

SHSMD26 CONNECTIONS

Health Care Marketing, Strategy & Communications

American Hospital Association Conference
September 27-29 ⚓ Baltimore

One Organization, Many Voices: Communicating Clearly Across a Multi-Generational Workforce

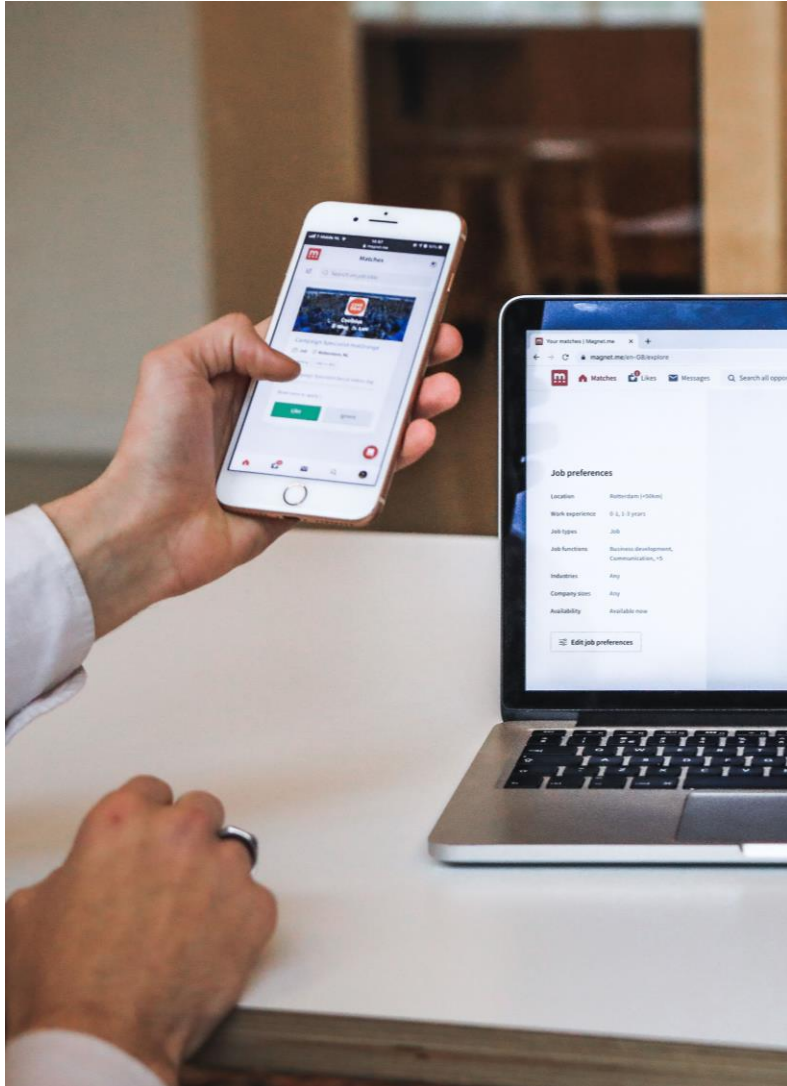
- **Mari Considine**, *Chief Brand & Marketing Officer, Acenda*
- **Cari Burke**, *Associate Vice President of Brand & Engagement, Acenda*

Opening Thought



- The challenge isn't creating more communication. **It's creating communication that connects across generations.**
- A Gen Z employee, a Millennial manager, a Gen X director, and a Boomer executive may all receive the **same message**, yet walk away with **very different interpretations.**

Agenda



1. The Multi-Generational Workforce Reality
 - *What is actually different, and what isn't?*
2. Why Messages Miss
 - *Where communication breaks down*
3. The Workforce Bridge
 - *Listen. Localize. Layer.*
4. Putting It Into Practice
 - *One voice, multiple pathways*
5. Let's Try It
 - *Interactive Exercise*

The Workforce Has Never Been More Diverse

Today's organizations often have four generations working side-by-side. **Different experiences have shaped how we work.**

Boomers
(61-80)

Gen X
(45-60)

Millennials
(29-44)

Gen Z
(15-28)

Yet everyone must operate from the same organizational mission and culture.

Slido Poll



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The First Trap: Assuming We Already Know Them



- Generation can influence communication preferences.
- So can:
 - Role
 - Tenure
 - Work environment
 - Life stage
 - Technology access
 - Individual preference
- Generation gives us clues. Listening gives us answers.

What We Have in Common

We're Different. But Maybe Not As Different As We Think.

EY surveyed 5,000 U.S. employees across four generations in its 2025 U.S. Generation Survey. **94% said workplace culture affects their decision to stay.**

Even better, every generation gave the same top answer when asked what workplace culture means: “How people treat each other.”

Where are we today?



Email Isn't Dead. 65% rely on email for general workplace news and updates.

- 35% Manager 1:1s
- 34% Newsletters
- 34% Team meetings

But channel reliance isn't identical.

- 19% Gen Z vs. 5% Baby Boomers rely on SMS/WhatsApp.
- 20% Boomers vs. 10% Gen Z rely on the intranet.

No single channel reaches everyone equally.

Slido Poll



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Where are we going?

**10 minutes
or less**

is how long most employees
have each day to engage with
organizational communication.

The 2026 IC Index surveyed roughly 5,000 employees, and the results moved in the wrong direction:

- 54% rate their organization's communication as excellent.
 - That's a 9-point decline from 2025.
- 50% do not trust their CEO or senior leaders.
- 49% say the reasons behind organizational changes are clearly communicated.

The answer can't simply be more communication.

But better communication.

The Pattern We See Repeatedly

Problem #1: Channel Mismatch

Sending a message does not mean employees see it.

Examples:

- Email overload
- Intranet content buried
- Teams notifications ignored
- Leadership messages overlooked

Being available does not equal being visible.

Problem #2: Trust Mismatch

Leadership may not be the most trusted messenger.

Employees often trust:

- Their direct manager
- Long-tenured peers
- Team leaders
- Employee ambassadors

The messenger matters.

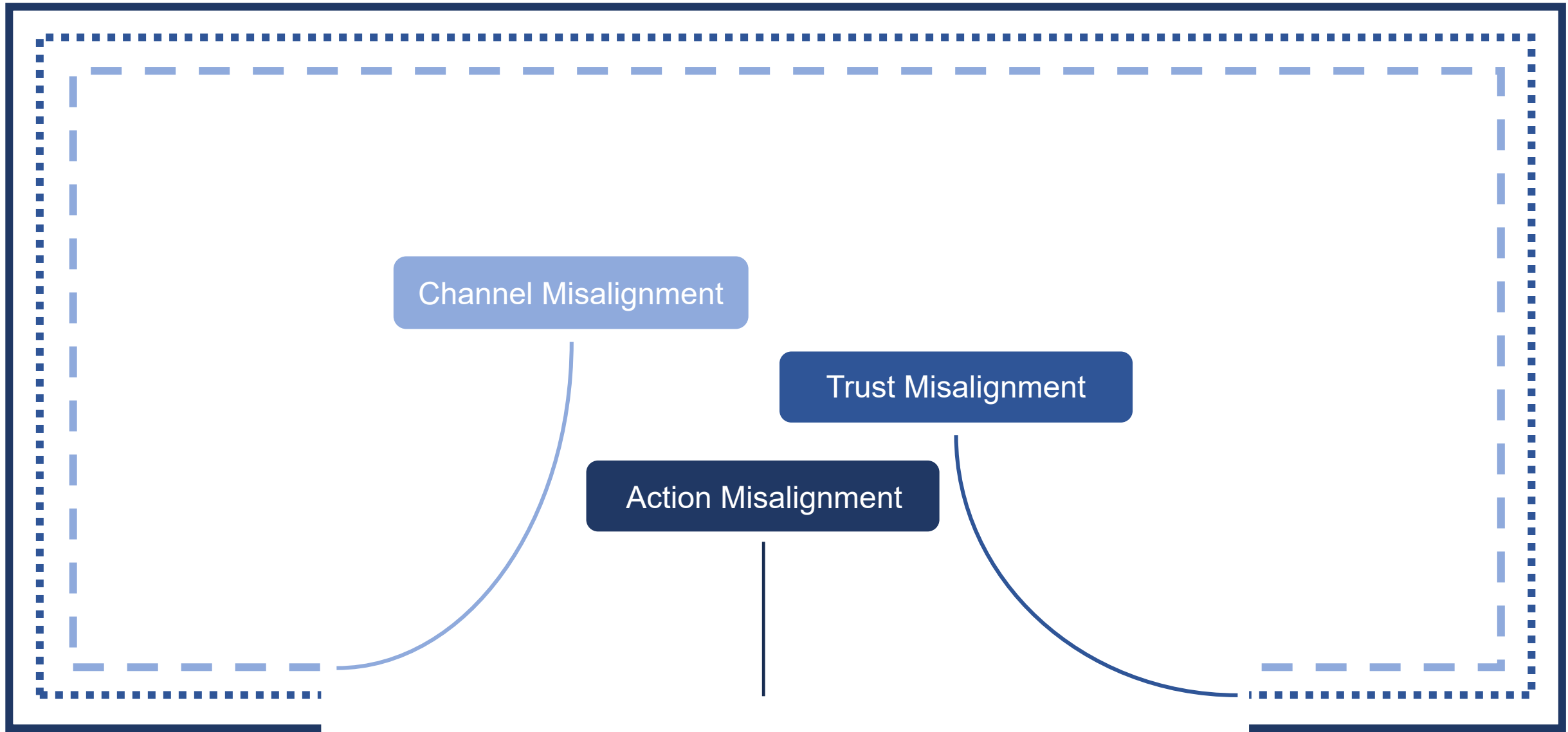
Problem #3: Action Mismatch

Employees understand the information but don't know:

- What to do
- Why it matters
- What changes for them

Information without action creates frustration.

The Three Fatal Flaws



One Message ≠ One Voice

One of the biggest mistakes organizations make is assuming consistency means uniformity.

Consistency Means

- Same mission
- Same values
- Same strategic direction

Uniformity Means

- Same format
- Same language
- Same delivery

One voice does not require one delivery.

Slido Poll



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How Generations Receive Messages: Patterns, Not Rules

Boomers Prefer:

- Leadership visibility
- Direct communication
- Context and credibility

Gen X Prefer:

- Clear information
- Efficient communication
- Practical next steps

Millennials Prefer:

- Transparency
- Purpose
- Collaboration

Gen Z Prefer:

- Authenticity
- Two-way communication
- Mobile-first experiences

The message can stay the same.

The experience of the message should change.

Managers Matter



Employees Don't Just Want Information.
They Want Guidance.

Among Gen Z and Millennials:

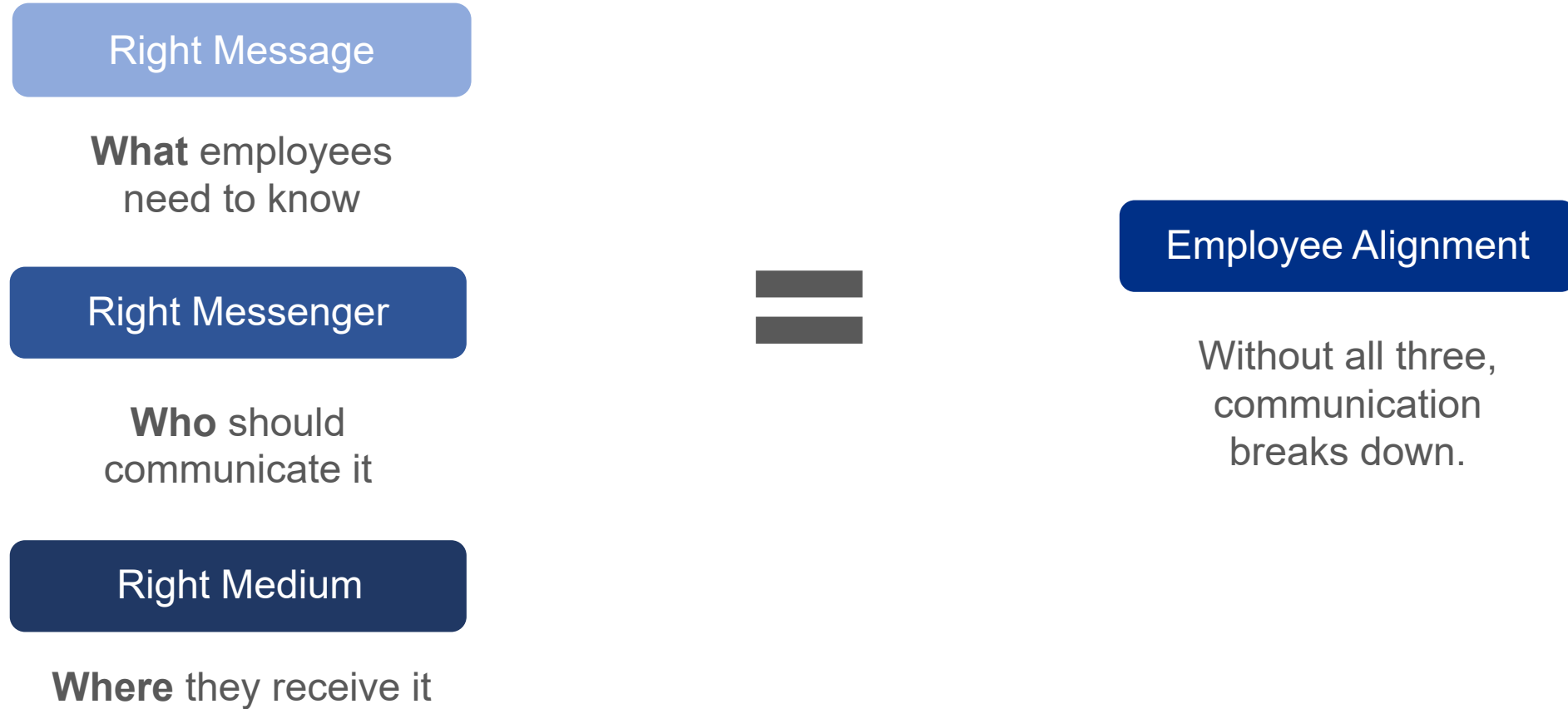
50% want managers to teach and mentor them.

But only: 36% say their managers actually do.

Managers aren't just another communication
channel.

They're interpreters.

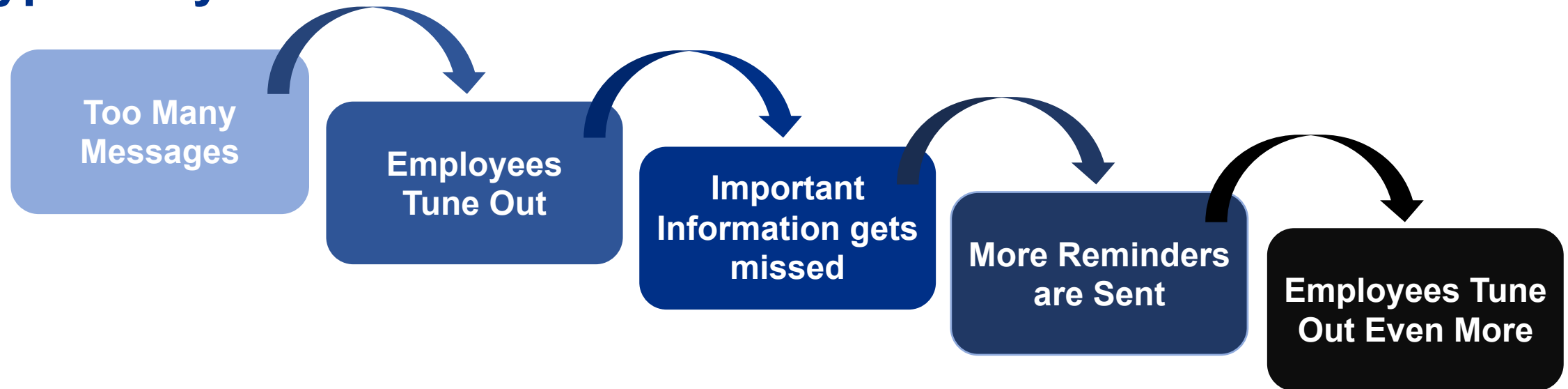
The Workforce Connection Formula



What Creates Message Fatigue?

More Messages Does Not Equal Better Communication

Typical Cycle:



The Communication Clarity Model



To cut through noise:

- Relevance → Why should I care?
- Timing → Why now?
- Simplicity → Can I understand it quickly?
- Action → What do you want me to do?

AI Is Changing the Communication Environment

Deloitte's 2025 global study of more than 23,000 Gen Z and Millennial respondents found:

- **77%** believe GenAI will affect how they work within the next year.
- **More than half** already use GenAI in their day-to-day work.

Employees are moving from “Where was that message?” to **“Just give me the answer.”**

That has huge implications for internal communications.

The Workforce Bridge Framework



Understand employees before communicating.

- Who is engaging?
- Who is not?
- What channels work?
- Who do employees trust?
- Where are communication gaps?

Keep the message. *Adapt* the delivery:

- Tone
- Messenger
- Format
- Timing

Without changing the organizational voice.

One campaign. Multiple entry points:

- CEO email
- Manager talking points
- Teams post
- Intranet story
- Video message
- Mobile notification

Different paths.
Same destination.

Same Message. Different Entry Points.

"We are launching a new employee engagement platform."



**Boomers
(61-80)**

A reliable source for
important updates
and resources.



**Gen X
(45-60)**

Fewer emails.
Faster access to
what matters.



**Millennials
(29-44)**

A better way to
collaborate and stay
informed.



**Gen Z
(15-28)**

Connect, share
ideas, and access
information from
anywhere.

Interactive Exercise

Generational Communication Personas: Know Your Audience

Scenario: Your company is launching a new employee benefit.

Sample message: Your company is launching a new employee benefit. Employees have 30 days to enroll. Everyone needs to understand what is changing, why it matters, and what action they need to take.

Now design the communication for Persona #1 & #2, considering the following:

- What is the primary channel?
- What format will you use?
- How much detail will you provide?
- Who should deliver/reinforce it?
- How will you reinforce the message?
- What is the CTA?
- What did you change and what stayed the same to maintain one organizational voice?

Ask the Audience

What did you change and what stayed the same to maintain one organizational voice?

Three Key Take-Aways

1. One Organization ≠ One Communication Style

Consistency does not require uniformity.

2. Trust Is Generation-Specific

The messenger matters as much as the message.

3. Listen → Localize → Layer

The most effective organizations create one strategy and multiple pathways to understanding.

Closing Thought

The strongest cultures are not built when everyone receives communication the same way. **They are built when everyone understands it.**

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Questions?

- Please be sure to complete the session evaluation on the mobile app!

Speaker Biography



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Speaker Biography



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Citations

- 2026 IC Index research
- 2025 EY U.S. Generation Survey
- 2025 Deloitte Gen Z and Millennial Survey