

Hark



Listen Up:

**What does your
future workforce
want and expect
from you?**



2024

Welcome

At Hark, we listen to young people. Our annual 'Listen Up' survey helps businesses like yours to better understand the pressing issues on young people's minds.

This year we spoke to **1,000 young people** and **80 teachers** to explore what they're looking for from employers and their hopes and dreams for their future careers.

'Listen Up' shows that we are entering a new era of business engagement, with young people expecting more from business than ever.

Organisations like yours need to engage with these young people: they are your future customers, the influencers that will shape consumer behaviours and trends, and your talent pipeline.

86% of young people tell us they will only buy from businesses that demonstrate

social responsibility, and a staggering 90% only want to work for companies that invest in social impact. **93% expect brands to take action by supporting schools and local communities.**

Young people say that they are leaving education without the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed in the workplace, and we know that 60% of employers are struggling to hire young people with the right skills (Demos, 2023).

The next generation wants to see your business step up and help get them work-ready by sharing your expertise and experience with schools through activity such as work experience, employee visits and inspiring content for teachers. Supporting young people's development is no longer something that sets your business apart in the minds of young people; it's something they expect.



93%

expect brands to **take action** by supporting schools and local communities



We've identified five ways your business can meet the needs of your future customers and employees, and stand out from the crowd:



1

Invest in listening to young people to make them feel valued

The top thing that young people want from an employer? A business that listens to them.

It makes them feel valued.

You can build opportunities to listen to young people entering your workforce, starting with your induction process. This creates a welcoming environment; demonstrates how much you value their contributions; and makes them feel heard. It also provides useful insight into what drew them to your business and any barriers they faced.

Businesses can also benefit from listening to their future employees: focus groups with young people who are still in education can further help you to understand and address any barriers that could be limiting the quality and diversity of your talent pipeline.



2

Don't make assumptions about young people's needs

What young people say they really need can be surprising!

Generations Z and Alpha are often dubbed 'digital natives' and many people assume that this is one area where they don't need support.

However, **only 30% of young people feel confident in their digital skills**. Having been raised using touchscreens, skills such as typing don't always come naturally. Young people are not all confident using increasingly important tools like AI or the software that businesses rely on to help them collaborate, organise and communicate.

70%

of young people **do not feel confident** in their digital skills



Making assumptions about what the youngest generations need can lead to gaps in their skillset that affect their confidence and work readiness.

Creating opportunities to listen to young people and ask them what they want your help with will help your business to fill these gaps, ultimately leading to a workforce that will come in with the skills and confidence you need.

Only

11%

of young people want to **work from home** full time



3

Understand the work environment that will help young people flourish

Generation Z is already entering the workforce, and Generation Alpha won't be far behind.

89% of them tell us that they want to work in an office or another in-person environment at least part of the time, busting the common misconception that young people are keen to work remotely. In fact, just under half don't want to work from home at all.

2/5 of young people say that feeling valued is a key driver for their future career. This is more important to girls, who are also more likely to prioritise finding their work meaningful.

Young people tell us that that they want their work to be appreciated and recognised, whether that be through the opportunity to share their ideas, praise or pay.

Building opportunities to listen to your young employees will not only help you avoid making assumptions about them, but it will also allow you to demonstrate how much you value their contributions. This will ultimately allow your workforce, and therefore your business, to flourish.



4

Help young people to develop the skills they're missing

A third of young people feel that they are lacking key skills that will help them stand out in a competitive job market.

They worry that they lack resilience and struggle with time management. Only a third think that they communicate well, and fewer than 1 in 10 feel confident in managing stress.

The world of work is fast-paced and evolving rapidly. A key skill for success is the ability to handle these challenges. Without support, young people are struggling to cope with the stresses of working life, and will be unable to thrive in the workplace.

91%

of young people **do not feel confident** managing stress



A future workforce without these skills is a massive concern to businesses.

94% of young people think that businesses have a role to play in helping them to develop these skills. It is in the interest of businesses to do this in a relevant, engaging way. Not only does it contribute to a more skilled, work-ready pool of future employees, but it can raise awareness of and interest in your industry and your business as an employer.

You can take inspiration from other organisations that are successfully supporting young people.

EngineeringUK are passionate about supporting young people to develop new skills that are useful for their future careers. When they set about creating their Climate Schools Programme, they wanted to make sure young people’s voices were heard. So they consulted with young people and their teachers every step of the way. This included running interviews and focus groups to understand their skills gaps, and asking for feedback on resources to ensure they were meeting students’ needs.

Is there a way you could emulate this in your business?



41%

of young people are worried that they won't be able to find a job

5

Give them real-world exposure to the world of work

School careers education is much improved, but young people still don't feel confident that they know what real-life careers look like.

90% of young people want real-life interactions with brands and businesses to show them what the world of work looks like and help them to understand their options once they leave school.

How can you help give young people the real-life connection to the world of work that they want and need? Work experience programmes allow young people to practise their developing skills in a real-life environment. Employees can also visit schools to deliver inspirational talks about the path they took to get to where they are today or run simple activities that put classroom learning into a real-life context.

Young people's biggest worries about the future:



1. Not having enough money (63%)
2. Being unemployed (34%)
3. Not enjoying their job (33%)
4. Not having friends (33%)
5. Having the right skills to get the job they want (31%)



Young people are most likely to want to work for companies if they:

1. listen to the needs of younger employees
2. provide mentorships
3. have a diverse workforce
4. support disadvantaged young people into work
5. are a brand they recognise.



In summary

Generations Z and Alpha are the future. They are your current young customers, and your future workforce. Building brand affinity and **developing a strong talent pathway starts now. Listening to them without making assumptions is key** if you want to truly understand them.

In a new era of business, it is worth building in opportunities to listen to young people and to collaborate on issues that matter to them. By creating meaningful engagements, you can help to get the best from your young customers and future employees. You will also be able to develop a rich suite of social initiatives which will set your business apart in their minds.

Young people are the future of business and **Hark is here to help.** We have dedicated, expert teams who can support your business to embed youth voice, design truly impactful programmes for schools, train your staff on how to foster meaningful connections with young people, or anything in between. Get in touch if you'd like to discuss how your business can make a difference to young people; we'd love to hear from you!

Hark

Get in
touch

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