

Generational Communication Profile: How to Reach and Communicate with the Millennial
Generation

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Executive Summary

The Millennial Generation is charging into the job market challenging traditional work habits and ethics, bringing innovative ideas, and introducing various technologies into the workforce. With Millennials holding approximately \$200 billion in spending power (Fuller), companies are spending billions of dollars looking for ways to market to these individuals. Researchers around the world have been trying to understand this large generation from studying behavioral, work, and social patterns. Their findings were quite different from former generations making it difficult for human resources and marketers to communicate to new employees or consumers.

Secondary research was used to collect data, opinions, strategies, and statistics for this paper. Academic articles were collected from *Annals of DAAAM & Proceedings*, *Journal For Quality & Participation*, *Franchising World*, and *Journal of Strategic Marketing*. Further data and statistics were collected from the Edelman Digital and TIME website.

The purpose of this report is to provide basic information on what Millennials value and how they communicate in comparison to previous generations. The topic of how human resources can accommodate to the needs of this young generation is also discussed along with how marketers can effectively select a marketing medium and appropriately choose a target market.

Based on the findings in this report, it is recommended that businesses should apply the following strategies in human resources and marketing to effectively communicate with Millennials:

1. **Human Resources:** Implement flexible work schedules, communicate with employees or new hires from younger generations, give feedback and suggestions, listen to the ideas and innovations of employees, and understand that generational differences exist.
2. **Marketers:** Understand the different types of marketing mediums, research characteristics of the consumers you wish to reach, and know which marketing method is most effective for your target market.

Introduction

Millennials, Generation Y (Gen Yers), Echo Boomers, Boomerangs, and Generation Next all refer to those born between 1980-2000. They are now beginning to charge into the workforce bringing innovative ideas and challenging the traditional mindset set by preexisting generations.

There are 80 million Millennials and approximately half are currently in the workforce, with millions added each year. By 2025 three out of every four workers will be from Generation Y (Schwabel). The Millennials have historically become the most educated and diverse generation who can no longer be ignored.

This paper analyzes the differences between the preexisting generations -- primarily the Baby Boomers (1946-1964)-- and the Millennials, and also discusses how businesses can understand and reach this up and coming generation both internally and externally.

Discussion of Findings

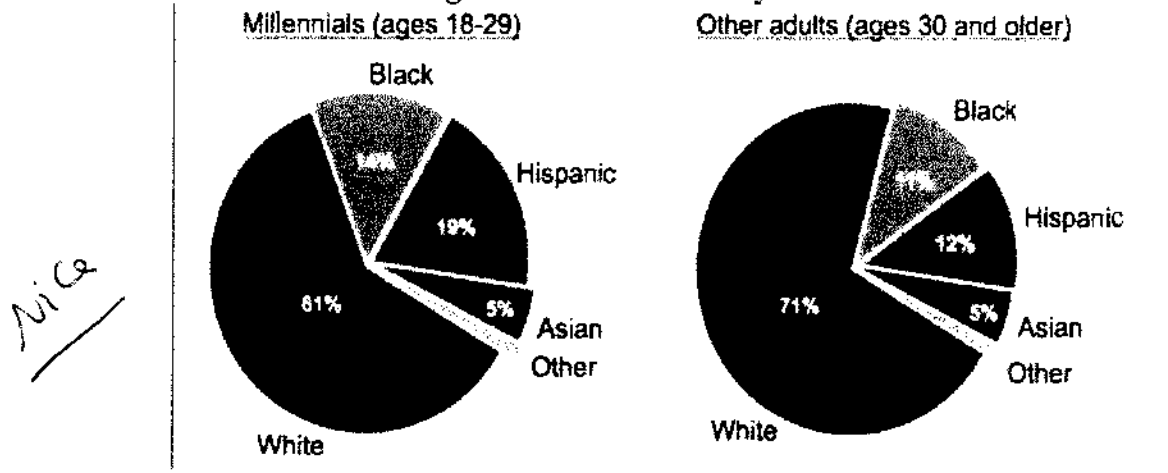
Baby Boomers vs. Millennials

Millennials, generally the offspring of Baby Boomers (Boomers), differ in both values and the way they communicate with one another.

Values

Accepting: Millennials have not only become the biggest generation since the Baby Boomers but also the most ethnically diverse (see Figure 1). Hispanic and Asian ethnic groups are anticipated to hold more than 50 percent of the total population of the United States by 2050. With such diverse backgrounds and beliefs, Millennials created an environment of inclusion and tolerance (Generation Y).

Figure 1: Ethnic Diversity in America



Source: inclusiontoinnovation.com, July 13, 2013

Relationships and Marriage: The Baby Boomer generation could not balance between work and lifestyle, they often worked 55-60 hours a week. This way of living did not settle well for Generation Y. Millennials have a balance between work and lifestyle, with relationships with friends and family becoming the priority over career. Many older supervisors, managers, and employers view this attitude as a lack of disloyalty to the company, but in through the eyes of the Millennials, relationships outweigh a job that could be terminated in an instant.

In regards to marriage, 44 percent of Millennials say that marriage is becoming obsolete compared to 35% of Boomers (By the Numbers). A decline in marriage can be attributed to the increase in cohabitating, a lifestyle that was once viewed as socially unacceptable in older generations. Young adults still believe that marriage should last a lifetime and with an increase in divorce rates and fees, most couples are hesitant in getting married. Also, women are finding it harder to find a suitable partner; and as a result, women are more accepting of motherhood without marriage (Generation Y).

Communication

Technology: Teenagers send a median number of 50 text messages per day (By the Numbers). The introduction of the cell phone, personal computer, and Internet has forever shaped the way we communicate with each other. Because Millennials were the first to grow up with such devices, this drastic change in communication is one of the main reasons why they are under constant examination. Technological advancements in real-time media and communication drive their expectation for immediacy.

Human Resources and Millennials

Employers, most often from the Baby Boomer generation, find it difficult to understand the minds of Millennials. Researchers have tried to dissect the minds of these young individuals and have found reoccurring patterns on their views on the work environment and work ethic.

Views on the Work Environment: Unlike the Baby Boomers, most Millennials view their jobs as temporary. Millennials watched their parents work hard and climb the corporate ladder only to see them lose their jobs as a result of the economic downturn. They view employers as less committed to long-term employment resulting in an unengaged, lax employee. Millennials are rattling the cages of companies by challenging work customs such as: environment, feedback, and the approach to the top.

Flexible work schedules: Boomers, known to be workaholics, usually work a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., five day work week. Millennials, on the other hand would prefer to make their own schedules. Millennials would rather work in the evening than work early in the morning. They also prefer to work from remote locations; and with the advancement in technology, telecommuting has finally become available.

Immediate attention: Millennials grew up with television, computers, cell phones, and social media leading to characteristics of impatience and instant gratification.

With continuous connections to the outside world, via e-mail or text messaging, Millennials are accustomed to instantaneous feedback. This mind set is carried over into the work place with wanting close relationships and frequent input from employers. Boomers preferred a structured system where their work would be inspected a certain times per year; this structure will not work for Millennials. According to Schwabel, 80 percent of Millennials would prefer to have regular feedback from their managers. They require active involvement with constant reassurance and approval.

Hierarchy: Titles and positions do not impress Millennials, contrary to the Baby Boomers. Baby Boomers had a sense of respect to higher authority such as supervisors or managers that most Millennials lack.

This “me, me, me” mentality, often associated with the Millennials, can be attributed to their parents cushioning and hovering their children growing up. Millennials were awarded trophies or ribbons for participation, no child ever went home empty handed. Growing up with the “everyone is a winner” mindset, makes it hard for Millennials to grasp the idea of a hierarchy. Many believe in fast promotions and the ability to speak with managers and supervisors as peers. The idea of seniority and “paying your dues” has become outdated. Unlike the way Boomers were raised, Millennials firmly believe that everyone’s input should be valued and deserves to be heard, regardless of title or position.

Work Ethic: The change in views on the work environment has also changed work ethic. Millennials view their career as an instrument in supporting their lifestyle. They view their work as an expression of themselves rather than definition of who they are. Millennials prefer working in teams and do not work without knowing how their work shapes the bigger picture. Also, the advancement in technology has made this generation the most tech-savvy generation in the workforce.

Works well in teams: “Millennial workers are likely to be actively involved, fully committed, and contribute their best efforts to the organization when their work is performed in a workgroup or team (Myers).” Generation Y workers have grown up playing on teams and have carried this mentality into the workforce. Compared to previous generations, Millennials prefer and are accustomed to collaboration with other co-workers. They view working in teams as enjoyable which has “enhanced innovation, increased productivity, and lowered personnel costs (Myers).”

Big picture: Millennials are conscious of change; they want to know that what they do has a chance to impact or benefit the company. Although Millennials do not view their careers as a significant part of their identity, as Boomers did, 95 percent said that they are motivated to work harder when they know where their work is going (Ferri).

Technologically advanced: Millennials are the key to utilizing technology to its greatest potential. The personal computer and Internet was introduced in the late 60s, before the first Millennial was born, and has grown exponentially. With technology improving every year, Generation Y is the first generation with the ability to adapt rapidly and keep up with the trends.

Computer engineering and software designing are relatively new jobs that Millennials are most equipped to fill. They have grown up with computers, cell phones, video game consoles, and tablets and are skilled in operating them.

Marketers and Millennials

With over 2 billion Internet users around the world, e-commerce and digital marketing was introduced. Digital marketing has become a large, continuously growing business segment with companies spending billions of dollars each year to market their product. Marketers worldwide are trying to keep up with a variety marketing mediums and appropriately select a target market from the most historically diverse generation.

Marketing Mediums: Baby Boomers grew up watching television, and it is safe to say that television ads are the most effective type of marketing for this particular generation. In regards to the Millennials, a broad scope of marketing mediums can be used to try and reach a specific demographic. With a variety of avenues to choose from, it has become quite the challenge for marketers to decipher which method is most effective and can reach a large audience.

Social Media: Social media, a term coined in the early 2000s, is defined as websites and other online means of communication that are used by large groups of people to share information and develop social and professional contacts. The most used social media sites, with over a collective 600 million users, are Facebook and Twitter. Other popular means of social media marketing include Yelp and e-mails.

Facebook: Facebook, a networking site known by marketers worldwide, was founded in 2004 and has grown exponentially. Facebook started to incorporate ads and company pages in 2007. With an increase in popularity and usage, Facebook has become one of the most visited web pages bursting with opportunity to appropriately reach a company's desired target market with personalized advertisements .

Twitter: Twitter, in business, is able to connect to its customers in real time. Twitter allows businesses to receive immediate feedback and gather insight within 140 characters. Twitter allows its users to follow companies or brands that peak their interest. With the consumer in control, this filters what is directly seen giving Twitter users a feel of personalization.

Yelp: Yelp, a shortened version of Yellow Pages, offers consumers a way to connect with local businesses and also learn what other "Yelpers" had to say about their experience with these businesses. In the first quarter of 2013, Yelp received 102 million visitors. Researchers have found that the majority of Millennials are more influenced by word-of-mouth than through advertisements.

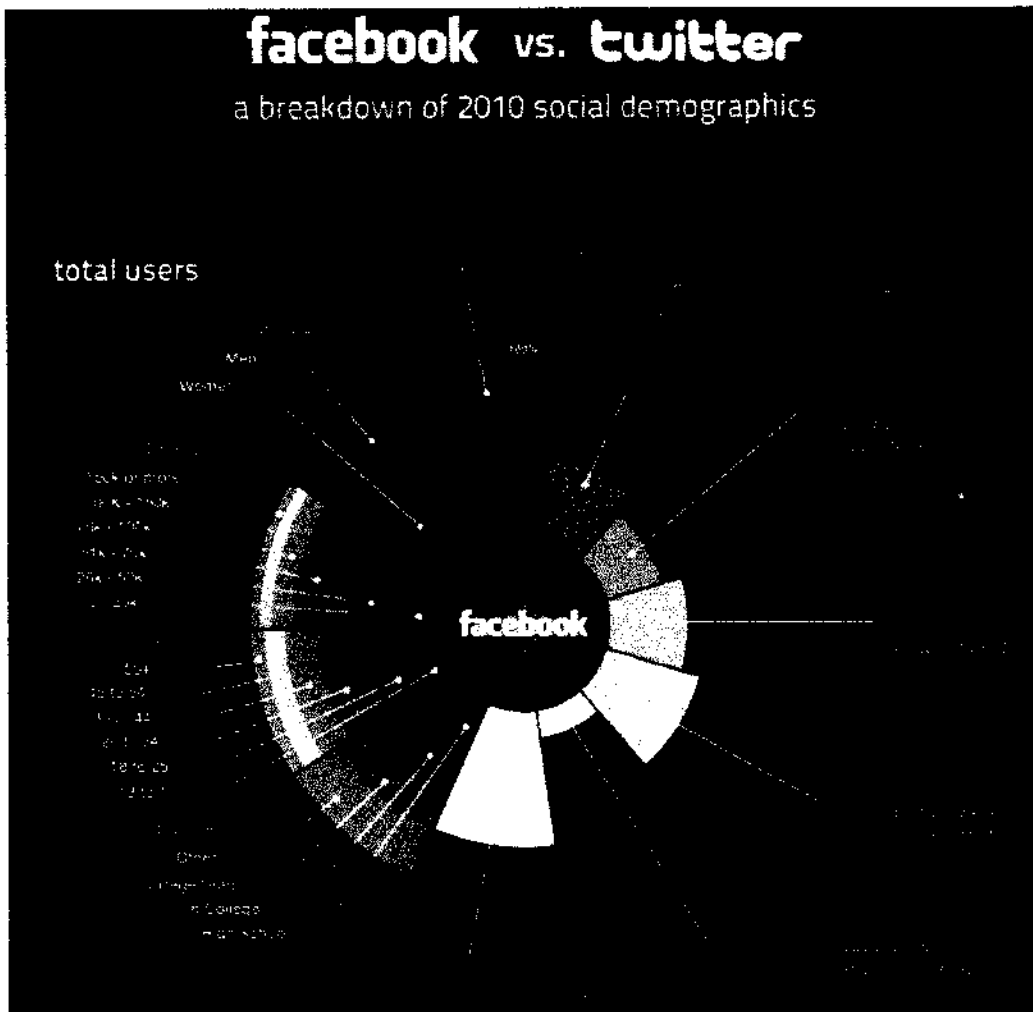
E-mails: Electronic mail has been in existence since the early 90s and with constant spam and junk mail, the use of marketing through e-mail may become obsolete in the Millennial Generation with an approximate 27 percent decline in e-mail usage among 12-34 year olds (By the Numbers).

Selecting a Target Market: Selecting a target market has become the biggest challenge for marketers. The most efficient way to reach the desired demographic is to understand the following:

- Who does the brand, company, or product pertain to?
- What are the defining characteristics of this target market?
- How are they best reached (print ads, television, internet, etc.)?
 - Figure 2 exhibits the demographic of Facebook and Twitter users

After understanding the previous three elements, a effective marketer would try to receive feedback from their consumers by surveys or polls to see what worked, what did not, and what could be improved. In terms of Generation Y, and incentive such as a discount or coupon is the most effective way to retrieve evaluations.

Figure 2: Facebook vs. Twitter



Source: ginva.com, July 14, 2013

Conclusions

Millennials, historically the most educated and diverse generation, can no longer be ignored as they enter the workforce in droves.

Millennials differ from Baby Boomers in both values and the way they communicate with one another. Millennials have a greater acceptance for diversity, are more lax in terms of marriage, and prioritize relationships with family and friends over work. Being raised in the age of technology, the Internet, and social media has changed the way Millennials communicate with one another, incomparable from prior generations.

Studies have shown that Millennials' view on the work environment and their overall work ethic often clashes with older generations' traditional work habits. Their need for immediate attention, flexible work schedules, and lack of respect for the work hierarchy make it difficult for employers to understand and manage their employees.

With various avenues available, marketers are having a difficult time reaching their desired target market. For previous generations, the use of print ads, e-mails billboards, television ads, and radio ads were the main avenues of communication. The introduction of social media was a rude awakening to marketers. After the initial shock, marketers are starting to grasp and utilize the popularity of social media such as: Facebook, Twitter, and Yelp.

Recommendations

Businesses would not survive without human resources and proper marketing, making the effectiveness of both departments critical. Based on the findings of this report, it is recommended that businesses apply the following strategies to improve productive communication with the Millennial Generation.

f. Human Resources:

- a. Implement flexible work schedules
- b. Communicate with employees or new hires from younger generations
- c. Give feedback and suggestions
- d. Listen to the ideas and innovations of employees
- e. Understand that generational differences exist.

g. Marketers:

- a. Understand the different types of marketing mediums
- b. Research characteristics of the consumers you wish to reach
- c. Know which marketing method is most effective for your target market

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Appendix

Table 1. Preferred online advertising.

Type of advertising	% of respondents
Coupons	73.6
Side-panel ads	70.3
Ads on YouTube	52.5
Email updates	51.1
Ads in game form	39.1
Pop-up ads	3.7

Note: Total does not add up to 100%; respondents could specify up to three choices.

Table 2. Digital marketing that marketers should avoid.

I prefer when product related websites avoid the following	Mean ^a
Avoid pop-ups on websites	4.35
Avoid un-closable windows	4.26
Avoid mandatory downloads	4.19
Avoid flashing items	4.08
Avoid links to sponsors	3.42

Note: All responses were significantly different from neutral (3.0).

^aMean on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

Table 3. Attention-grabbing digital marketing strategies.

Marketing strategy	% of respondents
Graphics	73.4
Bright colors	53.6
Interactive	50.6
Personalization	46.5
Simple, professional layout	43.1
'Free' (the word)	28.5

Note: Total does not add up to 100%; respondents could specify up to three choices.

Table 4. Incentives to repeatedly visit a website.

Incentive	% of respondents
Competitive prices	69.4
Good shipping rates	67.2
Coupons	57.7
Rewards for returning customers	52.4
Free gifts	52.3
Personalization	48.6
Updated product information	48.5
Favorable return policy	46.8
Interactive website	32.0
Email updates	26.4

Note: Total does not add up to 100%; respondents could specify up to three choices.