

# The 10 habits of highly effective millennial marketers.

(Based on the analysis of 100  
case studies)

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**W**hat is the secret to attracting Millennials? That's the million dollar question brand stewards in many different categories, including in the lottery industry, have tried to answer for years. Millennials are probably the most researched consumer generation in marketing, so you'd think the answer to this question would be obvious. In fact, a simple Google search for "Millennials" yields over 19 million search results, almost twice as much as for the other highly desirable consumer group, "the Baby Boomers" (10 million search results). And yet, while informative and interesting (everyone knows something about Millennials) most of this research is usually not actionable when trying to develop positioning platforms and communication programs actually targeting Millennials.

Maybe this explains why the industry hasn't cracked the code yet and why the question still seems like an important one?

To address this issue once and for all and turn the myths and half-truths about Millennials into specific and actionable insights, First-The-Trousers decided to analyze 100 North American case studies of effective marketing to Millennials (primarily Effie cas-



es), i.e. brands and campaigns that have successfully built their business by engaging Millennials.

A short version of the findings is published here (for more information about this research and a presentation of the more detailed results and relevant case studies please contact me at Ulli@first-the-trousers.com).

So what can we learn from these 100 brands who got it right?

- 1) They understand the role their category plays (or doesn't) in the lives of Millennials: the first observation is that these brands first and foremost help solve a relevant business problem. And they start by first understanding the role their brand (or category) plays or doesn't play in Millennials lives and design their strategies and marketing programs building from these first insights. For example, in 2015 Coke Zero realized that 80% of Millennials had never tried its product. Yet research also showed that 60% of people who do try Coke Zero, like it, actually like it so much that they would re-purchase it. The solution? Get as many Millennials as possible to actually sample Coke Zero at various events by engaging them via cool sampling devices and by rewarding them with a coupon. And while this program was executed in a really innovative way, I'd argue that its success is driven by solving a fairly mundane (but highly relevant) business problem.
- 2) They use celebrities to introduce their brand to Millennials. Another striking observation is that most of the cases we looked at used celebrities (from entertainment, Youtube, etc.) to help spread their brand message, usually as part of a broader marketing plan. While we knew that celebrities act as a great promotional device, we hadn't realized how systematically they were actually used and how critical they were in reaching out to Millennials successfully. Using celebrities acts as a short-cut to Millennials limited attention span and enabled those brands to extend their reach to the followers of these celebrities.



3) They design their marketing programs around real-life events. Interestingly, the majority of campaigns we looked at evolved a tie-in to a real live event, either an existing one (sports event, national holiday, ComicCon, etc.) or one specifically created for the campaign (a concert featuring Millennials favorite stars to promote AIDS testing in NYC, for example). So yes, while this cohort is often described as “digital natives,” the key to their hearts and wallets seems to be through real-live events.

4) They amplify and add value to existing experiences. When connecting their brand promotion to a live event, those brands however go out of their way to amplify the experience as opposed to just show presence through passive sponsorship. Coming back to the Coke Zero example I mentioned in the first point, Coke didn't just use promotional models or hand out free cans and bottles. Instead they built a 26-by-36 ft drinkable billboard (and other really innovative ads) that served real ice-cold Coke Zero to thousands of fans. The liquid flowed from a giant Coke Zero bottle through 4,500 ft of straw tubing that spelled out ‘taste it,’ until it reached seven dispensers on the ground.

5) They more deeply understand and leverage existing Millennials' behaviors. Let's start with an example: yes, Millennials use social media, but this general statement is not very actionable or useful in itself. Why? Because the logical yet ineffective conclusion would be “let's create Facebook ads to reach them!,” and good luck with that. So, better understanding their preferences is the next success factor of the brands we analyzed. For example, in 2015 Lowe's realized that the Millennials it wanted to attract used YouTube videos and illustrated blog posts as their learning media of choice. Lowe's also learned that they had particular preference for smart shortcuts and unexpected solutions, such as can be found on

sites like Lifehacker. The solution, a campaign called “Fix in Six,” that used Vine as core platform to distribute 6 second videos that would feed Millennials clever and useful home improvement content in appetizer-size portions. “Fix in Six” became an award-winning and innovative use of digital channels, but its real strength comes from the fact that it is rooted in a relevant consumer behavior.

**Top 10 Habits of Highly Effective Millennial Marketers**  
(that will challenge your current beliefs)

- 1 They **understand the role** their category plays (or doesn't) in the lives of Millennials
- 2 They use **celebrities** to introduce their brand to Millennials
- 3 They design their marketing around **real-life events**
- 4 They **amplify and add value** to existing experiences
- 5 They **understand and leverage** existing Millennial behaviors
- 6 They cooperate with **entertainment and media** properties appealing to Millennials
- 7 They reward Millennials through **free giveaways** that promote sales
- 8 They seed their brand message across a multitude of **on- and offline touch-points**
- 9 They use **social media** to amplify their message rather than as a media channel
- 10 They use digital innovation to add social currency and a **WOW factor** to a message, not to replace it

Source: 100 case studies of effective marketing to Millennials [www.first-the-trousers.com](http://www.first-the-trousers.com)

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6) They align with entertainment and media properties that are already appealing to Millennials (again, often as part of a broader marketing program). Another shortcut most brands we looked at used to gain the favors of Millennials was to

team up with media properties popular with Millennials such as BuzzFeed, College Humor, Vice, etc. to co-create content appealing to Millennials and in line with the brand's message, and then have that content live on a platform that Millennials are already comfortable with and enjoy.

- 7) They reward Millennials with free giveaways that (usually) help promote sales. One big "myth" in marketing to Millennials is that this audience will gladly be turned into brand ambassadors that will eagerly share the brand gospel across their social media channel with enthusiasm and for free. Our analysis on the other hand shows that most brands, while creating involving and share-worthy experiences, also rewarded the consumers who interacted with the brand with free incentives (or free products) that usually helped drive sale.
- 8) They seed their brand message across a multitude of on- and offline touch-points. A recent study into effective social media campaigns (Seriously Social 2015, Warc.com) shows that the most successful campaigns typically use between 3 and 5 channels (both on and offline), one of which often being the point of sale or retail environment. Our findings support this learning. The challenge with reaching Millennials is that one never knows if and when the tipping point will be reached and how the brand message will actually spread. Using a multitude of touch points (and tactics) seems to help address this issue. Including the point of sale as one of the touch points obviously helps drive sales.
- 9) They use social media to amplify their message rather than as a media channel. Yes, of course most of the brands we looked at used social media in one form or another. Some, usually due to budget limitations, even exclusively focused on only one or two social media channels. The point, however is that most of these brands tapped into the power of social media by giving Millennials a reason to share their brand message (and by making this sharing easy) and by promoting content they knew was already share-worthy rather than by buying advertising space on social media (even though some of the brand we looked at did). Frankly, it's easy to buy social media ad space to amplify your content- it's hard to create content shareable enough that you don't have to.
- 10) They use digital innovation to add social currency and a WOW factor to a message, not to replace it. Another myth about marketing to Millennials is that Millennials only respond to cool digital or social gimmicks. But I hope by now the reader will have realized that while these innovative ways to communicate play an important role in helping spread the word and create buzz for the brand, they were usually designed as a clever answer to a communication challenge rather

than as an end, or as a creative indulgence, in itself. Snapchat isn't an idea- it's a place an idea could live.

Millennials are often thought-of as this mysterious cohort that lives in a different (digital) world with different conventions and values and that speaks a different language that needs to be decoded. Our research and experience shows that instead, they are a group of very pragmatic consumers that demand value from the brand they interact with and for the money they that just happen to have grown up in a digital world and therefore are way more familiar with the digital and social space than most marketers trying to appeal to them.

So to conclude, ask yourself following questions when developing your next campaign targeting Millennials:

- Are you solving a relevant business problem?
- Are you including celebrities to help promote your message?
- Are you using live events to promote your brand?
- Are you amplifying Millennial's experience at these events?
- Is your program leveraging natural behaviors or are you hoping to create new ones?
- Are you partnering with entertainment or media properties that appeal to Millennials?
- Are you rewarding Millennials for their participation and do these rewards drive sales?
- Is your program using multiple touch points including point of sale?
- Are you using social media as more than just a media channel? Are you providing reasons to share?
- Are you using the digital space in an innovative and talk-worthy way to solve relevant consumer problem?

If you can honestly answer yes to all these questions, your campaign will most likely succeed and you'll be able to attract Millennials to grow your business. If you can't answer yes to all these questions, at least you'll be able to identify where the weaknesses in your program are.

For more information about and insights from this analysis and actual case studies, please contact me directly at Ulli@first-the-trousers.com. ■

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