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Freeman Gen Z Report

Our latest research reveals what younger audiences want from your event



Self-reliant. Pragmatic. Digital.

Gen Z Report

These key characteristics describe the up-and-coming consumers who make up Gen Z — and your future audiences.

As digital natives, Gen Z live online — from streaming entertainment to social shopping habits. And since the oldest of this group joined the workforce during the pandemic, they also welcome online events. This makes promoting the value of live events to Gen Z more challenging than other generations.

That's why we partnered with Edelman DXI to host a study exploring how this generation views and experiences live events and what event marketers can learn from the findings.

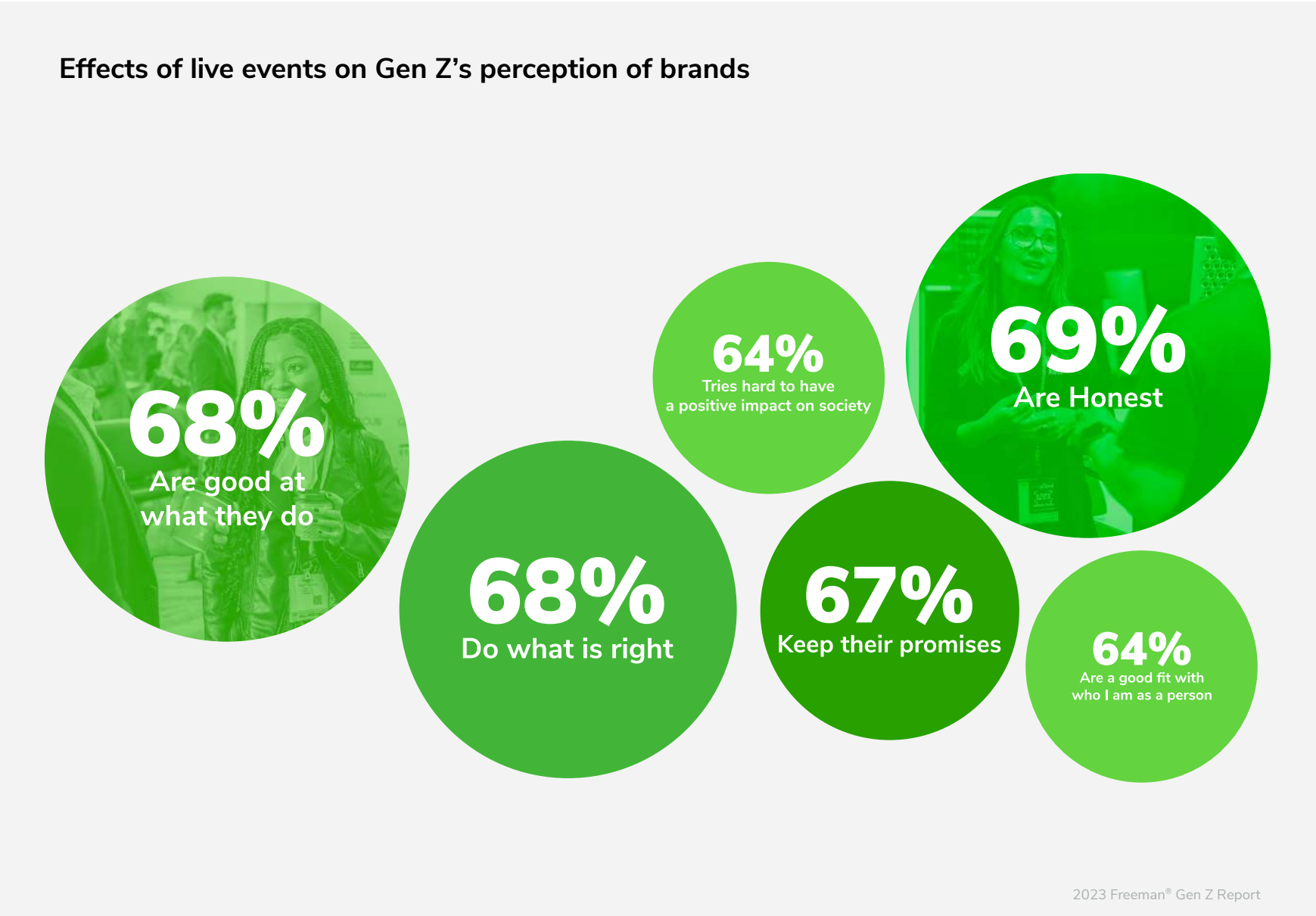
Case in point: Gen Z can be skeptical, but when they do attend live events their trust in brands they interact with escalates:



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Edelman Data & Intelligence conducted the survey in the U.S. from 11/1/22 to 11/16/22. Sample included 1,800 consumers/business professionals who attended an in-person event at work or outside of work and 250 event decision-makers with influence and/or decision-making authority over events. Generation Z (Gen Z) refers to the generation born between 1997 to 2012, following millennials.

Attending live business events has positive effects on Gen Z:



Despite Gen Z's occasional reluctance, in-person events have a strong impact on trust and loyalty:

71% say their trust increased following their interaction with a brand at an event

68% feel more trusting of a brand to "Do what is right" after interacting at a live event

64% retained these feelings for at least a month, resulting in a halo effect: long-term brand trust, recognition, and sales

So what does this mean for event planners?

Time is of the essence. Start cultivating a relationship with Gen Z now to reap long-term benefits. If you can build event strategies that appeal to this rising, digitally minded audience, prove to them the value of live events, and build a bond early in their careers, you'll gain lasting, loyal customers. And you'll ensure your event's longevity.

Our Gen Z Report uncovers their feelings about live events with some key takeaways.

Use these insights to build steady relationships (and relevant event formats) that will thrive today and tomorrow.



The Pros 👍

- ✓ Kinship for the win
- ✓ Brain food for thought
- ✓ Positive vibes

Kinship for the win

Gen Z likes to mingle. In fact, three of the top five benefits of attending business events for this group are social or networking-related, which is essential for building a positive experience:

What Gen Z likes about live events

61%

Meeting new people,
clients and/or partners

58%

Reconnecting with
people, clients and/or
partners

54%

More face time
with coworkers

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Live event engagement preferences



Attending classes
or workshops



Attending post-event
dinners or other
social/leisure events



Attending
networking sessions



Attending product
demonstrations



Visiting booths
and expo halls



Going to keynotes
or speaker panels

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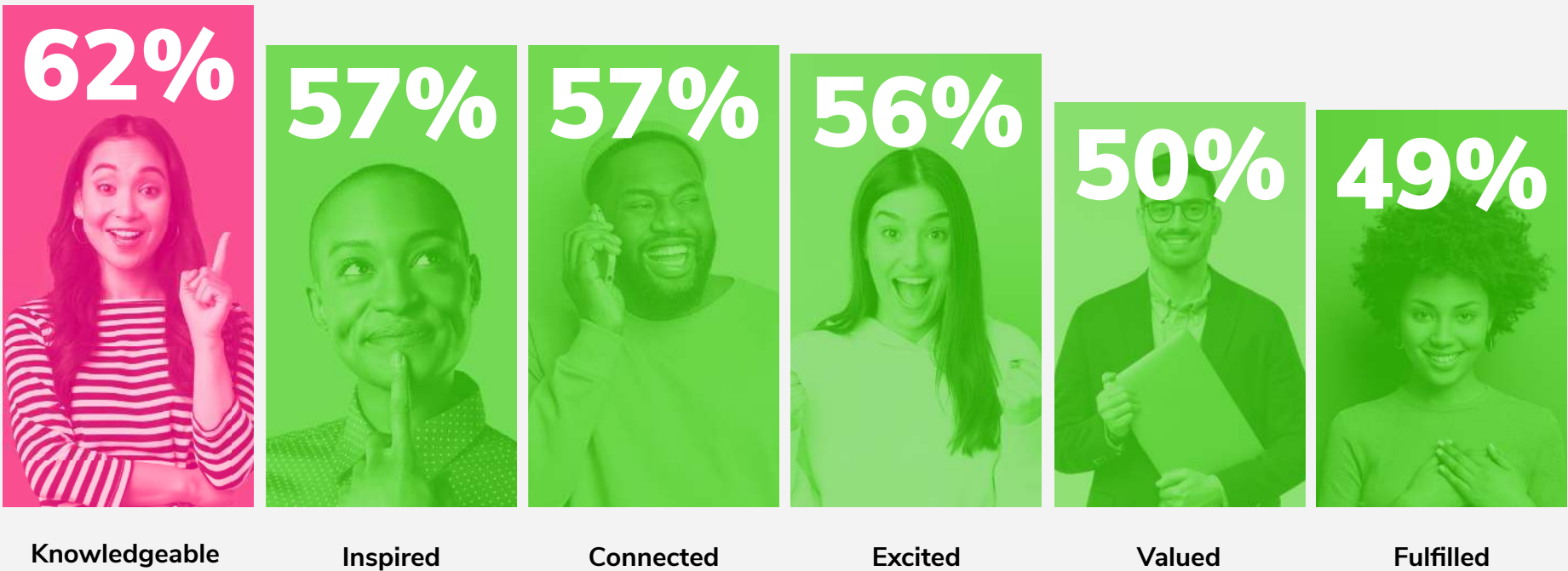
Brain food for thought

Broadening their personal and professional horizons is a big plus. Gen Z is more likely to value events that help them expand their knowledge and expertise about their related field or industry.

Positive vibes

Along with the in-person connections, expanding expertise, and overall inspiration that come from feeling fulfilled and valued, Gen Z leaves live events feeling good.

Gen Z leaves In-person events feeling more knowledgeable and connected to others



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The Cons 👎

- ❌ Burnout buzzkill
- ❌ Same old, same old = old (and boring)

Burnout buzzkill

While Gen Z values the opportunity to build connections at live events, overly programmed schedules across too many days can make them feel overwhelmed and unwilling to participate.

These consumers feel tired and disconnected as they struggle to adjust in the post-pandemic world. So perceiving something that requires an “always-on mentality” could be the factor that shifts their attendance from in-person to online.

Factors contributing to a negative event experience

47%

Overprogrammed days, not enough free time

42%

Cannot meet and connect with new people, clients or partners

39%

No exposure to unexpected ideas or experiences

I could not see or do everything I wanted to

37%

Cannot reconnect with people, clients or partners I already know

Not enough face time with people I work with from my company

36%

Bland, predictable venue space

No exposure to new brands or products

35%

Entry is too time consuming

No content or activities focused on well-being

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Same old, same old = old (and boring)

It seems obvious, but bears repeating: Gen Z expects valuable opportunities that can introduce them to new experiences and ideas.

Because they are weighing which events (if any) to attend in person, they're looking for ones that take burnout and boredom into account with balanced programming.

Gen Z's negative feelings associated with attending live events when their needs aren't considered



22%
Tired



17%
Discouraged



16%
Frustrated



15%
Lonely



13%
Disconnected

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How to build event strategies that resonate with Gen Z:

Be all ears

Event decision-makers can show they're actually listening to the good and the bad by:

- Replacing intense schedules with more balanced programming and ample breaks between activities.
- Providing valuable education and professional training opportunities that offer face time with industry experts and tools.
- Tailoring networking and social opportunities that appeal to younger audiences.

Make it memorable

This group lives online, so design an in-person experience that pulls them out from behind their screens. Consider:

- Only available in-person experiences that can't be replicated online — emphasizing the benefits of in-person connection with unique offerings could be a differentiator for these fickle digital consumers.
- Flexible programming formats that make sense for their lifestyle and preferences.

Consumerize the experience

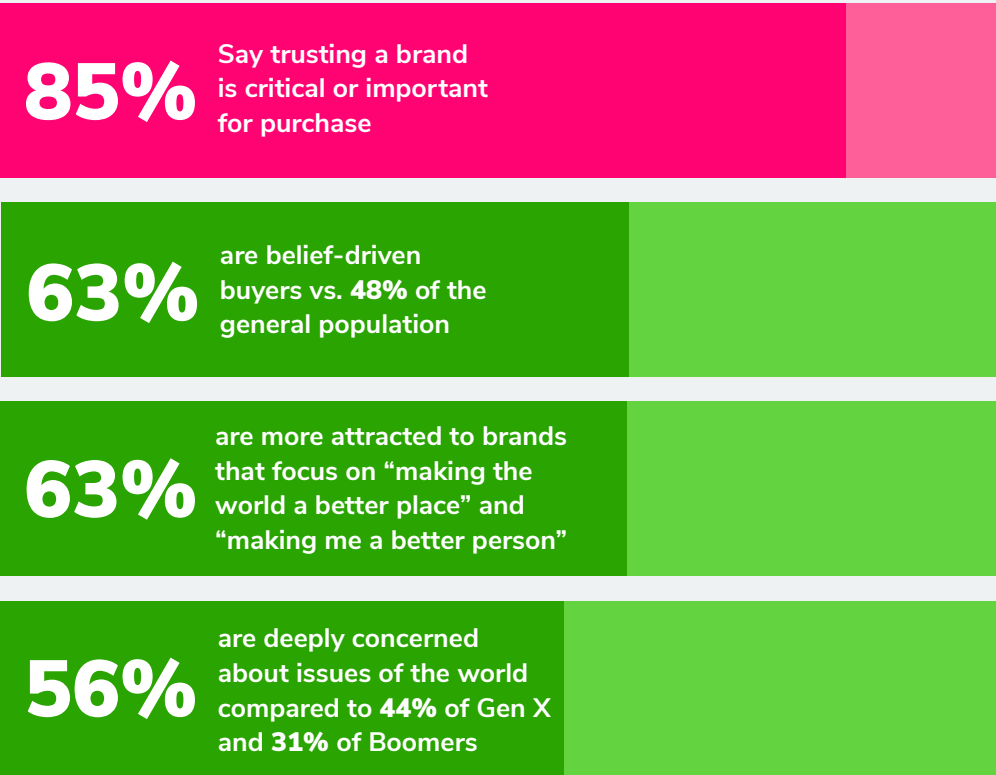
Take event design/programming cues from consumer events — think music, food, and fan festivals.

Simply put, these social experiences appeal to younger gens because they're memorable and fun. Creating moments they'll enjoy and hold onto makes attending an easy yes.

Show your humanity with WE over me

Gen Z is motivated by altruism. Showcasing your brand’s values and purpose-driven initiatives resonates with (and motivates) younger consumers who trust companies committed to bettering the world.

What motivates Gen Z loyalty and purchases



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Be their event tour guide

Gen Z consumers are either early in their careers or entering the workforce soon, so attending business events is new. Because they don't yet know how to make the most of in-person experiences, this group may be reluctant to participate or even show up.

So here's your opportunity to roll out the red carpet (points for a recycled one) and be their super-chill chaperone.



Show the value of in-person events with a Welcome-Connect-Simplify approach

Welcome

Be their host with the most hospitality and offer a positive spin that centers on them.

Offer special education tracks, seminars, and networking opportunities tailored for first-timers and young professionals.

Connect

Build connections (and create opportunities for them to connect with each other) well before the event using event apps, social media, and other digital tools that will enhance the experience.

Make sure it's easy and enjoyable so it's not seen as another thing they have to do.

Simplify

Untangle each step so they know when and where to be (with plenty of elective choices), what to expect, and quick tips for navigating and designing their schedule.

Consider cheat sheets, pre-event notifications, and pre-track alerts to build anticipation.



The key to your event future: Gen Z

This rising group of consumers is both reluctant and curious. Understanding this dynamic and making event format adjustments to meet their needs (while also ushering them through the event ropes) will help future-proof your event.

Use these data-based insights to intrigue Gen Z now, then continue evolving your event to keep them interested, engaged, and energized for the long haul.

In return you'll gain a trusting, loyal customer who will jump at the chance to attend any event you offer.



Want to evolve your event for younger generations?

Let's go

Visit us at freeman.com or contact us at freeman.com/contact

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