

MARKETING TO MILLENNIALS

Why Generation Y Would Buy From You

an eBook from



Millennials, or members of “Generation Y,” are the last group of individuals born in the twentieth century. Young, with a hunger for monetary success, they possess an aptitude for technology that allows them to quickly adapt to a constantly changing world. Do your marketing messages appeal to this innovative generation?



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Introduction

Generation Y refers to the generational cohort born between 1981 and 2000.

Members of Gen Y, also called Millennials for their place as the final generation born in the twentieth century, came into the world as interactive technologies were becoming commonplace. Exposure to websites, smartphones, and apps at very early ages provided Millennials immediate access to information that previous generations could not easily obtain.

Widespread internet access made Millennials the first generational cohort known for being “always

connected.”¹ The ability to be online constantly made multi-tasking part of the Millennial culture. Case in point: the average Millennial spends more than five hours on social media every day, usually while doing other things.²

By allowing Millennials the electronic means to communicate—and to consume—easily from anywhere and at any time, interactive technology has created an expectation for instant gratification among many Gen Y members.

In addition to technology, periods of economic uncertainty have also heavily influenced Generation Y.

During the Great Recession, when jobs were scarce, Millennials flocked to higher education programs searching for in-demand skills that would lead to better career opportunities. The resulting growth in college enrollment put Millennials on track to becoming the most educated generation in American history.³

Armed with their university degrees, working Millennials tend to enjoy above-average incomes and, thus, the financial means for active consumer spending. By understanding how to appeal to this intelligent and tech-savvy generation, you'll be able to reach Millennials with your marketing messages—in the ways they want you to—when they're ready to buy.



Equality Advocates

For Millennials, diversity is something to celebrate, and they're a force pushing America toward greater equality.



Following the lead set by their Baby Boomer ancestors, Millennials are active fighters in the battle for equal rights. As part of a highly diverse generation, Gen Yers welcome and expect inclusion, both in their personal and professional lives.⁴

Gender equality is at the forefront of many Millennial minds. Their parents and grandparents—who are most likely members of the Baby Boomer generation—have long challenged traditional gender roles while pushing for female inclusion at work. Piggybacking on those efforts, Millennials are fighting for equal pay among men and women who do the same work, and they are slowly making inroads in lessening the gender wage gap.⁵

Not only are Millennials striving to eliminate inequality among sexes, but they are also pushing to eradicate barriers to racial equality. Forty three percent of Millennials are minorities, making the generation the most racially diverse in American history.⁶ As a result, mixed-race relationships and families are far more common among Millennials than in prior generations.



Gen Y is also interested in LGBTQ equality—a civil rights issue not widely embraced by previous generations. Among Millennials, 70 percent support same-sex marriage, significantly higher than the approval ratings reported by older generations.⁷ Millennials are open about their sexual orientations, and most are likely to personally know someone who is homosexual. The resulting acceptance helped sway overall public support for same-sex marriage nationally and drove successful legalization efforts.⁸

For Millennials, diversity is more than just a civil rights challenge; it's a notion that should be celebrated. It's no wonder, then, that Generation Y is a positive force pushing America toward equality.⁹

An Independent Generation

Along with their desire for equality, Millennials place high emphasis on personal independence. Politically, religiously, and romantically independent, Millennials are challenging the norms set by generations before them.

Before the Millennial generation, couples typically married and had children at a young age. In 1963, for example, the average age for newlyweds was 21 for women and 23 for men. Fifty years later, those ages have increased to 27 and 29, respectively.¹⁰ Clearly, Generation Y members are maintaining their independence longer by waiting to marry, if they choose to wed at all.

In addition to their romantic freedom, a growing number of Millennials describe themselves as

religiously independent. Indeed, 26 percent of Millennials do not affiliate with a specific religious faith—a higher rate than older generations when they were the same age.¹¹

Members of Generation Y are taking society in a new direction by not conforming to previously set standards.¹² They are making their own rules and building futures for themselves based on personal goals, not on expectations that society establishes for them.



Generally speaking,
Millennial workers have an
undeserved reputation for
possessing a sense of
entitlement.

Two-thirds of US professionals describe Generation Y as feeling entitled and being mainly concerned about individual success at work.¹³

What causes the entitlement perception? Gen Y's high levels of education, along with their technology-fueled preference for instant gratification, creates an interesting dichotomy. Simply put, despite being new to the full-time workforce, Millennials want high-paying jobs and believe they're immediately qualified for those positions. In turn, Gen Yers are seen as lacking the patience to work their way up professional ladders.

But by bringing new knowledge, skills, and attitudes to work, Millennials are beginning to

change that perception and prove their professional worth. Among employers, 78 percent believe that Millennials are highly tech savvy, and that their skills are valuable assets to their companies.¹⁴

Whats more, two-thirds of professionals rank Millennials as being enthusiastic about their work.¹⁵ Enthusiasm and positive mindsets are sought-after work traits that benefit employers. For their part, Millennials want to show dedication to their jobs; toward that end, Gen Yers are the most likely age group to forfeit earned time away from work.¹⁶

Therefore, rather than having a sense of entitlement, Millennials simply refuse to settle for less than what they believe they deserve.



Appealing to Millennial Minds

The numbers bear repeating.

Seventy-five million people in the United States qualify as Millennials, making Gen Y the largest current generational cohort in America.¹⁷ Furthermore, Millennial consumers control \$170 billion in annual purchasing power, making them a highly sought after target for marketers.¹⁸

Companies whose marketing messages appeal to this important generation will enjoy a competitive advantage. Question is: what makes marketing appealing to Millennials?

Because technology is such a major part of the Millennial lifestyle, businesses promoting products or services online will have the greatest success reaching the generation's members.

Along with their preference for fast-paced living and buying, Millennials enjoy staying connected to those in their lives. Not surprisingly, Gen Yers spend an average of 5.4 hours a day on social media sites.¹⁹

That much time online provides companies with great opportunities for reaching Millennial consumers. It goes without saying that marketers looking to reach Gen Y should promote their brands via social media and other mobile-friendly channels (and, of course, their ads should include clickable links for making online purchases).

However, having grown up in a fast-paced culture, Millennials won't linger long on advertisements—digitally displayed or otherwise—especially those that fail to immediately set themselves apart.

Advertising promotions must be eye catching and quickly paced while containing messaging that appeals to Millennial interests.



In addition to a preference for connecting through technology, Millennials also care about living authentically—and about making a difference in the world.

Gen Y's use of social media and its members' interest in doing good are merging as Millennials turn to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms to promote their lifestyles and beliefs—and to encourage social change.

But in general, Millennials avoid attempts to advertise to them.²⁰ What's more, Millennials tend to view corporations as being generally motivated by profit—which stands in direct contrast to their personal altruistic beliefs. In fact, 84 percent of Millennials distrust the advertisements they see.²¹ That's why companies must find authentic ways to market themselves to Millennials.

Therefore, rather than coming across in ads as selling products and services, companies would do better to feature everyday people expressing—in their own words—authentic support for a brand.





Millennials are more likely to do business with companies whose core values align with their own.

Another way for advertisers to appeal to Generation Y is to shed light on the company's core values. Millennials are more likely to buy from businesses that demonstrate social responsibility, whether that means donating a portion of company profits to charity or making and selling environmentally friendly products.²²

Breaking through the Millennial trust barrier is easier for companies that offer “social proof” in their advertisements. By portraying people who Gen Yers see as similar to themselves in their ads, marketers can help Millennials identify a connection between themselves and the company.

In short, companies should strive to market themselves in a genuine light. Millennials want to live positive lives, so aligning products and services to match their value systems will appeal to Generation Yers—and turn them into longterm customers.



Debrief

The Millennial generation is quickly becoming a dominant consumer group. To successfully appeal to Gen Y members, businesses must tailor their marketing styles appropriately.

Millennials are advocates for equality. For that reason, marketers will want to ensure that their messages portray diversity and inclusion. As a culturally diverse generation, Millennials expect to see advertisements that reflect and celebrate differences.

Generation Yers are the first to grow up “wired” through technology, setting a life course far different

from the generations before them. Marketers should be mindful of this and promote their messages using social media and other mobile friendly tactics.

By showcasing the hard-earned knowledge they gained through higher education, workers from Generation Y are defying the negative “entitled” reputation bestowed upon them. Their technical skills make Millennials valuable assets to employers.

Successful marketers will present their messages in ways that portray Millennials as they see themselves—as hardworking contributors to the professional workforce and to the world.

Notes

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5. Ibid.
6. Pew Research Center. "Millennials in adulthood." (2014).
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8. Liptak, Adam. "Supreme Court ruling makes same-sex marriage a right nationwide." *New York Times* (2015, June 26).
9. Taylor, "It's a millennial world now."
10. Pew Research Center. "How millennials today compare with their grandparents 50 years ago." (2015).
11. Pew Research Center. "Millennials: A portrait of Generation Next."
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13. Ernst & Young. "Younger managers rise in the ranks: Survey quantifies management shift and reveals challenges, preferred workplace perks, and perceived generational strengths and weaknesses." (2013).
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15. Ibid.
16. Project: Time Off. "The work martyr's cautionary tale: How the millennial experience will define America's vacation culture." (2016).
17. Pew Research Center. "Millennials overtake baby boomers as America's largest generation." (2016).
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19. Taylor, Kate. "Want to reach millennials? This is how they spend their time." *Entrepreneur* (2014, June 27).
20. Byron, Jill. "Brand authenticity: Is it for real?" *AdAge* (2016, March 23).
21. DeMers, "7 ways to target millennials through content marketing."
22. Ibid.



When it comes to designing a brand, people usually know what they like – and what they dislike. However, few know what actually works.

Our job at The Creative Block is to design and implement branding that looks great while meeting your marketing expectations. Or, put another way, to know what you like and to know what works.

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