

Four millennial stereotypes that will ruin your ad campaign

By [Jana Rooheart](#)

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Multiple pieces of marketing research show that Millennials are the largest generation with the greatest combined purchasing power in history. No wonder advertisers are so obsessed with this segment of the audience and the ways to reach them.

However, people born since 1980 to approximately 2000 are also the ones with the greatest student loans and the highest unemployment rate, which makes them tough customers. Apart from this ambivalence, there are also many misconceptions (and a few justified stereotypes) that millennials themselves hate, and that can ruin all your efforts to make an efficient ad campaign.



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Me, me, me

The most widespread notion about people born since 1980 to approximately 2000 is that they are narcissistic, self-involved and shallow. After all, it was them who invented the selfie. Those people grew up wearing the crown their parents put on them, so the best way to reach this audience is to flatter them blatantly. Well, flattery is the most overused advertising technique since the time immemorial and, I won't deny it, quite an efficient one. However, you shouldn't miss the opportunity to offer millennials something more than the ability to snap a perfect selfie with your smartphone or be the best in a pair of your jeans.

They just seem more self-involved – and only because thanks to technologies, they have more channels to express themselves than previous generations. Their ego is by no means not the only thing that makes them tick: they are altruistic and determined to make a difference. Don't flatter them directly, they want brutally honest feedback, shared experience, collective action and civic engagement. You will achieve more if you highlight that 1% of each sale goes to charity, or that new pack of your product is more eco-friendly than anything before, instead of focusing on how your product will make your customers even more charismatic. Instead of highlighting how unique your customer is, it is better to underline what he or she has in common with others and how they can make a difference together.

Entitled

This second stereotype is also widely spread. Of course, if someone is full of oneself, one must feel entitled. There are some grounds for this one. However, millennials themselves explain their drive to have things here and now, not with the entitlement, but with the lack of trust – they have experienced too many broken promises. Therefore, instead of promising them a pie in the sky, it's better to offer something less – but, yes, here and now. Not the fulfillment of a big dream, but something that will help them on the way to achieving it.

Lazy, lacking focus and passion

Ads often appeal to the laziness of people, and rightly so. Who doesn't want to make their life easier and spare some time and effort? However, the assumption that they are lazy annoys and upsets Millennials, so it's better to avoid such implications. Millennials are the ones who undertake unpaid internships to learn more of something they are passionate about. The “easy” start-ups and crowd-funding came around not because Gen Y is too lazy to get away from their computers and their parents' basements and find a proper job – it's because they are trying to make lemonade from the lemons the life offered them. They are staying positive and relaxed when circumstances are depressing and unpromising. If anything, it makes them enthusiastic. So, instead of highlighting how your product or service will indulge their laziness, better shift focus to the time it saves them: the quicker the better.

Dependent on technology

This notion millennials themselves admit being true. They are so-called “digital natives”, social networks are their habitat, and they do have a fear of missing out something exciting and important, so staying connected has a great value to them.

All the [groups](#) the marketers split millennials into: Hip-ennial, Millennial Mom, Anti-Millennial, Gadget Guru, Clean and Green Millennials, and Old-School Millennials – have their own special interest and involvement in digital. Globally aware and charitable Hip-ennials thrive on information and are the most active users of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Millennial Moms are family-oriented and tech-savvy, they are into parenting apps like [Pumpic](#) and Baby Bump and apps devoted to health and working out, like Daily Yoga. Gadget Guru is rather obvious: they are gadget-crazed (usually Apple fans) and have an app for everything. Clean and Green love renewable energy and recycling, they swarm social networks, creating themed communities and sharing “green” life hacks online. Old-school Millennials are less involved in digital life, still, they love watching classic shows they find on YouTube and use social networks to keep in touch with their friends, whom they prefer to meet in person. The less involved are so-called Anti-Millennials, who are the most conservative and search life/work balance and comfort, however, they do utilize planners, musical apps and video chats such as Skype and Viber.

What is wrong then with this notion, particularly when it's true? Here is the catch: although Millennials are admittedly tech-dependent, they are also aware that their digital involvement borders addiction and the latest trend is to curb their digital habits. Therefore, constantly appealing to this characteristic feature of their generation, you have a risk creating yourself an image of a bad guy, who tempts them into dependency and addiction.



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It doesn't matter that you must quit the digital fad absolutely, yet you'd better be more subtle and creative with it. On top of that, with pressure for Gen Y, you should not forget that an older generation is interested in technology as well (and has a greater individual purchasing power, mind you).

In conclusion, let me remind you that Generation X was regarded as bored cynics, and in her book, *Generation Me*, Jean M. Twenge quotes an advertising executive, who calls this notion the “most expensive marketing mistake in history”. So be careful with stereotypes, sometimes they work, but sometimes they backfire and it may cost dearly.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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