



THE FUTURE TECH BUYING COMMITTEE:

Millennials + Gen X Decision-Makers
Achieving MORE, Together

LinkedIn

Introduction

MUCH ADO ABOUT MILLENNIALS

As Millennials embrace and encompass more influential, defined roles across the enterprise, stereotypes persist about their disruption of the status quo — depicting Millennials as:

- ❖ **Self-absorbed**
- ❖ **Desiring instant gratification**
- ❖ **Digitally dependent**
- ❖ **Unable to work well with others**
- ❖ **Aspiring to be different, for difference's sake**

But, let's face it. Too much fuss has been made about the negative implications of today's younger professionals. And Millennials dislike labels and presumptions about their habits, attitudes, and approaches toward driving business forward as much as their Gen X counterparts.

The excess hype surrounding differences, rather than similarities, between these two groups' involvement in the technology buying process led us to explore further.

In fact, Millennial and Gen X professionals who make technology decisions for their businesses — across all companies and disciplines — are more aligned than ever.

Why? One theory is that technology and the shared technology procurement process fosters a common language that bridges generational divides. As technology investments and renewals are made, alignment and collaboration between a growing committee of business stakeholders is vital for long-term success.

Noticing this subtle harmony can help enable more informed, sophisticated marketing.

If all the talk is true, Millennials are changing the way organizations make technology buying decisions. **But is there truly a big difference? We sought to find out. As you'll see, the data discounts the hype.**



of the U.S. workforce will consist of Millennials by 2020.

Source: <http://www.multivu.com/players/English/7428151-ibm-millennials-workplace-myths/>

2B+ Millennials around the world

In the U.S., **Millennials have surpassed Gen X** to become the largest share of the American workforce.

Source: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/11/millennials-surpass-gen-xers-as-the-largest-generation-in-u-s-labor-force/>

About the Global Study

TECHNOLOGY DECISION-MAKERS ARE MATURING, EVOLVING, AND EXPANDING

In October 2016, LinkedIn surveyed 5,470 global professionals who had influenced, contributed to, owned budget for, made decisions about, or implemented one or more technology purchases for their company over the past year. We examined our data by closely comparing responses between:

- ✦ **Younger Millennials** (1992–2000)
- ✦ **Older Millennials** (1981–1991)
- ✦ **Gen Xers** (1966–1980)



A few notes on terminology:

The technology (IT) buying committee, as defined by LinkedIn, encompasses a cross-functional entity of individuals representing a range of departments that possess budget, purchase authority, and influence in the technology buying process.

There are 80 million Millennials in America alone, and they represent about a fourth of the entire population, with \$200 billion in annual buying power.

Source: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2015/01/20/10-new-findings-about-the-millennial-consumer/#7d50e4a28a87>

Breaking Down the Global Study

Survey Breakdown:

// DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

50%
Millennials

50%
Generation X

46% of total respondents
(Gen X and Millennials)
hold decision-making roles within
their businesses.



// Committee vs. Company Size

Tech Buying Committee	Overall Company Size (Employees)			
	1-50	51-500	501-5000	5001+
Just me (1 total)	13%	5%	3%	2%
1-2 other people	54%	32%	28%	23%
3-4 other people	25%	33%	32%	30%
5+ other people	8%	27%	34%	38%

Source: 2016 LinkedIn survey of Millennial/GenX IT committee members (global data)

Respondents' representation spans
North America, Southeast Asia,
India, Europe, and Australia.

Key Takeaways

INSIGHTS FROM 5,740 MEMBERS OF THE TECHNOLOGY BUYING COMMITTEE

✦ The tech buying committee continues to expand

- Tech functions dominate
- Gen Xers are more likely to lead, but Millennials are gaining representation
- Those who manage the budget often have decision-making authority

✦ Tech-savvy buying committees influence through collaboration

- Most committee members consider themselves in the early majority of tech adoption
- Millennials and Gen Xers exchange opinions and learn from each other
- Both generations are open to new brands
- Led by Younger Millennials, most buyers use social media to learn about technology

✦ Understanding buyers' evolving challenges, needs, and roles is critical for success

- Buyers in both generations have expectations for social selling behavior
- Tech reps who provide applicable content are more likely to gain their consideration

Overall, we see no significant generational divides within today's buying committee — only subtle differences that help better inform technology marketers.

Action Items for Marketers

- ☐ **Offer digestible information** — especially brand information and expert opinions with a defined point of view — during consideration.
- ☐ **Then follow up** with more in-depth media to support post-purchase needs.
- ☐ **Realize that social selling is important** to all tech buyers and drives key sales outcomes.
- ☐ **Opt to ungate or soft-gate certain content**, as it deters clients and customers (particularly younger ones) from engaging and/or providing accurate information.

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The Tech Buying Committee Expands

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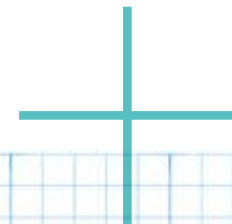
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// PART ONE



Decisions, Decisions, Decisions —
The Tech Buying Committee Expands



HYPE/HARD

data

HYPE: Business decisions about technology solutions are primarily made by those in technology functions.

HARD DATA: Today's technology buying committee encompasses every enterprise function from sales to finance to legal to operations and more.

		Decision-makers	Influencers	Budget Owners	Implementers
TECH	Information Technology	19%	15%	16%	23%
	Operations	12%	9%	8%	10%
	Engineering	8%	8%	10%	8%
	Quality Assurance	3%	2%	3%	3%
	Research	2%	1%	2%	1%
		44%	35%	39%	45%
EXTERNAL	Business Development	7%	5%	7%	5%
	Support	5%	5%	5%	4%
	Sales	5%	4%	5%	4%
	Marketing	4%	7%	7%	5%
	Media & Communication	2%	2%	1%	1%
		23%	23%	25%	19%
BACK OFFICE	Finance	8%	9%	10%	9%
	Accounting	5%	6%	4%	5%
	Purchasing	5%	6%	4%	4%
	Legal	1%	3%	2%	2%
	Human Resources	2%	3%	2%	2%
		21%	27%	22%	22%
OTHER	Program/Project Management	8%	6%	9%	6%
	Product Management	4%	7%	4%	4%
	External Consultant/Advisor	2%	2%	2%	2%

Source: 2016 LinkedIn survey of Millennial/GenX IT committee members (global data)

The buying committee spans a broad range of constituents.

TECH:

IT, Operations, Engineering, QA, and Research

EXTERNAL-FACING:

Business Development, Support, Sales, Marketing, Media, and Communications

BACK OFFICE:

Finance, Accounting, Purchasing, Legal, and Human Resources

OTHER:

Program/Project Management, Product Management, Consultant/Advisor

When it comes to today's technology buying committee, survey responses across Millennials and Gen X reinforced that:

- The committee continues to evolve and expand, now encompassing 4+ decision influencers.
- While dominated by tech-focused functions, the committee has representation across a range of internal and external-facing groups (64% Back Office; 23% External; 13% Other).
- Millennials and Gen Xers are distributed similarly across a wide range of departments.

THE 4 DISTINCT FUNCTIONS OF THE TECHNOLOGY BUYING COMMITTEE

Decision-makers: Select tech products or services to buy

Influencers: Provide input on tech products or services

Budget owners: Oversee funding for tech products or services

Implementers: Manage, implement, or deploy new tech products or services



Gartner says global IT spending to reach \$3.5 trillion in 2017.

Source: <http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/3482917>

Key Finding: The Bigger the Company, the More Folks to Reach (and Please)

Survey responses revealed a direct correlation between a company's size and its respective number of buying committee members. More than half of technology buying committees overall (up to two-thirds at larger companies) are composed of at least four people. Specifically:

➤ **52% of decision-makers work with 3+ committee members on average.**

➤ **67% of decision-makers at small companies work with two or fewer committee members.**

➤ **34% of decision-makers at companies sized 501–5000 and 38% of those at companies sized 5001+ indicated that their buying committee encompasses 5+ people.**

Takeaways for Marketers

With tech purchases influenced and made by increasing numbers of stakeholders, ask yourself:

- ☐ Is your marketing strategy designed to reach and impact all the functions represented on the buying committee?
- ☐ Does your content acknowledge the unique tech needs and challenges of each constituent?
- ☐ Are you marketing in the same way to small tech companies as you would to large tech enterprises?

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More than HALF of tech buying committees overall have at least four people.

// PART TWO



Gen X, Older Millennials, and Younger Millennials
All Join Today's Committee Table



HYPE/HARD

data

HYPE: Millennials are self-involved, non-contributive, and seldom included in conversations surrounding purchasing or implementing new technology.

HARD DATA: Millennials are active members of the buying committee.

34% of Younger Millennials (ages 19–25) and **41% of Older Millennials** (ages 26–35) **already possess technology decision-making responsibilities.** Among Younger Millennials on the tech buying committee, **61% provide input.**

Rather than disrupting the buying committee, Millennial survey respondents assert their representation across important committee roles by **providing input on a technology product or service purchase** or **implementing/managing a new technology product or service.**

	Younger Millennials	Older Millennials	Gen X
Decided on a tech product/service to buy	34%	41%	48%
Managed the budget for a tech product/service purchase	20%	27%	37%
Provided input on a tech product/service purchase	61%	68%	67%
Implemented or managed a new tech product/service	53%	58%	57%

Source: 2016 LinkedIn survey of Millennial/GenX IT committee members (global data)

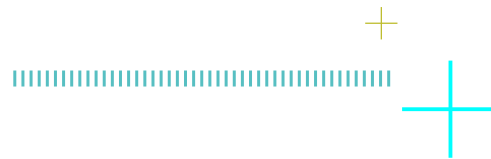
And the data shows us that there's true consistency across these generations. **A strong majority (80+%) of Gen Xers mirror their Millennial counterparts when it comes to:**

- Trying new technology brands
- Asking colleagues for advice about technology products or services
- Sharing opinions about technology with friends outside work
- Recommending technology products or services to coworkers
- Providing thoughts or recommendations on business technology products or services

MILLENNIALS AND GEN X ARE IN COLLABORATIVE HARMONY

Along the buying committee chain of command, research results found that:

- **Gen Xers (48%) are more likely to be leaders**, especially when it comes to making formal business decisions.
- **Millennials (41%) are just as likely to provide input** on tech purchases or implement a new product/service as their Gen X counterparts.
- **Over half of Younger Millennials (61%) contribute to their companies' technology purchases** — and one in three is already a decision-maker.
- **Gen X still exhibits more leverage in tech buying**, with 85% of Gen Xers deciding tech purchases or managing the budget for them.
- **Millennials are gaining ground, with 68% of Older Millennials contributing to decisions** and surprisingly (or not) 54% of Younger Millennials doing the same.

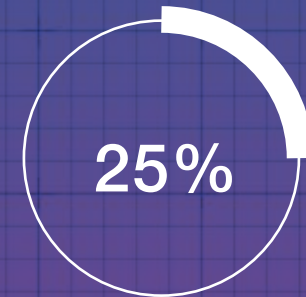


An IBM Institute for Business Value study found that 53% of Millennials and 63% of Gen X believe analytics can help them make better decisions.

Source: <http://www-01.ibm.com/common/ssi/cgi-bin/ssialias?htmlfid=GBE03658USEN>



How common is
committee multitasking?



Only one in four members
is solely focused on new
product/service purchases,
and even fewer (14%) work
solely on renewals.

Continued tech buying
committee changes are
driving unity, making
what generation you're
from far less important
than how you work.

Committee Members Wear Multiple Hats

You'll note that across all generations, if a member of the tech buying committee manages the budget for a business technology purchase, chances are they're also the decision-maker. In fact, nearly three in four budget owners are also decision-makers, while half of decision-makers are also in charge of budget.

Globally, three in five tech buying committee members are involved in both new tech product/service purchases and renewals. To show how common committee multitasking is, only one in four solely focuses on new product/service purchases, and even fewer (14%) work solely on renewals.

	Decision-makers	Budget Owners
Decided on a tech product/service to buy	100%	72%
Managed the budget for a tech product/service purchase	51%	100%
Provided input on a tech product/service purchase	75%	76%
Implemented or managed a new tech product/service	71%	71%

Source: 2016 LinkedIn survey of Millennial/GenX IT committee members (global data)

Takeaways for Marketers

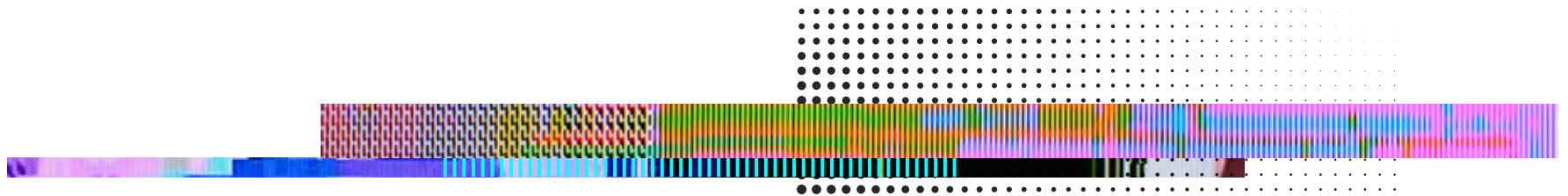
As a tech marketer, consider the following points:

- ❑ Millennials are active, engaged and prominent in the buying committee — don't overlook including them in marketing efforts.
- ❑ Committee members may have multiple roles, which means multiple pain points. Don't get too niche-specific in content directed toward them.
- ❑ Those responsible for onboarding new tech are likely also responsible for tech renewal, so it's crucial to keep them happy with relevant, engaging content both along the purchase cycle and post-purchase.



// PART THREE

Help Me Help You — Collaboration and Tech-Savviness
among Generations (and Where to Go from Here) +



HYPE/HARD

data

HYPE: Millennials are considered more tech-savvy than prior generations.

HARD DATA: Millennials are not significantly more likely to consider themselves tech-savvy at work than Gen Xers (**79% vs. 75%, respectively**).

There's a shift toward personalization and greater connection with content. It's becoming more important in all marketing, including tech, and Younger Millennials are driving influence. This is largely because Younger Millennials, more than any other group, are governed by personal branding and digital work habits. This means no "phony" content will do — it has to be relevant, tailored, personalized, and genuine.

While they may not have the same level of digital fluency, Older Millennials and Gen Xers also stay on the cutting edge — so delivering the right marketing messages to them along their purchase path has never been more important.

Tech-savvy and Tech-scrappy

Millennials have grown to expect continuous tech advancements and have low tolerance for processes that impede their momentum.

They are comfortable using many access channels, devices, and technologies that allow them to resolve issues without contacting support.

While Millennials will happily roll up their sleeves to look for information themselves, they will also feel more frustrated if you fail to provide the appropriate resources at the right time.

❖ **63% of Millennials are not happy** with the tools their tech department gives them.

❖ **Self-service and crowdsourced** customer service options are essential and so is the need for brands to be open to customer collaboration and co-creation.

Source: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/micahsolomon/2016/12/27/millennial-customers-will-dominate-2017-is-your-customer-service-experience-ready/#12e87be79f4e>

TWO GENERATIONS, ONE TECH-SAVVY STYLE

// Millennials are not significantly more likely to consider themselves tech-savvy at work than GenXers.

Overall, at least three in four tech buyers consider themselves in the “early majority” when it comes to adoption of new technology at work. And what may surprise you is that there’s little generational difference: **79% of both Younger and Older Millennials believe this, and 75% of Gen Xers also consider themselves early adopters.**

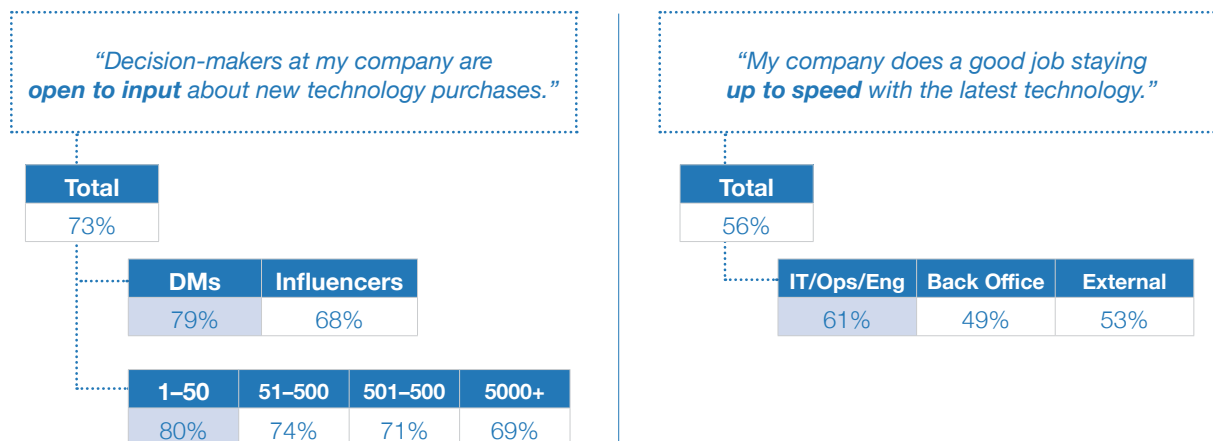
But, while the tech-savvy buying committee drives influence through collaboration, it’s the openness to innovation that conversely drives tech adoption. Across the board for all generations, nearly three-quarters (**73%**) say **decision-makers at their company are open to input on purchases, yet only (56%) say their company stays up to date with technology.**

	Younger Millennials	Older Millennials	Generation X
An early adopter (i.e., among the first to start using)	19%	19%	17%
In the early majority (i.e., not first to use, but before majority)	60%	60%	58%
NET: EARLY	79%	79%	75%
In the late majority (i.e., start using after the majority)	16%	17%	22%
A laggard (i.e., among the last to start using)	1%	1%	1%

Enterprise Leadership Falls Short on Listening

However, the percentage of those who believe decision-makers at their company are open to **input about new technology purchases declines as the company size grows: 80% of those in a company sized 1–50** believe decision-makers are open to input, while only **69% of those in a company sized 5000+** believe the same.

That means there's a disparity at the enterprise level between technology being recommended and actually adopted.



// Larger companies reported greater challenges adopting new technologies. It's the job of marketing and sales to thoughtfully equip enterprise buyers with the tools and support necessary for successful implementation and user adoption.

Source: 2016 LinkedIn survey of Millennial/GenX IT committee members (global data)

The fact that Millennials consider themselves tech-savvy in the workplace isn't surprising given outside research that underscores just how much professionals value tech:

- ✦ **93% of Millennials** cite modern and up-to-date technology as one of the most important aspects of a workplace.

Source: <http://www.cio.com/article/3082775/unified-communications/millennials-are-shaking-up-workplace-communication.html>

- ✦ **While 81% of Millennials** said “state-of-the-art technology” was paramount to an ideal working environment over perks or amenities.

Source: Ibid.

- ✦ **58% of respondents** in a study by Ernst and Young agreed that Gen Xers are revenue generators.

Source: <http://www.business.com/sales-and-marketing/generations-divided-making-the-differences-between-gen-x-and-the-millennials-work-for-your-business/>

Takeaways for Marketers

- ❑ **Millennials and Gen X aren't far apart on the tech spectrum** (as perhaps previously assumed), so you may be able to leverage the same marketing content for both, depending on its purpose.
- ❑ **Keep company size in mind when developing tech marketing materials** — realizing that you may have to work harder with larger companies to convey and persuade them to select your product or service.

// PART FOUR



Marketing to All: Get Honest and
Take Action with Relevant Content



HYPE/HARD data

HYPE: Millennials all seek information the same way, via the same digital formats.

HARD DATA: Millennials are individuals who believe personalized, relevant content across a handful of important channels matters most when it comes to their role.

PURCHASE DRIVERS PUSHING THE SALE

As today's buyers continue to evolve, understanding their challenges and unique, competitive, and demanding needs is critical for success. Personalization remains vital, yet respondents — of all ages — are less than impressed with their average sales rep's capabilities.

Across all generations, when considering tech products/services, technology buyers prefer sales reps who:

- ✦ Understand their business needs/roles (90%)
- ✦ Provide relevant content (78%)

And while all generations are increasingly in agreement on these points, Millennials, particularly Younger Millennials, exceedingly value:

- ✦ Reps who share content applicable to their roles
(80% — compared to 78% of Older Millennials and 76% of Gen Xers)
- ✦ Personalized communications
(78% — compared to 73% of Older Millennials and 68% of Gen Xers)
- ✦ Having connections in common
(59% — compared to 50% of Older Millennials and 42% of Gen Xers)

Approximately **three in five** tech buyers want their reps to use **LinkedIn** for social selling actions...

...in particular, for providing/sharing **valuable insights** (61%–72%).

Globally, the majority of technology buyers (72%) say it's important their sales rep demonstrates key social selling behaviors across four distinct categories:

- ✦ Having a professional brand
- ✦ Having a network of trusted connections
- ✦ Taking a relevant approach to the sale
- ✦ Leveraging valuable insights

Yet, it seems reps aren't meeting the mark. When it comes to their reps' performance, tech buyers indicate there is significant room for improvement. Social selling behaviors are important to buyers and drive key sales outcomes. So reps must adopt these tactics to portray a professional brand and a strong network of connections — specifically, **they need to demonstrate that they're knowledgeable about a buyer's business, must share relevant content/perspectives, and should utilize data-driven insights.**

// I am more likely to consider a technology brand's products or services if their sales rep(s)...

	Total	Younger Millennials	Older Millennials	Gen X
...demonstrate a clear understanding of our business needs	90%	89%	90%	91%
...share content applicable to my role in the decision-making process	78%	80%	78%	76%
...have a clear understanding of my role in the decision-making process	74%	76%	73%	68%
...provide personalized communication	71%	73%	71%	69%
...target appropriate people at my company for initial discussions	71%	73%	71%	69%
...are connected to others at my company	47%	59%	50%	42%
...have an informative LinkedIn profile	43%	47%	42%	42%
...reach out to me through LinkedIn	26%	32%	26%	24%

FINE-TUNED FORMATS FOR BOTH GENERATIONS

Whether a Millennial or Gen Xer, different content formats are sought after for specific informational needs. For instance, globally, expert opinions and industry news are considered the top sources of influential information during the tech input or decision stage. For the implementation stage, **learning guides (47%)** are sought above all else. For budgeting purposes, **opinions/reviews (40%)** and **product/service information from tech brands (32%)** come out on top.

Overall, globally, when consuming information tech buyers of all ages tend to prefer short articles and posts. That means shorter, digestible formats are preferred for top types of pre-purchase information:

- ✦ General news (47%)
- ✦ Expert opinions (33%)
- ✦ Industry-specific news (39%)

Formats like video and white papers come into play for the buying committee when they seek post-consideration/renewal information:

- ✦ Learning guides — video 36%, white papers 23%
- ✦ Product information — video 21%, white papers 25%

- Millennials and Gen X both rank blog articles as their #1 favorite type of content, and both rank white papers as their #1 least favorite type of content.
- Gen X likes sharing slideshare content 50% more than Millennials.

Source: <http://www.adweek.com/digital/how-different-generations-consume-content-online-infographic/>



//PART FOUR

Marketing to All:

Get Honest and Take Action with Relevant Content

// When consuming info, tech buyers tend to prefer short articles and posts:

47%

read short articles/posts on general news/current events

39%

read short articles/posts on industry-specific news/trends

36%

watch how-to/learning guide videos or webcasts

// Expert opinions and industry news are top sources of influential info when inputting or deciding, while learning guides are key for implementation:

61%

use opinions/reviews from experts as top sources for deciding

42%

use industry-specific news and trends for inputting

47%

use how-to/learning guides for implementing

Peers are just as credible as experts:

People have the highest tendency to trust a business that treats its employees well, and a dominating **53% of people trust hearing it straight from the employees themselves.**

Source: <http://www.slideshare.net/EdelmanInsights/2017-edelman-trust-barometer-global-results-71035413>

WANT TO REALLY STAND OUT TO THE MILLENNIAL CROWD? Consider Unlocking the “Gates”

Gated content stands out as unwanted and problematic for both Millennials and Gen X. **Globally, 78% of Younger Millennials decided not to download content because they had to fill out a form, as did 80% of Older Millennials and 82% of Gen Xers.**

Nearly two in three tech buyers encountered gated content online in 2016 — among these, **81% decided not to download due to gating.**

Globally, one aspect where Millennials and Gen Xers differ is that, **Millennials (especially younger ones) who encounter gated content are more likely than their Gen X counterparts to enter false information when downloading.** And for all tech buyers who have entered false information or chosen not to download gated content, privacy and relevancy are the primary reasons.

	Why Entered False Info	Why Decided Not to Download
I wasn't comfortable sharing my information with a vendor	71%	60%
I didn't know how the vendor would use my contact information	71%	59%
I wasn't sure that the content would be useful or relevant to me	44%	47%
I didn't want to take the time to type my information in the form	32%	46%
I didn't want the vendor to think I was interested in their products/services	34%	28%
I am not the right person at my company for the vendor to contact	17%	15%

Source: 2016 LinkedIn survey of Millennial/GenX IT committee members (global data)

Millennials (especially younger ones) who encounter gated content are more likely than their Gen X counterparts to enter false information when downloading.

Takeaways for Marketers

When crafting content as a tech marketer, keep these tips in mind:

- ☐ Content created for the decision-making stage should be shorter and more digestible than all other stage messages.
- ☐ Gate thoughtfully. Gate larger, more robust material when it comes to content, rather than the “little stuff,” so you avoid losing your audience.
- ☐ The more personalized you can make your content, the more apt tech buyers are to read it regardless of generation.

Conclusion

THE STRUGGLE ISN'T REAL — MILLENNIALS POSE NO RISK TO THE FUTURE OF TECHNOLOGY PURCHASES, AFTER ALL

Technology allows us to communicate and collaborate in powerful ways like never before. It's a place where Millennials and Gen Xers find common ground — and come together to adopt new work tools, drive innovation, and revolutionize connection.

The “language of tech” is a great equalizer. Our new findings indicate less difference and greater similarity across generations when it comes to choosing, funding, and implementing business technology.

The implications for tech marketers are powerful. Don't let myths get in the way.

Instead:

- ❖ **Target, reach, and engage with all** personas on the buying committee via informative, relevant channels.
- ❖ **Digital fluency is the name of the game** regardless of generation — ensure your content is relevant and genuine.
- ❖ **Personalize outreach and provide useful communication** around the complex challenges that today's businesses face.
- ❖ **Review your content strategy** to incorporate consideration of company size since your buyers may have different expectations.
- ❖ **Understand enterprise buyers are looking to you** for the tools to achieve successful implementation and user adoption.



Interested in how Millennials are engaging with the LinkedIn platform? Check out our [Millennial Minute](#) series on the [LinkedIn Marketing Solutions Blog](#).



- ❖ **Align sales and marketing to more** effectively nurture and care for key customers, with consideration for tech buyers' preferences for content and social selling.
- ❖ **Gate content with caution and a well-thought-out approach** that adds value instead of detracting from your tech buyers' experience.

Remember, the struggle isn't real. Millennials aren't disrupting, but rather contributing to the conversations, decisions, and implementation of business technology products and solutions.

