8 Rules of Marketing to Millennials

Up to this point, there has not existed a more complex and nontraditional generation than Millennials. That is, individuals who range approximately anywhere from ages 18 to 35 today. Not only are they the largest generation by population size, which has tremendous influence on their role as the leading consumers today, but the environment in which they were raised has cultivated an entirely new approach to their values and way of life. These 75 million individuals grew up in an age of technology and global connections—where handwritten letters only existed in romantic movies and children learned how to navigate an iPod before learning how to tie their shoes.

With this, unlimited access to diverse knowledge, ideas and experiences is made available to them. So why does this matter? This is a generation of ideas and personal choice. This independent generation is all about making their own decisions and customizing things to suit their values, needs and desires. When it comes to marketing, Millennials know what they want and won’t settle for anything that falls short of meeting their expectations. Companies are realizing this and are forced to reevaluate their current marketing strategies in order to win the attention and loyalty of this generation.

This white paper explores the values of this generation and provides you with the 8 Rules of Marketing to Millennials.

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Effective Millennial Marketing Rule #1:

DON’T CREATE PROBLEMS, SOLVE THEM.

Relative to previous generations, Millennials desire control in order to eliminate any potential problems before making a decision. We see this with the delay in traditional lifestyles such as marriage and starting a family. Katie Elfering, a consumer strategist, explains in her research titled “Inside the Millennial Mind” that this delay is a result of this generation’s desire to have the best of both worlds—without having to confront any problems. Their unwillingness to surrender one for the other leads to the integration of different lifestyles.

They still want marriage and a family, but not the kind their parents strived for—with the cookie-cutter suburban home and white picket fence. Instead, Millennials are determined to maintain the youthful, urban city lifestyle and career while still being able to pursue the traditional family lifestyle. This presents multiple challenges for Millennials, which also opens up opportunities for brands to solve. This generation likes solutions, so your brand has to reassure them that you can solve their problems and prep them for the next life stage. Brands must demonstrate how they can add value to Millennials’ already complicated lifestyle.

Target immediately used this platform to successfully launch City Target, smaller stores that are located in the heart of a city’s downtown area. As previously mentioned, Millennials want to be able to raise a family in urban cities without having to drive a far distance outside of the city to get their groceries and supplies for the home. So Target strategically brought these things to them by building stores that cater to the urban city lifestyle. In doing this, Target markets to Millennials by recognizing the desires of this generation and executing a solution that adds value and convenience to their lives.
City Target – Chicago

City Target – Seattle
Effective Millennial Marketing Rule #2:

DON’T JUST TELL THEM WHAT YOUR PRODUCT IS OR CAN DO. SHOW THEM HOW IT WILL MAKE THEM FEEL.

Millennials are deeply rooted in internal feelings. According to CEB, loyalty, happiness and authenticity are some of the top values of this generation – which are values that were not considered as important by previous generations. Their motivation to do things is based on how it will make them feel. And if you haven’t heard of the popular acronym YOLO (You Only Live Once), the modern day “carpe diem,” it does a good job summarizing the values behind decision making in this generation.

This could be a result of the unfortunate economy that Millennials grew up in—an era punctuated by the largest economic decline since the Great Depression, the 911 terrorist attacks, the increasing concerns of global warming, etc. The uncertainty of their circumstances and future has shaped Millennials to be present-focused and to want to make things work for their current happiness. Having no security in tomorrow, this generation compensates their inability to control uncertainty by having control over the things that make them feel good.

Guinness beer markets right to the viewer’s emotions with their feel-good, “Friendship” commercial. This 60-second spot featured six friends playing wheelchair basketball. A twist at the end reveals that only one of the men actually needs the wheelchair, while his friends all get up from their wheelchairs to walk to a pub for a post-basketball beer.
The commercial inspires the loyalty and enjoyment of friendship—with an added value of Guinness beer. Rather than telling the audience what their product is, Guinness captures an intimate moment between friends while being sure to keep their product at the center of it all. Marketing to emotions was a success with the spot receiving more than 7 million views on YouTube within a month. Get this generation feeling good and they’ll want to share your brand with everyone they know. That’s marketing that feels good and goes viral.
Effective Millennial Marketing Rule #3:

**INSPIRE TO DO GOOD.**

Now more than ever, we are able to quickly exchange information and get news about the world because of the development of technology. This global connection has inspired Millennials to support social issues and causes that they believe in. The release of the 2014 Millennial Impact Report showed that 87% donated money to an organization that supported a cause they were passionate for. This constant exchange of information around the world has raised awareness for issues such as poverty, human trafficking, malnutrition, etc. and encourages this generation to step in to make a difference.

This being said, Millennials are a proactive generation that desires to change the world. So there’s no hesitation when it comes to supporting a product or service that contributes to a greater cause. Companies such as TOMS Shoes and Method Home Products have captured the attention of Millennials through their inspiration to do good.

**TOMS Shoes** has become a popular brand among this generation, not only because of the large variety of styles and designs they offer, but because of the company’s mission to “identify a global need and create products to help address them.” For example, for every pair of shoes purchased, TOMS purchases a pair to give to a child in need.

**Method**, a household cleaning brand, markets their products by emphasizing its eco-friendly values. Unlike
competing cleaning product brands that work hard to market their products’ efficiency, Method delivers another message: “Housecleaning is more than cleaning, it’s making our planet and homes a better place.”

So when marketing to Millennials, your brand should inspire to do good. TOMS Shoes and Method do this on the first page of their websites. Millennials don’t just want to know how your product is going to do good for them as a consumer. But in purchasing your product, how are they doing good for others? For this generation, it’s no longer just a brand. It’s a movement.

TOMS home page: See a world of POTENTIAL
Meet Charles & Francine. There's a story behind every mess...

we're all good.

at method, we believe in making cleaning products that are well, clean. naturally derived ingredients are our superheroes, and we keep the planet in mind with every bottle we design. the bottom line? we're a pretty package inside and out.

LEARN HOW WE KEEP THINGS GREEN

Method home page: Learn how we keep things GREEN
Effective Millennial Marketing Rule #4: CREATE SOMETHING THAT CAN BE SHARED.

With the Internet and social media playing a huge role in their lives, Millennials are all about social status and sharing their personal information with others. So brands can’t just create a positive brand experience. They have to create a positive and shareable brand experience that facilitates the social sharing of their consumers.

What does this mean? Brands need to give their consumers a platform to spread the word about their product – especially Millennials, who have a network size that is more than 4 times that of the generation before them. A survey conducted by Annalect found that 47% of Millennials who owned a smartphone discovered brands from “someone else following/liking/pinning/tweeting information on social media.”

Nike took its brand and created the Nike+ Running App, which allows users to share their fitness goals and achievements with others. This social community allows individuals to map their routes, track their distance, and it even projects real-time cheers for every like or comment they receive from a friend. Nike extends personal fitness goals into a social event, while at the same time markets its brand. Users might not be able to share their running shoes or workout gear, but Nike uses a mobile app to design a platform for its brand to spread and be shared.
The Nike+ Running App allows you to share your fitness goals and progress with others.
Effective Millennial Marketing Rule #5:

GOOD DESIGN IS MANDATORY.

Good design is no longer a bonus for Millennials. It has become an expectation. We live in an era that is extremely motivated by visual stimulation, which explains this generation’s craze over social media. Social media has extended beyond its original text-based medium and is a perfect demonstration of the gravitation toward visual platforms. For example, Instagram and Pinterest, two of the fastest-growing social networks within the past few years, are visual-heavy mediums that help contribute to finding and sharing images and photography.

Simply put, if your product doesn’t make a good first impression, Millennials will most likely not think to look twice and may quickly move on to the next aesthetically pleasing thing that grabs their attention.

It’s not just about the product. Millennials are also about the delivery of their purchases. That means energy must not only go into creating a great product, but also in presenting the brand or product in a visually creative way.

We see these innovations take place with brands such as eos. What was once just another lip balm has now been given personality, style, and creative packaging. These “smooth spheres” give a fun look to help prevent your lips from chapping. In addition, the traditional and trusty brand, Campbell’s, launched its Go Soups as a strategy to market to Millennials. With a decline in canned soup sales, Campbell’s redesigned its
look to be colorful and youthful—not to mention, the soup now comes in a plastic pouch in order to “convey freshness.” Since the launch, Campbell’s Go Soups have increased its sales by 8%. They’ve also launched the soup marketing campaign via a Tumblr website and partnered up with Spotify for a music download service. Campbell’s is working hard to target this generation by renovating its look and displaying it through mediums that are popular to Millennials. eos and Campbell's are two examples of how brands are marketing to Millennials by redesigning products in a way that complement the personality of the target audience. It’s a product you can trust—and it looks good.
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Effective Millennial Marketing Rule #6:

SAY GOODBYE TO CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT.

Say goodbye to the days when brands would hire a celebrity spokesperson. Millennials are looking to everyday, relatable people for product influence and reviews. Rather than relying on the advocacy of celebrities, this generation appreciates the unfiltered honesty of bloggers, vloggers, and Youtube personalities. A report by Millennial Central found that 68% of Millennials are completely unfazed by celebrity endorsement.

Brand credibility is earned when the products are represented by individuals who are in the same boat as the consumers, not celebrities who pretend to be. When brands have real-life people talking about their problems and how a product can help solve it, the brand is more likely to earn this generation’s trust. The unscripted transparency of bloggers or vloggers connects with the audience and makes them feel like the brand and its products are made for everyday people like them.

A great example of this is Lancôme, a French cosmetics brand. Lancôme signed 23-year-old Michelle Phan to be their official video makeup artist. Phan is one of the most popular makeup artists on YouTube with more than 100 million views and over 750,000 subscribers on her channel. Phan signed with Lancôme in February.
2010, where she would create makeup tutorial videos using Lancôme products. This was a smart marketing decision for Lancôme, as they were able to reach a whole new audience. Phan had already gained the trust of her fans and subscribers throughout her journey as a YouTube vlogger. So Lancôme took this opportunity to market their products by using someone relatable and influential to endorse their brand.
Michelle Phan joins the Lancome team as the first video makeup artist.
Effective Millennial Marketing Rule #7:

DON’T COMPROMISE WHO YOU ARE.

While it’s important for brands to meet the needs of their consumers and to present themselves as understanding and relatable to this generation, it’s even more important for brands to know their identity and to never compromise it. Work hard to reach Millennials, but don’t lose your brand identity in the process of trying to appease this generation.

Millennials are known to be a generation that refuses to “fit the mold.” As previously mentioned, this is a generation of individuality and personal choice. So just like Millennials do every day, brands need to be confident of their identity and own up to who they are. Millennials value brands that stay true to their identity.

One of the most respected brands is Chipotle—and for this reason exactly. Although Chipotle faces the competition of other food companies like McDonald’s and Burger King, it doesn’t try to market to its audience with a similar strategy. Chipotle isn’t about health, and they’re honest about that. Rather, their brand’s identity is rooted in where their food comes from and the authenticity of their ingredients. Chipotle values freshness and has gained a reputation for their commitment to adopt that as their identity. The Motley Fool puts it best when they write, “Staying steadfast and committed to this transparent goal has fostered trust among its growing customer base.”
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It's not just a burrito. It's a foil-wrapped, hand-crafted, local farm supporting, food culture changing cylinder of deliciousness.

Learn more about food with integrity →

At Chipotle, we like to talk about why meat raised without hormones tastes so delicious, but the ad agency insisted we be direct.

Chipotle: Food With Integrity
Effective Millennial Marketing Rule #8:

Make them laugh.

In an article titled, “Millennials Just Wanna Laugh,” research was cited showing that this generation values humor and laughter. Eighty-eight percent of Millennials say that humor is vital to this generation’s definition of themselves. That being said, marketing with humor can be a great way to capture attention and get people talking about your brand.

Old Spice, an American brand of male grooming products, is known for their quirky, satirical humor. From the brand’s humorous commercial series to its social media presence, and even down to the laughter that comes with its packaging, Old Spice aims to make their audience laugh—especially their recent target audience, Millennials. We see the success of this marketing tactic with Old Spice being the number one most-viewed sponsored channel on YouTube. Within the first two days of launching its Twitter page, Old Spice gained 80,000 followers. And the brand’s Facebook page, which recently began to post humorous videos, increased Facebook interaction by 800% and sales figures by 107%.

The use of humor in social media doesn’t just make a brand interesting—it makes it worth sharing. Riggs Partners, a creative marketing consultancy, blogs, “This sense of humor appeals to a younger audience of men whose hands have not been calloused from hard labor like those of their fathers and grandfathers. They don’t take life too seriously because they don’t have to yet… And Old Spice, bottling up the romantic ideals of a generation into one concise container of manliness, tells them that’s alright.”
Old Spice Twitter
Old Spice Facebook

GET SHAVED IN THE FACE

Old Spice

Old Spice has 75 years of experience helping guys improve their
mornin'rit, with deodorant, bodywash, antiperspirant and
fragrances.

Health/Beauty

Write something on Old Spice's Page...

13 Friends

Like Old Spice

+4
Today, brands are looking at the largest and most influential generation. Their ability to know what they want, their desire to do what makes them feel good, and their spending power are a few of the reasons why Millennials have become highly empowered consumers.

Millennials are driving trends, so unless marketers work hard to redefine engagement and brand loyalty to this new type of consumer, they’ll find themselves easily pushed aside. Knowing the values and understanding the needs of this generation is crucial for brands to deliver the right message—which will win them the attention and loyalty of Millennials.

We “get” Millennials. So if you want to get this niche audience also, talk with us. Contact Ellyn Davidson, managing partner, at EDavidson@brogan.com.