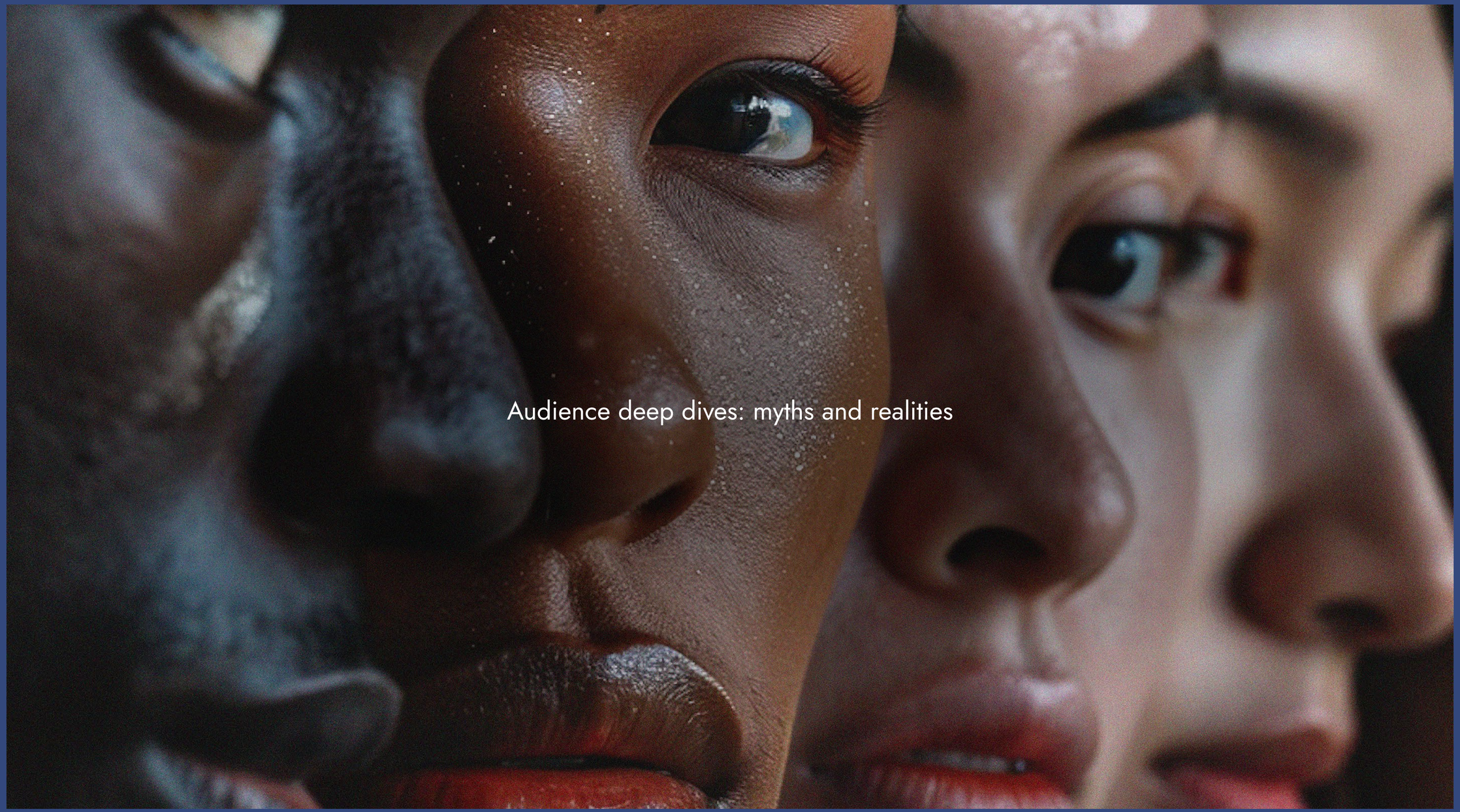
Survey structure

The survey included a wide range of items measuring workplace behaviour, personality traits, event preferences and decision-making styles. Most items used a 5-point Likert scale, with results reported as "Top2" (strong agreement) percentages for each group.

Analysis approach

Signature patterns were identified by focusing on traits or behaviour where a group's score differed by at least ±10 percentage points from at least one other group – a (easy to understand) significant threshold chosen to ensure only meaningful, statistically robust differences are highlighted.

The analysis of both surveys was used to compile this report, providing quantitative anchors for each behavioural insight and combining external generational patterns with our practitioners' view of how participation works in live environments. By combining mci group practitioner data with psychographic and trend-radar frameworks from insidery, the survey establishes a baseline for what participation looks like and why it changes. This hybrid evidence base will underpin annual updates and benchmarking from 2026 onward.



Audience deep dives: myths and realities

The rising influencers



Snapshot

Students, young professionals, early-career digital natives

Age range

Born 1995 to 2012

Work context:

New entrants to the workforce, often hybrid/remote.

Digital DNA:

The first fully digital-native audience. They decide fast what's worth their time and they'll advocate quickly when something feels real.

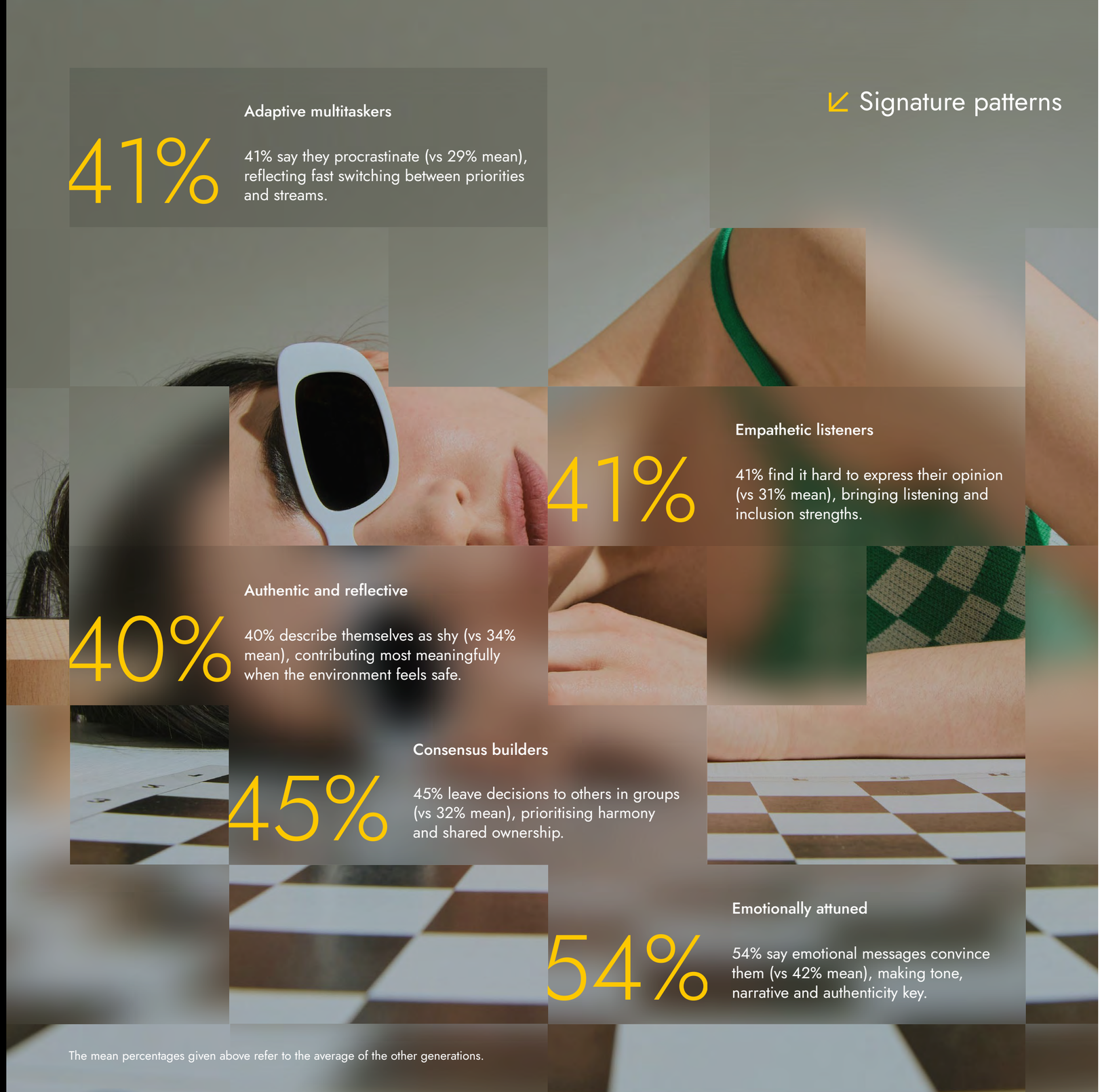
Motivations:

Career validation and growth; belonging and purpose; access and equity; recognition that is visible to peers and employers. Events are a stage to be seen at, credited and recommended.

Core values

Inclusivity, transparency, sustainability, personal growth.

Signature patterns



Adaptive multitaskers

41%

41% say they procrastinate (vs 29% mean), reflecting fast switching between priorities and streams.

Empathetic listeners

41%

41% find it hard to express their opinion (vs 31% mean), bringing listening and inclusion strengths.

Authentic and reflective

40%

40% describe themselves as shy (vs 34% mean), contributing most meaningfully when the environment feels safe.

Consensus builders

45%

45% leave decisions to others in groups (vs 32% mean), prioritising harmony and shared ownership.

Emotionally attuned

54%

54% say emotional messages convince them (vs 42% mean), making tone, narrative and authenticity key.

The mean percentages given above refer to the average of the other generations.

Channels and behaviours:

They are creative trailblazers who are inspired by unconventional approaches and respond to novel formats and unexpected collaborators when the value is real and the participation is practical. In practice, MCI experts often see early-career participants scanning the environment before they engage, looking for clear social cues, guidance and signs that participation will feel safe rather than exposed.

- **Platforms**: Instagram, TikTok, YouTube for inspiration; LinkedIn for career signalling.
- **Formats**: Short-form and applied learning, on-demand access, light gamification.
- **Events**: Hybrid for affordability and access; in-person for networking, identity and recognition.
- **Community**: Peer-led groups, mentorship pods and niche digital communities.

Pulse points:

- AI-personalisation of journeys.
- Micro-credentials and portable badges.
- Cause-driven participation and visible sustainability.
- Comfort with experimentation and calculated risk, especially when there is visible upside (skills, recognition, access).
- Future-facing narratives land best when paired with a concrete contribution path (skills, artefacts, recognition).
- Energy management matters: build in recovery and decompression moments (quiet zones, wellness breaks) to sustain participation across the day.

Engagement playbook

1

Tie every activity to a clear milestone (skill, micro-credential, showcase).

2

Build participation pathways such as co-designed sessions, peer labs, project briefs.

3

Seed a creator brief pre-event; shortlist 5–10 young voices to co-host segments.

4

Offer hybrid options with low friction to join, contribute and be seen.

5

Use authentic young voices in programming and communications.

6

Schedule peer showcases daily; make clips immediately reusable and taggable.

7

Offer visible roles that still feel safe: co-host segments, team lightning talks, guided first-time speaker formats and structured networking moments with clear prompts and expectations.

8

Design for shared ownership using collaborative choices (group prioritisation, live voting, co-created outputs) so consensus feels natural and inclusive.

9

Tie contributions to public, portable recognition (badge/credential + social asset); diversify it (badge, stage time, portfolio credit); then add a next-step CTA (trial, mentor match).





Myths

01.

They only want digital

02.

Short attention spans

03.

Less inclined to engage with associations

04.

They'll naturally speak up

versus

Realities

01.

Gen Z does not want a purely digital experience. External research suggests they see in-person events as important for career development, even while many feel less confident about networking and relationship-building in those settings.

02.

It's not that they can't focus. They have a low tolerance with content that feels generic but engage deeply when it's relevant, visual and participatory.

03.

They join when career ROI and peer connection are clear and immediate.

04.

They engage more when participation is structured – small groups, clear prompts, shared tasks and psychologically safe facilitation.

How to use this knowledge

Plan your event as a 90-day journey: build interest before, create moments to contribute during, then publish recognition and clear next steps after.

Reduce practical uncertainty before the event. Clear pre-event communication on what to expect, what to wear, how to take part and where to start can make attendance and participation feel more manageable.

Run a pre-event social challenge that feeds into a live showcase. During the event, design at least one low-friction contribution moment per attendee – ideally team-based – such as a lab checkpoint, peer review, micro-pitch or co-created clip. Gen Z is more likely than Boomers to accept "good enough" (51.4% vs 30.5%), so make it shippable: short cycles, fast feedback and an MVP output that can be improved post-event.

Within 7 days, publish recognition reels and send next-step links mapped to each contribution (trial, mentor match or portfolio credit).

Measure trial sign-ups, user-generated content submissions, and referral activations within 30/60/90 days.

Plug-and-play event ideas ↘

01
Next Gen Lab:
A co-designed track with project briefs and peer review.

02
Reverse-mentoring breakfast:
Pair senior leaders with Gen Z for 30-minute problem swaps.

03
Portfolio sprint corner:
Hands-on clinic where participants build a case study or demo to earn a micro-credential.

04
Creator-in-residence:
Invite a credible industry creator to coach short-form storytelling.

05
Badge bar:
On-site micro-assessments that issue portable digital badges for skills learned in sessions.

06
Impact hack (2/3 hours):
Teams tackle a real member/client challenge. Winners get stage time and mentoring credits.

07
Speed mentoring carousel:
6 × 8-minute rotations with opt-in follow-ups.

08
Peer showcase stage:
Daily 15-minute lightning talks featuring first-time speakers.

Decoding boxes ↘

01 Do/ Don't

Do: blend digital flexibility with in-person moments for mentoring, belonging and recognition.

Don't: assume digital alone is enough or run generic, passive sessions.

Do: design structured participation (small groups, clear prompts, shared tasks) so it feels safe to contribute.

Don't: expect them to "naturally speak up" without facilitation, prompts and psychologically safe formats.

Do: tie every activity to visible career ROI: a shippable output, badge or portfolio credit, then public recognition.

Don't: miss the follow-through: if you don't publish credit quickly and offer a next step, momentum drops.

02 Proof point

Next-gen labs combined with mentoring and recognised micro-credentials lift first-year retention and progression into committees and programmes.

03 MCI expert opinion

Early-career participants are often present and interested, but harder to activate visibly. MCI experts say they are more likely to need guidance, clear social cues and low-risk ways to join in. Quiet participation should not be mistaken for low motivation.

04 Sector watch

Public sector and tightly regulated professions may need accredited pathways; tech and creative sectors reward portfolio-grade outputs over exams. Adjust credential design accordingly.

05 Quote card

"They are new to the event and don't know as many of the other attendees. They might be less confident to participate in networking opportunities."

mci group
Internal Global Experts Survey

The purpose-driven pragmatists



Snapshot

Mid-career professionals, purpose-driven career builders.

Age range

Born 1980 to 1994

Work context:

Balancing progression with life responsibilities; leading hybrid teams.

Digital DNA:

Fluent adopters of tools that save time; expect seamless, joined-up experiences.

Motivations:

Advancement and recognition; alignment with organisational purpose; flexible ways to build skills and networks without compromising work-life balance, with visible leadership moments and big-picture direction that feels worth backing. *The Deloitte 2025 Gen Z and Millennial Survey* found that Millennials are weighing money, meaning and well-being together, with mentorship, purpose and financial security all shaping how they make career and participation decisions.

Core values

Purpose, growth, balance, inclusion, credibility.

Signature patterns

Bold innovators

55%

55% see themselves as risk-takers (vs 39% mean), embracing change and forward motion.

Visibility seekers

57%

57% seek visible roles (vs 43% mean), valuing recognition and leadership presence.

Event catalysts

62%

62% see events as a stage for visibility (vs 44% mean), using gatherings to build networks and share ideas.

Pragmatic achievers

52%

52% prefer “good enough” over “perfect” (vs 41% mean). In other words, they prioritise momentum and would rather ship something useful than wait until it is perfect.

Creative trailblazers

57%

57% are inspired by unconventional approaches (vs 48% mean).

The mean percentages given above refer to the average of the other generations.

Channels and behaviours:

Because they are selective and time-pressed, they often become the silent benchmark for what a “balanced” event looks like, even when other audience groups need something quite different. They also engage across a broad mix of channels, with stronger use of mobile and text-based touchpoints alongside more traditional digital channels.

- **Platforms**: LinkedIn, podcasts, newsletters for learning and visibility.
- **Formats**: Short, applied learning; cohort-based courses; certification mapped to career steps. They also respond well to content that feels varied, efficient and immediately useful, especially when practical examples help turn ideas into action.
- **Events**: Hybrid conferences with clear outcomes; workshops with tangible takeaways.
- **Community**: Communities of practice, peer coaching, leadership forums.

Pulse points – signals to watch:

- Leadership readiness.
- Well-being and flexibility as standard.
- Measurable sustainability.
- Skills-based hiring and credential portability.
- Stronger appetite for experimentation and risk.
- Higher responsiveness to visionary narratives when paired with practical delivery.

Engagement playbook

1

Build for selective participation: clear session outcomes, short formats, visible progression and follow-up that helps them turn participation into something useful quickly.

2

Use a “vision + experiment” structure. Open with a big-picture provocation, then move quickly into unconventional, applied labs that produce a tangible output.

3

Design for momentum. Millennials are more likely to accept “good enough” at work (52%), so optimise for MVP outputs and fast feedback loops.

4

Tie programmes to explicit career milestones (credential, portfolio piece, stretch assignment).

5

Blend on-demand modules with live, applied labs and peer review.

6

Invite co-creation on topics; rotate emerging leaders onto main stages and advisory groups.

7

Offer credential-backed workshops with on-site assessment and instant badges.

8

Host “impact ateliers” where teams build a pilot plan; book a 30-day follow-up clinic.

9

Provide a staffed ROI calculator bar; email outputs with a one-click pilot request.



Myths

01.

They’re serial job-hoppers

02.

Convenience trumps all

03.

They’ve been eclipsed by GenZ

04.

If they adapt, the format is working



versus

Realities

01.

They commit when growth and values align.

02.

Efficiency matters, but in-person is still where trust and community deepen.

03.

They remain a large share of the workforce with growing budget authority.

04.

Mid-career participants often extract value from imperfect events but that can hide a gradual erosion in relevance as time pressure increases.

How to use this knowledge

Bundle an on-demand course with a live lab and a digital badge aligned to a leadership pathway; schedule quarterly showcase slots for participant work.

Remember that mid-career participants are often balancing ambition with constraint. They will engage when the value is clear, the format respects their time and the outcome is tangible enough to justify the effort.

Frame event sessions as career-and-impact accelerators that culminate in something to ship: a credential, a case study, or a pilot plan.

After the event, send a simple "what you achieved" pack: for example, a certificate, a template to capture results and one clear next step (like a pilot call or a one-click path to purchase).

Pair each learning session with a ship-it artefact (case study, badge, pilot brief) and a showcase slot.

Trigger an auto follow-up: certificate + portfolio template + calendar link to a pilot scoping call.

Plug-and-play event ideas ↘

01
Leadership pathway studio:
Applied workshop + portfolio review leading to a recognised micro-credential.

02
Purpose & impact lab:
Teams design a measurable sustainability initiative; showcase outcomes on the main stage.

03
Impact atelier:
Co-design a sustainability or efficiency pilot; issue a "Pilot Ready" badge and 30-day follow-up clinic.

04
Skills to signal workshops:
Brand academy modules mapped to recognised micro-credentials; recruiter drop-ins.

05
Portfolio-to-promotion clinic:
Translate project outcomes into promotion-ready evidence.

06
Flex networking hour:
Childcare-friendly timing, short formats, opt-in follow-ups.

07
Peer coaching circles:
Facilitated 6-week sprint with rotating roles and take-home playbooks.

08
Continuing professional development express:
Accredited 45-minute micro-courses with instant certificates.

Decoding boxes ↘

01 Do/ Don't

Do: build hybrid, outcomes-led learning that respects time and ends in something to ship.

Don't: run content-heavy programmes without a clear take-home artefact and next-step pathway.

02 Proof point

Leadership pathway labs that end in a shippable artefact and visible showcase moments accelerate progression into leadership roles and strengthen ongoing engagement, because Millennials are more likely to use events for visibility.

03 MCI expert opinion

Mid-career participants often adapt well to existing formats, which can make their needs easier to miss. MCI experts describe them as selective and time-pressed, able to extract value from imperfect events, but increasingly quick to disengage when relevance is weak.

04 Sector watch

In regulated professions, Millennials respond best when leadership pathways are formalised (continuing professional development, accredited micro-credentials, clear progression steps). In commercial, tech and scale-up sectors, the draw is speed and proof: "good enough" pilot plans, ROI cases and visible leadership showcases. In sustainability-driven sectors, purpose and measurable impact need to be built into the output, not left as messaging.

05 Quote card

"Mid-career professionals are selective. They attend with specific expectations and limited time."

mci group
Internal Global Experts Survey

The pragmatic decision-makers



Snapshot

Senior professionals, C-level executives pragmatic decision-makers

Age range

Born 1965 to 1979

Work context:

Accountable for results; high meeting load; cross-functional leadership.

Digital DNA:

Comfortable with digital but they don’t want noise. They want tools that save time and make decisions easier.

Motivations:

Authority and influence; time-efficient insight; trusted peer exchange; purposeful networking; visible contribution as mentors and leaders.

Core values

Credibility, efficiency, stability, impact.

Signature patterns

Pragmatic evaluators

38%

38% see themselves as risk-takers, significantly lower than Millennials (55%) and Gen Z (51%).

Steady contributors

43%

43% seek visible roles, lower than Millennials (57%) and Gen Z (54%) but higher than Boomers (32%). They prioritise substance and results over spotlight.

Purposeful networkers

47%

47% see events as a stage for visibility, lower than Millennials (62%) but higher than Boomers (37%). They value authentic connections and knowledge-sharing.

Thoughtful communicators

31%

Only 31% find it hard to express an opinion. Lower than Gen Z (41%). They weigh perspectives before speaking.

Deliberate doers

31%

31% report procrastination, higher than Boomers (18%) but lower than Gen Z (41%). They take time to evaluate, then act.

The mean percentages given above refer to the average of the other generations.

Channels and behaviours:

They prefer evidence-led recommendations and credibility signals over hype, and they respond best when options are clearly framed and decision paths are frictionless. Their disengagement is often evaluative rather than hesitant: they are continuously assessing relevance, value and whether the format respects their time.

- **Platforms**: LinkedIn, curated industry forums, executive newsletters. (Email remains a strong channel for this group, more so than for younger generations, alongside curated digital communities and executive-style communications.)
- **Formats**: Briefings with clear recommendations; invite-only roundtables; curated peer circles.
- **Events**: Short, high-impact sessions; white-glove experiences with defined outcomes.
- **Community**: Trusted networks; mentorship; board/advisory participation.

Pulse points – signals to watch:

- Our research suggests Gen X adopts new technology pragmatically, especially when it makes work more efficient and improves decision-making.
- Capability gaps.
- Hybrid leadership models.
- Elective participation in fewer, higher-yield forums.
- Pre-reads, templates and clear options increase participation and speed.
- Fewer, higher-yield forums with curated peer relevance outperform broad “mixer” formats.

Engagement playbook

1

Position them as mentors and advisors.

2

Provide executive-grade pre-reads and decision templates.

3

Design peer-to-peer forums with defined outcomes and follow-through.

4

Report ROI with deal velocity, pipeline movement and strategic alignment.

5

Build a cadence for executive blocks: Signal Briefing > Roundtable > Decision capture.

6

Run a peer reference lounge for scheduled 1:1s with existing customers; log qualified interactions.

7

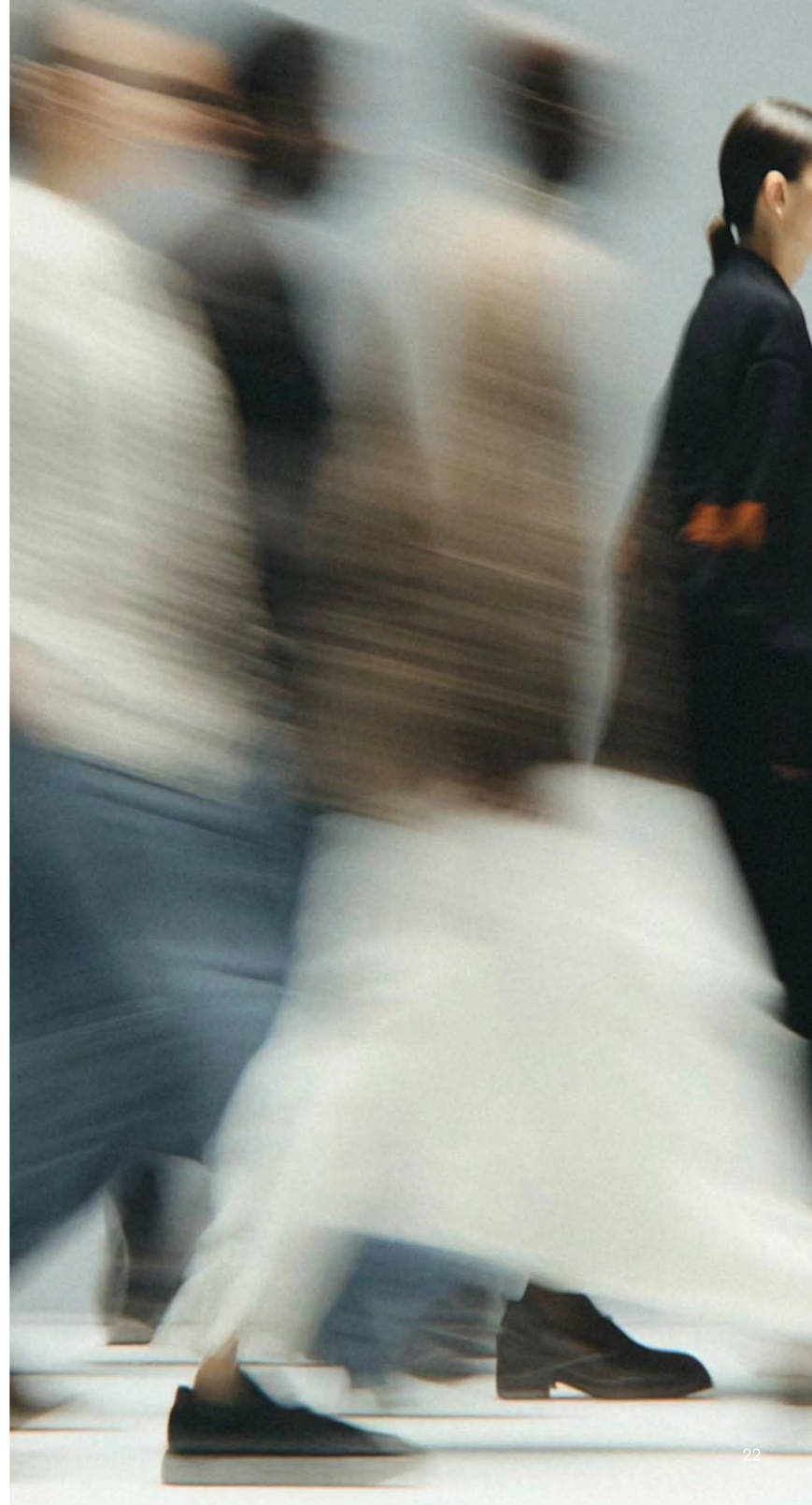
Provide CFO-ready one-pagers from proof-of-value sessions.

8

Design curated site visits or showcase tours that lead into focused discussion.

9

Use leadership case critiques to turn shared challenges into practical takeaways.



Myths

01.

They’re disengaged

02.

Change-averse

03.

Don’t want the spotlight

04.

If they are quiet, they are satisfied



versus

Realities

01.

They control critical budgets and set direction.

02.

They adopt when the value case is clear and the risk is managed.

03.

They will take visible roles when they’re purposeful and tied to outcomes, but they don’t need attention for its own sake.

04.

Senior decision-makers often disengage through silence, selective attendance or withdrawal of attention when the value is not clear.

How to use this knowledge

Pair a 12-page executive brief with a 45-minute roundtable and a next-step checklist; schedule follow-up commitments in-room.

Make relevance obvious early. Senior participants are more likely to engage when the value is differentiated, the discussion is peer-led and the next step is clear enough to act on quickly.

Make the event easy to assess as well as easy to act on: give them a clear set of options, a decision template and a next step they can take back to their teams. Anchor each executive moment to a documented next step (pilot, procurement pathway, governance sign-off) and capture it in-room. Report back on opportunity creation and stage progression within 60 to 90 days.

Plug-and-play event ideas ↘

01
Executive briefing + roundtable:
20-minute signal brief > 25-minute peer discussion > 10-minute decisions.

02
Deal desk clinic:
Peer review of live opportunities with standardised next-step templates.

03
Mentor office hours:
Senior leaders host 1:1 coaching slots for high-potential talent.

04
Boardroom case critique:
Dissect a live case; co-create a one-page playbook.

05
VIP site tour:
Curated visit tied to a strategic theme; capture follow-ups before guests leave.

06
Customer advisory council live:
Facilitated feedback with product leaders; publish decisions and timelines.

07
Procurement fast-track desk:
On-site policy/Q&A; pre-baked security & compliance packs.

08
Peer reference lounge:
Bookable 1:1s with existing customers; log qualified interactions for sponsors/sales.

Decoding boxes ↘

01 Do/ Don’t

Do: lead with a clear value case and executive-grade pre-reads that reduce decision effort.

Don’t: rely on hype, vague inspiration or long sessions without a decision template.

02 Proof point

Decision-focused roundtables paired with an executive brief and a captured next-step pathway shorten time-to-action, because Gen X values practical judgement, purposeful peer exchange and progress over perfection.

03 MCI expert opinion

Senior leaders are rarely underserved because they are overlooked. They disengage when the relevance bar is not met. MCI experts describe them as selective, discussion-oriented and quick to withdraw attention when formats feel generic, performative or light on value.

04 Sector watch

In regulated sectors, Gen X responds best to risk-managed pathways: governance-ready decision packs, compliance pre-reads and clear procurement steps. In tech and transformation programmes, credibility matters most: Proof-of-Value sessions, CFO-ready one-pagers and peer references outperform “vision” messaging alone. In complex B2B environments, curated executive forums with captured commitments deliver higher yield than broad-scale networking.

05 Quote card

“They are trained to filter continuously: Is this relevant? Is this worth my time?”

mci group
Internal Global Experts Survey

The legacy leaders



Snapshot

Senior professionals, emeritus members and mentors.

Age range

Born 1946 to 1964

Work context:

Governance, strategy, stewardship; often portfolio careers; mentors.

Digital DNA:

Pragmatic adopters of technology that enhances effectiveness.

Motivations:

Mentorship and knowledge transfer; purposeful roles; recognition; continuity of the community or mission. They value roles with clear purpose and accountability, and respond best when outcomes are credible, well evidenced and delivered to a high standard.

Core values

Stewardship, continuity, relationships, impact.

Signature patterns



Risk management experts

30%

30% see themselves as risk-takers (vs 48% mean), reflecting a cautious, stability-first stance.

Action-oriented and reliable

18%

18% say they procrastinate (vs 36% mean), signalling follow-through and delivery focus.

Confident, clear communicators

26%

26% describe themselves as shy (vs 37% mean) and only 17% find it hard to express an opinion (vs 36% mean), supporting direct, decisive dialogue.

Independent and accountable

19%

19% leave decisions to others in groups (vs 39% mean), indicating ownership and decision-making comfort.

Quality-driven professionals

31%

31% prefer "good enough" over "perfect" (vs 49% mean), reflecting high standards and attention to detail.

The mean percentages given above refer to the average of the other generations.

Channels and behaviours:

They respond especially well when expertise is captured, shared and carried forward, whether through mentoring, guidance notes, masterclasses or reusable assets for the wider community.

- **Platforms**: Curated briefings; private networks; low-noise communication channels. App and social-led channels play a smaller role for this group.
- **Formats**: Advisory councils; executive dialogues; evidence-led briefings; decision notes; fireside exchanges; masterclasses.
- **Events**: High-signal plenaries with well-moderated Q&A and fact-based discussion; intimate roundtables; recognition moments with substance.
- **Community**: Mentorship constellations; legacy/knowledge capture initiatives.

Pulse points – signals to watch:

- Succession planning.
- Formal knowledge-transfer mechanisms.
- Pragmatic digital adoption to extend reach and memory.

Engagement playbook

1

Build in quality cues like strong facilitation, rigorous pre-reads, clear decision capture, and post-event outputs that are publishable without rework.

2

Create purposeful advisory roles with clear remits.

3

Blend in-person gravitas with simple digital follow-ups.

4

Design public recognition tied to concrete outcomes (mentee progress, programme wins).

5

Channel expertise into visible assets (playbooks, interviews, case libraries).

6

Convene an “Advisory Council Live” with clear remits; publish decisions and timelines.

7

Pair Masterclass + Apprentice sessions; credential the mentoring contribution.

8

Run a “Legacy Interviews Studio” to capture short, reusable “how we solved it” clips.

9

Integrate recognition with proof (mentee outcomes, programme wins) into plenaries.



Myths

01.

They attend for nostalgia and ceremony

02.

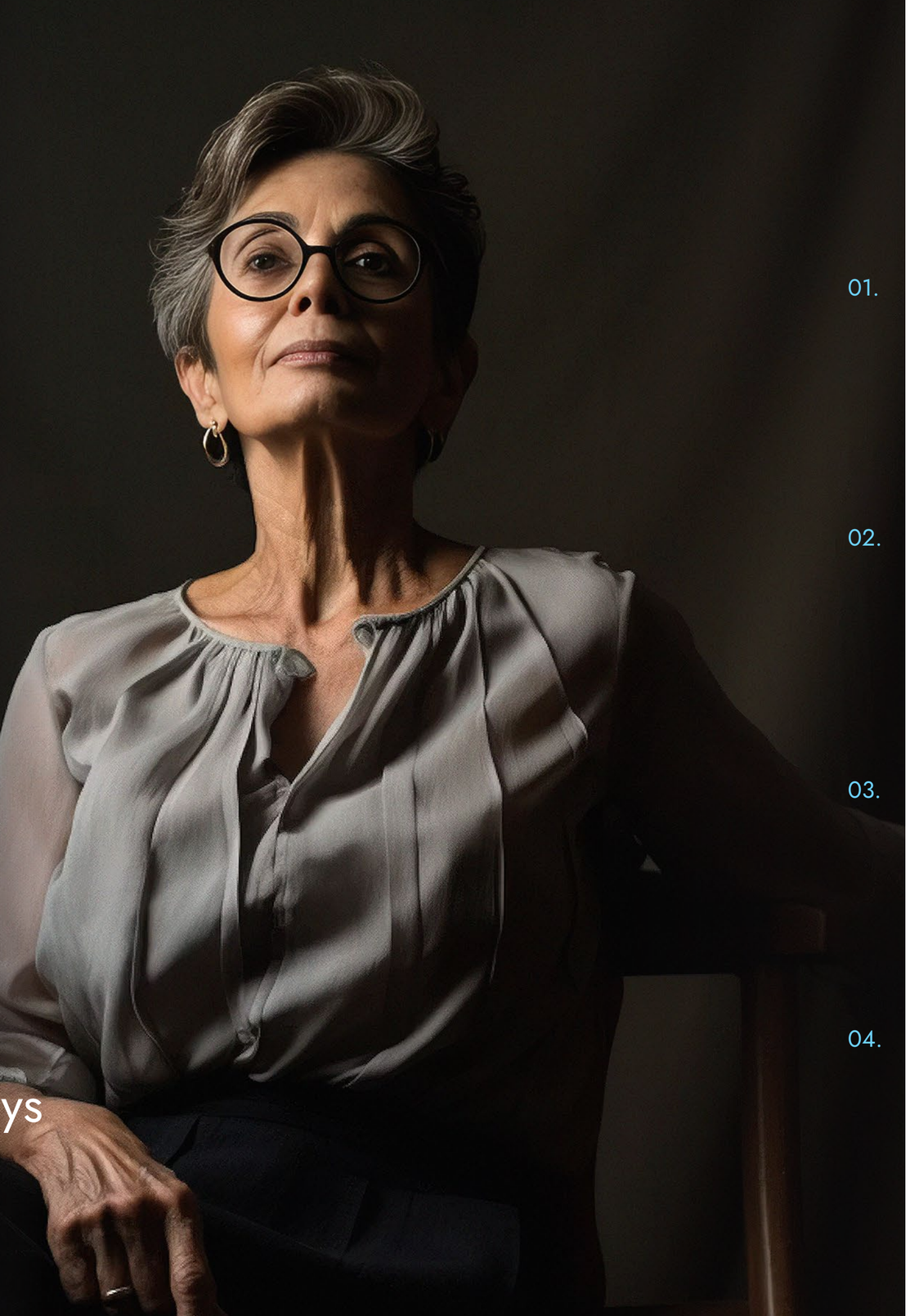
Resist digital

03.

Disengaged

04.

Fixed in their ways



versus

Realities

01.

They show up for substance – credible insights, decisions, stewardship and outcomes, not visibility for its own sake.

02.

Adopt useful tools, especially to enable hybrid leadership.

03.

They engage when given a clear role (mentor, reviewer, knowledge-holder) and when participation leads to something others can build on.

04.

Adapt readily when benefits are clear and aligned to values.

How to use this knowledge

Baby Boomers tend to be careful with risk and far less motivated by visibility than younger cohorts. They bring stability, accountability, a bias for substance over self-promotion and a preference for rational, fact-based cases over emotional messaging.

They show up for credible insight, clear decisions and outcomes they can stand behind. Convene an advisory circle with quarterly showcases; pair each session with mentor–mentee progress checkpoints and a published one-pager of decisions.

Design purposeful stewardship moments that convert expertise into assets and advocacy: advisory outputs, mentor matches, and public recognition tied to tangible outcomes (successful pilots, mentee progression).

Make their contribution purposeful and visible in a meaningful way: not as spotlight for its own sake, but as guidance, mentoring, decisions or knowledge that strengthens the wider community.

Plug-and-play event ideas ↘

01
Advisory Council Summit:
Structured agenda with mentee showcases and decision capture.

02
Masterclass + apprentice:
Senior-led skill sessions paired with reverse-mentoring slots.

03
Legacy interviews studio:
Short "how we solved it" recordings for the community library.

04
Policy & practice roundtable:
Pragmatic debates producing a one-page guidance note.

05
Honours & highlights:
Micro-recognition woven into agendas, not bolted on.

06
Stewardship salon:
Small-room discussions that finish with a published guidance note and named sponsors.

07
Masterclass & mastermind:
Expert teaching followed by curated problem-solving tables; capture playbooks.

08
Heritage-to-horizon showcase:
Trace impact over time; announce co-created next steps with partners/customers.

Decoding boxes ↘

01
Do/ Don't

Do: give them purposeful stewardship roles (advisor, mentor, reviewer) with a clear remit and outcome.

Don't: rely on emotional hype or performative "spotlight" moments.

02
Proof point

Advisory circles that capture decisions, pair mentors with high-potential members and publish a one-page guidance output increase long-term participation, because Baby Boomers value substance over show, rational evidence and high standards.

03
MCI expert opinion

More experienced participants engage most when their contribution has a clear purpose. MCI experts see the strongest response when formats turn expertise into something useful – mentoring, guidance, decisions or knowledge that can be shared and applied beyond the event.

04
Sector watch

In regulated professions and governance-heavy sectors, Baby Boomers respond best to evidence-led formats: accredited or standards-aligned masterclasses, policy-to-practice roundtables and decision notes that can be taken straight into committees. In complex B2B and mission-led organisations, stewardship roles and knowledge capture (playbooks, guidance, case libraries) build credibility and continuity more effectively than visibility-led programming.

05
Quote card

"Senior experts have solid professional experience and look for tailor-made solutions. They prefer discussion-led formats and peer exchange, and are less responsive to apps or gamification."

mci group
Internal Global Experts Survey

Blended team dynamics



Snapshot

Cross-generation audiences across roles and regions.

Make-up

Paired roles (eg, early-career + senior lead), mixed skills, shared targets.

Work context:

Hybrid by default; they collaborate online most of the time, with a few high-value in-person moments to lock decisions and build trust.

Collab DNA:

Clear structure beats stereotypes; progress depends on clear roles, simple rituals and visible recognition.

Motivations:

Delivering meaningful outcomes; accelerated learning in both directions (technical fluency and domain expertise); recognition for team wins; continuity of knowledge and relationships.

Core values

Shared outcomes, respect, reciprocity, learning, trust.



Channels and behaviours:

In practice, the biggest sources of friction are usually not interpersonal. They come from mismatched expectations around content, technology, visibility, pace and how people prefer to take part.

- **Platforms**: Low-noise collaboration hubs, shared docs, lightweight project trackers.
- **Formats**: Paired talks, co-led labs, office-hours, decision roundtables.
- **Events**: Short, high-signal checkpoints; showcase milestones with public recognition.
- **Community**: Practice guilds and mentorship constellations with rotating responsibilities.

Pulse points:

- Succession and capability transfer.
- Documented hand-offs.
- Credentialled mentoring.
- Pairs/triads leading visible initiatives.
- Repeat participation across cycles.

Engagement playbook

1

Don’t treat participation as one shared behaviour.

2

Some people need prompts and structure, others need autonomy and relevance, and blended audiences work best when both are built in from the start.

3

Build every programme with at least one high-impact element for each generation, then anchor delivery in shared roles, rituals and recognition.

4

Use paired keynotes (emerging leader + senior sponsor).

5

Run cross-gen innovation jams; fund top pilots; document hand-offs.

6

Add a “reverse demo theatre” (juniors drive demo; seniors interrogate value); publish joint takeaways.

7

Define complementary roles at kick-off (sponsor, lead, contributor, reviewer).

8

Credential mentoring and project contributions (badges, credits, showcases).

9

Rotate stage time across audience segments and functions.



Myths

01.

Generational divides block collaboration

02.

Mentoring is one-way

03.

Hybrid weakens team bonds

04.

If everyone is in the room, the format is working for everyone

versus

Realities

01.

Clarity of roles and rituals reduces friction and increases speed.

02.

Reverse mentoring improves adoption of new tools and formats for all.

03.

Hybrid strengthens access when paired with purposeful in-person checkpoints.

04.

Mixed-generation attendance is common, but engagement often breaks down when formats assume similar confidence levels, motivations and ways of participating across the whole group.

How to use this knowledge

Publish a “blended team charter” template (roles, rituals, recognition). Start by identifying where the format may be favouring one kind of participant over another, then build in multiple ways to contribute so confidence, experience and working style do not determine who gets heard.

Require a documented hand-off at each milestone (eg, mentee deliverable signed by mentor) and make the deliverable visible to the community. Issue a blended team charter at event kick-offs; enforce two decision checkpoints per cycle and a documented hand-off at each milestone.

Plug-and-play event ideas ↘

01

Cross-Gen innovation jam:

Mixed teams collaborate on a challenge, present ideas on stage and compete for funded pilots.

02

Reverse demo theatre:

Early-career presenters drive the demo; senior leaders interrogate value; publish a joint takeaway.

03

Customer council × mentorship day:

Council in the morning; mentor carousel in the afternoon; shared outcomes board.

04

Continuity clinic:

Plan succession/knowledge transfer using your tools; export an action grid per organisation.

05

Paired keynotes:

Two-voice talks (emerging leader + senior sponsor) with a published 90-day action.

06

Decision relay:

One generation frames the issue; another tests it; a final pair turns it into action.

Decoding boxes ↘

Do/ Don’t

01

Do: mix formats, so every cohort has a clear “win” (briefings, peer exchange, applied labs, co-creation).

Don’t: build one-size agendas and assume engagement will average out.

Proof point

02

Multi-generational programmes that start with shared “All Generations” tactics, then add targeted hooks for each cohort, deliver stronger collaboration and repeat participation because they turn generational differences into practical roles, rituals and recognition.

MCI expert opinion

03

Mixed-generation audiences are now standard, but event formats often lag behind that reality. In our internal expert survey, respondents said the biggest challenges come from differences in content expectations, comfort with technology, motivations and participation styles.

Sector watch

04

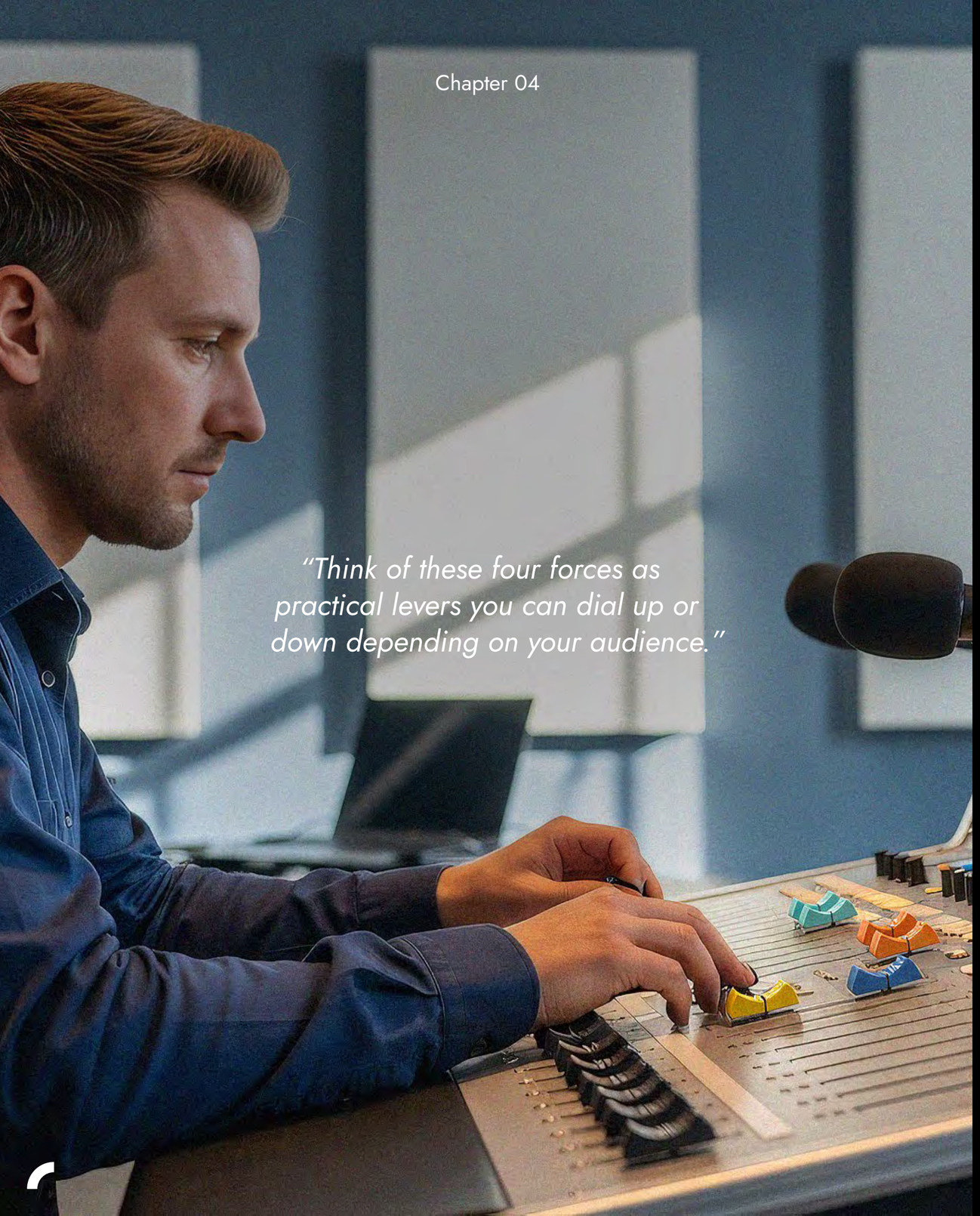
In regulated professions and governance-heavy sectors, blended teams perform best when decision rights are explicit and outputs are documented (briefs, hand-offs, committee-ready notes). In tech, innovation and transformation settings, cross-gen formats work best when you pair experimentation with a clear value case and peer proof. In global, multi-region organisations, asynchronous collaboration needs a few high-intent in-person checkpoints to lock decisions and strengthen trust.

Quote card

05

“Balancing tech-driven formats for younger audiences with discussion-led formats for senior leaders remains an important challenge.”

mci group
Internal Global Experts Survey



Cross-cutting global trends

Four forces shaping participation consistently show up for every generation:

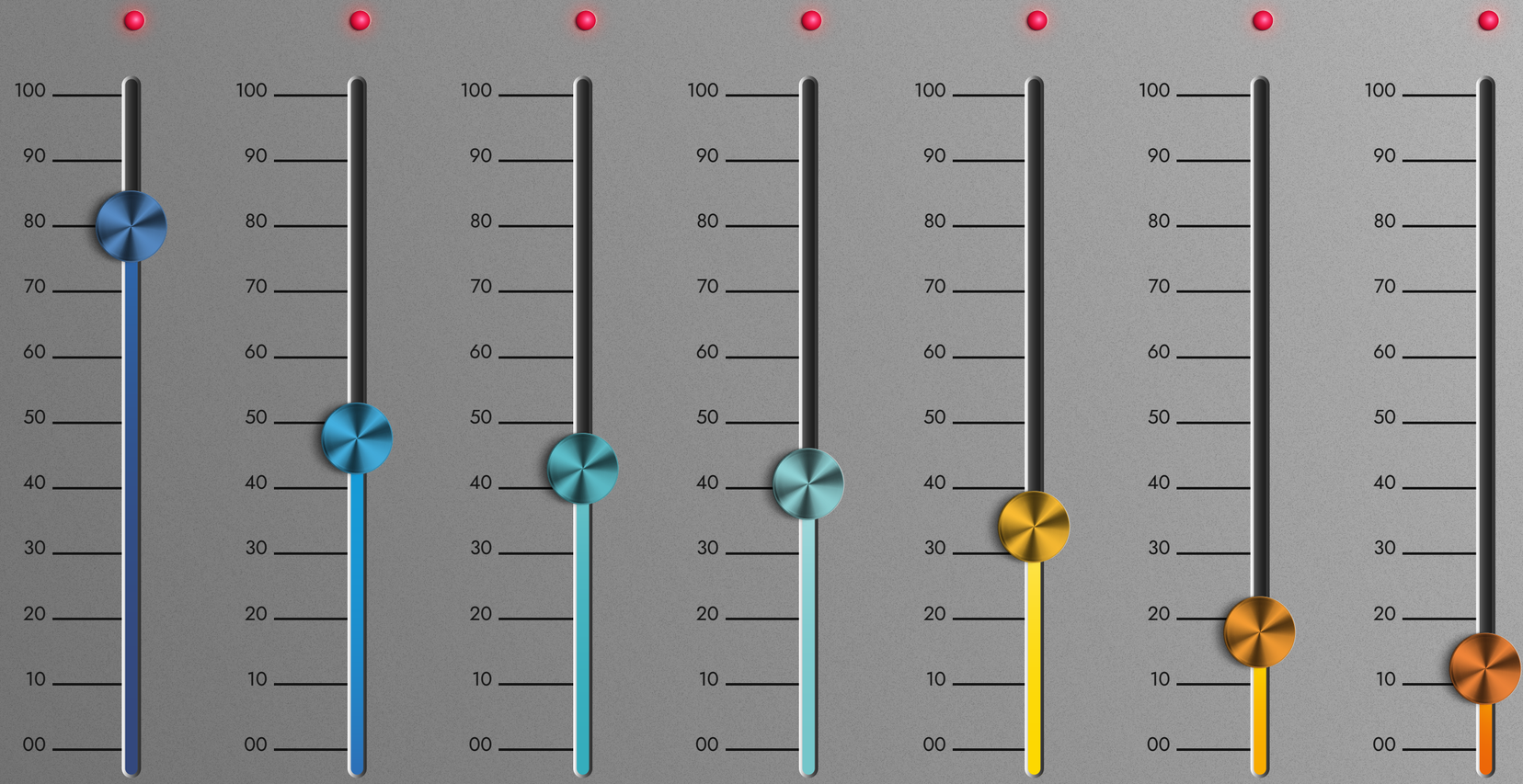
Relevance (AI-driven personalisation)
Values in action (credible sustainability)
Community (a sense of belonging)
Learning (clear opportunities for growth)

These trends matter to everyone; the difference is what each group takes from them. Gen Z expects content and experiences to feel tailored. Gen X and Baby Boomers value personalisation when it reduces effort and makes decisions easier. Sustainability can be a deciding factor for Millennials and Gen Z, while for older cohorts it tends to build trust when it's practical and proven. And across all of this, consistency matters as much as innovation. People are more likely to engage when technology feels connected, useful and relevant across the year, rather than fragmented or decorative.

So think of these four forces as practical levers you can dial up or down depending on your audience.

Expected engagement pressures in the next 2–3 years

- AI-driven personalisation 80%
- Demand for measurable outcomes 46%
- Higher expectations for sustainability proof 42%
- Growth of phygital experiences 41%
- More community-led programming 34%
- More demand for micro-credentials 17%
- Hybrid-by-default participation 12%



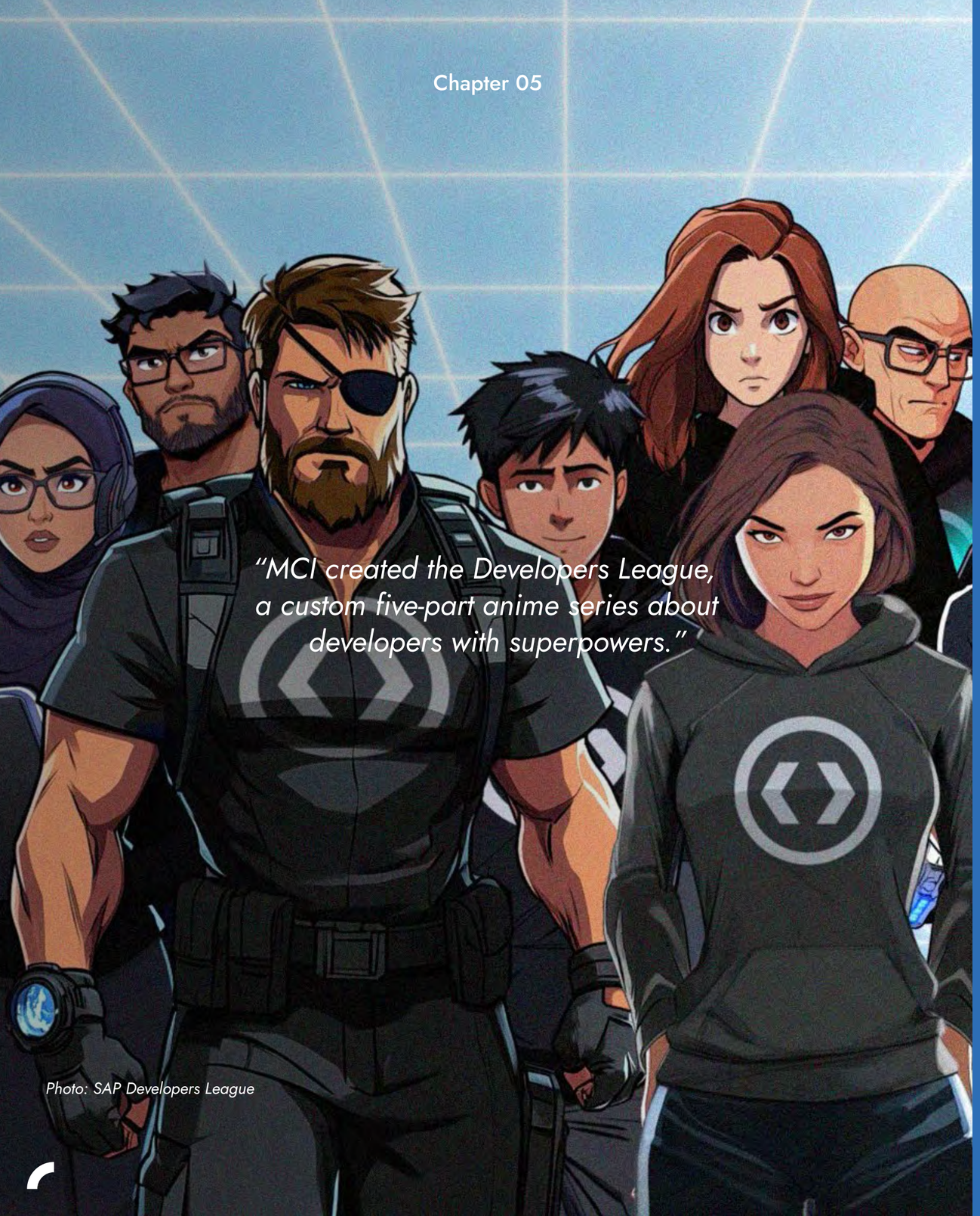


Photo: SAP Developers League

Case stories
From insight to impact

What audience-first design looks like in practice

At mci group, we’ve seen first-hand how audience-specific design choices can improve participation, satisfaction and long-term engagement. These snapshots from our case study library show how we have helped different audiences engage more meaningfully by addressing the barriers, expectations and behaviours that matter most to them.

1. Rising influencers

In our experience, younger audiences and digitally fluent communities respond best when participation feels visible, inclusive and worth their time. The examples below show how mci group has helped create stronger identity, connection and active involvement.

SAP Developers League, MCI Germany

The audience challenge: SAP wanted to emotionally unite its global developer community across time zones, cultures and event formats, while creating a stronger sense of identification and a consistent thread between all annual event formats.

Our solution: MCI created the Developers League, a custom five-part anime series about developers with superpowers. Centred on Judy, a young developer who discovers her abilities and overcomes self-doubt, the series became the emotional throughline linking the hybrid kick-off, virtual deep dives, local events worldwide and cliffhanger episodes released between formats. Produced entirely in-house with AI as a creative co-pilot, it delivered emotional engagement, high visibility, strong engagement across formats, enthusiastic feedback from community and executive leaders and sustainable impact, with Season 2 already in production.

Read more here

Google Nation Community, MCI Brazil

The audience challenge: Google wanted to celebrate and empower diverse Latin American tech communities, helping participants from Google Developer Groups, Google Developer Experts and Women Techmakers connect across countries, feel included and see the impact of Google’s community outreach programmes.

Our solution: MCI Brazil created Nation Google Community as a repeatable event brand built around unity between nations. Working with Criaplan, the team designed an in-person experience that encouraged connection, knowledge sharing and inspiration across communities. Google’s brand colours, relaxed seating, country-inspired culinary offerings and interactive activities helped spark engagement, while local Colombian supplier partnerships supported successful delivery in the host country.

Read more here

2. Purpose-driven pragmatists

When mid-career audiences want practical value, visible progress and a stronger return on their time, MCI helps them engage with formats that are more immersive, more relevant and easier to translate into career or business value.



Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) Annual Scientific Meeting, MCI Australia

The audience challenge: ACEM's Annual Scientific Meeting needed to regain its pre-pandemic stature, enhance the delegate experience, increase engagement and rebuild participation while prioritising innovation and financial sustainability.

Our solution: MCI Australia partnered with ACEM and the Local Organising Committee, beginning with an event design strategy workshop to define objectives and measurable outcomes. The team reshaped the meeting with gamified networking zones, a Monopoly Scavenger Hunt, a Challenge Zone, Fireside Chats, strong app-based participation and a paperless sustainability approach. The event attracted 1,093 delegates against a target of 900, achieved 32% ROI, recorded 126,994 app page views, saw more than 5.5 million points earned through challenges and received a 92% peer recommendation score.

Read more here



European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (ESPEN) Congress 2024, MCI Switzerland

The audience challenge: ESPEN needed clearer strategic positioning and a revitalised growth strategy after it emerged that previous congresses had struggled to realise expected targets.

Our solution: We carried out a comprehensive 360° strategic and audience review, drawing on our Business Intelligence Unit to redefine the congress positioning. The growth strategy focused on reaching previously untapped audience groups, attracting new industry partners through emerging scientific topics, strengthening digital marketing and conversion, redesigning the ESPEN Village to showcase member value and introducing app gamification to drive attendee interaction. The congress achieved attendance growth of more than 30%, a 45% increase in exhibitors, 56% growth in exhibition space sold, a 38% rise in abstract submissions and record profits.

Read more here



Photo: ACEM's Annual Scientific Meeting

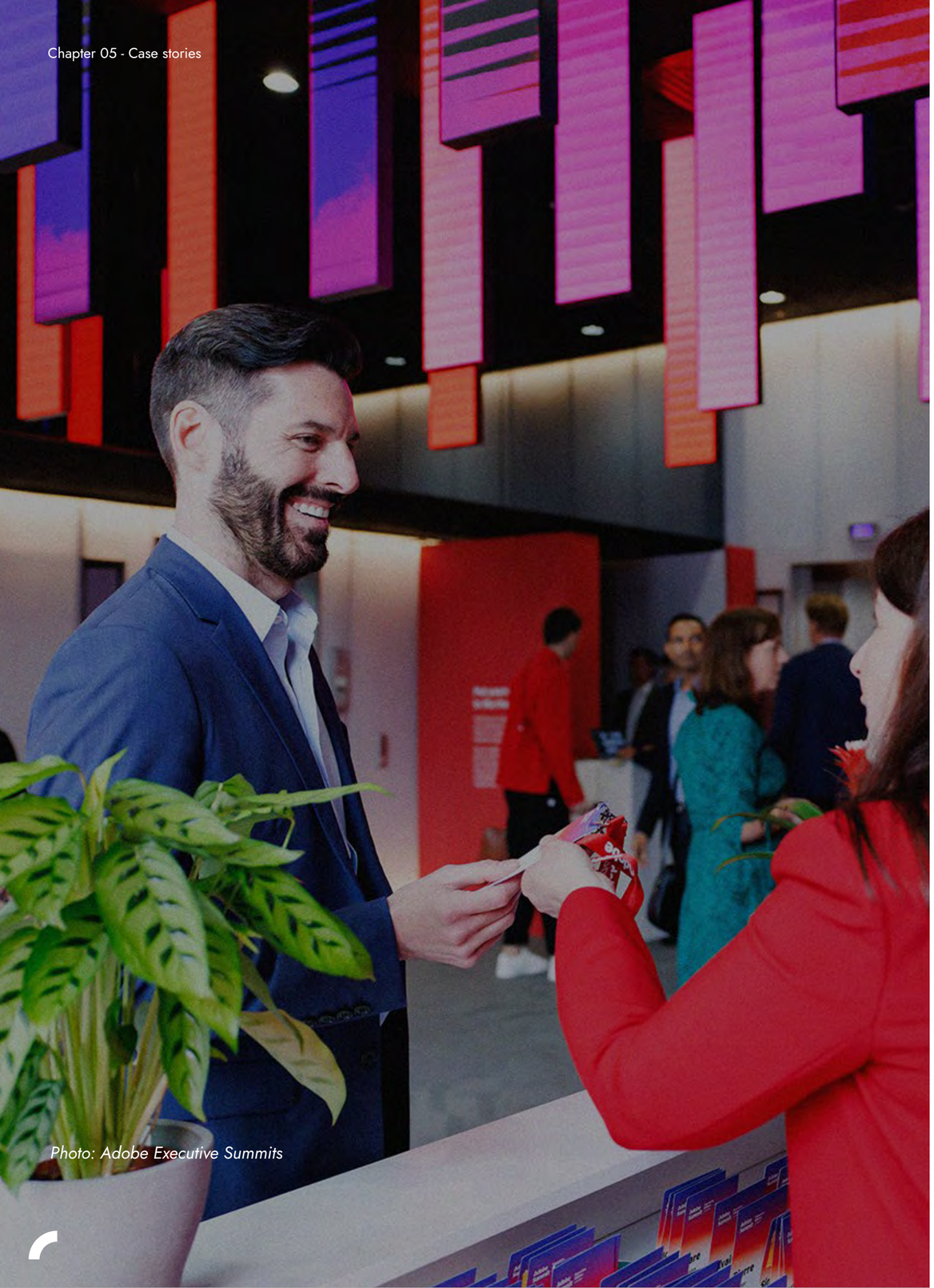


Photo: Adobe Executive Summits

3. Pragmatic decision-makers

We've seen that senior audiences engage best when the value is clear early, the conversations are purposeful and the format respects their time. These examples show how mci group has helped create more focused, decision-ready experiences.



Adobe Executive Summits, MCI UK, Germany and France

The audience challenge: Adobe wanted to shift from a broader user and developer audience towards high-value commercial customers such as CEOs, CCOs and CTOs, while bringing its GenAI capabilities to life for senior decision-makers.

Our solution: MCI helped shape a targeted Executive Edition of the Adobe Summit across London, Munich and Paris, built around the theme "Personalisation at Scale". The experience included accessible senior Adobe leadership, immersive plenary presentations, hands-on demos, personalised Firefly portraits, attendee welcome messages and themed networking and demo areas. Each event was oversubscribed, with 150 C-suite guests in London and Paris and 100 in Munich, alongside excellent feedback from Adobe's internal marketing team and high-value customers.

Read more here



Sprinklr CX Connect Melbourne, MCI Australia

The audience challenge: Sprinklr wanted to expand its CX Connect customer event into Melbourne and reach a new audience while supporting both new prospect acquisition and stronger relationships with existing clients.

Our solution: MCI designed a one-day event for around 200 marketing, customer service and CX leaders, combining plenary content, interactive demo zones and discipline-specific workshops. The format gave participants practical exposure to the platform and created space for deeper discussions, customer feedback and targeted storytelling across marketing and customer service use cases. The Melbourne debut achieved Sprinklr's aims of new business development and client retention, with more than 200 leaders attending and a format that proved scalable for regional customer engagement.

Read more here

4. Legacy leaders

In our experience, more established audiences respond best when their expertise has a clear role and their contribution leads to something useful. The examples below show how mci group has helped turn experience into dialogue, guidance and long-term value.



44th Congress of the French "Mutualité" Federation (FNMF), MCI France

The audience challenge: For its 44th edition, the Mutualité Française Federation wanted to stage a high-impact national congress in Agen that reflected its values of progress, cooperation and openness.

Our solution: MCI France created a locally grounded congress concept combining participatory content, creative formats and precise technical delivery. The programme included video testimonies from the field and interactive, intergenerational sessions designed as laboratories for ideas, aligned to the Federation's wider mission. The result was a congress that brought together 1,499 participants, 30 exhibitors and 76 volunteers, supported by a complex technical and production operation.

Read more here



16th European Space Conference, mci group Belgium

The audience challenge: The 16th European Space Conference needed to amplify its messages across a senior, influential audience of member states, European C-level industry representatives, policymakers, decision-makers and the wider EU space ecosystem.

Our solution: The five Brussels-based mci group brands delivered an integrated audience engagement approach built around organic and programmatic campaigns, community management, paid advertising, social listening and speaker-led content tailored to an audience knowledgeable about space policy. The results included 2,000 attendees, more than 150 speakers, four EU commissioners, four ministers, more than 100 media articles, 1.7 million social media impressions, 17,000 ad clicks, 16,000 website visits and 224 tracked registrations.

Read more here



Photo: 16th European Space Conference



Photo: World Energy Congress 2024

5. Blended audience dynamics

We have seen that mixed generation and mixed-stakeholder audiences respond best to formats that allow people to engage in different ways while still contributing to a shared outcome.



World Energy Congress 2024, MCI Netherlands

The audience challenge: The Congress needed to connect the full energy ecosystem, from C-suite decision makers, policy makers, industry leaders, academics and government representatives to start-ups, sponsors and the World Energy Council's Future Energy Leaders community.

Our solution: MCI Netherlands supported a high-level congress experience combining direct interaction, social media, email campaigns, sponsorship, exhibitor engagement and a unified brand identity. The format gave senior leaders a visible role in shaping dialogue on the energy transition, while creating space for younger professionals to contribute. The Congress attracted 8,500 participants from 118 countries, 355 speakers and 74 government representatives.

Read more here



International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) 2025 Congress, MCI Switzerland

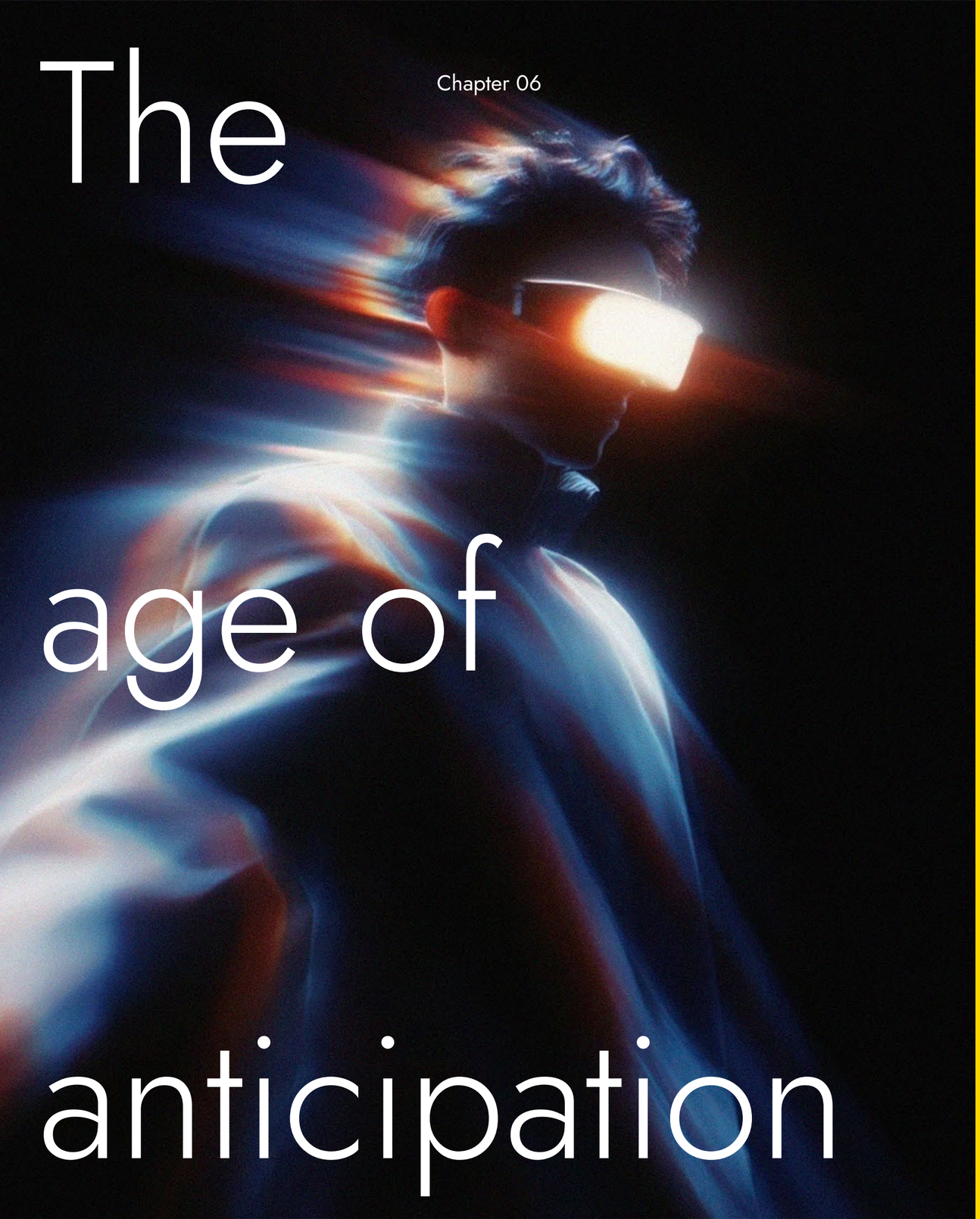
The audience challenge: FIGO 2025 needed to hold together a broad international community that included seasoned healthcare practitioners and senior academics as well as students and junior doctors, while ensuring the week-long congress felt coherent and valuable.

Our solution: The congress combined formal scientific sessions, interactive formats, hands-on simulation labs and advocacy-led moments in a shared experience. The scale included more than 5,000 delegates, 1,900 speakers, 17 on- and off-site workshops, nearly 2,000 e-posters and oral abstracts, 20 surgical video classrooms, 160+ breakout sessions and a strong exhibition and sponsorship presence spanning pharmaceuticals, medical devices, academia and NGOs. Delegates were supported by the conference app, communication across multiple platforms, webinars and social media content before and during the congress.

Read more here

Chapter 06

The age of anticipation



Designing engagement for what comes next

The case studies in the previous chapter show how participation models can evolve; the next step is anticipating where they will go. The next wave of audiences, and the technologies that connect them, are already reshaping how participation works. Organisations that treat engagement as a living system, not a sequence of events, will retain loyalty as behaviours and expectations continue to change.

AI-assisted programming, portable credentials, sustainability as a selection filter and community-first business models are converging. The challenge is to phase these capabilities so that value is proven early, measured transparently and reinforced at every touchpoint. Our survey data show how strongly these future signals are already visible across today's segments.

Don't forget about Generation Alpha. We haven't...

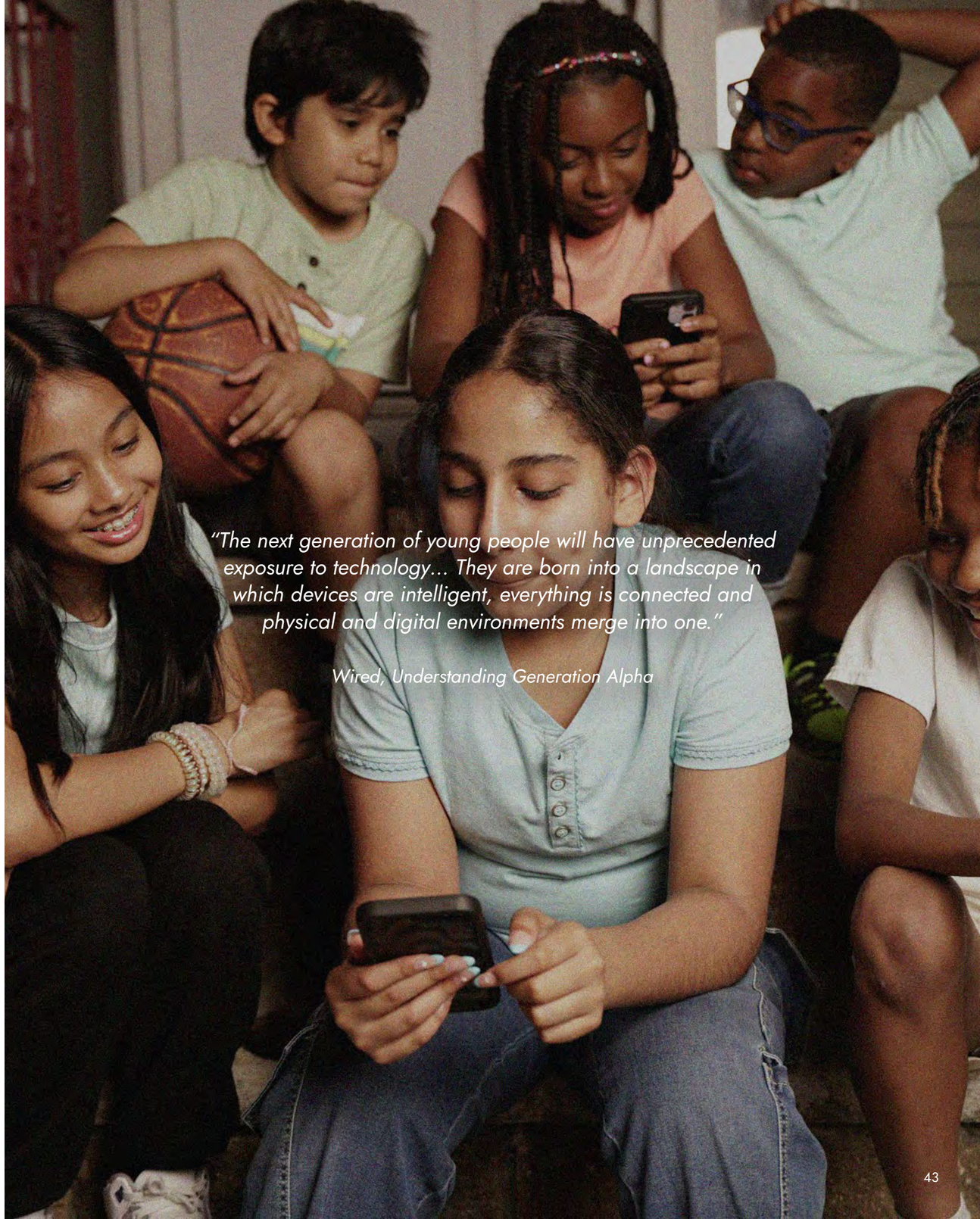
Generation Alpha (born 2013 to the mid-2020s) will enter the workforce within a decade, but their habits are already visible. As WIRED observed in *Understanding Generation Alpha*, "The next generation of young people will have unprecedented exposure to technology... They are born into a landscape in which devices are intelligent, everything is connected and physical and digital environments merge into one."

This cohort is the first truly phygital audience, blending physical and digital experiences into a single, continuous loop. Haptic interfaces, voice assistants and immersive AR spaces will not be novelties but the baseline for how they learn, play and socialise. For them, participation is instinctive: they expect experiences that respond to movement, touch and voice, confirming that they are part of the story.

Early indicators show shifting spending patterns toward digital collectibles, in-game assets and creator-led micro-transactions. The "product" they value most is content – personalised, interactive and immediately shareable. They curate and remix experiences that express identity and belonging, and they reward authenticity over advertising. They are also likely to expect more choice and more personal relevance; young people increasingly want to make their own choices, manage multiple identities and use services that respond to their individual needs and preferences.

As they grow, Generation Alpha will expect emotional intelligence from technology itself: systems that recognise tone, mood and context and adapt accordingly. At the same time, access to these technologies will not be equal. WIRED notes that one of the most disruptive effects may be the uneven distribution of both the benefits and the risks, with more tech-literate and better-resourced groups gaining advantage faster than others.

Loyalty will hinge on co-creation, transparency and sensory authenticity. For our clients, these expectations redefine the design brief: to build engagement systems that respond in real time, emotionally as well as digitally. This aligns with early trend-radar signals identified by insidery's B2Me and Horizon surveys.



From insight to impact



At mci group, we help leaders turn these shifts into advantage, designing engagement systems where every interaction advances an outcome and proves value in ways stakeholders can see and trust.

Insights from our Global Audiences Trends Survey 2025 data sets ground every recommendation in evidence, providing a measurable path from participation to impact.

Partner with us to activate these insights and build your roadmap for deeper, more durable engagement across every audience, every generation and every moment that matters.

References

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Shape the future. Share the future.

Connect with us

Headquarters:

MCI Suisse SA
Rue du Pré-Bouvier 9
1242, Satigny – Geneva
Switzerland

mci-group.com



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