



WHITE PAPER

The Shift Towards Retention:

How to reduce staff turnover in UK Hospitality


planday
FROM XERO

in association with


THE BURNT CHEF
PROJECT



Foreword

Employing around [8% of the workforce](#) and contributing [£93bn annually to GDP](#), the hospitality industry is central to the UK economy. But it faces numerous challenges – most critically, the ability to attract and retain skilled staff. This is highlighted by the sector’s [112,000 unfilled vacancies](#). The problem is so widespread that [61% of UK businesses](#) are suffering from staff shortages, with 40% having to reduce opening hours to cope, which negatively impacts their bottom line. Even when managers can get workers on board, the challenge is not over, as around [30% of employees](#) leave a new hospitality job within 90 days of starting.

To better understand why, Planday commissioned research into the **habits and work priorities of 2,000 UK shift workers**, primarily in hospitality and focusing on **1,000 Gen Z employees** (aged 16-27). The results of the survey aim to help hospitality leaders understand why the industry has such a high churn rate and outline what they could do to keep their employees happy and motivated.

Our research found that many employees enter the industry with a positive mindset and that the vast majority would recommend a career in hospitality. But several factors are holding the sector back. Low pay, long shifts and a lack of control over rotas are issues that were repeatedly flagged.

More concerning for employers, **53% of respondents have plans to leave their current role** in the immediate future. And this figure is substantially higher in Gen Z employees (**57%**) than Gen X staff (**44%**).

Although we do not have all the answers, this report provides some low-cost solutions to addressing the staffing crisis. Managers can use its findings to identify the root causes of dissatisfaction and start providing better support to their teams.

Dave Lee

CEO, Planday

Research methodology

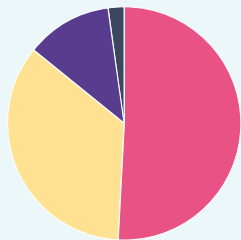
With a **focus on the hospitality sector**, our survey uncovered what motivates employees who rely on shifts. It explores working preferences, desired benefits, the challenges of working in the industry and what respondents expect from their employees and managers.

In January 2024, we surveyed **2,008 workers** across the hospitality, care and retail industries.

Industry split



Generational split



Our sample was made up of:

- 51% - **Gen Z** (age 16 - 27)
- 35% - **Millennial** (age 28 - 43)
- 12% - **Gen X** (age 44 - 59)
- 2% - **Baby Boomer** (age 60 - 69)

Hospitality split

- 59% of respondents work in hospitality **exclusively** (whether full time or part time)
- 12% of respondents work in hospitality **part time to supplement income** in another job
- 14% of respondents work in hospitality **part time to support themselves through education**
- 14% of respondents work in hospitality **part time due to other commitments** *
- 23% of our hospitality workers **have two jobs**

*childcare, caring for a relative etc.

Contents

1. What affects employees' happiness at work?
2. Hospitality's mental health epidemic
3. Tackling mental health stigma: The Burnt Chef Project
4. Clear career paths and progression motivate hospitality employees
5. Failing to plan is hurting businesses more than they realise
6. The long term impact of short-term planning
7. Understanding generational differences
8. The solution? Shift your mindset
9. Building a hospitality community: Countertalk
10. What hospitality bosses can do today to create happier working environments tomorrow

1.

What affects employees' happiness at work?

When employees first enter the hospitality industry, many join with the sense they can positively affect people's lives. In fact, when asked why they would recommend the industry one respondent stated, "how rewarding it is to know you're making a difference in someone's life."

But the positive sentiment quickly fades, with many employees feeling overlooked by their employers. For instance, less than half of respondents (**46%**) **feel fairly compensated for their role**. And employers are not taking advantage of non-financial rewards to boost morale, with only **47% happy with their employee benefits**, and **51% feeling valued and listened to by their employer**.

This is a deepening crisis, as one in seven hospitality workers would not recommend the industry as a career, primarily due to low pay (**66%**), long shifts or unsociable hours (**57%**) and a lack of control over rotas (**46%**). This combination of factors has a detrimental effect on employee happiness and job commitment and is why most employees in hospitality only stay in their position for an average of six months.

51%

of respondents plan to leave their current role in the immediate future

Employee responses provide clear guidance on how to lower churn, with **55% (unsurprisingly) stating that better pay** would keep them from leaving their role. Beyond financial incentives, other factors that could help make employees happier and keep them in their current job are a **better work/life balance (29%)** and **better career progression support (24%)**.

Work/life balance is something that Krzysztof Dudkowski, GM at the renowned Three Chimneys Restaurant, takes into account.

"We reward people for the work they've done. This is a huge hit - especially with the chefs. In other places, very often they'll get a fixed salary and work crazy, exhausting hours, in excess of 60 hours a week. We don't do that, and as a result we have a very happy team."

Read the whole article [here](#)



2.

Hospitality's mental health epidemic


A concerning trend that has developed within the hospitality industry is the poor mental health experienced by employees. Previous reports have found [4 out of 5 hospitality professionals have reported having at least one mental health issue](#) during their career. Unfortunately, this trend continues to grow.

85%

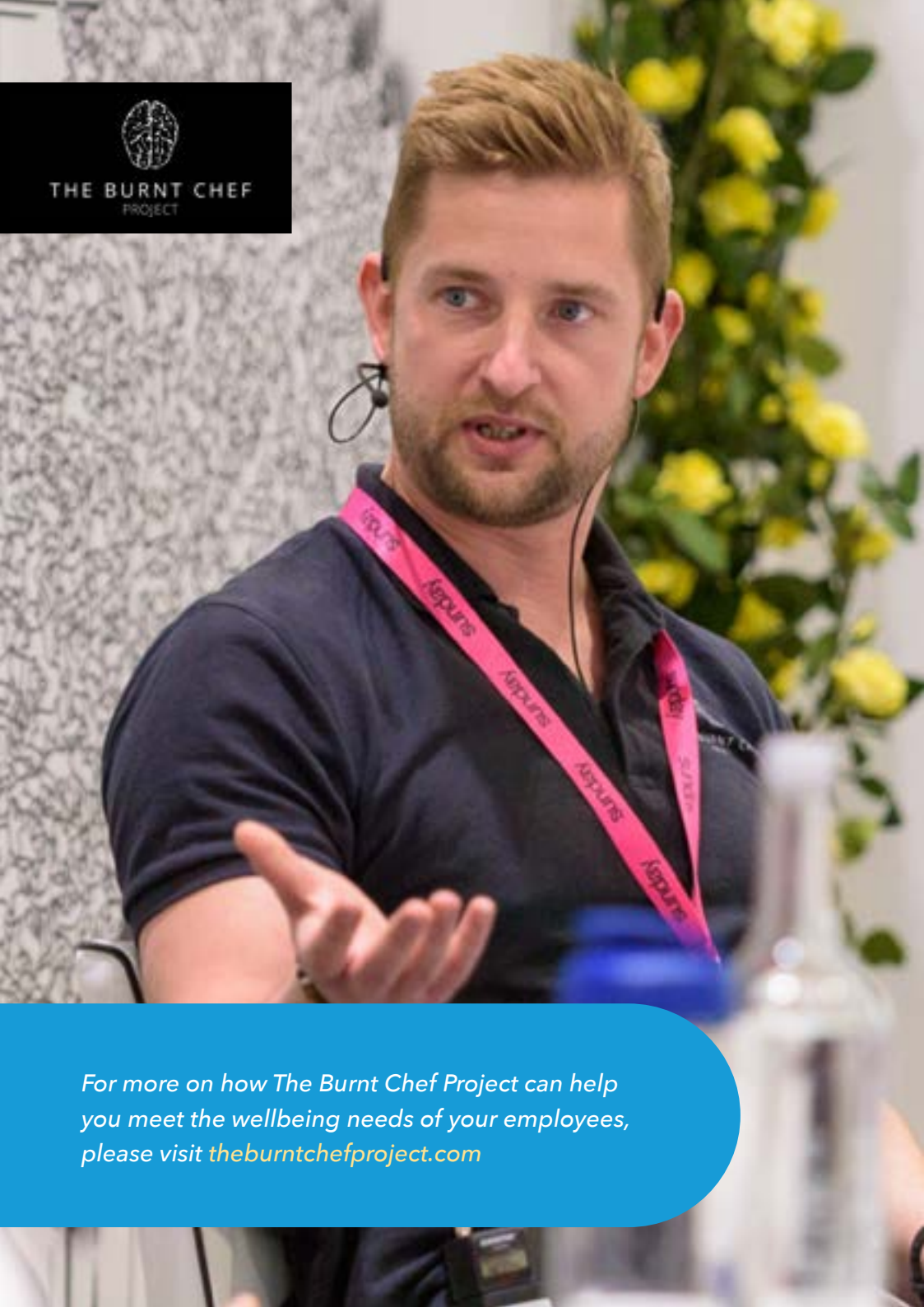
of hospitality employees experienced symptoms of poor mental health in the past 12 months, including depression, anxiety or stress.

Three factors drive this problem; **low pay (15%)**, a lack of **work/life balance (17%)** and **poor financial wellbeing (16%)**. While low pay can be harder to address, creating better environments for work/life balance and financial wellbeing are firmly in managers' control. Fixing these issues should be at the top of any agenda. Mental health support, for instance, is one of the most important workplace benefits to respondents (**31%**), behind only extra pay on bank holidays (**42%**) and free meals on shift (**32%**), but it is currently only available to **24%** of hospitality employees.

Our survey offered clear solutions to this problem. For instance, **36%** of workers state that better access to mental health support, along with weekend days off (**33%**) and more advanced planning through smarter rotas (**33%**) would significantly impact their wellbeing. By addressing these issues managers can go a long way to improving their staff's mental health.



% report that more advanced planning through smarter rotas would significantly impact their wellbeing



3.

Tackling mental health stigma: The Burnt Chef Project

Since 2019, The Burnt Chef Project has been tackling mental health stigma in the hospitality industry. It has provided mental health support to almost 4,400 people in the industry, conducted 15,600 health and wellbeing modules worldwide, reached 122 countries around the globe and trained over 140 chef ambassadors in mental health awareness.

The Burnt Chef Project aims to improve recruitment opportunities and reduce staff turnover by creating a culture of care and compassion through tools, services and education. Take The Burnt Chef diagnostic tool; it is designed to detect high levels of stress and burnout, and predict the associated costs. They also operate a free text-based service, available 24/7, to anyone in hospitality who wants to talk about their mental health, bullying, relationship problems and more.

On the findings of this report, The Burnt Chef Project founder Kris Hall commented: "It's no surprise that work/life balance and rota management feature highly on the top things that employees want to see from their workplace."

This report further confirms that mental health is being impacted by lack of work/life balance, long hours and below par communication. This is exacerbated by the skill gap shortage caused by high turnover leaving new managers with little time to develop skill sets around culture, performance, retention, career progression and advanced rota management to support their teams.

We don't believe in a blame culture for hospitality, but it does raise some interesting questions about what we need to do as an industry to create a healthy work environment that celebrates work/life balance, the importance of giving teams an opportunity to plan their life in advance with effective rota management and, ultimately, recognising the importance of health and wellbeing as one of the key components to a profitable and sustainable business model."

For more on how The Burnt Chef Project can help you meet the wellbeing needs of your employees, please visit theburntchefproject.com

4.

Clear career paths and progression motivate hospitality employees

Many employees in hospitality have their eyes firmly set on the future. Better managerial support on career progression is one of the top factors that would keep employees from leaving their current role.

45%

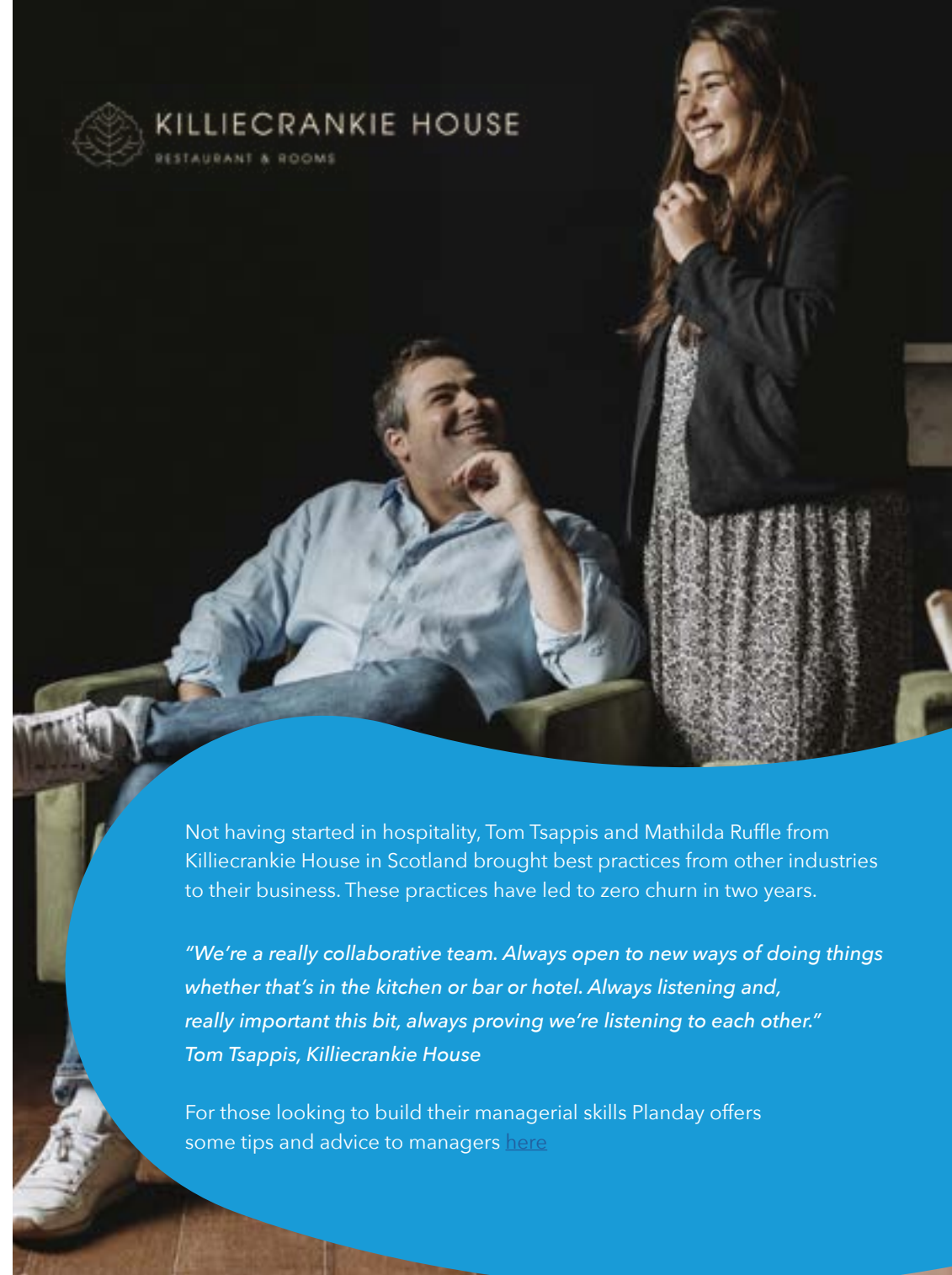
of employees feel they do not have a clear professional path or the training needed to progress to the next level.

This lack of support contributes to why so many hospitality workers regularly change jobs within the industry. In fact, 71% of people who feel they lack appropriate guidance to progress plan to leave their role in the immediate future. This compares to 45% of those who feel adequately supported. This could be driven by people looking for new experiences and managers who could offer them training. Unfortunately, due to this high churn, many people become managers at a much younger age than they might in other industries. Meaning many can feel out of their depth when it comes to managing staff.

Considering **31% of hospitality employees** felt that developing their own management capability was one of the most important skills to develop to progress their career, it is vital the industry does more to support current managers, especially as younger employees are promoted. This is becoming increasingly important as managers' roles extend beyond managing balance sheets, and morale, motivation and staff development become more of a focus.



KILLIECRANKIE HOUSE
RESTAURANT & ROOMS



Not having started in hospitality, Tom Tsappis and Mathilda Ruffle from Killiecrankie House in Scotland brought best practices from other industries to their business. These practices have led to zero churn in two years.

"We're a really collaborative team. Always open to new ways of doing things whether that's in the kitchen or bar or hotel. Always listening and, really important this bit, always proving we're listening to each other."

Tom Tsappis, Killiecrankie House

For those looking to build their managerial skills Planday offers some tips and advice to managers [here](#)

5. Failing to plan is hurting businesses more than they realise

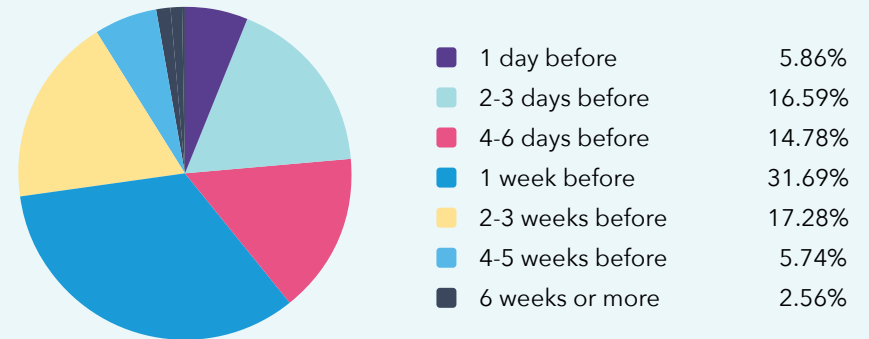
While higher pay would be enough to keep **53% of employees** in their current role, for a third of workers, another significant factor is the ability to strike a better work/life balance. At the moment, only **24% of employees get two consecutive days off** once every fortnight on average, with one in 10 only getting that every 2-3 months. By not being able to properly recover from work and relax, employees run the risk of burning out quicker.

67%

% of employees believe that having more notice of shift patterns would improve their life.

The lack of regular breaks demonstrates the importance managers need to start placing on non-financial benefits when trying to retain staff. For instance, **24% of workers** say clearer communication on rotas and more advanced notice on shifts would be enough to keep them in their current position. Being able to swap shifts more easily would be enough to keep **21%** from leaving their role. Businesses that fail to see the rising importance of this focus on work/life balance will start to lose out to those that do. A good work/life balance is the most important factor for **47% of employees** when looking for a new job - and **25%** demand regular working patterns in their role. Meaning they simply won't consider any hospitality business that doesn't offer this. But the vast majority of businesses are failing to plan ahead, with **69% of hospitality employees** only being given a week or less notice of their next shift pattern.

How far in advance do you hear about your next shift pattern?



This results in **56% of employees** having to cancel personal plans due to last-minute shift changes. The impact of poor planning goes beyond cancelling plans, with **51% of workers** stating unpredictable shift patterns mean they rarely know what their monthly take-home pay will be, and **53%** suffering from stress and anxiety due to not regularly knowing when they will be needed at work.

Despite the clear correlation between better planning of shifts and an improved work/life balance, many businesses still rely on outdated approaches to manage their staff's time. For example, paper rotas are still the most common channel managers use to communicate shift patterns to their staff. Likewise, 53% of hospitality workers rely on messaging platforms like WhatsApp to share availability with their managers.

These systems quickly become too complicated to manage as co-workers swap shifts between themselves. Likewise, information can become fragmented, with managers needing to draw information from messages, emails and in-person conversations as they develop the next schedule. Meaning important information, such as availability, can be easily missed, incorrect salary payments and managers spend more time processing admin rather than focusing on developing skills.

6. The long term impact of short-term planning

For employees, the impact of businesses failing to plan shifts ahead brings a wide range of problems. For instance, **50% report their family becomes stressed** as they don't know when they will be able to see each other next. And irregular shift patterns have kept 52% from taking up hobbies and exercise, which significantly affects their mental health. Over the last 12 months, **47% of workers** have experienced disturbed sleep, 44% felt anxious or worried, **42% burnt out** and **31% have reported symptoms of depression**. Clearly, by failing to plan ahead the hospitality industry, and individual businesses, are putting themselves at a disadvantage.

68%

of employees have considered switching to another industry due to the lack of notice on rotas and unpredictable shift patterns.

Being able to plan ahead more efficiently is quickly becoming an essential component of a successful hospitality business. Those that fail to do so will struggle to retain current staff as employees quickly become burnt out and frustrated with schedules that aren't accurate or fail to give them the flexibility to swap shifts.

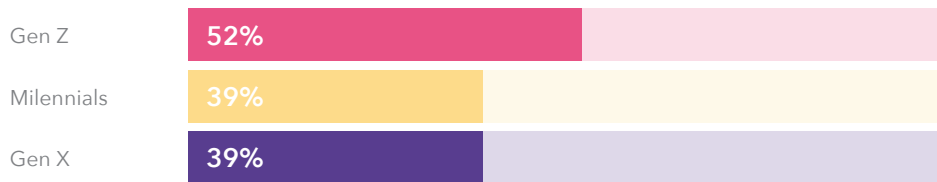
Likewise, managers' time is quickly absorbed as they spend time swapping shifts between workers, or trying to find cover last minute. Meaning they can't spend time doing the work they were actually hired to do. This can quickly lead to poor employee morale and engagement that leads to lower retention rates. Firms looking to avoid this need to find solutions that can address this issue if they are to thrive in the future.



50% report their family becomes stressed as they don't know when they will be able to see each other next.

7. Understanding generational differences

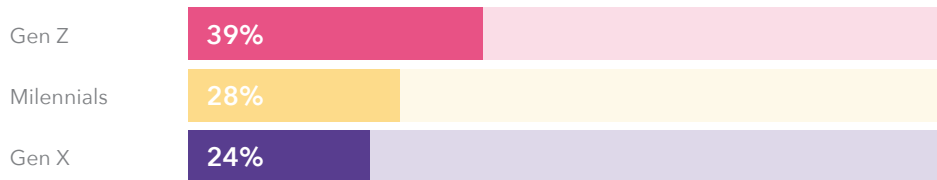
Comparing generations



Don't recommend hospitality job due to a lack of control over shifts.



Are planning to leave their current job in the immediate future



Want a clearer career progression in their roles

If they are to attract new, younger talent, managers must also pay close attention to generational differences. For example, **52% of Gen Z workers** wouldn't recommend a career in hospitality due to a lack of control over shifts, compared to only **39% of Millennials** and Gen X workers. Similarly, Gen Z workers put a greater focus on long-term careers, with **39% wanting clearer career progression** in their roles, compared to just **24% of Gen X** and **28% of Millennials**. This means managers will need to spend more time with younger workers to ensure they understand what skills they should be developing, and what steps will take them to the next level.

Businesses that fail to accept these generational changes will be punished by younger workers, as they are willing to switch jobs to get what they want. In fact, **57% of Gen Z employees** are planning to leave their current role in the immediate future, compared with **44% of Gen X** and **17% of Baby Boomers**.

Many businesses are failing to react to the changing demands of the workforce. While **85% of Baby Boomers** feel valued in their role, this drops to just **49% for Gen Z** employees. And only **52% of Millennials** and **47% of Gen X** think they are valued at work. This is reflected in the benefits packages, with 67% of Baby Boomers happy with what's on offer and only **49% of Gen Z** satisfied with their current package. Sadly, it seems this is unlikely to change soon, as only **44% of Gen Z** employees think their boss listens to them, compared with **72% of Baby Boomers**.

Despite young workers aged 16-24 making up around half of the hospitality workforce, many businesses overlook their needs, and focus on a minority of older employees who may be in more senior positions. **This means hospitality businesses need to change how they plan and operate shifts.** They also need to develop programmes to manage employees' long-term career goals in the sector if they want to attract the best talent available.

8.

The solution? Shift your mindset

Hospitality businesses are facing some of their most turbulent times. As owners contend with a poor economic environment, staff shortages and high rates of churn, combined with a workforce that is increasingly feeling the pressures of the job, it can feel like they have nowhere to turn to for help. But there is light at the end of the tunnel, that brings positive results without relying on spending more money. For example, embracing staff's personal lives. Doing this will enable managers to offer their team the personalised support and guidance they need to progress their careers while providing them time for friends and family, too.

As part of this shift, businesses need to move from outdated planning methods to modern tools that allow them to be flexible, dynamic and resilient when it comes to managing their workforce.

Embracing new technology can help businesses address underlying issues, and help manage employees better so that everyone can go away happy.

For example, **68% of employees** would regularly use a mobile app that allows them to make shift changes and stay on top of their rota and pay. Not only would this make it easier for staff to manage their time, it would also benefit managers.

For instance, such an app could keep all communication in a central place, meaning important updates are not missed. It could also reduce the time required to create new rotas from hours of work to a few clicks. Meaning staff can focus on more important business areas.

Not only would smarter rotas help staff manage their time better, **33%** believe more advanced planning would lead to a direct improvement in overall wellbeing. It would make it easier for managers to ensure staff regularly get weekend days off (which **33%** of respondents believe would improve wellbeing in the workplace) or give staff consecutive days off (which would improve workplace wellbeing for **26%**).

68%

of employees would regularly use a mobile app that allows them to make shift changes and stay on top of their rota and pay.

By modernising and automating staff scheduling, managers can also begin investing in their staff more. For instance, only **54% of workers** have a line manager who gives them regular appraisals. By spending less time on shift planning managers can instead focus on their team, ensuring they are developing the skills they need to thrive in the hospitality industry.



Planday's technology is designed to help you get ahead. [Watch a video tour](#) here to see how or [get in touch](#) today for a free demo.

9.

Building a hospitality community: Countertalk

Countertalk is a community founded to help find, share and support great hospitality businesses. It is their mission to promote and highlight healthy work environments, connect people and engage in meaningful actions to improve the industry.

Countertalk helps promote the best jobs in the industry, typically only posting the top 3%. Each advertisement is reviewed to ensure it meets their carefully considered criteria and follows Countertalk's guidelines of a healthy working environment. They are also building a community that keeps in touch with how workers are doing and operates industry events to bring employees together.

"While improving pay rates and shift length is at the mercy of business models and market conditions, giving staff the opportunity to plan their lives with plenty of notice is entirely within our control. We expect flexibility from our staff in the day-to-day, we should be offering it in return."

Max Coltart, Head of Partnerships
at Countertalk (and freelance chef).



Countertalk

10.

What hospitality bosses can do today to create happier working environments tomorrow

Something in hospitality has to shift. Retaining teams is a more efficient and economic strategy than hiring new. As we have seen, retention does not just need better compensation. Feeling valued through career progression, mental wellbeing and a better work/life balance rates almost as highly as pay. Which is great news for an industry struggling with costs.



68 % of employees have considered switching to another industry due to lack of planning

What practical actions can businesses take that will really shift the dial on their retention?

Improve mental wellbeing support:

85% of respondents have suffered with mental health problems in the past 12 months, but only **24%** have access to support in the workplace. The Burnt Chef Project offers free help, resources and a 24/7 helpline. They also have a sentiment diagnostic tool that will allow you to assess your organisational risks and associated costs.

Create progression plans for all employees:

71% of people who feel they lack appropriate guidance to reach the next level plan to leave their role in the immediate future. In an industry which is promoting younger, less experienced employees, it's vital they receive one-to-one coaching and training. [Planday's resource centre](#) contains various articles from experts in the industry including how to effectively train and retain staff.

Plan rosters further ahead:

68% of employees have considered switching to another industry due to lack of planning, yet **69%** only get a week or less notice of their next shift. Such a small change in approach could positively impact half of all employee lives in terms of time with loved ones, hobbies, exercise and mental wellbeing.

Use technology to work across generations:

68% of employees state that they would make regular use of a mobile app that allows them to make shift changes and stay on top of their rota and pay. Such technology would also free up managers to take care of the other recommendations in this report.

If you want to explore any of the issues raised in this report, [get in touch](#) for guidance on how you can keep your employees happy, engaged and motivated in their work.

Ready to make your big shift?

For more actionable tips on how to make your hospitality team happier, visit planday.com/articles and follow us on social media.



Smarter scheduling and employee management

Book a call and see how you can save 80% on staff admin by using Planday.

[Book a demo](#)

planday
FROM XERO

TURNING OVER
STAFF INSTEAD
OF TABLES?

YEAH.

YOU'RE GONNA NEED

planday
FOR THAT.

Create schedules for work - and life

Quickly build schedules that take into account your team's lives and your business's needs.

Shift control back

Let your team swap shifts with each other, apply for open shifts, or sell shifts to their colleagues - through an easy-to-use app.

Stay on the same page

Provide your team with a centralised, secure communication platform and up to date with what's happening at work.

Open for work

Let your team mark their availability, so you'll always know who can (or can't) work.

Ready to give a shift?

Visit planday.com

Trustpilot
★★★★★

