

## **Marketing to Generation Y-ers and Why Old People Are Failing Us**

My generation was born amidst the backdrop of a dying world.

As children, we lived through the worst economic times since the Great Depression. As teenagers, we were shepherded into debt as college degrees became empty papers. And as young adults joining the workforce, we've been labeled "lazy", "arrogant", "pampered", "snooty" and "apathetic".

### **You Know What I'm Talking About**

Those Gen Y-ers who have unrealistically high expectations regarding career advancements... The self-entitled portion of the population who hold over-inflated opinions of their skill set because they were conditioned all their lives to believe that they could never fail... The young and brash folks who seem to not have emotional intelligence, networking capabilities, respect for authority, and no qualms about quitting whenever they want.

### **Bad News for You**

These fickle-minded Gen Y-ers you love to hate are *everywhere*, whether you approve or not. We're joining (and leaving) the labor force in droves, evolving into the demographic with the largest spending power, and hold the future of the world in our hands – so be good to us.

### **Faux Pas: Gen Y-ers Don't Understand Real-World Issues and Have No Firm Grasp on Reality**

### **Truth: Gen Y-ers Inherited a Broken World and Our Tactics Are Better Than Yours**

**Here's Why:** The oldest of my generation (the Gen Y-ers of 1980), were born when companies began downsizing. They were barely stringing sentences together in 1984 when the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported widespread layoffs of people around them; they were in elementary schools when Black Monday struck; they were

there in the recession of 1991, watching as it burned the hopes and dreams of their families away; they witnessed the dot-com bubble go full-circle from boom to bust between 1995 and 2001, and while they were not old enough to understand the Enron tragedy when it happened, they were certainly not too young to be spared from the pain that the scandal brought.

Generation Y-ers grew up without knowing a single prolonged period of financial stability. And just like the Greatest Generation who fought World War II, Generation Y-ers rose to the occasion when collectively and unequivocally, their childhoods were taken from them on September 11, 2001.

We fought the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; championed for homosexuals the rights to love and marry; swept the first black American president into the Oval Office – and bore witness to how our parents had not much to show at old age after 40 years of hard, honest work. Why would we want to walk your paths?

Each time, and with each turn for the worse, whether you choose to stand with us for how we behave, or against us for the way we react – we continue to be the Greatest Misunderstood Generation who rises to the occasion, albeit in our own special ways.

### **Marketing Lesson 101**

Generation Y-ers grew up around technology, and we grew old in our basements tinkering with our gadgets. Every marketer just pretends to know what that means.

The concept that most older and more traditional marketers don't seem to grasp is that *all of Generation Y-ers' friends live in their computers*. We're antisocial. We shrivel at the thought of having to communicate face-to-face with strangers.

### **Your Calls to Action**

And that's why your calls to action should **never** include phone numbers that would lead to us needing to speak to a real person. We text, not talk. We're selective listeners. We don't care if you're our parents or the guy living down the street; you can talk all day, but we'll only listen when we want to.

We don't want coaching calls that start off with getting to know each other. You'll have to be our friend first before you get to coach us.

Our updates are strategically delivered to us via Facebook and Twitter throughout the day from our network of carefully selected informants from all over the world. We watch out for each other on YouTube. We screen you meticulously, and we don't check our emails. To those advocating email marketing as the **only** way to go, please link us to your social media profiles from there, then. But, really, we don't care for email; there's not enough group engagement going on there.

Online social validation is of utmost importance to us, though, and we take our friends' recommendations seriously — never mind the cost of those shoes. And we, perhaps, admit to having a slight problem with real world-networking... But old-school methods are *expensive*. And dying. The concepts behind them are timeless, for sure, but the methods... they're dying, for sure.