

TIPS TO AVOID THE #MILLENNIAL MELTDOWN

Oh, Millennials, what are we going to do with you? Everyone wants to #reach you, to #engage you and to get you to spend your #money. Why, oh why, won't you just tell us what we can do for you? Oh, what's that you say? You mean you have been telling us this whole time? Huh ...

Open your ears, the Millennials are talking, says Melvin Greer, Senior Fellow at Lockheed Martin and author of "21st Century Leadership." A majority of Millennials — 59 percent — turn to their trusted network of friends and family as the primary influencers when making a purchase.

Millennials don't just use products and services; they are the products and services they use. The generation associates a part of themselves with their preferred brands and is hyperaware of how a brand not only meets their service

needs, but also their personal needs. Because they have such high expectations for hyper-personalization, they therefore require mass-customized experiences.

Millennials are digital natives accustomed to having any kind of information available to them at any time. Instead of worrying about meeting these high expectations, consider using their knowledge and ideas: ask them what they want and they'll give you the exact products and service ideas they want to buy from you. It could be as easy as that.

If you're wondering why you should jump through hoops for the youngest purchasing generation it's because once you've got 'em, they'll be yours forever.

Trust in brands and institutions are waning across the generation. They are

well-trained in sniffing out inauthenticity and need to believe that a company has integrity to follow through with what they say. It may seem counter-intuitive, but it's important to be aware that Millennials are at the top of this reciprocal ecosystem. They will represent almost half of the U.S. workforce by 2020. They will also represent about \$1.4 trillion in spend — about one third of all retail sales projected for that year.

You may see them as one small fish, but collectively, they are all sharks in a large network that wields the power to create or kill your company, Greer says. Millennials are a viral group that can lead to large-scale changes in the future of consumer behavior. You'll be taking the reigns alongside them if you find the sweet spot at the center of mass customization, authenticity and technology.

The five disruptive strategies for #Millennials

1 Structure

Baby Boomers prefer structure with little room for flexibility. They require a separation of work and social life. Millennials, on the other hand, crave flexibility, but they also seek clear goals and a set agenda, constructive feedback and two-way communication throughout the organization.

2 Purpose

They'll pull out their wallets for a cause. Perhaps they're philanthropic of mind or want to give back to their community. Can your organization show them that their money is going to a greater good or that it will change the world in some way? Millennials not only want to be involved with idea creation, but also with decision-making.

3 Omnichannel

It should go without saying that Millennials are the most engaged of all the generations. It should also go without saying, then, that they need to be engaged on all channels. Engagement means a two-way conversation that stimulates their minds is fast-paced, concise and educational or instructional. This means channel integration is imperative — they have such a high expectation of a seamless experience that they don't even want to be aware of the channel they're operating in.

4 Interactive retail

Millennials internal to your organization are just as important to your business as those who are external customers. Go back to the

basics and stimulate their senses as a way of disrupting them. Greer suggests training through interactive design modules, real-time feedback and gamification.

5 Brand journalism

Tweets, Facebook posts, survey feedback, all these things are classified as brand journalism for your business. Content is key to growing and maintaining your buying relationships with Millennials. They don't want to engage with your contact center, Greer says, they want to be your contact center. They don't breakdown channels by medium in their minds because they consider themselves to be their own channel. Everyone is the star of their own movie, he says. Kids these days.