



PRESS RELEASE

MFA SHEDS LIGHT ON GEN Z MEDIA WORKERS – AND HOW LEADERS NEED TO CHANGE

12 February 2026: Gen Z now makes up almost half (48%) of Australia’s media workforce, yet much of the conversation about this generation continues to rely on outdated assumptions, according to a new whitepaper released today by the Media Federation of Australia (MFA).

Drawing on data from the MFA’s NGEN Workplace Survey, *The Gen Z effect: how a new generation is reshaping work in the media, why it matters and how leaders can adapt* reframes Gen Z not as a problem to be solved, but as an early signal of deeper structural changes across the media industry.

NGEN is the MFA’s flagship training and development program for media professionals with less than five years’ experience. It delivers an extensive program of workshops, events and practical learning opportunities designed to build the skills and capability of the next generation of industry leaders. Participants come from both media agencies and media owners, and the program is unmatched in the market – often forming the core training and development for employees with five years’ experience or less.

Announced today at an event kicking off NGEN’s 2026 workshops and training, the whitepaper explores how the conditions Gen Z entered the workforce under have fundamentally shaped their expectations of work.

Gen Z is the first generation to begin their media careers during a period of constant disruption, with early professional experience dominated by digital-first workflows, virtual collaboration and limited access to in-person mentoring. Never Not Creative’s Mentally Healthy 2024 Survey showed this has had a lasting impact on mental health, with younger workers reporting higher levels of anxiety than older cohorts.

Now building careers in an industry increasingly shaped by automation, AI and platform-driven workflows, Gen Z sees structured support and development as essential – not optional.

Melanie Aslanidis, the MFA’s Head of NGEN and MFA Foundations, said: “Too often, Gen Z is framed as less resilient, less loyal, harder to manage. In reality, Gen Z is not a problem to solve, but an early signal of deeper changes already reshaping how work is learned, communicated and experienced.

“Understanding Gen Z isn’t about indulgence or accommodation. It’s about recognising how the foundations of work have shifted, and what effective leadership looks like now.”



The whitepaper identifies four areas where these shifts are most visible – learning, communication, culture and careers – and provides practical insights for leaders navigating a workforce in which Gen Z represents a critical mass.

Download the whitepaper: <https://www.mediafederation.org.au/downloads/the-gen-z-effect-white-paper>

Among the most important expectations of Gen Z workers is clarity – they perform best when expectations, feedback and progression pathways are explicit.

As the whitepaper states: “For Gen Z, feedback isn’t a judgement, it’s a developmental tool. It’s part of how they learn, not something saved for formal reviews. Regular, in-the-moment input helps answer the basics: *Am I on the right track? What should I focus on next? How am I improving?*”

MFA CEO Sophie Madden added: “What’s often framed as ‘Gen Z needs’ are in fact fundamentals of good work: clear communication, meaningful development, supportive leadership and healthy workplace cultures. When organisations get it right for Gen Z, they create better outcomes for people at every stage of their career.

“This whitepaper is testament to the important role NGEN plays in listening to early-career talent and translating those insights into practical guidance for the industry. We’re proud of NGEN’s continued leadership in shaping a more resilient, inclusive and future-ready media workforce.”

Key findings of the MFA’s NGEN Workplace 2025 Survey include:

- Gen Z are more face-to-face than many expect: 47% prefer in-person conversations, while only 1.3% prefer communication via project-management tools.
- 57% prefer real-time feedback while on the job, rather than waiting for formal reviews.
- Only 6% believe long hours = working hard, with 82% saying it’s about working efficiently and meeting deadlines.
- 91% say supportive managers are the most important feature of a healthy workplace.

NGEN’s 2026 program includes a total of more than 40 workshops and events, covering a broad range of professional skills, such as negotiation, presentation, critical thinking, change management, effective communication, leadership, the return of the NGEN Charity Cup and more. For more information and registrations: <https://ngen.org.au/Events>

The NGEN Mentor Program, following a successful pilot in 2025, will return this year, connecting rising talent with experienced industry leaders to provide structured guidance, valuable insights and the support needed to navigate career paths and accelerate growth.



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About the MFA

The Media Federation of Australia (MFA) is the peak body representing media communication companies. The MFA is a non-for-profit organisation established in 1997 with a current membership base that represents over 90% of all media billings placed by media agencies in Australia. The MFA's vision is to encourage operational excellence in the field of media communication connections and to define and develop best practice standards to support its members and the role they play in servicing their clients.