



FELINE SOFT
Part of ClearCourse



**10 MEMBERSHIP
MUST-HAVES FOR
ATTRACTING THE
NEXT GENERATION**

IMAGINE. THINK. BUILD.

20 Years of Digital Solutions for Membership and Charity.



CONTENTS

Introduction **3**

Member value **5**

- 1 A deep understanding of your audience 6
- 2 A clearly articulated purpose 7
- 3 A valuable and relevant proposition 8

Membership models and fees **9**

- 4 Flexible membership tiers and subscriptions 10

Personalisation **11**

- 5 A plan to play where your members play 12
- 6 Platform-appropriate, relevant content 13
- 7 Personalised member journeys 14

Member experience **15**

- 8 A seamless omnichannel experience 16
- 9 Platforms that deliver on your members' needs 17

Technology **18**

- 10 The right tech stack 19



INTRODUCTION



10 MEMBERSHIP MUST-HAVES FOR ATTRACTING THE NEXT GENERATION

Membership organisations often have a long and proud history, and much of that early purpose stands the test of time – sharing and developing knowledge, setting standards and connecting like-minded people.

However, times change, and today, your potential members have endless options for connection and knowledge sharing.

The challenge facing every membership organisation has become establishing genuine relevancy and value for potential members of today – and tomorrow.

Of course, this challenge isn't news. However, the past few years have seen membership organisations struggle with the 'how'. Change can be difficult, and many organisations haven't laid the foundations to cater for the next generation of membership.

What's needed now is solutions. The first step in finding those solutions is a true understanding of the younger generation.

Generation Z – Gen Z or 'zoomers' – are those born between 1997 and 2012, and they're a different proposition to the generations before; they're the first digital natives.

They're hyper-connected and hyper-aware, and research shows they're driven by individualism and strong ethics, while craving support and community. →



Driven by individualism

Gen Z expects flexible and hyper-personalised experiences.



Craving community

Access to micro-communities is important, and the online/offline boundaries are no more.



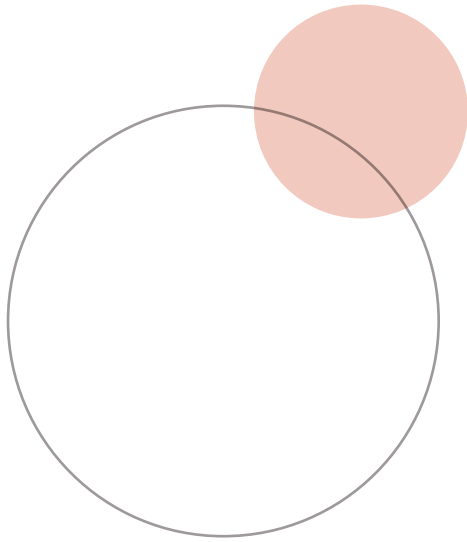
Apprehensive about the future

Gen Z is concerned about what lies ahead, making guidance, support and learning essential.



Hungry for change – today!

Impatient and ideological, Gen Z has a desire to see innovation, progress and impact.



INTRODUCTION



10 MEMBERSHIP MUST-HAVES FOR ATTRACTING THE NEXT GENERATION

- ➔ They're concerned about the future and need lifelong learning, and they are hungry for change, too.

For membership organisations to thrive in the future, the rule book on member engagement and proposition needs to be rewritten. Best-in-class thinking, powered by best-in-class technology, is needed to fuel the organisations that will flourish in the future.

Over the course of this ebook, we delve into 10 membership must-haves for attracting, engaging and retaining the next generation, giving you clarity about the path ahead, the obstacles you face, and how to overcome them.

We think of the challenges facing membership organisations within the context of four groups – member value, membership fees and subscriptions, personalisation, and member experience. Identify and solve the challenges in each group, and the future state becomes clear and achievable.





MEMBER VALUE

Before a prospective member even comes onto your radar, you'll be on theirs. And the thing that Gen Z will be evaluating you on is your value. The value you can offer them, and the value you're offering the wider world.

If these two aspects align with their values, motivation and personal ambitions, you might be given the opportunity to engage further. So it's essential that what you believe, what you stand for, and what you offer is clearly communicated from the outset.

But before you can ensure what you're offering will resonate, you have to understand what makes them tick – and that begins with collecting and aggregating your member data.



A deep understanding of your audience



Only 35% of associations conduct any research with their members¹

While generalised research – including the common features of Gen Z that we shared in the introduction to this ebook – is fine to provide a base-level understanding of the next generation, it is just that – base level.

As a membership organisation, it's imperative you deeply understand what your members want, what their challenges are, and how you can help. This will differ from generation to generation, of course, but will also differ based on other factors – potentially including the type of role they're currently in, their location and their career aspirations.

There's no better way of doing this than conducting your own research – regularly. Currently, only 35% of associations conduct regular membership research – meaning 65% are second-guessing.¹

By carrying out an annual survey, for example – of both current and prospective members – you can better understand your audience. You'll understand the competition you face to gain their attention, and how you can be of maximum value, too. While the right technology – such as an integrated CRM and website – can enable you to capture data and understand member interests, preferences, and user journeys.

This information can also be used to build detailed individual personas to deliver absolute relevancy and a stellar experience too – but more on that later.



ACTION: COLLECT AND COLLATE MEMBER DATA

- Send a regular survey to current members (and also to prospective members) through social media targeting and/or other methods of direct distribution (such as email and through partner organisations).
- Review the tools at your disposal to collect the data you need to understand what motivates your members and what matters to them.

A clearly articulated purpose



92% of GenZ members say they need to share values with a brand to associate with it³

As a cohort, Gen Z has been through significant experiences in their relatively short lives. As well as being brought up during a time of seismic change from a connectivity perspective – a deeply unregulated internet exposing many to experiences previous generations were protected from at a younger age – they’ve already lived through the impacts of the global financial crisis, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.

A greater access to information – albeit both real and fake – has shaped strongly held views and increased awareness of issues affecting the world around us. This plays out in a number of ways, including the brands and organisations Gen Z choose to associate themselves with.

They relate to brands that can talk openly and transparently.² A vast majority of Gen Z – 92% – say they need to share values with a brand to be associated with it³, while 90% are concerned with social issues⁴, and expect brands to demonstrate purpose beyond profit⁵. For membership organisations to successfully connect with Gen Z in the first place, that purpose has to be clear.

Having internal clarity around your mission and vision doesn’t guarantee this purpose is being effectively articulated to existing and prospective members. It’s also worth considering that Gen Z is less likely to be familiar with your organisation and its objectives due to their relative inexperience.



ACTION: COMMUNICATE YOUR MISSION AND VISION

- Step into the shoes of existing and prospective members and review your positioning. Is it clear what you stand for? Is your purpose relevant for today and the future?
- Create a mission and purpose statement that speaks to your members, and especially emerging generations. Alternatively, review your current statement to ensure it does.
- Communicate it widely across and beyond the organisation, and ensure it’s embedded in your marketing and communications.

2 Gen Z: More human, more caring, more sharing (cim.co.uk) [↗](#)

3 Gen Z’s deep-rooted value for brand purpose means new KPIs for marketers (edelman.com) [↗](#)

4 Cash-strapped Gen Z expect brands to demonstrate purpose beyond profit as new research finds that 90% are concerned with social issues (dentsu.com) [↗](#)

5 Cash-strapped Gen Z expect brands to demonstrate purpose beyond profit as new research finds that 90% are concerned with social issues (dentsu.com) [↗](#)

A valuable and relevant proposition



Only 58% of membership organisations feel their value proposition is 'compelling'⁸

While Gen Z is motivated by the wider impact of an organisation, that doesn't mean to say that they're not focused on what they personally get out of engagement, too.

Financial insecurity is a major concern for Gen Z.⁶ This means that anything they decide to invest in will be a considered purchase, and must be worthwhile for them. They'll seek out the best prices, but aren't willing to compromise on quality⁷, meaning what you offer has to be cost-effective, and must deliver on expectation. Given that a consideration phase is likely to be involved, it's important to clearly and transparently convey the value proposition to them. This isn't something they'll do because the generation before did, or they feel it's 'the done thing'.

Gen Z are the first true digital natives and are accustomed to immediate access to a wide array of free resources via the internet. Which makes it especially important that the benefits you offer are tangible, valuable and worthwhile – and have the capacity to enhance their professional and personal lives. In an age where it is increasingly difficult to verify information sources and distinguish between fact and AI-generated fiction, the good news is that membership organisations are particularly well-placed to provide much needed guidance and support.

While a strong member value proposition is essential in attracting and retaining all members – whatever their age – recent research suggests that only 58% of membership organisations believe their value proposition is 'compelling'.⁸ Unsurprisingly, the survey also found that those organisations that had seen an increase in membership numbers and renewals were significantly more likely to report having a compelling proposition.



ACTION: REVIEW YOUR MEMBER VALUE PROPOSITION

- Combine survey and engagement data to understand what your members value, by segment.
- Use this understanding to review your current proposition. Do the two match up? If not, consider updating your proposition to make it more competitive and convincing.
- Ensure your value proposition is clearly articulated and shared through the right channels (more on that later).
- Segment members by engagement levels. Gently encourage people who aren't getting maximum use from their membership and remind those who are of the value they're receiving.

6 2024 Gen Z and Millennial Survey: Living and working with purpose in a transforming world (deloitte.com) [↗](#)

7 The picky buying habits of Gen Z consumers (bbc.com) [↗](#)

8 2024 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report [↗](#)



MEMBERSHIP MODELS AND FEES

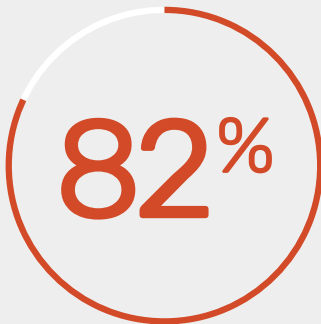
Payments are often overlooked as a hygiene factor. In fact, both the membership fee structure and the payments experience should form a key component of your acquisition and retention strategy. Perceived value and fees are inextricably linked, but the subscription model itself can also influence member perceptions of value.

As we've discovered, spending is often deeply considered by Gen Z, and their dollars have to be earned. However, this is a digital native generation that is well-accustomed to alternative ways of engaging with brands and businesses – ways that reduce risk, and often put the onus on the business to keep delivering value.

For membership organisations, this requires lateral thinking and potentially a move away from the traditional. Offering flexible membership models can allow members to select the level that suits them – making membership more accessible and valuable to diverse audiences.



Flexible membership tiers and subscriptions



82% of people in the UK are signed up to a subscription box service⁹

Many of us use subscription services. From Netflix to Spotify, Hello Fresh to Graze, we're very used to subscribing to a service for little to no commitment. In fact, 82% of people in the UK are signed up to subscription boxes⁹, while two thirds are signed up to subscription streaming platforms¹⁰.

Regardless, subscriptions are part of how we, as consumers, buy. A monthly subscription model could be incredibly effective in attracting new members and retaining existing ones. Rather than just offering the option of an annual membership fee, an ongoing, monthly subscription fee removes a barrier to entry (commitment) and takes away a decision in 12 months' time, which can significantly reduce member attrition.

It is also worth noting that associations reporting increases in membership numbers – and especially those with rates at or above 80% – more often use a tiered membership structure than those reporting declines in the same areas.¹¹ Gen Z members are also more likely to experience financial instability than their older counterparts. Offering affordable entry-level membership with the option to switch to more expensive tiers as their needs change and careers develop could prove an attractive proposition.

You could even explore a radical approach – such as offering a free entry-level membership, with additional paid tiers offering more valuable benefits. Or maybe your members would value the ability to switch certain benefits on and off, as desired, with the membership fee rising or falling correspondingly? Of course, this requires a change in business model. However, if the data suggests it could deliver value and relevance to your members, it's worth exploring within your organisation, and perhaps testing with a small cohort before potentially rolling out across the organisation.



ACTION: ASSESS YOUR MEMBERSHIP MODEL

- Use your member data to identify patterns. Do different segments appear to put greater value in certain benefits? Are you seeing patterns of non-renewal or poor acquisition amongst certain demographics?
- If the data warrants further exploration, carry out an exercise to map out tiered membership options, offering varied benefits at each level to cater to diverse interests and budgets.
- Test these draft tiers to see if they could add value – both internally via financial and behavioural modelling, and externally by surveying your members.
- Consider offering a test group access to tiers of membership. Learn from that experience, and then roll it out more broadly.

9 [81% of UK households are signed up to subscription services \(whistl.co.uk\)](https://whistl.co.uk)

10 [TV streaming statistics: The most popular streaming services in the UK \(finder.com\)](https://finder.com)

11 [2024 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report](#)



PERSONALISATION

Whereas in previous generations people may have conformed to structures that were already established, Gen Z want to break the mould. They champion their individual differences, attributes and goals, and want businesses to recognise them as individuals, too – not as part of a singular group.

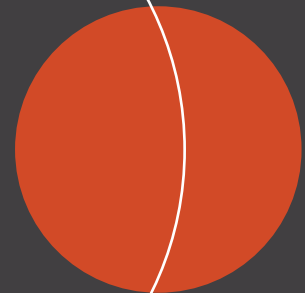
Of course, regardless of the generation you belong to, we all enjoy a more personalised experience.

A named welcome at a hotel check-in, an email with personalised offers from a favourite brand or a birthday discount code all provoke a favourable response and heighten our appreciation of a brand. The difference is that Gen Z expects it as default.

Stats show that 58% of membership organisations don't personalise the online experiences they're delivering to members¹², meaning they risk providing irrelevant information to a generation that expects hyper-personalisation.

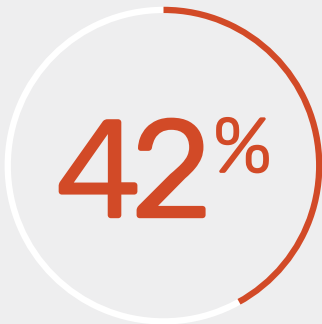
For a membership organisation, understanding individual members' motivations, career aims, strengths and weaknesses enables the delivery of more targeted, relevant services.

But before you can deliver meaningful personalised member journeys, you need to know what content will hit the mark, and which channels should be used to deliver it.



12 Digital Excellence 2023-24 report
(memberwise.co.uk)

5 A plan to play where your members play



Only 42% of membership organisations personalise their online experience for users¹²

Your audience – your prospective and current members – can't be looked at as one large homogenous group.

While a common interest provides some connection, that's where the similarities end. Long gone are the days of a generic monthly magazine and a generic weekly newsletter cutting it. To attract and engage the next generation, your communication strategy has to be far more tailored than that – and the first step is to know where your audience is.

For example, 'zoomers' (Gen Z) in the UK prefer to get their news from social media¹³, and prefer Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat to other social channels.¹⁴ They use social media to search, too – believing organic search engine results are anything but.

While you're likely to find that social media is an important channel – especially for reaching younger members – your investigation shouldn't stop there. Review member engagement with every channel you currently use to understand which perform the best for each segment, as well as those that are falling flat.

Explore adding new channels to the mix if the ones you're using aren't cutting it or there are clear gaps between where you and your members are spending time. More on this in the next section.



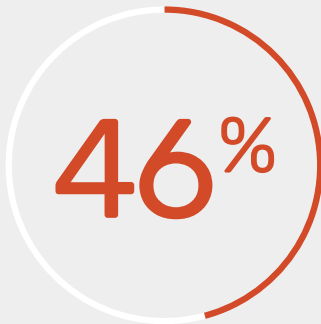
ACTION: CREATE PERSONAS & MAP USER JOURNEYS

- Conduct research on your members and map out key user journeys at a high level. Where do they spend their time? Through which channels are they most likely to engage with you?
- Use this information – as well as the survey and behavioural data you've already collected – to develop personas for each of your audience segments.
- Track engagement metrics (such as open rates, click-through rates, and platform visits) to assess channel performance and validate your personas.

13 [Light-hearted news on social media drawing Gen Z away from traditional sources \(ofcom.org.uk\)](https://www.ofcom.org.uk)

14 [How Different Age Groups Are Using Social Media 2024 \(targetinternet.com\)](https://www.targetinternet.com)

Platform-appropriate, relevant content



46% of UK GenZers have abandoned a brand when they got 'bored' with it

If you need any confirmation that you need to reach your audience with interesting, engaging and relevant content – on the platforms they choose to use – then consider this. Almost half of UK Gen Zers (46%) and 29% of other generations have abandoned a brand they were once loyal to because they grew 'bored' of them.¹⁵

That's right – even if they were once loyal. If you get stale, if you're not delivering the content and information that your audience wants to receive right now, you run the risk of becoming irrelevant.

Planning is key here, and a robust strategy that maps out the channels and platforms you use to connect your current and prospective membership – and the top-level content themes your audience will connect with – is needed.


However, research shows that just 27% of member associations have a digital strategy in place¹⁶, while 40% don't measure member engagement.¹⁷




ACTION: DEVELOP A CHANNEL & CONTENT STRATEGY

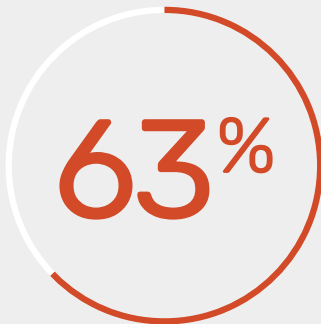
- Use the personas you have developed from your member research to plot out a digital strategy that combines the types of information and content your members and prospective members want from you with the channels they most frequently use.
- Create a content calendar that outlines what you're publishing, where and when, and then measure the results you get, and evolve based on engagement and response.
- Tailor content formats for each platform and channel to maximise engagement and value for members.

¹⁵ From bland loyalty to brand loyalty: nearly half of Gen Z abandon brands that become boring (news.sap.com) 

¹⁶ Digital Excellence 2023–24 report (memberwise.co.uk) 

¹⁷ Digital Excellence 2023–24 report (memberwise.co.uk) 

Personalised member journeys



63% of member organisations have no suitable data system to allow member segmentation

In the past, many membership organisations have been guilty of focusing on acquisitions. Get them signed up, let them choose their own path, and hope come renewal time they'll sign up again.

If members were lucky, they may receive communications based on an area of speciality, but in many cases members received the same info on the basis that they were, well, all members.

That's not going to cut it with Gen Z. They will join you because they see purpose and benefit – and you need to help them achieve that.

By the time a new member has signed on the proverbial dotted line, you should know a lot about them. It's important to harness this, and continually collect data at appropriate points to supplement it.

When you collect all your data in one centralised system, it can be segmented and analysed, so tailored and relevant information and services can be delivered – helping you guide each individual member to meet their own aspirations and expectations. However, 63% of member organisations don't have the system integration to support this currently – meaning another big opportunity to stand out from the crowd.



ACTION: OPTIMISE MEMBER JOURNEYS

- Review your CRM to ensure it can give you everything you need in terms of data collection and analysis.
- Map out key journeys with specific user goals in mind, such as submitting a new member application. For each stage of the journey, identify the goals, needs, touchpoints, and quality of experience.
- Assess each stage to identify opportunities to add value through automated delivery of personalised content or communications. For example, consider sending a timely and personalised email summarising membership benefits for a prospect that abandoned their application to join.
- Use your CRM to segment audiences based on behaviour, interests, and engagement levels. Employ marketing automation to deliver personalised messaging to guide people through the user journey.



MEMBER EXPERIENCE

A decade or so ago, user experience (UX) was often an expensive afterthought in digital projects. Today, it's fundamental. Delivering a seamless member experience across digital and in-person formats is essential in driving engagement and satisfaction.

From webinars to conferences, social media to learning, the experience delivered needs to be consistent, and of exceptional quality to attract and retain an audience who likely don't have the feeling of duty towards your organisation that older generations had.

For Gen Z, membership organisations need to prove their value and worth – and central to that is member experience.



A seamless omnichannel experience

As digital natives, Gen Z expect seamless and immediate access to things they've bought¹⁸ – so waiting even a few hours, never mind days, for a purchase to arrive in their inbox, or membership to be confirmed simply won't cut it.

Likewise, a seamless digital to 'real life' – omnichannel – experience is the expectation today. Think of a retail store. Whether we're shopping online or in-store, we expect consistency. We expect to be able to return items purchased in-store online, and vice versa. The same thinking should be applied here.

Central to this is not only a consistency in terms of presentation – branding, tone of voice and look and feel – but also data and knowledge. Quality levels have to transcend virtual and physical boundaries, and central to this is your online presence.

In a modern membership organisation, your website is no longer a brochure for your organisation. It is the beating heart of your organisation. It is the place where members will get the most value from their membership – either directly from resources, or indirectly through finding events and forming connections.

Data can power a personalised experience for each member, and the harsh reality is that a substandard website simply won't do. Gen Z are digital natives, they know what bad, average, good and great online experiences look like – and if an organisation wants to earn the trust and belief of the next generation, its online presence has to stand up.



ACTION: **CREATE A SEAMLESS EXPERIENCE**

- Ensure cross-platform consistency by aligning branding, messaging, and functionality across channels.
- Focus on easy navigation, vibrant and engaging visuals, fast loading speed and easy access to resources.
- Use analytics to track member journeys across channels and identify drop-off points and engagement opportunities.
- Review your data architecture to identify data silos and opportunities to unify data across platforms and channels.

18 [Gen Z Purchasing Behavior: Shaping the Future of Retail and E-commerce \(neurolaunch.com\)](https://neurolaunch.com)

Platforms that deliver on your members' needs

Your website should be at the heart of your organisation. However, there are a whole host of other platforms that can add value to your members' every day and help them get the most out of their membership.

For example, a membership app can help you provide quick access to resources and connections, while a member portal where they can manage their accounts and access learning can be hugely valuable. Online communities are increasingly important for member organisations, with adoption increasing for the past six consecutive years.¹⁹

Social media, meanwhile, can be an exceptionally effective member service tool, responding to queries and solving problems. WhatsApp, too, is increasingly being used by businesses for customer service.

The key thing here is understanding what your members want. Don't assume they want WhatsApp member service, or an app to access resources. Ask them if they'd find it useful, and what they'd like included. Validate this by cross-referencing with data that tells you how they're actually using platforms. Who knows, you may well stumble upon something you'd never considered too strongly before!



ACTION: AUDIT AND OPTIMISE YOUR PLATFORMS

- Audit platforms regularly to ensure they're meeting current member needs and expectations.
- Survey your members about the platforms they use and how they'd like to interact with you. Gather feedback on usability and accessibility to guide updates and improvements.
- Integrate essential tools and resources directly into platforms to streamline access and boost engagement with key content and services.



TECHNOLOGY

Perhaps unsurprisingly, key to powering the membership organisation of the future – one that can naturally and seamlessly connect with and deliver value to members – is technology.

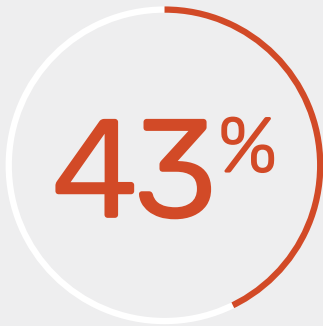
Technology underpins almost everything we do nowadays, but not all organisations are equipped to get the most of out of it. By connecting with the right tech partner and adopting a sophisticated approach to how you use your technology, you can ensure you deliver against Gen Z expectations by focusing on the areas that will add value to your members' experience.

Through this, you not only provide members with an experience that exceeds their expectations and remains something they are proud to be a part of, but you also enable your organisation to grow and invest funds where they matter most.



MEMBERSHIP
MUST-HAVE

10 The right tech stack



43% of membership organisations have no key system and process automations in place²⁰

It's fairly predictable that technology lies at the heart of being able to connect digital natives to a membership organisation – however, it's impossible to deliver immediacy, relevancy, and exceptional value without it.

Your choice of technology is perhaps the most important aspect altogether, as it powers everything we've mentioned so far. From a powerful CRM that serves as a single source of truth, to marketing automation software that delivers the right information to the right people at the right time, to payments software capable of effectively and efficiently processing member payments. However, 43% of membership organisations don't have key system and process automations in place, while only 8% are using AI-driven automations.²⁰ This highlights a major opportunity.

Embedding new systems, technology, and ways of working is a significant task – particularly as the day-to-day doesn't stop – which is why it's helpful to partner with experts that understand the membership sector's unique challenges. They can help you identify the biggest opportunities for change, implement technology and processes, and measure and learn – building business cases for the stages that follow.



ACTION: FIND THE RIGHT PARTNER

→ Get expert advice from a specialist tech company experienced in membership organisations to ensure you get the very best outcome.



FELINE SOFT

Part of ClearCourse

Felinesoft has more than 20 years of experience designing and building operational and digital solutions for some of the UK's largest membership organisations.

Our team is passionate about tech, yet as a business, we remain people-focused. We get to know our client's organisations; understanding them, their priorities, their pain points and their people.

Through this insight we guide our clients through the process of implementing new technologies that will deliver real value – empowering their people, powering up their productivity and future-proofing their organisations.

OUR FRAMEWORK

The Felinesoft Microsoft Dynamics 365 Framework has been creating solutions for some of the UK's biggest names in business and membership for over 20 years. Our team combines their passions for tech and people, helping to guide our clients through the process of implementing new technologies that deliver real value; empowering their people, powering up their productivity and future proofing their organisations.

OUR APPROACH

Our unique building-block approach ensures efficient, future-proof solutions that enable our clients to attain and exceed their most ambitious goals across all our key areas:

- CRM
- Website solutions
- Web and mobile apps
- Digital consultancy
- Embedded member subscriptions

WHO WE'VE WORKED WITH

airmic

APM Association for Project Management

bacp | counselling changes lives

ciar.b.

THE KENNEL CLUB

The Royal Society of Medicine

GET IN TOUCH

Interested in learning more about any aspect of attracting Gen Z to your organisation? Get in touch with the team today.

sales@felinesoft.com / 0117 325 1902

felinesoft.com