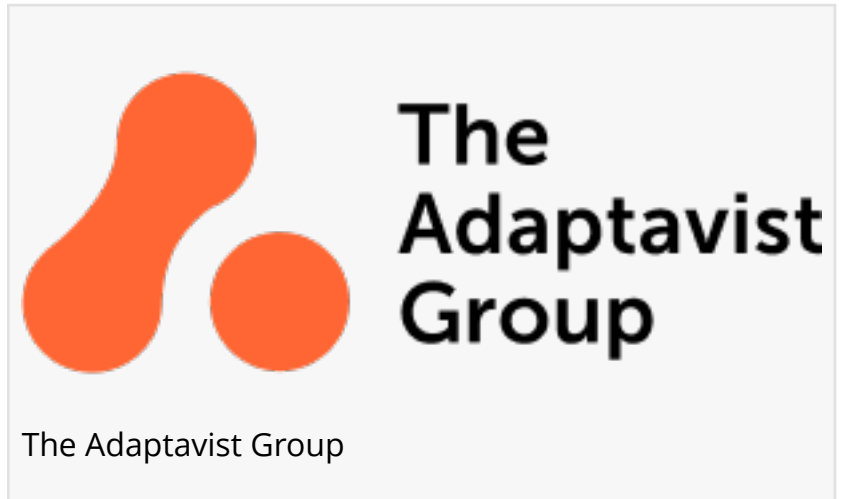


# Workplace communication wars: research uncovers how different generations use and view emojis, punctuation, and AI ☐

*Emojis seen as 'inappropriate' by nearly half of over 50s, while two-thirds of Gen Z use them every day, The Adaptavist Group research reveals*

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- New research from [The Adaptavist Group](#), a collection of diverse technology companies making businesses work better, today reveals how generational divides are shaping workplace communication, with everything from emojis to AI tools sparking debate and impacting productivity.



The Adaptavist Group's [Workplace Communication Atlas](#), which surveyed 1,000 knowledge

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*Simon Houghton-Williams,  
CEO of The Adaptavist Group*

workers in the UK and was conducted via Attest, maps out conversational preferences, highlighting the subtle - and sometimes not-so-subtle - differences in how Gen Z (18-28 year-olds), Millennials (29-44) and over-50s interpret workplace communication tools and behaviours. With up to four different generations now in the workforce, the findings indicate how even small nuances in workplace communication can have significant implications for collaboration, efficiency, and employee experience.

Misunderstandings in the workplace

Evidently, nuances in digital communications in the

workplace are driving miscommunications in workplaces. In fact, 'misinterpreting tone or phrasing' came out as the biggest communication challenge facing workers, cited by almost half (46%) of respondents. This was closely followed by different response time expectations (46%)

and lack of context (31%).

The research follows The Adaptavist Group's 2024's [Digital Etiquette: Mind the Generational Gap Report](#), which shone a light on communications challenges created by an intergenerational workforce. According to the study, an enormous 56% of workers find generational collaboration challenging, highlighting the scale of the challenge facing businesses.

### AI slang translators

To navigate the nuances of workplace communications, a significant 68% of workers are using AI tools, such as ChatGPT, to help with everything from helping with grammar and spelling (42%) in their professional messages to adjusting tone (26%) and brainstorming ideas on how to respond.

The attitude to AI-based messaging is positive too, as 71% said they would be happy for, or amused to see, colleagues to use AI tools to reply to their messages. Just 29% said they would be annoyed, and would prefer human responses.

Likewise, more than half (52%) of workers said they would be likely to use an AI assistant to translate workplace slang that they didn't understand - this can be broken down by 55% of Gen Z, 57% of Millennials and 42% of over-50s - demonstrating how AI is increasingly impacting human communication.

### Understanding the full stop

The study also showed how misunderstandings often boil down to generational differences when it comes to everyday linguistic tools, such as the emoji and the full-stop.

A full stop (.) at the end of a workplace message is interpreted by a majority of over 50s (71%) as clear and 'to the point', or professional and formal. Meanwhile, just over half of Gen Z (52%) and 61% of Millennials share the same sentiment.

On the other hand, Gen Z are far more likely to interpret the full stop as cold, passive aggressive or outright rude than their generational counterparts. A combined 23% of Gen Z said they felt this way when they receive a message that ends with a full stop, whereas just 10% of those over 50 and 16% of Millennials felt the same.

Interestingly, 22% of total respondents - including 25% of Gen Z - said that their interpretation of the full stop is dependent on the sender, suggesting that context plays a significant role in its interpretation.

### The emoji minefield

The script is reversed when it comes to the perception of emojis in the workplace, as Gen Z are far more receptive compared to the older generations.

Over two-thirds (68%) of Gen Z frequently use emojis to communicate in the workplace, compared to just 36% of over-50s. Millennials sit in the middle when it comes to emoji usage, with half (48%) using them to communicate.

Despite their willingness to embrace emoji culture, Gen Z were found to be the most likely to misinterpret emojis, with 43% experiencing a misunderstanding at work caused by emoji use, vs just 20% of over 50s and 32% of Millennials. This defies the expectation that the 'digital-savvy' Gen Z would be in the know about emoji meanings. However, it's possible the different generations are misaligned on the different connotations of each emoji.

For example, when asked about their thoughts on emoji usage, 45% of over-50s said that receiving a professional message with smiley faces is completely unprofessional. Conversely, 58% of Gen Z and 56% of Millennials think it makes the message feel more friendly or approachable.

The Adaptavist Group's research also found that older workers are far less likely to adapt their emoji usage depending on the recipient (58%) than Gen Z (80%) and Millennials (74%), further fuelling the ongoing emoji divide between generations.

Simon Houghton-Williams, CEO of The Adaptavist Group, commented:

"Our latest research shows just how complex workplace communication has become. With four different generations now in the workforce, and people communicating across multiple channels, there is an increased risk of misunderstanding, which hinders both productivity and worker happiness.

"To bridge the generational communication gap, businesses must embrace flexible, integrated work management and communication tools that cater to diverse preferences without creating siloes. But technology alone isn't enough - promoting communication literacy across all age groups is vital to fostering collaboration. By rethinking traditional tools, normalising AI through transparent governance, and investing in shared training, organisations can enhance understanding and productivity, and ultimately create a more inclusive, connected workplace."

ENDS

Notes to editors

Research conducted by Attest on behalf of The Adaptavist Group in February 2025. The research

surveyed 1,000 UK knowledge workers.

## About The Adaptavist Group

The Adaptavist Group is a collection of diverse companies with one common goal: to make business work better. We combine the best talent, technology, and processes to make it easier for our customers to excel—today and tomorrow.

We are experts at delivering innovative software, tailored solutions, and quality services across some of the world's most trusted technology ecosystems, including Atlassian, AWS, monday.com, GitLab, and many more.

The Adaptavist Group exists to support clients' day-to-day workflows, business transformation, and high-growth strategies. We offer a comprehensive but always evolving range of services across five key practices: agile, DevOps, work management, ITSM, and cloud. Our depth of knowledge across these practices unites us in our mission to help businesses embrace continuous transformation and make it their competitive advantage.

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