

Essential tips for marketing to Millennials



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NOW THAT WE'RE a couple months into the year, I hope you're sticking to those resolutions made in January. If not, it's never too late to get back on track!

One of my business goals for the New Year is to expand my marketing horizons by exploring new ways to reach specific audiences. I'm dedicating time to understanding one audience in particular — the demographic known as Generation Y, or Millennials.

This group includes anyone born from the early 1980s to the early 2000s, and makes up about 25 percent of the U.S. population.

Studies of this generation are fascinating. One characteristic I find intriguing is how this generation seems to define themselves by the brands they support. Millennials connect with brands on a different level than generations before them, and this is completely changing conventional marketing.

Let's take a look at four characteristics about Millennials and how you can use them to help you market to this generation more effectively.

Millennials are connected.

Millennials are referred to as “connected consumers,” which is very fitting. This is a tech-savvy generation, constantly connected to a computer, tablet or mobile device — sometimes at the same time! They rely heavily on the online realm for information, and they want to be able to access information quickly and easily, especially on the go.

What does this mean for you? The mobile version of your business website must be optimized for smartphones. Make sure that it's visually appealing on every device, with a clear path to information, and offers an overall user-friendly experience. If you don't have a mobile website, it's important that you make sure your business information is available and current on other informational sites, such as Google, Yelp or Yellow Pages, because Millennials will be searching for it!

Millennials want to connect — virtually.

Millennials want to connect with people and brands they love through social media, and they want to tell the whole online world about it! Social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter provide an opportunity for your customers to do just that — it's almost like having others sell your business for you!

In addition, Millennials want to engage on these platforms with the brands they love. They want more than informational content; they want to establish a two-way connection with your business



through asking questions and receiving shared or user-generated content.

What does this mean for you? When marketing to Millennials, social media presence is a must! Establish your business or brand on social media platforms that make sense for your audience. You don't necessarily need to be on every single channel, but starting out with Facebook or Twitter can be an easy, low-cost way to connect with your customers and engage with them on an ongoing basis.

Millennials value relationships.

Because Millennials are so connected, it's only natural that they'd extend that to their personal relationships. This can be seen from where they work to what they wear, even to what they drive. They want to have a relationship with your brand, product or company.

What does this mean for you? Make your marketing interactive! Allow them to feel a part of the brand through seeking their input, participation or communication about your company, brand and

products. You can do this in a number of ways, from using social media as a tool to gain feedback, to establishing face-to-face connections at a point of transaction. Each interaction is a chance to grow a relationship and establish loyalty.

Millennials care about supporting a cause.

Millennials want to make a difference in the world; therefore, they want to support brands that are making a difference in the world.

Take a look at Toms Shoes, one of most well-known modern brands, and instigator of the “one-for-one” giving opportunity. When a customer purchases a pair of shoes, the company provides a pair of shoes to a child in need. Millennials love this — they get a great product and get to participate in charitable giving at the same time. They get to be a part of a mission.

What does this mean for you? If you make philanthropic efforts a part of your company's mission, Millennials will be more likely to connect with and support your brand. Or, if your brand itself represents a cause (for instance, supporting the environment or education), then Millennials will find an added attraction to your product. Stand for something, and Millennials will stand behind you!

Millennials are changing the way we do business today, and understanding what makes them engage with the brands they love will help you market to them more effectively. Take the opportunity to learn more about this generation. Challenge yourself and your business to expand your marketing horizons by targeting Millennials. ☺