

The Future Decision-Makers: Marketing to Millennials

As baby boomers begin to depart the labor force and are replaced with millennials, a significant disruption is about to affect the [\\$600 billion global legal services market](#). Millennials became the largest generation in the U.S. labor force in 2016, according to a [Pew Research Center analysis](#) of U.S. Census Bureau data. This generation, which currently (in 2018) ranges in age from 22 to 37, is often described as the “selfie generation” or “digital natives.” Most don’t remember life without the internet. Few don’t know what it’s like to function without a smartphone. They’ve been characterized as entitled, impatient, multi-device multitaskers who are technology obsessed, but also socially conscious; somewhat idealistic and less likely to blame the past, instead opting to look for solutions.

While generational studies are inevitably stereotypical and broadly define common characteristics and values shared by people who have been raised in the same era, understanding fundamental generational differences can help marketers adjust strategies and prepare for change. Future purchasers will not necessarily behave in the same ways as past purchasers. Marketers have spent millions of dollars on studying the purchasing habits and modeling personas of target audiences. Whether you ascribe to the belief that an historical shift causes the next generation to break from the traits of the previous generation every 20 years or so, certain facts about millennials can’t be ignored:

1. They have a high level of technological literacy.
2. The way they communicate is different from previous generations.
3. They are expected to be the largest living adult generation, [surpassing the baby boomer generation by 2019](#).

As Millennials mature and assume higher positions in corporate America, they are beginning to *influence* purchase decisions and actually *become* the purchasers of legal services. Recognizing emerging trends and understanding cultural characteristics of this group are crucial to capturing their attention.

They’re Price-conscious

With the internet literally at their fingertips, millennials are highly adept at price shopping. Many are burdened with student debt and witnessed the Great Recession. They are price-conscious and not as motivated to accumulate money as their predecessors, the X Generation. They know how to compare costs and carefully consider their options before purchasing.



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They Use Multiple Devices

A [recent Nielson report](#) shows that only 2 percent of millennials change channels during television commercials. While this may appear to demonstrate their openness to watching commercials, the study also revealed that they scored low in ad memorability – viewers reported that they switched to their phones during commercial breaks to engage on social media.

They're Distracted and Commonly Multitask

The Nielson report also reveals that millennials are adept at using multiple devices across various platforms at the same time. Companies that can market across devices are most likely to grab their attention and create brand memorability.

They Seek Immediate Response and Satisfaction

Immediacy is expected with this generation, which has grown up using texts and emails as their primary means of communication. The iPhone “read receipt” feature exemplifies how people track when their texts are read. If they don't get a response in less than a minute, they become impatient. Clearly, this trait will pose problems in the legal services industry where thoughtful responses don't always come with lightning speed.

They Grew Up with Online Reviews and Influencer Marketing

If they want to know whether a product, place or service is “legit,” millennials turn to online reviews, recommendations on social media, and endorsements from influencers and celebrities. They value the opinions of people they are connected to online more than they trust self-promotional content from brands.

Social Media is Baked into Their Human Interactions

While they're susceptible to brand storytelling that social media facilitates, millennials want to be part of the story, not passive witnesses. They like, share and comment on social media posts. They write reviews and discuss companies in various online forums. For brands, this can cut both ways: Positive reviews can lead to an increase in popularity, but negative reviews can cause serious damage.

They Don't Want Irrelevant and Impersonal Content

Flashy and self-promotional content doesn't influence this group. Remember that they're digital natives, not easily impressed with the technology that they've grown up with. They'd rather see products and information tailored to their unique needs and wants. Retargeting campaigns don't creep them out when they see ads following them around the internet.

They're Socially Conscious

Growing up in an era of climate change, increased diversity and – more recently – the #MeToo movement, 70 percent of millennials are willing to spend more with brands that support causes they care about, according to a [Cone Communications survey](#) report.

How Should Law Firms Market to Millennials?

Tell Your Firm's Story with Authenticity

Every firm has a brand message that uniquely defines them and differentiates them from competitors. Firms need to communicate authentically and openly. Your firm's story should lift the curtain and show the world a behind-the-scenes look at your firm culture, your attorneys and your good work. Millennials are particularly skeptical of marketing spin. Jargon that presents a glossed-over version of your firm and contradicts your outside reputation will be a red flag for this generation. Be transparent. Be relevant.

Create Efficiencies with Technology and Innovation

Millennials understand the power of technology and its ability to create efficiencies. If technology can reduce the amount of time it takes to perform a task and the end result is equivalent to – if not better than – a non-tech approach, your firm better be leveraging such solutions.

Univar Inc. is one company that gets this attitude. In a [recent article](#) in the *American Lawyer*, Jeffrey Carr, general counsel of Univar Inc., explains how the company plans to cut its legal spend using efficiencies that “will include using technology and project management ... [with] the goal of reducing litigation and automating legal services. Law firms will have to buy into that view if they want a slice of Univar's \$7 million annual spend on external legal services.”

Develop Alternative Fee Arrangements and Deliver Value

Shifting away from standard hourly billing where the law firm absorbs some of the risk is going to be attractive to millennials. When they purchase legal services, they will demand *value* delivered with effectiveness and efficiency. Similar to how millennials price shop online, they will be open to alternative legal services that provide the best value for their dollar, including shopping for legal services providers other than attorneys.

Jennifer Warner, vice president of legal for Columbia Sportswear Co., shared some direct advice for traditional law firms at the [Summit on Legal Innovation and Disruption](#): “I want to take that same amount of money and I want to spend it better. I'm going to be looking at my total combination of resources. What are my outside counsel doing? What are my alternative providers doing? And what is my in-house counsel doing, and do I have the right mix?”

Develop a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Program

With heightened attention to social problems, millennials care more than previous

generations about social change and want to actively be part of solutions. According to [The 2017 Millennial Impact Report](#), national marches and social protests exemplify how this generation is dedicated to large social issues, regardless of any direct benefit to themselves. They are more likely to research the issues a company supports compared to previous generations.

For law firms to develop a CSR program that resonates with millennials, they can't just randomly pick a cause; they need to find a genuine mission their firm values. For instance, Jaffe recently partnered with Wine To Water in a pro bono effort to build water filters for families in need of clean water. During the LMA national conference in April 2018, we invited attendees to help us build water filters that were sent around the world. We witnessed firsthand the excitement generated by active participation in an effective volunteer project.

While disruption in the legal industry is inevitable, understanding the characteristics of the next generation of purchasers will help firms reinvent the way they provide and market legal services. Firms that neglect to consider the effect the new generation will have on the industry, and opt instead to hold onto long-held traditions, might find themselves struggling to keep pace with the competition.

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