



What Does Effective Employee Engagement Look Like to Gen Z? Advice for the Extractives

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In an era when the extractives industry has struggled to attract the next generation of talent, companies that focus on providing one-of-a-kind growth experiences, innovation and a place for individuality can set themselves apart.

Effective employee engagement begins long before new talent joins: from messaging and positioning, recruiting and focusing on employee career development, all the way through to highlighting impressive alumni.

Brunswick's Emily Buczynski, Director and Energy & Resources Sector Manager, spoke to Rebekah Metts-Childers, Partner on Brunswick's Employee Engagement practice, about how the extractives can effectively position themselves to attract Gen Z to join their ranks.

What is important to understand about the way Gen Z views the workplace, and how can the extractives capitalize on those attitudes?

Rebekah Metts-Childers [RMC]: While there was a time that professionals were more focused on securing roles within specific industries or companies, Gen Z increasingly values the opportunity to build a long-term career in roles that provide clear and tailored career paths and the promise of diverse professional opportunities.

It is important for these professionals to understand how a career in extractives could advance their career and professional experience in the longer term. The extractives industry can be exceptional choices for ambitious individuals. If companies highlight the skillset development that occurs over time, they can position themselves as ideal platforms for launching a versatile and dynamic career – “five years *here* will teach you everything you need to know to go *there*.”

And, because Gen Z talent is spread broadly across industries, there is an opportunity for extractives to seek out less traditional recruitment sources in the industry, and target top talent in areas like finance and tech where companies may be downsizing.

What current storylines or themes from the extractives do you think might need to be told in a different way for Gen Z?

RMC: Three major themes stand out where the extractives can develop a more appealing story.



First, the industry should simplify and personalize the work and outputs. Right now, we see stories that showcase energy transition and the vast amount of materials needed to power the world. Using large, impersonal numbers, like millions of metric tons of copper, can be overwhelming and decrease how it resonates with someone looking for purpose in their work. The bigger the number, the less it can feel as though each person has the ability to impact it. To engage employees, these concepts must be relatable to their lives, tied to the work they are going to be doing with more digestible outcomes.

Second, extractives have an opportunity to educate about how their work ties to end-products. It is a different conversation if we can invite people to think about a commonly used product, and then work backwards in our storytelling about how extractives contribute to its existence. I can envision props at a recruiting fair to demonstrate that storytelling.

Third, technology and innovation are certainly topics that are being touted in every industry, and are compelling to Gen Z. Tying back to the concept of working “here will teach you everything you need to know to go there,” companies should talk more about the industry’s rapid progress, innovation, and the opportunity to learn and grow as the industry evolves – explaining how new talent can reshape the industry’s future. They should shift their narrative away from being just a mining or oil and gas company with proof points that share data and stories about R&D, resources and how they tackle challenges.

How else should the extractives be thinking about how they can better position themselves among the next generation when perceptions seem already well-formed?

RMC: Gen Z is the most diverse generation in history. They often look at the intersection of current events and the organization they are considering joining to see how they relate. Companies have the opportunity to proactively do that assessment – determining the topics most important to the Gen Z audience specific to their industry, and how they are acting in that context. Being intentional, up front and proactive in those messages can drive better dialogue and bring people quicker to seeing themselves working in and for extractives.

What other advice do you have for these industries as they think about how they can stand out as attractive places to work?

RMC: To attract younger talent, the extractives need to clearly demonstrate their commitment to innovation and change in their day-to-day operations.

It is essential for the industry also to encourage an internal culture that embraces fresh ideas and new thinking. They should not claim sustainability and promote their external efforts to drive global change if their own workplace remains resistant to change. Leadership should address this and invite people to the change process. Initiatives like junior boards can show an employer’s openness and facilitate conversations with those who were previously not interested or involved.

And ways of working should be considered. Gen Z desires flexibility. Where they can find roles that support their other interests, as well as allow them room to enjoy those interests, they are more likely to take the job and stay longer.



To continue the conversation



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Emily is a Director and the Energy & Resources Sector Manager for the US. Emily has delivered data-driven communications recommendations and support on critical issues ranging from crisis communications to public affairs, narrative development, stakeholder mapping, reputation measurement and issues management campaigns.

Meet the expert



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Rebekah is a Partner in the Chicago office specializing in transformation and change communications. She leads Employee Engagement work in the US, helping clients develop and execute internal communications, workforce engagement and culture programming.