

# How your manufacturing business can attract and retain younger customers

A woman with brown hair, wearing a yellow hard hat and clear safety glasses, is focused on her work in a manufacturing setting. She is wearing a red and black plaid shirt. The background is a blurred industrial environment with various metal parts and machinery.

Offer product personalisation

Provide a quick, trackable service

Make the purchase experiential

Boost your sustainability credentials

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## How to attract new, younger customers

# BETTER.

### How your manufacturing business can attract and retain younger customers


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The future is young. Millennials and Gen Z now make up more than 50% of the global workforce. They will become the leaders in supply chain and buying. And they will be a strong source of income in the years ahead. Therefore, even if you don't sell directly to the consumer at the moment, forming relationships and loyalty with this generation now could help establish your business for future contract wins.

But how can you appeal to new, younger customers? It's no mean feat, especially if your manufacturing organisation has a lot of existing contracts that have been in place for decades.

In this guide, we dive into attracting them through digital technologies, so that you can grow your customer base, boost your income, and future-proof your business.





## Understanding your audience

### Defining and personalising your offer

Firstly, let's find out who these younger customers actually are. Millennials are those born between 1980 and 1996, and Gen Z are those born after 1996.

While there are slight differences between the two, they have one thing in common: they're digital, more so than any other generation before them. In fact, Gen Z are what can be described as genuine digital natives – they've never experienced life without technology.

#### *Provide personalisation*

As for enticing this audience and turning them into loyal customers, let's take a look at some interesting stats on spending habits. Gen Z are prepared to purchase luxury, but their definition of this might surprise you. They don't want a well-known brand they can parade around – they want to invest in something they believe in. Plus, they desire one-of-a-kind pieces that make them stand out. That makes customisation a necessity.

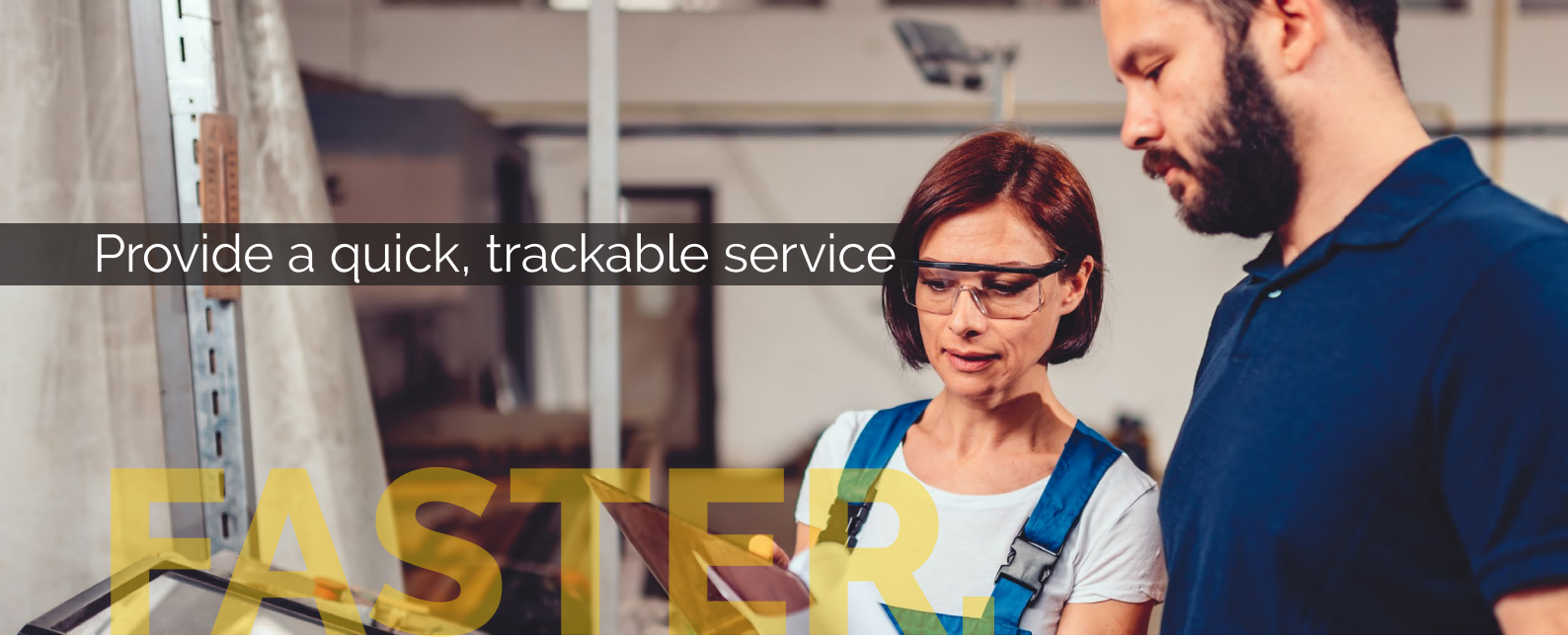
This trend isn't just specific to Gen Z though. It was found that 90% of overall consumers would rather purchase a product if personalisation is available. This is somewhat expected given that we live in a world where you can quickly have your initials on a handbag, a face on a birthday cake, or even – though admittedly not as speedy – a kitchen designed to your precise specification. Mass personalisation is definitely here to stay for younger customers who have grown up with products and services that literally revolve around them.

And technology can facilitate this. While deep learning in artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) can identify quality failures so plant operations can take corrective action, the efficiency this results in also frees up capacity for personalisation. The shop floor can autocorrect numerous functions without requiring human intervention, whilst IoT sensors gather, communicate, analyse and action data. This then equips the worker with more insight, so they're able to tackle creative or professional-level tasks in customisation.

**90% of consumers would rather purchase a product if personalisation is available.**







Provide a quick, trackable service

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### Offer a quicker and more reliable service

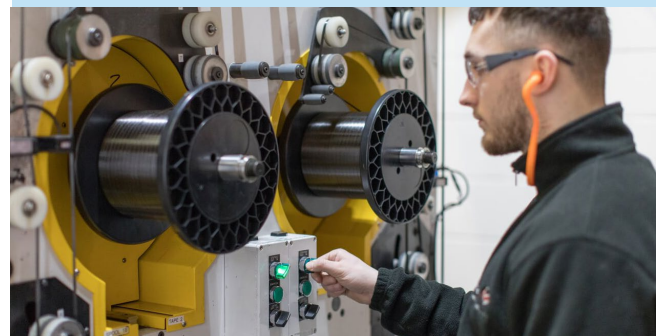
Whether it's a popular sofa company or a large pizza delivery chain, tracking helps to provide a dependable service that keeps customers in the know. True, your audience will realise that it's not always possible for high quality or customised products to get to them in just a couple of days. However, they will appreciate being able to track where their order is in the process.


A fast, trackable service is especially the norm for millennials and Gen Z. Multitasking is the standard among a younger audience, so everything needs to be quick – from enabling them to place and receive an order to ensuring you catch their attention in the first place.

That's why many makers are using scheduling software to more precisely track product progress through the factory floor. A great demonstration of this is [Bindatex](#), who provide a cutting service for advanced materials. By implementing Total Control Pro (TCP), a cloud-based production data capture system, they can track each order through the manufacturing process. This led to benefits such as better productivity (by almost 30%) and a reduced lead time (by an average of 25%), as well as improved efficiency.

This has plenty of other knock-on advantages too. It aids [traceability](#), enabling manufacturers to guarantee and even enhance quality, protect themselves when an issue in the supply chain arises, and reduce their waste.

**By using scheduling software to track product progress, Bindatex has improved productivity by 30% and reduced lead times by 25%**





Make the purchase experiential

## Take the customer on a journey

Products are being integrated into consumers' lives through digital technologies – and both millennials and Gen Z expect nothing less, given that they're both so familiar with making purchases online. Large brands are employing tools to show us exactly why we should choose their kitchen, furniture or design over others. Augmented reality (AR) enables us to position products into our homes, view outfits, or plan layouts prior to buying.

For instance, with millennial powerhouse and cult brand MADE.com, you can digitally place furniture into your home to see it in situ before you make that all-important purchase. Even kitchen giant Wren allows you to view your particular design online, which puts them a head above their competitors. There's also leading textile manufacturer Panaz, who received support from Made Smarter. They implemented an end-to-end custom digital printing solution, which allows customers to tweak a design, receive a sample, and then place their final order.

Parity Medical has taken a similar approach with their virtual showroom. Together with Made Smarter, they identified an off-the-shelf software package which enables sales staff and customers to 'meet' online. As it also integrates with Parity Medical's existing administrative, sales and production systems, they've been able to cut their sales demonstration process down from two days to just one hour.

These are only a few examples – you can read about the benefits of AR in our [beginner's guide to augmented reality for manufacturers](#).



Parity Medical's virtual showroom has enabled them to cut their sales demonstration process down from two days to one hour.





Boost your sustainability credentials

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## Embrace the eco-friendly trend

Our final top tip to attract the younger generation is to demonstrate your eco-friendly practices, as this audience is generally more conscious about both their health and the health of the planet. What's more, the government has committed to ensuring that the UK becomes the first major economy to achieve net zero emissions.

Technology is crucial to this. Additive manufacturing increases efficiency by reducing lead times and extending a product's life cycle. Then there is predictive analysis via AI, which can identify inconsistencies and optimise production. And, of course, there's Digital Twin technology, which can help cut waste. A great example of this digital tool in action is aerospace manufacturer MSM aerospace fabricators – they used it to optimise the design and layout of their factory floor before the build. This resulted in the most efficient layout possible.




There's also big data. You can use this to precisely identify where emissions are produced, as well as how to either reduce or eradicate them altogether. It's just one of the tools we mention in our dedicated [guide to making your manufacturing business more sustainable](#).



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Supporting your digital journey

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## Support from Made Smarter

Now you know how to entice the younger generation through digital technologies, the next step is understanding how exactly to implement these tools. Made Smarter can help here.

Whether you need support through a [digital transformation workshop](#), match funding, or even hiring your own digital native through our [digital technology internships](#), we're happy to aid you on your journey to digital transformation.

To find out how we can help you make your operations smarter, [register on our website](#). It takes just a couple of minutes to sign up. One of our expert advisers will then be in touch to discuss your best route forward.



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