

GETTING REAL:

Understand Millennials' Role In Workplace Services Market

For more than 17 years, MarketReach has pioneered the development of leading sales and strategic marketing solutions for the coffee, vending, and micromarket industry. In the course of the hundreds of campaigns that we have managed, we have encountered diverse industry trends and have adapted our clients' strategies accordingly, from emerging technologies including cashless payment and mobile processing. Of all these trends, none has had such pervasive impact or staying-power as the rise of the Millennial generation in the workforce.

What may seem like a modern buzzword with negative connotations, the "Millennial" generation is transforming every aspect of the coffee, vending and micromarket industry from product inventory to payment processing. Most notable is that millennials' preferences and concerns are changing how our clients communicate with prospects during the sales cycle, from getting their foot in the door to capturing the attention and interest of the decision-maker.

In the first section of this article, we will provide an introduction to the millennial generation, exploring who they are and why they matter. In closing, we will explore the subject of how to reach them.

WHO ARE THEY?

Millennials are the largest generation, According to a 2018 Pew Research Center study. Pew Research (Washington, DC) defines "millennials" as people between 22 and 37 years old.

This study defines the millennial generation as unique for its use of technology (although previous generations are catching up). The U.S. Census Bureau reports that they now number 77 million. This is the population's largest age cohort, representing more than 25% of the total American population.

The bottom line here is that the millennials are quickly becoming the predominant age group to engage with commercial food services. They are no longer a small, marginal segment. Millennials today are much more than your hipster niece who is glued to her smartphone during holiday dinners. Statistics show that millennials make up a growing majority of people who purchase from your equipment or markets. They are also discerning coffee drinkers and are willing to pay for a great cup of joe.

For these reasons, understanding the preferences of millennials is essential

by **Amanda Puppo**
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when deciding on product offerings. In foodservice, products that are "sugar-free" and "diet" hold little appeal for millennials, while products that boast "gluten-free" and "vegan" ingredients wield powerful attraction. As for beverages, Millennials are obsessed with flavored coffees of all kinds, the sales of which demonstrate that they far surpass the popularity of energy drinks. The National Coffee Association of U.S.A.'s Coffee Blog reports that 70% of "past-day" coffee consumed by millennials is of the gourmet or flavored variety (nationalcoffeeblog.org).

Millennials dominate the American workforce today and will for decades to come, and they have buying power. They now outnumber "Generation X" and the long-dominant "Baby Boomers." Pew Research has found that one in three American workers today can be defined as a millennial; they have been influenced by shared unique experiences, demographic attributes, psychographics and ideals. *Bazaarvoice* (Austin, TX) states that in the U.S., millennials now have the most spending power of any generation. Pew Research estimates that power at about \$1.3 trillion annually.

MILLENNIALS MAKE DECISIONS

Millennials are ambitious. 54% of Millennials either want to start a business or have already started one, the Kauffman Foundation reports. In the corporate environment, Millennials are fast-becoming the executive decision makers that B2B industries want to connect with. Over the past five years, Kauffman found, 87% of millennial workers took on management roles, compared with 38% of Gen X and 19% of Baby Boomers. This can't be understood in isolation: PwC (London, UK) reports that 63.3% of US executives will be eligible to retire within the next five years. They will be replaced by even more millennials.

The bottom line here is that millennials no longer can be considered the age cohort whose members help companies troubleshoot social media. In all industries, Millennials are making executive decisions about their companies' breakrooms.

Suggestions: When composing your sales presentations and brochures, consider millennials as your target audience and tailor your sales messaging to appeal to their

psyches. When drafting your leading feature and benefit statements, consider highlighting the attributes that millennials value. Millennials have a deep affection for products that are both locally and responsibly sourced, and are willing to pay a higher price for products that might "nourish" their ethical standards more than their appetite. Most appealing are products that promote "green" and "eco-responsible" operations. Ninety percent of millennials will buy from a supplier whose brand or brands follow social and environmental practices they trust *L'Officiel USA* (New York City) has found that 95% of them will recommend that brand to a friend.

In your sales messaging, consider highlighting your "green" operational practices along with any products that do the same. What "eco-friendly" policies does your company have in place? Practices like paperless billing and local sourcing are worth mentioning to help set you apart from your competition and help get your foot in the door.

Take the time to research the products that you offer and highlight their leading
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About the Author

AMANDA PUPPO is the founder and chief executive officer of MarketReach (Lawrenceville, NJ), a boutique agency specializing in high-level prospecting and appointment setting services. Since she established the company in 2003, MarketReach has grown to a staff of 20.

Puppo has been named "Young Entrepreneur of the Year" by the US Small Business Administration (SBA). She is



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MarketReach serves the coffee, vending and micro market industry with services in B2B appointment setting, lead generation and integrated marketing solutions to fill the sales pipeline. Puppo can be contacted by emailing to Amanda@MarketReachResult.com, or calling her at (609) 448-6364

ENGAGE WITH MILLENNIAL DECISION-MAKERS TO BUILD TRUST

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features as well. A Millennial will be enticed by hearing from a responsible vending/micromarket/office refreshment service operator who takes the time and responsibility upon themselves to support products with “green” initiatives, and will be more open to working with a company that is perceived as making a difference.

It’s worth taking the time to understand this desire for seeing a product or service in the context of its impact on society.

MILLENNIALS ARE PRINCIPLED

Millennials like companies they can trust, and they are loyal to the ones they do. Sixty percent are often or always loyal to the brands that they currently purchase or conduct business with, according to *Forbes*. And they are savvy B2B consumers. Social Chorus (San Francisco, CA) has found that only 6% of Millennials consider online advertising to be credible. Moreover, a whopping 84% of Millennials don’t trust traditional advertising, according to HubSpot (Cambridge, MA).

The bottom-line summary is: To appeal to the millennial decision maker, a company’s brand identity has never been more important. How a company appears to the public, and the tactics a company employs to convey its message, makes a big difference. Millennials reject the one-way communication of traditional advertising, so companies must adopt marketing strategies for two-way communication and outreach.

Some suggestions for doing this include: (1) Build or revamp your brand’s identity. Factors such as your reputation, authenticity, perceived positive impact on the world, best practices and ethical guidelines matter.

Furthermore, *image* matters. Invest in services for brand development to secure a powerful logo, slogan, color palette and font collection to ensure that your positive image is supported with a consistent design and staying power.

(2) Change the approach of your sales process. Draft a sales presentation that prioritizes these confidence-building elements within the leading feature and benefit statements. Your sales pitch should establish trust, emphasize your company’s commitment to service and tell a story that positions your company as more than just the service that you provide.

Most importantly, seek opportunities for two-way communication in the sales meeting by pursuing active engagement. Abandon the concept of memorizing an “elevated

pitch” that only appeals to the prospect who is thinking “what’s in it for me?”

Instead, take the time to address the prospect as an individual. Ask probing questions to elicit each prospect’s unique values and “pain points,” and then present your sales features in a customized, conversational way. This way, prospects feel a personal connection because they’re being spoken *with*, not spoken *to*.

Sixty-four percent of millennials believe that social media are among the most effective channels for reaching brands, Microsoft has said; and Simple DirectMedia-Layer (SDL) observes that five out of six millennials connect with companies on social media networks. Sixty-two percent of millennials say that, if a brand engages with them on social networks, they’re more likely to become loyal customers (*Forbes*). Millennials also engage in quid pro quo: 66% of Millennials follow a company or brand on Twitter, and 64% will “like” a company or brand on Facebook to score a coupon or discount, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth has found. What’s more, 56% would share their locations with companies in order to receive coupons or deals for nearby businesses. The USC Annenberg Center for the Digital Future (Los Angeles, CA) reported that 51% of millennials would share information in exchange for an incentive.

The bottom line here is that, with millennials, the key to sales is *engagement*. Companies must adopt the platforms millennials use and understand what motivates them. This is an absolute necessity to secure Millennials as lucrative prospects and to retain Millennials as clients.

In order to do this, it’s important to build and maintain social media profiles. For the coffee, vending and micromarket industry, social channels like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and even YouTube are excellent vehicles for marketing.

However, be warned: simply creating a profile and logging in occasionally is *not* enough; in fact, such infrequent casual use can sometimes work against your intentions.

The platform(s) that you subscribe to will depend upon the content that you produce. For prospect engagement, data collection, promotional offers, contests and occasional photo and video content, LinkedIn and Facebook are leading platforms. If you are able to produce consistently high-quality photographs to illustrate your services, Instagram is an oft-overlooked platform. And if you have five or more videos and can add new video

content at least once a month, YouTube can be added as well.

Once you’ve chosen the social media that you plan to use, build a strong marketing strategy for each. All social media platforms offer a lucrative opportunity for engagement with prospects, brands and clients, but they are virtually worthless without a strong marketing strategy in place for support.

Start by defining your current objectives and then define a consistent strategy to achieve those goals. To build your brand identity, schedule weekly posts to publicize company announcements such as policy updates, press releases and product information. A blog on your website is good for this purpose. You then can repurpose them for LinkedIn and Facebook posts.

A great way to build your brand is to align your company with key products and brands that you offer. Establish connections with these brands, and consistently share the content that you want to associate with your company’s brand image. Sharing product announcements from leading brands that you carry is also a great strategy for client retention. Messaging service features on all platforms can be used to engage current prospects and solicit new ones.

MILLENNIALS ARE TECH SAVVY

More than nine out of 10 millennials own smart phones, according to the Pew Research Center; and *Forbes* has found that 87% of millennials use two to three tech devices at least once a day.

So the overall bottom line is that times are changing. Millennials are not defined by technology, but they are setting the pace and forcing previous generations to play catch up.

To benefit from this, adopt smartphone-friendly technology. With new concepts emerging every day, it is important to consider the ones that integrate seamlessly into smartphone technology. Services with smartphone-compatible applications, available in Apple’s App Store and the Google Play app store, are essential for a variety of solutions ranging from cashless payments and loyalty incentive programs; you also can find a wide range of management programs for everything from inventory management to security. Providing these service features is a strong selling point – but being able to offer them on a platform with which the Millennial decision maker is already highly familiar is invaluable.