

COMMERCE

How younger employees are changing luxury workplaces

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A hybrid workplace can be a competitive advantage. Image credit: USPA

By SARAH RAMIREZ

NEW YORK As Gen Zers and younger millennials enter the workforce and begin climbing the corporate ladder, luxury brands need to adapt to keep younger employees engaged.

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COVID-19's continued impact on work has only further complicated the situation, especially for new hires who may have entered the workforce during the pandemic. Many luxury organizations also have unique cultures that young employees need to familiarize themselves with, according to panelists at *Luxury Daily's* annual Women in Luxury eConference on June 16.

"I think it's important to really lean on your HR team to teach management on how to catch those millennials and the Gen Zs up to where they need to be," said Shannon Stilson, vice president of marketing and media, USPA Global Licensing Inc. and Global Polo Entertainment, [USA Polo League](#), West Palm Beach, Florida.

"You don't want to fatigue your management as well," she said. "Then you can't focus on goals and productivity, because you're always training and developing."

The panel was moderated by Marie Driscoll, managing director for luxury and fashion at [Coresight Research](#).

Women in Luxury 2022 was produced by Luxury Daily

Bridging generational gaps

Speakers agreed that millennial and Gen Z employees bring a new set of expectations, which has ultimately led entrenched workplaces to focus on mental health, sustainability and diversity all positive shifts.

For instance, the USPA welcomed Morehouse College as the first HBCU to join its Collegiate Partnership Program in 2020. Private aviation firm [Volato](#) prioritizes sustainability, specializing in light jets and introducing a carbon offset program ([see story](#)).



Many younger employees may not have the necessary experience with high-net-worth clients. Image credit: USPA

Early-career employees, however, may also face their own steeping learning curves, especially regarding the service and relationship building that are integral to luxury.

"They don't have the business acumen that that is required," Ms. Stilson said. "I think it takes a lot of training.

"It's easy to lose a customer or lose somebody by one unintentional email or the way that you speak to someone," she said.

Members of the concierge team at Volato typically have deep customer service backgrounds, but hiring for pilots poses its own unique challenges, according to Jennifer Liotta, vice president of legal and human resources.

Government regulations require a minimum set of qualifications for pilots, which defines and limits the candidate pool. On Volato's compact luxury jets, however, pilots are also the ones interacting directly with clients.

"We are focused on a customer who has high, high expectations of communication and presentation," Ms. Liotta said. "Our pilots are right there in the thick of it getting them back and forth but also dealing with the human stresses that come with travel."



Both managers and employees need to be proactive about communication. Image credit: Volato

Panelists also noted that younger employees may be less solutions-oriented, and instead tend to ask too many questions out of fear of failure. To build confidence, managers can encourage workers to take ownership of specific tasks or projects.

Early career development is an important component of employee retention. While Ms. Liotta and Ms. Stilson are not seeing the high turnover rates of The Great Resignation, both are cognizant that millennials and Gen Zers are more comfortable with frequent job movement than older generations.

WFH mode

Remote or hybrid work models also mean that managers need to be more mindful about verbal communication and following up with their reports, as they may miss nonverbal signs of how employees are faring. Modeling good work habits is another essential component of training new workers.

While remote work has its downsides, there are reasons for optimism.

According to a Boston Consulting Group survey, the vast majority of managers and employees believe a digital transformation, including support for remote work, client relationships, internal processes and marketing, will help

their organizations adjust more easily to a post-pandemic climate ([see story](#)).

"I think now people are finding that [working from home] can be a competitive advantage," said Volato's Ms. Liotta. "It has its challenges as an organization, but if you can offer it effectively wherever you can, a lot of employees appreciate it.

"It really does expand your access to a lot of talented people that you otherwise wouldn't be able to bring into your organization," she said. "So it's worth the effort if you can do it."

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