

The Age of Aquarius Meets the Age of Millennials

Are You Marketing to and Managing a Younger Version of Yourself?



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It's impossible to market to and manage a generation you think is a younger version of yourself, especially if it's not! That's what's happening these days between baby boomers (born from 1943 to 1960) and [millennials](#) (born from 1982 to 2000).

[Baby boomers](#) look at this generation—its idealism and its revolutionary tendencies—with a remembrance of things past. Millennials' recent political disruptions seem reminiscent of the 60s, a special time for boomers, many of whom came of age during the Vietnam War. Today, they look at these young protesters from this vantage point. That's a big mistake. It puts marketers and managers on the wrong path.

Imagine two birthday cakes, both with pink frosting and a cherry on the top. They look identical but the cake inside—the part that gives that lovely frosting its *raison d'être*—is different in every way.

Granted, baby boomers and millennials have some similarities. Both are large generations. Both have been intensely focused on by their parents, society, marketing outreaches, and the

media. Both want to change the world. Cut. End of scene.

The devil for marketers and managers is not only in the details, but in the differences. First of all, protests reveal different generational characteristics. Baby boomers broke rules just for the sake of breaking rules. Because of a war they couldn't or wouldn't understand and the "I am not a crook" Nixon era, they are an anti-establishment generation that questions authority. Boomers are inwardly turned, a generation of individuals who focus on themselves. They protested the Vietnam War in direct correlation to how active the draft was at the time.



In contrast, the millennial revolt is led by the desire to make a grand statement with their lives. Their motivation often stems from their desire not only to succeed, but also to help others. They are an outwardly turned generation, a generation of groups who focus on the team and the greater good. In

marketing and management, millennials want to know how a business producing products and services is contributing to mankind as a good, corporate citizen. There are 80 million millennials. By this number alone, they have forced corporate America to stand for something greater than the bottom line.

Next, each generation's attitude toward free speech reveals

generational differences. Baby boomers fought hard for this. They want to talk about everything, from “The Vagina Monologues” to presidential sex in the Oval Office. But on the other hand, millennials need “safe rooms” at college to protect themselves from the free speech that might hurt their sensitivities.

Then, each generation’s style of working is different. Boomers work hard, often putting in 60-hour work weeks to get the job done and to look good to the boss. Millennials, well, if employers don’t accommodate their style of doing things, they’ll go rogue entrepreneur on you and leave. For example, LinkedIn, with more than 400 million members, understands the millennial need for a more personal and professional life. For instance, family and friends can eat with employees in the cafeteria for free. Millennials don’t thrive on long work weeks, so LinkedIn, gives them one Friday, every month, to work on personal projects. And talk about unlimited vacation time! Sweet.

Finally, how each generation is motivated is different. Boomers are highly motivated by money; millennials need a profession with a purpose. Boomers, as idealists, want to teach the world to sing; millennials are saviors who want to help people around the world better their lives. Millennials are really more like the World War II generation (born from 1901 to 1924). They are going global to save the world, but the millennial way is not by war, it’s by acts of volunteerism, days of kindness, and contributing time and money to charities of their choice.

Millennials expect a company to make a difference on the environment and the betterment of people’s lives. Whole Foods, with its vision of a sustainable future, hangs banners throughout its stores highlighting its good global deeds. Nike help launch “The Girl Effect,” a movement that helps young women around the world climb out of poverty. Many businesses encourage mentoring and other social outreaches on company

time.

Examining these differences matters because it helps marketers and managers better understand and work with all generations. The more you know, the better the marketing effort, the more efficient the workplace. Let the sunshine in.

About the Author: [Ann A. Fishman](#) was awarded four U.S. Senate Research Fellowships to study generational trends and is an expert in providing insights into the preferences, trends, and buying habits of each of America's six generations. She taught generational marketing at NYU. Her book, "Marketing to the Millennial Woman," was recently published.