

Marketing to

Millennials

by Rich Kizer & Georganne Bender



Meet the Millennials: the 72 million potential customers, who just happen to be kids. But not just any kids. Millennials are said to be the most beloved and doted upon children ever to walk the face of the Earth. Born from 1982 to 2000, the youngest Millennials are still in grade school, while their elder statesman are 26 years old.

Millennials parents come from varying generations. They might be Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, or even fellow Millennials. This has added to this generation's nuance and diversity. To market to a Millennial you need to think like a Millennial. You think your life is busy? Consider this:

A Millennial's life goes 24/7. They have never known a world without computers or the Internet. Watching a Millennial do homework can be a dizzying experience. Both the TV and a CD is playing in the background. Loudly. Or maybe the kid is plugged in to his/her iPod. The computer screen is popping with IMs, and the cell phone (the one accessory no Millennial is ever without is bursting with text messages) and the house phone is ringing off the hook. Toss in a video game in progress, several Web sites, and a couple of open blogs, and you'll begin to get the picture. Unless you don't speak Millennial. In that case, allow us to translate:

You know what a CD is; CDs replaced those vinyl record albums you have collecting dust in your basement. iPods are Apple Computer's pocket-sized hard-drive based devices that allow you to download and carry 5,000+ of your favorite songs along with you, everywhere you go. Who has 5,000 favorite songs? Most Millennials.

"IM" stands for "Instant Message" -- the lifeblood of Millennials communication. IM-ing takes place at a computer, where the screen is covered with little boxes that are filled with important acronyms, like "DEGT": "don't even go there", "IDTS": "I don't think so", and other top secret information. It must be top secret because every time an adult walks behind a Millennial while she's IM-ing her friends, the Millennial has a tendency to drape herself over the screen. Savvy Millennials download Anti-Parent Keys that allow them to tap a button and cover what's really on the screen with a page from a parent-approved Web site.

A blog is a Web site that can be used for many things; usually they are a place for the average citizen to have a voice. News hounds often check the blogs before they tune in to the mainstream medias. Millennials typically use blogs like MySpace.com and FaceBook.com as personal diaries, a place where their friends -- and the world -- can read their innermost thoughts. Want to scare yourself? Visit popular blog www.livejournal.com, click on "search," then "random." Then click on "User Info" to get the bloggers age. We'll warn you in advance: if you're a parent, what you read may scare you. On the Internet nothing is held back.

Growing up with these advantages has caused some big changes in how Millennials process information. In fact, the experts say that instead of linear thinking -- A to B to C -- a Millennial's thought process "moves randomly among a series of points before integrating into a conclusion." This all-over-the-place thinking allows them to process information faster, and allows for greater absorption of information. It is also likely to drive an older person nuts. You ask a kid a question, expecting a simple answer, only to find yourself worn out trying to follow his logic. They may have MTV attention spans, but they're brilliant kids!

So how can you put this 72 million customer opportunity to work in your store? Easy! Start now and grow your customers right along with you. Here's how:

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A Millennials world goes 24/7 – your store better have 24/7 presence

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What's your Web site like? Is it merely a place to visit to get basic information about your store or is it a "living, breathing" thing? Millennials like to play, and in fact will spend hours on Web sites that they like. This means your Web site needs to be filled with cool things to do. Club Libby Lu, an accessories store for

VIPs (Very Important Princesses) has an outstanding Web site. At www.clublibbylu.com VIPs can checkout the goods, play the Fame & Fortune game, plan a party with the help of a "fun and funky Club Counselor," discuss their most embarrassing moments, check out the Club faves, and more. It's a great model to study when re-designing your own Web site. And remember, if Millennials like your Web site, chances are their parents will too. Make sure you add lots of things for them as well.

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Millennials have a "pack" mentality; they tend to do everything in groups

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Remember when you had to have a date for the Prom? Not anymore! Being exposed to so many group activities as little kids has created a generation that likes to hang out together. Millennials even shop in groups -- and they LOVE to shop! Millennials are said to visit an average of 200 stores per year. And since Millennials influence spending \$600 billion per year, and spend a whopping \$20 billion a year of their own money, no wonder retailers are clamoring for their attention.

Stores like Abercrombie & Fitch, American Eagle, Hollister, and The Limited, Too are just a few of the stores that cater solely to Millennials.

Even Nordstrom has specialty departments for both teenage boys and girls. Millennials enjoy attentive customer service and look for stores that give it to them. They are also very brand conscious -- the kid might have a purse from Target but she wants a Louis Vuitton.

Check out this blog discussing how to get service at an "upper class store":

- "Don't just stand there and look like you're dumb. If no one comes and asks you what you need or what you want, take off your watch and start looking at it and turn it over and check the back of it. Take off one of your rings and twist it."
- "If you have something like a Louis Vuitton wallet or a coin purse or something like that, take it out and check your money."
- "If nothing else, that last item will get the sales person running to you, unless of course it's fake LV (Louis Vuitton) and you're in an LV store, then try hard not to embarrass yourself."

One poor mis-informed girl asked, "Can't you just go up to the counter and ask for help?" The reply: "No! The sales employees are there to serve YOU, not you serve them." Millennials carry a sense of entitlement, and no wonder. They've been doted upon, and catered to, by their parents since birth.

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Your goal should be to plan classes for your Millennial customers. For the littlest Millennials try both solo classes and events as well as those that include their parents.

In addition to classes, Tweens respond to favorite activities. When Toyota introduced the Scion, a car marketed to Millennials, they hosted street fairs where kids could participate in activities they enjoy, like skateboarding marathons. The cars decorated the sidelines, where the kids could touch them, sit in them, and imagine how they would design their own Scion someday. A waste of time? Nope. Toyota was just keeping their future customers close. Scion's Web site, www.scion.com, introduces kids to the Scion Culture, an online community where they can build their own Web site or become an active participant in ScionWorld.

"Gold Collar" Millennials, the oldest of the group, are defined as the new working class with money to

burn. They are graduating from college, getting settled in their careers, decorating new apartments and homes, and maybe even getting married and starting families. Any sort of Do It Yourself classes are a good fit for them.

Tapping into their touchstones is critical

Form your own Millennial Advisory Board. Turn them loose in your store and ask them to come up with things they'd like to do with what you sell. Listen to what they tell you -- you can guide them, but you cannot apply your generations slant to their ideas. The goal is to create an interactive and fun in-store experience -- from their perspective. Then give them easy ways to refer their friends.

This is the perfect time to get to know the Millennials. Visit your local library, or your favorite book store, and spend an hour or two perusing the

magazine rack, flipping through the hundreds of magazines devoted to Millennials. Remember *Seventeen Magazine*? *Glamour*? *Cosmopolitan*? If you haven't picked one up in awhile, we guarantee you'll be in for a shock. *US Magazine*, *Life & Style Weekly*, and *Teen People* will keep you up-to-speed with what's going on with Mylie Cyrus, Ashley Tisdale, Hillary Duff and other Millennials idols who are setting the fashion pace these days.

Reacquaint yourself with MTV. Yes, it will be hard, but just do it. Turn off the TV shows you usually watch and tune into what's on Fox, CW, the Disney Channel and Nickelodeon. Listen to Millennial music. If you think 50 cent is change for a dollar, if you don't know the difference between Emo and Ska, or if you can't hum the songs on this week's Top 10 list, then you have a lot of catching up to do. Don't worry. It will be both a fun and profitable journey! ☺

Rich Kizer and Georganne Bender are nationally recognized experts on customer diversity, "messing with the media," marketing and everything retail. They are widely referred to as retail anthropologists because they stalk and study that most elusive of mammals: today's consumer. KIZER & BENDER have presented their "Retail Adventures in the REAL World™" keynotes and seminars to diverse audiences since 1989. In 2004, KIZER & BENDER were named "Two of Retailing's Most Influential People." KIZER & BENDER's retail observations are widely featured in the Medias, including the ABC News special report "How Stores Hook You." Their book *Champagne Strategies on a Beer Budget!* has helped thousands of retailers improve their bottom line and their client list reads like a Who's Who in American business. Contact Rich & Georganne at 1-888-215-1839 or via their Web site www.KIZERandBENDER.com.