

HOW TO ENGAGE MILLENNIALS

A NEWFOUNDERS ACTION PAPER



NEWFOUNDERS

HOW TO ENGAGE MILLENNIALS?

This paper is for candidates, politicians, state parties and political organizations that want to engage more millennials in their campaigns.

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INTRODUCTION TO NEWFOUNDERS

We at NewFounders are not only activists, group leaders, and politicians. We are political builders. As a coalition, we believe that the next paradigm shift in politics is centered around the use of design and tech to make politics come to the end user, not the other way around. A nation is a contract with a citizen, and as consumers in this system, we need our political technology to reach the levels of usability and accessibility as other products we are used to purchasing. We strive to make the most basic systems for the America consumer—running, voting and giving—easy and even fun.

The key to this lies in understanding today's citizen consumer. America is an overworked country. We need the ability to fix problems from anywhere and in any milieu, to be able to engage with politics in ways and timeframes that make sense, and to be able to easily enter and leave a hive brain (joint voice and think tank) centered around redefining America 2.0 and Democrats 2.0. Our work unlocks large pools of communication and listening on the left and center of the country, with the aim of redesigning not just our policy platform, but our country itself.



THESIS

There are three significant ways to engage millennials based on the findings of the millennial panel that wrote this paper. They are:

- Knowing and respecting the millennial audience and speaking their language.
- Increasing usability and accessibility inside any tools, systems or asks made of this audience.
- Tying asks into a more substantial cause or mission, one aimed at the betterment of the world and not just for the interests of one or a few.

We will begin by identifying the age range of millennials, move into an analysis of their most common personality traits and the cause for these traits, examine how usability and accessibility can be increased for this audience at both the party and campaign levels, examine their current engagement in politics, provide a list of do's and don'ts, and summarize five critical findings that can transform how millennials respond to your political campaign.

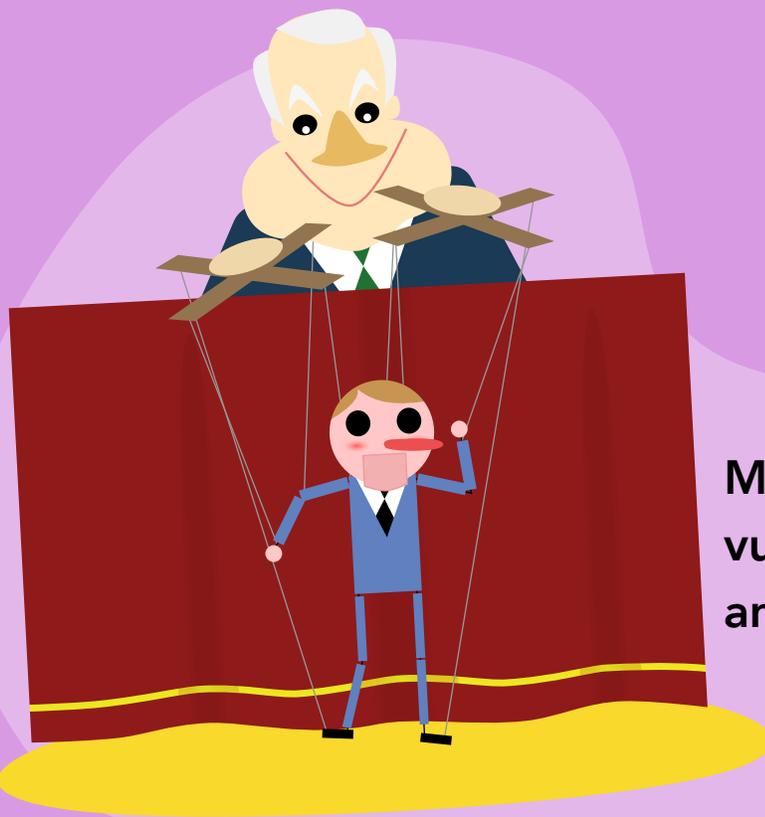


SUMMARY

Reminders

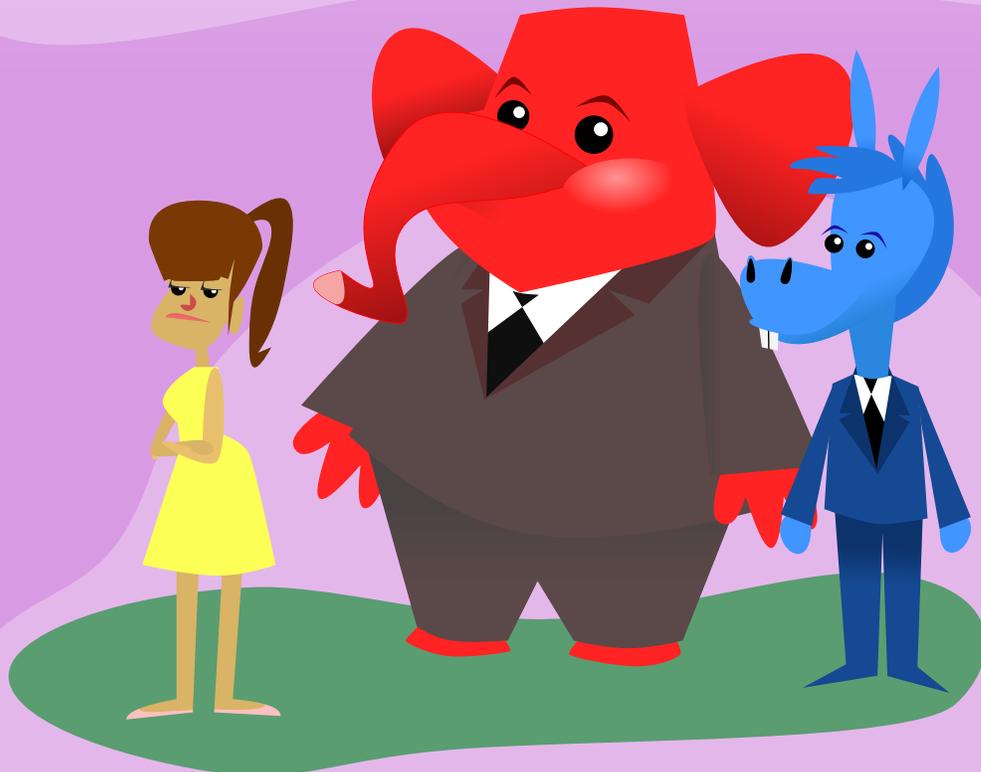
- Student loans
- Health insurance
- Rent
- Get 2nd job

Millennials are trying to “adult” as hard as they can but facing terrible challenges...they need allies, not chiding parental voices. They are working multiple jobs in an uneven economy and don't have a lot of time.



Millennials prize honesty, vulnerability, accessibility and humility.

Millennials are not lazy—if they are not interacting with you, they feel shut out.

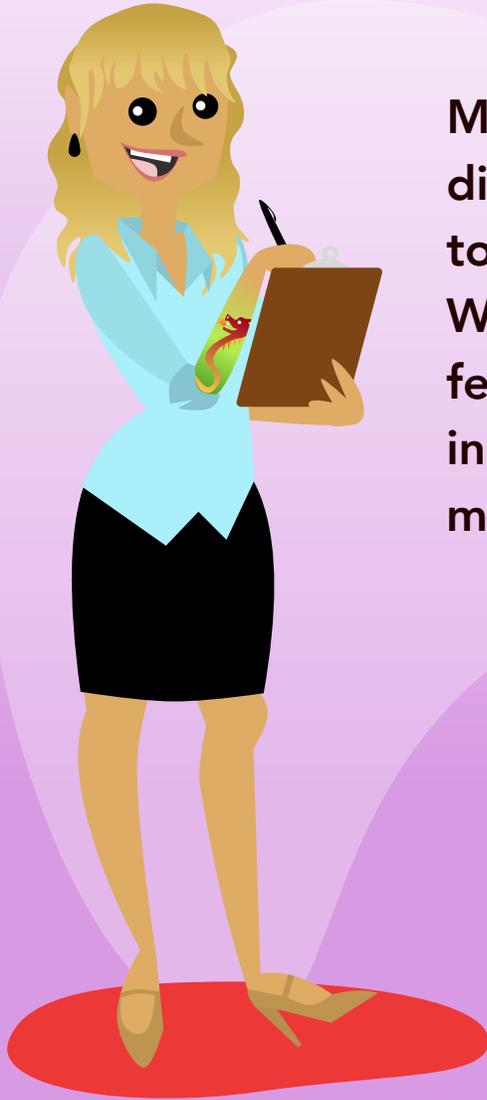


Millennials are highly driven by goals and beliefs, and less driven by party politics. Personality engages more than any party or system ever will.

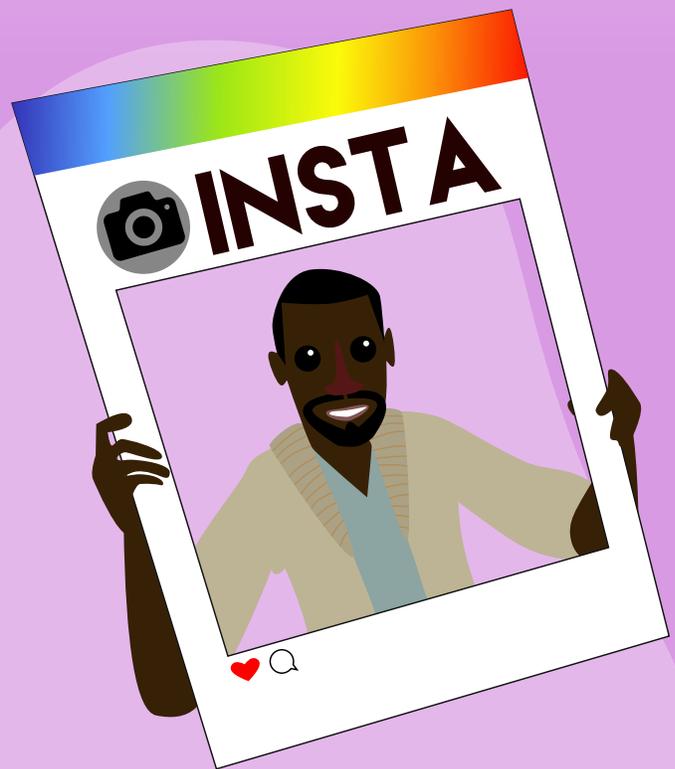
Millennials want to do well by the planet and the world.



Millennials, as a generation, have been trained that initial ways to engage and organize a social network are online, and that things come to them, quickly.



Millennials want communication directed toward them to be blunt, to-the-point, and functional. Whether positive or negative, feedback needs to be structured in a way that leaves no room for misunderstanding.



Millennials create strong connections to brands.

Millennials will back you and help you, if you give them a pathway to engage, a narrative and personality they can believe in, and ideally, a problem they can solve alongside you.



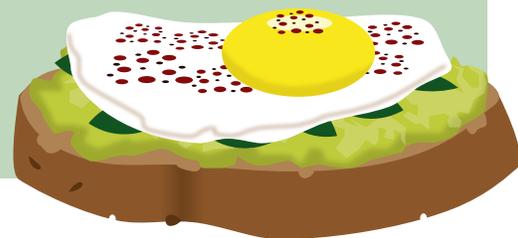
Millennials are the most diverse generation ever seen.

KNOWING THE MILLENNIAL AUDIENCE

Millennials were raised under a different paradigm than Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y and other generations. Their likes and dislikes are based on the world they were ushered into; a world that is obsessed with revenue and personal gain, not necessarily intent on making changes for the greater good, and containing shorter and shorter attention spans. American society, for millennials, includes increasingly difficult economic and work-life boundaries, high education costs, a large aging population burden looming and a healthcare crisis. They are under stress, constantly multi-minding, and highly web and mobile savvy. Here are some of the most common traits of this generation:

First, millennials have a tremendous sense of community engagement and a desire for civic action. The millennial sense of “community action” is often misunderstood because most millennials learned from early ages that their social connections were going to be mapped and best used online. Since their early years, millennials have been creating online connections as a way to both be heard and mobilize more effectively, but if you are not online, it’s not easy to see this. Ivey Business Journal states that “One of the characteristics of millennials, besides the fact that they are masters of digital communication, is that they are primed to do well by doing good. Almost 70 percent say that giving back and being civically engaged are their highest priorities” (Gilbert.)

Millennials have an incredibly strong desire to interact with a new system, process or ask online before they engage with it in an offline setting. When you look at how this generation was raised, this makes tremendous sense. This generation expects things to come first to them online because everything always has. They expect to meet brands and even people through their peers on the web or on their phone first, where they can examine it, friend it, and interact with it there before they move into a more extensive relationship. If a tool or process does not do this, it makes the ladder of engagement for a millennial harder. This explains why it's very likely that you will see millennials engaging in a protest march, which they likely heard about through a friend or friends online, examined, and got on board with vs. in a polling booth where they will have to find a place that is often not listed anywhere virtually or is at the very least hard to find and requiring person-to-person interaction as the first step in the process. Millennials want to vote. However, voting is currently organized in a way that is very foreign to them. They are much more native to an online poll than an offline process. If the ladder of engagement presented to them doesn't start with virtual interaction and conversation, expect a substantial falloff out of the gate.



Millennials don't just organize their social networks online; they use their online networks of friends and family to learn which brands and people to trust. If they have a good interaction with a brand or person, that interaction will be "broadcast" and bring referred trust to that brand or person. If you have opened your platform to millennials and worked with other corresponding systems to aid them in easily engaging with you, the next step is to woo these personal interactions that can bring preferred trust. Meet this group with highly visual and short, real interactions. For millennials, marching with you in a march while taking selfies or grabbing a burger from you at a food truck is much more exciting than watching you give a large speech. This trust is furthered by millennials' use of influencers when buying products and choosing who to advocate for. If they trust you--and better yet if the visuals are compelling and people they trust, trust you--they will broadcast the interaction across multiple networks, and that referred trust will work highly in your favor with their social network. The best visuals will always be those of you solving a problem together as a team, for reasons we will discuss a little later.

Millennials are primed to do well by doing good and want to do well by the planet and the world. Contrary to beliefs that they might be un-engaged with the world and defiant towards civic action, millennials are massively interested in activities that help the planet, the world, those in need, and in civic action. Their challenges in activating around these issues lie with the fact that the generations before them were not raised online and therefore don't know how to make systems like voting, giving and running easy or accessible in the way that consumer systems millennials already use do. Millennials are the polar opposite of the stereotype of the Boomer generation. While Boomers see millennials as lazy, entitled and weak, millennials see Boomers as the same, and furthermore, as a generation that had their chance to do good in the world and failed it. Between the current American government, the lack of climate control, families being separated at the border, and the challenged state of the middle class, millennials cannot be seen to be wrong in their thinking.

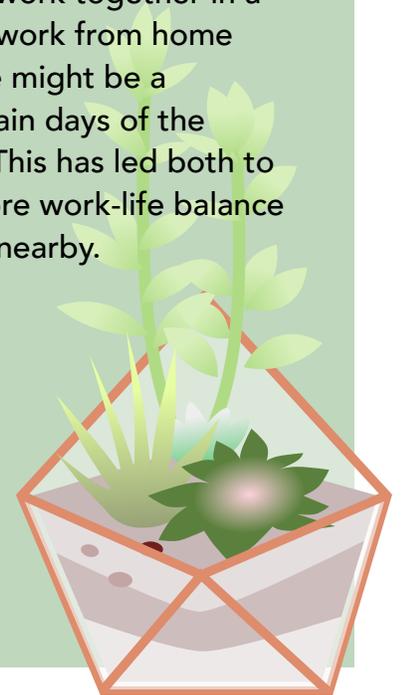
Millennials have a characteristic that comes from their positioning as the polar opposite of the Boomer generation: **they greatly prize transparency.** And not only transparency in the sense that they want people to be honest; transparency in that they want communication to them to be blunt, to-the-point, and functional. Companies have already seen a great improvement in their millennial recruitment and management by embracing transparency in their external marketing. It shows an internal team dedicated to honest salesmanship. Mad Men-era marketing around clumped stereotypes could not be more of a turnoff. However, advertising for a company like Hello Flo, which is a period-starter pack for young girls and celebrates a natural biological process for women, is seen as heroic because it both achieved its objective and also promotes a world issue: gender equality.



If millennials don't like a brand, judgment can also be swift. Wendy's Hamburgers is celebrated for its sick burns online via Twitter, and Papa Johns was recently eviscerated on the same channel for using the inappropriate racist language, causing their founder to resign.

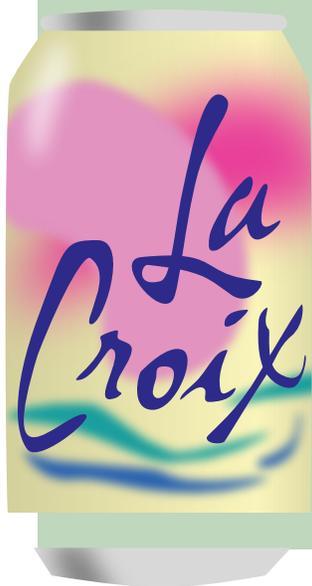
From the management side, one of the examples of how millennials differ is how and when they want feedback. Some stereotypes paint millennials as needing constant, positive feedback and regular promotions just to do their job. **But it's transparency and bluntness that most millennials prize while doing a job**—and when this type of feedback is given, their performance improves. "What one person sees as a need for constant affirmation might, in fact, be that millennial responding to the fact that the manager couched their review in glowing praise while slipping in criticisms alongside it," states Genevieve Thiers, tech entrepreneur, and NewFounders co-founder. "If the manager had just been blunt and to-the-point about what needed to change, the millennial might have just made the changes and moved on. A thing I have learned about millennials: Tell them exactly how to improve, and they will do it. End of story." Experts agree that blunt with millennials is better. Joanne Sujanski wrote in SuperVision about an employee that was facing misleading feedback that "instead of feeling appreciated, however, the few short accolades of "good job" were overshadowed in the employee's mind by the more frequent criticisms he received – without guidance as to how exactly he could improve." (SuperVision, December 2009). Sujanski reaches an insightful conclusion: Whether positive or negative, feedback needs to be structured in a way that leaves no room for misunderstanding. Feedback needs to be clear and specific to be effective" (Gilbert).

Whenever possible, millennials prefer to learn through experiences. Anyone seeing a tech startup's office these days know that it's usually not the typical arrangement anymore of executive offices in the back, with subordinates in cubicles around the center of the floor. The business world has started to adapt to the new millennial majority's preferences by transitioning from limited engagement by the executive office to a more interactive, experience-driven community. This might mean that teams work together in a cubicle space with open couches and chairs, or that entire teams might work from home during certain days communicating on Slack only, or that an office space might be a disjointed bunch of groups working from WeWork or similar offices certain days of the week. There is no normal now regarding how and where people work. This has led both to us working longer and harder, during odd hours, but potentially also more work-life balance as this can be done around, say, younger kids that might need a parent nearby.



Millennials also have been trained that things come to them fast and will be short and to the point. This generation does not wait in line or suffer boring videos. From instant access to the web to instant news and immediate interaction, systems have to be optimized to keep attention in a day and age where the average video is less than 2 minutes. Pay close attention to the speed and efficiency of data you produce, as well as how well it can be applied to everyday life. Giving options to stop and continue a video or talk is a good idea so that the millennial audience can consume and share data on their own time.

Companies today are also seeing another millennial trend: **millennials are less prone to respect hierarchies and more prone to respect open, collaborative environments where the team succeeds, and not just one person.** Today's corporate world is flattening, and teams on differing projects might include both the highest and lowest levels of a company. Collaboration has become a critical selling point that has defined the development of new environments catered towards this generation. "It's been recognized that collaborative thinking often breeds greater success than an individual approach, [and while] earlier generations seek a greater level of personal recognition...Millennials are content to enjoy success together as long as the greater goal is achieved" (Holmberg-Wright). The unique mindset of the incoming generation regarding how readily they dive into work when allowed to consult their peers allows for a more organically diverse point of view and as a result, increasingly creative responses to problems. The prevalence and high usage of social media has fostered a sense of comradery between millennials, which provides a space for a "hive-mind" mentality to blossom towards innovative solutions while protecting against mental fatigue. In embracing these cultural differences, companies can harness this generation's full potential. It's in the best interests of experienced teams to embrace this practice because the millennial generation has knowledge of tech, design, and usability that can translate even the driest products to market in a new and innovative way. If you are in politics, take note. How can you engage millennials in a team around you, with constant communication, so that they can unlock their best skills to aid your message?





Another cultural difference that is seen in the millennial workplace, which can be translated to other fields such as increasing voter turnout for elections, is the fact that **millennials often create secure connections to the public image of the company, person or product that they are engaging with.** To millennials, who like to work in hive brains, companies ARE hive brains, and as such, have almost a human personality that is “friended” by their employees. The Ivey Business Journal suggests that “highly engaged employees are proud of the organizations they work for. When perceptions of employer reputations decrease, a similar decrease in engagement spreads throughout the workforce” (Gilbert). In the same way, if a millennial is working for a political candidate or caucus that is seen to betray their values, the millennial will likely leave.



Millennials are lifelong learners. There is a belief in this generation—stemming from their school years and perhaps their reaction to how ineffective those years were in actually getting them to work—that learning should happen as a continuous process, ideally within a team, throughout life. This group takes Youtube courses to increase their talent fast and be more open to web-based learning. This group is also researching a candidate or party or policy platform thoroughly. They focus on narrative, transparency, and consistency in morals. For a millennial, learning about the moral stance of a brand or candidate is as relevant as learning about the facts about the company or campaign itself.

The second piece of this is tied to the idea of referred trust that was examined a few paragraphs back. **For millennials, association with one brand more than another can drastically affect the individual's personal brand.** Those who are looking to attract the attention of the millennial generation can more easily make an impact on the demographic group in a way that not only achieves short-term success but inspires long-term loyalty. However, trust must always be maintained through transparency and accessibility, or the millennial will leave and take others with them. While this might seem like a choice, it's not possible for them to choose to stay if a brand betrays their trust. If they are seen to stay with a brand that betrays them, the millennial, by extension, is selling out and decreasing their own transparency, and by extension, their trustworthiness. It can bring their own brand down in the eyes of their social network. If they associate with those they can't trust, then, in turn, their own referrals go down with their internal network.

In order to engage millennials, **take into account the whole person, not only their political ideologies but also their workplace demeanor, connections with social media and the activities they partake in outside of the voting booth.** This learning is basically about respect. Approaching a millennial that is black and assuming that they will support other black candidates is seen as a sign of disrespect. Same with LGBTQ or women or Hispanics or any other demographic. Instead, millennials are concerned with all facets of a candidate's ideology basing their support of the said candidate on interviews and extensive research. This does not mean that a candidate needs to research every millennial in their district in depth; it's more just a warning to not ever generalize this group. Millennials are highly individualistic, and so approaching them on a single characteristic can backfire. Instead, attempt to learn more about their generalized interests and sense of humor using favorite media channels like CNN, Twitter, BuzzFeed, and other local newspaper's opinion pieces. This can aid you in finding a voice that strikes a balance that toes the line.



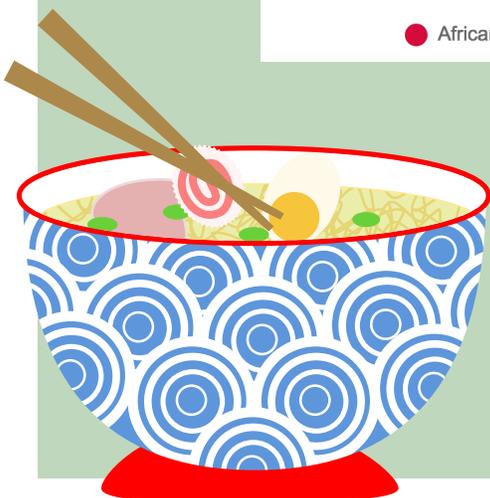
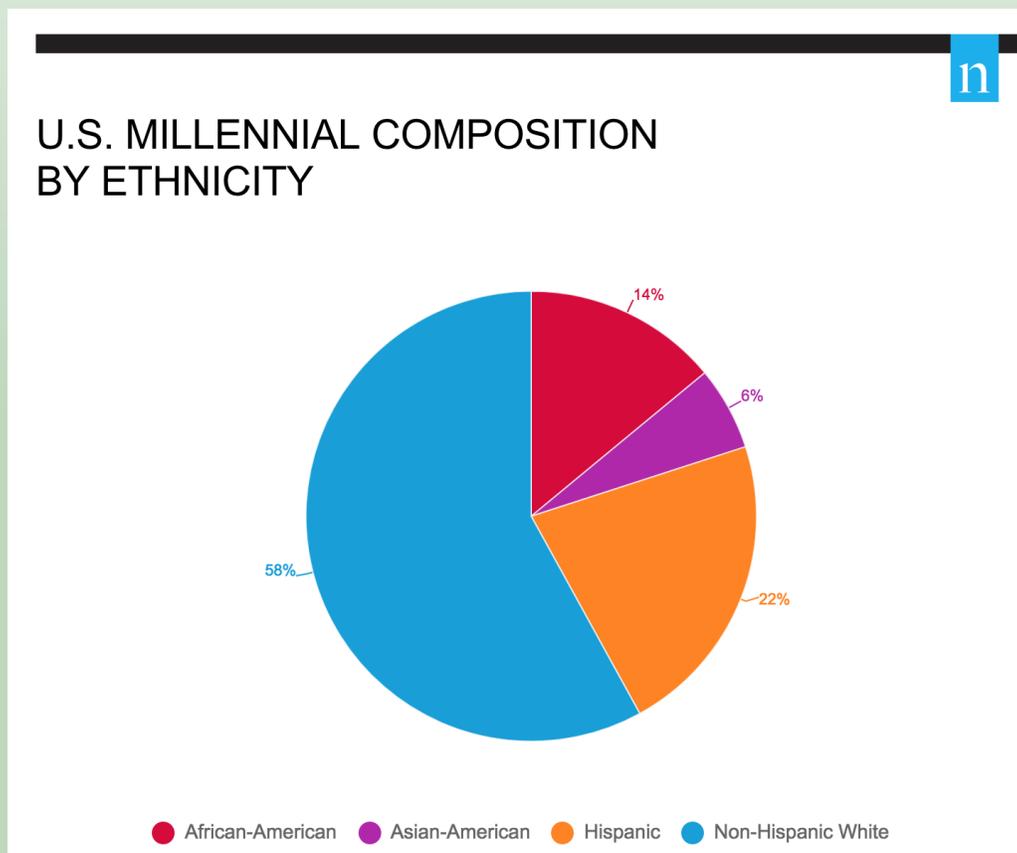
For a millennial, the most significant qualities a person or brand can have are those of honesty, accessibility and humility. The person that is vulnerable is the person that wins with this audience. This generation has no time for someone that is not self-aware. Knowing who you are is GOOD. Having a personal narrative and world goal that defines you is GOOD. When millennials are asked why they do not support a brand or a politician, they often describe a lack of clarity and purpose. **When millennials interact with people, they want it to be as clear as possible, and quickly transparent.** Tell them why you're doing what you are doing in the clearest possible terms, off the bat, and don't wait.

This brings up an essential contradiction that many often see with millennials. While millennials prefer to live a lot of their social life online, in things that matter, for example, social engagement with a brand or person, voting, or organizing, **they prefer to be face-to-face with people when making collaborative decisions or at critical engagement decision points.** At a decision point, millennials will need to read human responses to their possible engagement, to see how honest you are, and to see if it's worth it or not for them to engage. This might seem odd that a person would want to first engage with you online, but then meet with you at the moment of real engagement or to give a real "vote," but it is based on trust. Online interactions are limiting in their communication or miscommunication. However, there's no way to mistake what is going on in person. Millennials are flocking to newer groups created since the 2016 election that "get" this trend, notably RunforSomething, a training platform, that provides a simple ladder of engagement before in-person meetings, and Swingleft, a platform that has just enough online engagement to entice, but then brings millennials into localized, in-person meetings.

Millennials are also extremely adventurous and open to new experiences. This is not a generation that is going to go, en masse, to Disney World and call it a day. From Happy Place, the Museum of Ice Cream, Sleep No More (PunchDrunk) to hiring a travel company to send random plane tickets in the mail to a surprise city every month, millennials welcome change, surprise, and individuality in their activities. The brand, employer or political candidate that understands this will cultivate their interviews and marketing to this trend, rather than just assuming that this generation does everything online and can't interact with people. It's far more likely you will see a millennial celebrating a microbrew made in the back garden of a small NYC brewery in an Instagram post than seeing them supporting a Budweiser in a Hard Rock café. Consider adding details to your events that make them non-generic, that might appeal to this audience.



A final point about millennials is that **this is the first generation that really is fighting to eliminate discrimination completely.** There is a shift in representational identity amongst this generation due to the exposure to cultural diversity from such a young age. "Having worked in many collaborative settings, connecting with ease on social media, and the ability to access content created from all over the world, they look at diversity as something to blend together experiences, culture, perspective, and backgrounds. Diversity to a millennial is not merely a racial or gender divide. It is who they are. Nielsen reports that 42% of U.S. millennials are people of African-American, Asian-American, and Hispanic heritage. They have grown up with representations of other races and backgrounds portrayed in the media and popular culture. They will not notice differences per se. Millennials view diversity as a strength resulting in many different viewpoints and solutions to the same problem" (Holmberg- Wright). One of the most exciting aspects of unlocking millennial market is the fact that prejudice due to color, gender variance or more when voting is likely not to be an issue, leading to a more representational electorate overall.



Increasing Usability and Accessibility at the Party Level

Before we can even get to the level of how campaigns and candidates can better engage millennials, we need to start at the party level. Many millennials right now are upset at the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and party establishment for being super removed from who millennials are, full of red tape, and inefficient. This spans several areas of the party spectrum. When asked, millennials show their disdain and worry for the traditional Democratic party by pointing out various areas of weakness including opinions around the chairman of the party usually only being employed part-time, information about where to vote and how to run, and how in the last election candidates were poorly coached in how to appear even remotely authentic. If anything, they nailed the part of two out-of-touch parents fighting with each other in a bad divorce; something that to many millennials is all too real.

When asked if identity politics mattered at all to female millennial voters, the general answer, anecdotally, appears to be that yes, it does. However, millennials are resistant to being lumped into buckets based on one characteristic and trait, and that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was very badly coached—or just resistant to—the idea of being open, natural and accessible during her campaign. This was what ultimately hurt her with millennials—the lack of connection on a real and honest level.

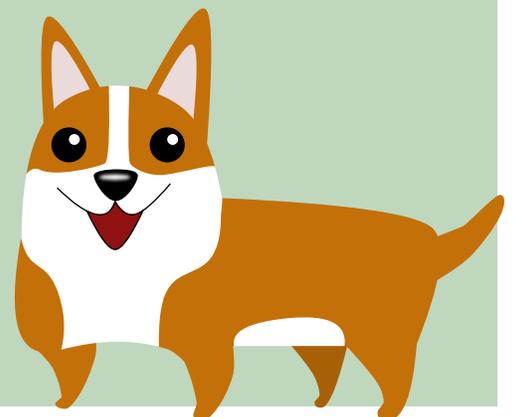
From a base party level, many millennials, who use their smartphone and the online world for almost everything—are mystified at why so little political information is in those spheres. During a recent focus group within the NewFounders coalition, millennials had simple suggestions for how to make voting, running and giving easier for themselves. These suggestions included:

- **Put voting dates and locations in standardized online calendars.** There are only four major calendar providers that are used; iCal, Google, etc. Why isn't an election listed in these locations like a holiday would be, with a simple Google Maps extension connecting the user to how and where to walk to the polling location or how to vote via mail? This is actually not just a good idea—it's a selling point for service providers seeking more clients. Of the focus group, 80% agreed that if a calendar had this data, they would be more likely to MOVE to that calendar from their existing one, regardless of the hassle of transferring data.



- **Make it easier for millennials to understand who is running and why they should vote for them in the polling booth.** When in a voting booth, many voters don't have any idea who these candidates even are or their potential impact on their lives. Most voters unfortunately don't have the time to run a thousand Google searches to figure it out. Anyone who has ever suffered through a page of judges and tried to figure out any kind of basic rules for voting across a large block of unknown people (choose only the women, for example) will understand that this point is particularly valid. NewFounders coalition member and activist fighters Ballotready have begun to bite off this titanic challenge, but it's a massive one. The millennial dream is to have a way to immediately see a visual. This includes a map of how political offices interact and their impact on the citizen (why do we need a water commissioner and what on earth do they control that affects our lives?) and to be able to draw off some basic filters that might reflect who I am and my voting. For instance, to be able to immediately filter out who is female, pro-choice and has not had a scandal in the past 10 years, or to be able to filter for those under a certain age, that tend to more open to new ideas. Provide millennials with this ability and overlay a social filter so that people have some idea of how their friends voted. This likely cannot be done for legal reasons, since it's illegal in several ways, but to be able to pre-choose via a simple technology who you plan to vote for in advance before hitting the ballot booth, and then share that quick map of your choices to friends and see how closely you stack up across a group or to a particular like-minded pal can help.

- **Give me a way to be a crowdsourced, consulted part of policies and solutions for the party.** Most millennials in the group felt like there was a war room in DC somewhere where policies, positions, critical races and tactics to win were decided without anyone caring about their opinion. When asked, 80% supported a broadening and flattening of information sharing around how all these items were created, and the creation of a crowdsourcing campaign to try and make sure that the voice was even somewhat considered or included when these decisions were made. The general feeling was that "if I am going to be cut out of those decisions and the team making them...why would I buy into or support that party at all? It's just not mine, or in any way related to me."



The suggestions above are just a start, but they show an evident desire on the part of millennials to engage, but a lack of information and ease in doing so. The suggestions made are not difficult, but without a state party that understands tech and design and a champion for millennials, the disconnect will continue, and it will keep a generation that could be very politically active on the sidelines due to inaccessibility.

It's also HARD to vote just out of college, period. Many millennials are not sure if they are registered. They probably moved after college. Are they registered in their new state? They don't always know. Rather than ask, this might lead to avoiding voting altogether. States are also taking some preliminary measures to make systems like registering to vote a little easier. A way that some states in the U.S. have tackled the registration problem is by changing their registration system, streamlining it and creating digital reforms to their programs to make the process easier. According to the Washington Post, "automatic voter registration systems as in Oregon and California make voting easier for young people who are likely to move often. Colorado's 2013 reforms make it easier to register and vote on election day by pairing mail-in ballots with drive-through drop-off" (Dalton). In adapting to the perceived needs of millennials, governments are seeing an increase in participation and interest in statewide and national issues. Moreover, there is a massive surge now as well as groups finding and registering millennials in their home states at concerts and events like marches, but it's still not easy. Many potential voters continue to slip through the cracks.

The millennial vote is remarkably valuable, as the generation is now the largest to be entering adulthood. Although their low voter turnout might often be seen as laziness, it has been recorded that it is not an accurate representation of their interest in politics as they are "about as politically active outside elections. They're involved in local communities, volunteering, and challenging political elites." (Dalton). There is a huge focus on creating a brand of engagement in politics because millennials are particularly attracted to doing things that-in their eyes-matter because "they want to work with purpose and to make a difference within the organization and to the world. (Watkins, January 2015)" (Holmberg-Wright). It's not a vote to miss for simpler reasons like registration, and state legislators and leaders need to continue to make registration easier for this generation to begin to take part.



Increasing Usability and Accessibility at the Campaign Level

Moving to the level of campaigns, there are some simple things off the bat that you can do just to show that your campaign is open and accepting to the millennial generation. These can be broken out into three areas. First, with the rise of social media, the creation of close-knit online communities and online forums where political conversations take place are becoming more popular outlets for knowledge sharing. As referenced by SagePub Journals, "[a]lthough young adults are notoriously uninterested in politics and the news, lack political knowledge, and have lower rates of political participation than their older counterparts (Delli Carpini, 2000), the trend of millennials engaging in political activity online has been increasing in recent years (Smith, 2013)" (Leavitt). For conversations on social media to convince a millennial to vote, they need to be actual conversations. Social media managers need to be monitoring Facebook, Twitter and Instagram feeds, responding to DMs and reacting as fast as possible to incoming requests and feedback. This can make or break a candidate. If there is a controversy brewing of a candidate, sometimes good social media reactivity can even stop it in its tracks, or a comedic response can diffuse it. It is not enough to be on the channel, pushing out content. That can be seen as one-sided and selfish. Monitoring and responding is essential.

Second, when in doubt, make it easy for someone to see you and hear you on their terms. It's still very hard to vote, but Facebook stories with candidates and Zoom calls are on the rise. Millennials are a generation that started to grow up in a largely digitally inclined era, and as a result, it is no surprise to see that they find themselves very comfortable with sharing their views in chat rooms, comment sections, and online discussion pages. Although it can be argued that the attraction to these often-anonymous platforms stems from the freedom that people feel to talk openly about their opinions, there is legitimate weight in tying the instant-feedback nature of social media to the preferences to millennial voter engagement. It is being said that "a vast majority (71%) of young people today cite the Internet as a main news source and 67% of 18 to 24 year-olds have engaged in political activity on social networking sites (Smith, 2013)," which means that the immediate response that they receive is appealing, more so than reading a newspaper or waiting for a yearly performance review at work. They will come to you when they are ready to do a gut check on you personally. However, they expect to engage first online, and if they cannot, you will be seen as out of the loop. It's critical as well to keep content short. This audience has a short attention span. Having a way for this audience to absorb a short learning, pause, and choose whether they want to move on and absorb more is critical, and shows your support towards this group learning at their own pace, vs. forcing them to work at yours.



Finally, make social sharing and likes visually compelling. For a millennial, they are going to be posting on Snapchat and Instagram, so find a background that is an easy and pleasant image that they can use. Your posters should be formatted to a rectangular design, not vertical. This is easier for them to Snap and post. Any events you do should have quirky and colorful step-and-repeat areas that make visuals. Consider activities that will make an image pop, like props or cartoon cutouts that will lead to even better images. "At a recent political event I threw with political candidate Nicole Johnson in Chicago, she had a simple Instagram outline cutout, for selfies," states Genevieve Thiers with NewFounders. "It was shockingly effective. It was a funny backdrop for pictures and selfies, and it planted the idea in someone's head to post a picture on Instagram simply by being the Instagram filter outline." The better the image a millennial can get with you, and the more fun and exclusive it appears, the more likely it will appear and get likes on social media (and maybe even go viral.). If you really want to surprise and delight a millennial, photo-bomb them by leaping into the background of a picture they are taking with someone else. This kind of joke is funny and shows accessibility.

"Gather round children, and I will tell you the tale... of the landline." Iliza Schlesinger, Elder Millennial

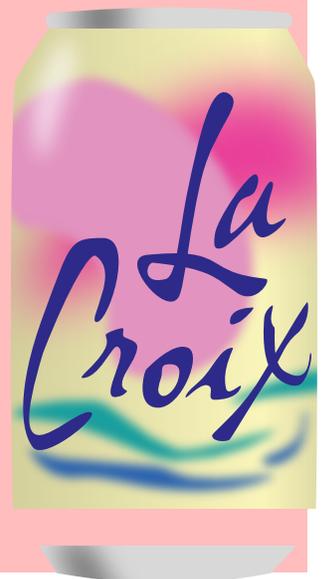
"There are no superheroes, just us. We are the ones we've been waiting for." Shiza Shahid, millennial,
Malala Fund



Understanding Influencer Marketing

As millennials build their social networks, they are prone to seeing and cultivating shared trust in brands and people based on the opinions of their family and friends. An influencer is an individual that generally has a large following on social media and has the ability to affect the decisions of their audience by recommending or not recommending certain products, brands or organizations. The trend initially grew out of bloggers, who noticed buys around their posts. This trend began to grow as millennials began to cluster around social media and buy based on what they read there, and companies noticed.

Influencers don't just recommend items...they publicly try them and show their worth in engaging ways. Have you ever seen a video promoting a breadmaker today, where it shows easy use of the tool? Or a makeup tutorial that shows you how to do Halloween makeup for your kids? This content has influencers behind it and are appealing because very few of us want to read tool manuals anymore. Influencers can show new ways to use old items or inspire people in aspirational ways. Some of the most glaring influencers today are the Kardashians. Whatever they promote, use or buy often carries shock waves for the products in question. Celebrities are now influencers as well, with Jessica Alba jumping from acting to create The Honest Company and Gwyneth Paltrow deviating from acting to Goop. A common misconception around influencers is that they are just in the beauty and fashion worlds. That's not true anymore. Anybody with a following has a voice and ability to influence. One of the most bizarre things about President Donald Trump is that he took his ability to influence--as a celebrity on The Apprentice and outspoken businessman--and took it into the presidency. We now see whiplash left and right every time he tweets. This is on purpose. President Trump knows the power that he wields on social media and he uses it to disarm and sow confusion. Politicians are influencers! It's up to the individual elected official to use that power for good or not. The best way to understand this phenomenon is that millennials consider everyone an influencer, it's just varying levels of power that person has (based on the size of their network.) Everyone has the power to influence each other, regarding a buy, a vote or an opinion they might hold.

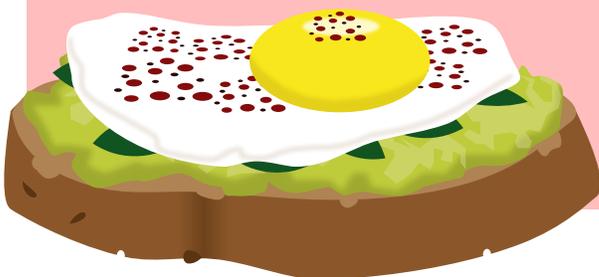


To implement influencer marketing in your campaign to activate millennials:

1. CREATE EXPERIENCES AND NOT JUST PRODUCTS (OR POLICY): As stated earlier in the paper, you're more likely to see millennials sharing their experience at a microbrewery than at a franchise restaurant. By creating an experience that is worth sharing, millennials are more likely to share with their following multiplying the reach of your message.

Millennials are often ok with influencers partnering with brands but want the brands and the influencers to be transparent about their partnership. A great way to create an experience rather than a typical campaign event is to have music, artists, and food to liven up the space. Another thing to think about is how space is represented at your event. Do you want to sit in a circle to facilitate conversation or do you want the focus to be centered on a speech you are giving? As you plan events, think of the way that your audience will engage with you and perceive you.

2. CREATE A GENUINE MESSAGE: Know what you stand for. Millennials are often faced with vast amounts of information about most people in society. They are well researched and have no problem cross-referencing different interviews from online to create a profile of someone. This is why brand is so important. By creating a compelling brand with a compelling message, you give millennials a reason to go out of their way to support you. Create a genuine brand by not trying to be cool, but by being real. Tell your story in a vulnerable way and allow people to connect with you through a compelling narrative. If a story is manufactured or holding back, the millennial audience can tell. Hello, reality TV. Politics today are more polarized than ever and it is ok to be honest about what you think. As you tell your story make sure to define your "why". Beyond knowing what you stand for, millennials want to know why you're standing in the first place. Simon Sinek's famous TED Talk, How Great Leaders Inspire Action, captures this sentiment perfectly. Purpose can be universal and allows us to move forward as a community inspired by action. Michaela Bethune of DoSomething.org said, "You need to focus on long-term engagement with communities, and not focusing just on GOTV as a transactional, flash in the pan. Young people have a great bullsh*t detector, and can tell when you're only after their votes to accomplish your own goals. A quick anecdote: When I was working with organizers around the 'Black Panther' film release, they were saying how people wanted Black Panther to be part of "Blue Wave 2018" to take back the house (and get audience members signed up for the DNC). An incredible organizer said something to the effect, "Blue Wave 2018? What about Black Wave 2018? Where were you when Flint happened? You can't just show up around elections in our communities to get us out to vote, and not be showing up at all other points of the year. That's inauthentic."



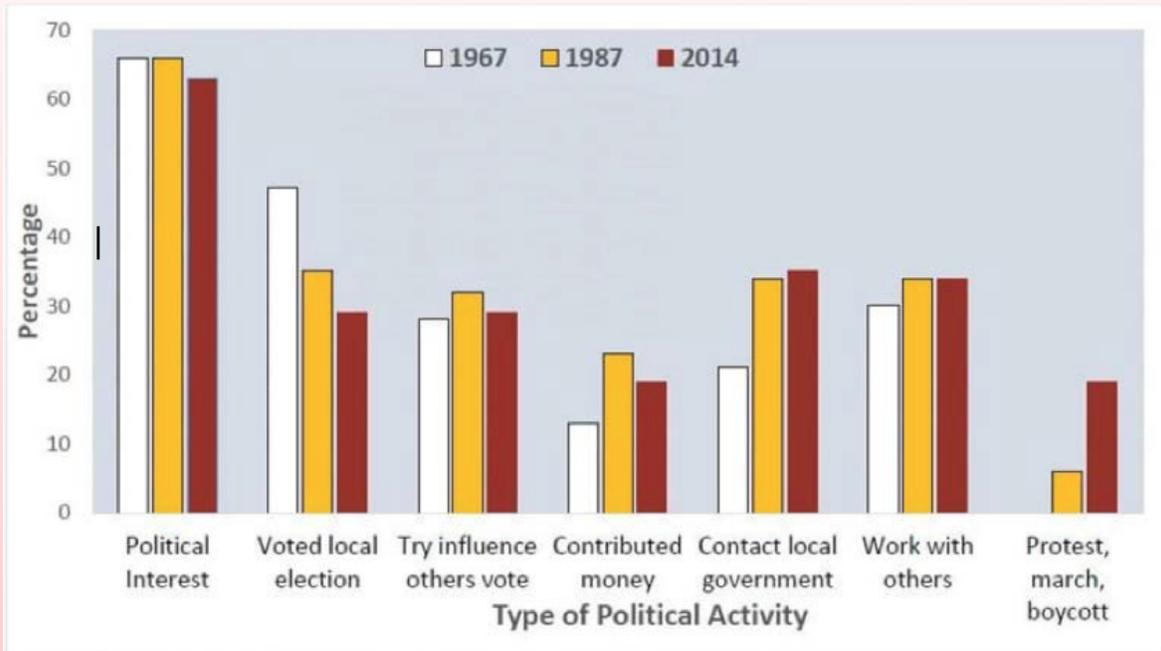
3. ENGAGE WITH USER-GENERATED CONTENT: Get people inspired to share along with you. As people take awesome pictures with you and of your events make sure to acknowledge that by commenting on photos or reposting the images. According to an Olapic study, 56% of consumers would be more interested in buying a product that they have seen in a positive or relatable photo posted by another consumer. User-generated content has become a major tool for brands in marketing their products. When you connect with your audience properly, they will be compelled to create content referencing your campaign. To start this action, have a social campaign that is defined by specific hashtags. This hashtag should be centered around your audience taking a specific action or relating through a common cause. One example of this is the #ShareACoke campaign in the summer of 2014. Coca Cola brought interactive marketing to the forefront by printing individual names and phrases on Coke bottles and cans throughout the country. Fusing the appeal of personalization with the accessibility, value, and expansiveness of social media, customers created experiences to share with the world. The hashtag was used over 250,000 times and helped Coke revive their sales by 30%. By doing this, the company was able to reestablish its brand and product as a movement.

4. MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH THE RIGHT INFLUENCERS: Just because you have connections to an influencer does not mean you should leverage them. Make sure that when you engage with influencers that they are the right people for your brand to be engaged with. Because millennials are well researched, many influencers have been “exposed” and “cancelled” for previous racial slurs, homophobic behavior or offensive acts. Many companies are often called out by their customers when these scandals happen to address the exposed influencer and un-partner with them; often threatening not to use the brand’s products again. Because of this, make sure your influencer interactions are genuine.

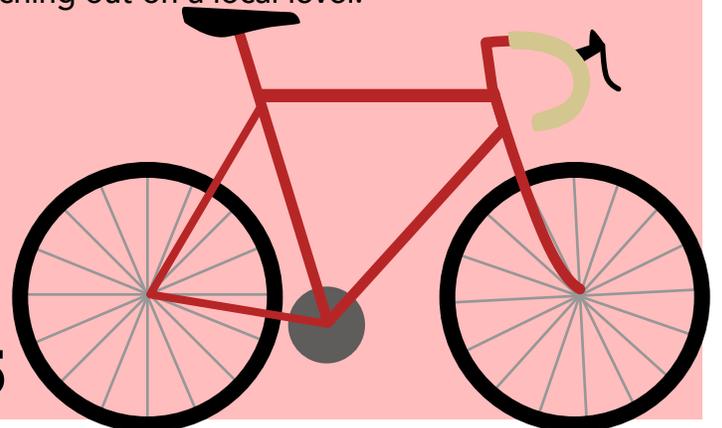


Current Millennial Engagement Across the Political Spectrum

Millennials in the last election cycle showed high interest, but lower levels of engagement in voting, influencing and working with others. Their weakest area was in giving, which can be attributed to lower job opportunities and less income. Protests, marches, and boycotts got some engagement, but not as much as voting or influencing.



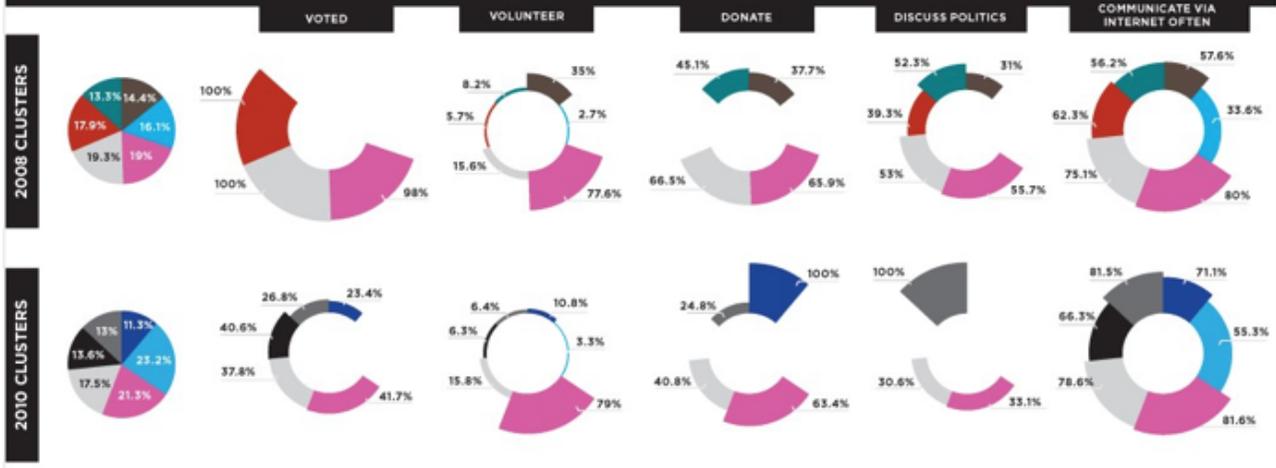
Given the sense of importance placed on community involvement and service that shows an overarching interest in the health of the nation, the support of humanity and the overall betterment of society, it's not too surprising to find that the Right has had more success engaging with millennials than the Left. Civic Youth's Post Election Analysis notes that "The one area where Trump voters come closest to Clinton voters is in local engagement and helping others. This suggests they may especially value—and be open to—grassroots, interpersonal civic acts as an avenue for making a positive impact on society" (Circle Staff). Ironically, while the Right is not seen as a bastion for liberal thinking nor individuality, they are very, very good at reaching out on a local level.



Millennials and Gen Xers are now the majority of

THE DIVERSITY OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Despite references to a single "youth vote," CIRCLE's analysis of American youth reveals diverse backgrounds and experiences, leading to a variety of forms and levels of political engagement. This infographic explores the results of a cluster analysis of American youth in 2008 and 2010. Graphs show each cluster's level of engagement across five forms of participation.



- | 2008 & 2010 | 2008 ONLY | 2010 ONLY |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> POLITICAL SPECIALISTS
Moderately high levels of political participation and relatively low levels of service participation BROADLY ENGAGED
Likely to engage in all types of civic behaviors CIVICALLY ALIENATED
Almost completely disengaged from civic and political life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ONLY VOTED
Vote but are otherwise disengaged in civic activity ENGAGED NON-VOTERS
Moderately engaged in community activities, but do not vote POLITICALLY MARGINALIZED
Most are active in political discussions and groups, and may donate to causes, but none are registered to vote | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNDER MOBILIZED
Do not vote, are not registered to vote, and are not civically engaged TALKERS
Stayed current with political discussions, may or may not vote, but otherwise disengaged DONORS
Donated money or goods, but were largely otherwise disengaged |



Jonathan M. Tisch
College of Citizenship
and Public Service

designed by elefint designs

What's frustrating to see is millennials trying to find the same approachability in the Left, but the activities that the Left is inviting them to do are activities that are not as optimized as they could be. While the Right might woo millennials in a personalized experience, via perhaps a college recruiting tour or personal mentor, into running for local office and then beginning to climb, the Left is offering, to date, opportunities to participate in social media campaigns, boycotts, protests and other forms of community. While this is very appealing, and certainly getting engagement, the need of the Left to change Facebook likes and Instagram posts into real votes and a bigger bench is a vital, yet challenging proposal which effects election results and loss of power.



In a recent study by Tufts and Circle, millennials were separated out into broad groups. These groups included political specialists, broadly engaged, vote only, civically alienated, engaged non-voters, politically marginalized, under-mobilized, talkers and donors. A breakout of the prevalence of each can be seen below. The study is worth a read, due to the in-depth nature of the personality traits they identified within each voter. However, also bear in mind that some simple accessibility by candidates, campaigns and at the party level can also change things incredibly fast. We're at a low point concerning political accessibility for this generation right now, so this data reflects where we have been with this group, and not where we (and they) can go.

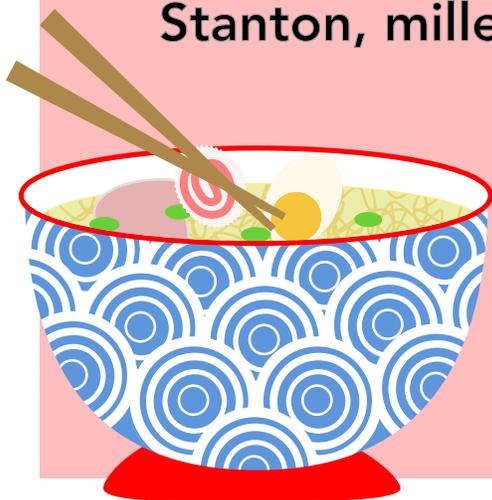
A common misconception about millennials is that they are naturally liberal-leaning. The Case Foundation and Achieve released three waves of research in this area, and in their 2016 Millennial Impact Report, which included a survey, they show that more millennials identified themselves as conservative-leaning rather than liberal or neutral near the end of the 2016 election. Also, more conservative voters that identified as millennials were self-identifying as activists as well during this time. One of the most significant hot-button topics for millennials was—unsurprisingly—education and the high costs associated with it. This is a generation that lives in significant debt, preparing for a world in which there are not many jobs with educations that are vastly more expensive than they are useful. The Case Foundation/Achieve report is interesting because it showed how millennial participation, despite these issues, dropped based on seeming indifference from the candidates that were running. As they became more and more despairing that their causes mattered, their engagement in marches, volunteering and donating severely dropped. Knowing that they were listened to mattered—and they were not listened to. It's hard to use labels like apathetic and engaged when the population in question is trying to be heard and not getting through.



If usability and accessibility are increased in politics overall, and by individual candidates, it's very possible that millennials will lean Left again. The Case Foundation study reported that there was a significant disparity in the last election between what millennials said they would do, and what they did do. Of 21% that said they would vote for Trump in the last two months, 39% actually did. There are great variables that change fast. A party that listens to and focuses hard on the issues of this group--crowdsourcing solutions and policy with them could swing results quickly back in their favor.

It's even possible that a third party of their own might best serve millennials, but it would not be advisable to let the current two parties think that this path is not a big deal. Examining the trends above and noticing that millennials want to be a part of a team, build together with a candidate they like, towards a future that is truly good for the planet and world—these trends could be captured by an existing party that is simply open to being more responsive in social media, holding conversations and crowd-sourcing policy based on beliefs and narratives. Understanding and respect is the key. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez pulled off a stunning upset in New York this year based on appealing to a progressive district with issues that were highly education and economy based. While her platform was socialist/progressive, which might turn off some, it's worth noting how much millennial support she got. She was millennial, responsive, open, and listened. Their issues were her issues too. It might be worth the traditional democrats taking some time with her and understanding at the very least the way that she approached millennials on their own turf and engaged them, as this could spell the future of an increasingly distant party.

“Just because you’re an adult doesn’t mean you’re grown up. Growing up means being patient, holding your temper, cutting out the self-pity, and quitting with the righteous indignation.” Brandon Stanton, millennial, Humans of New York.



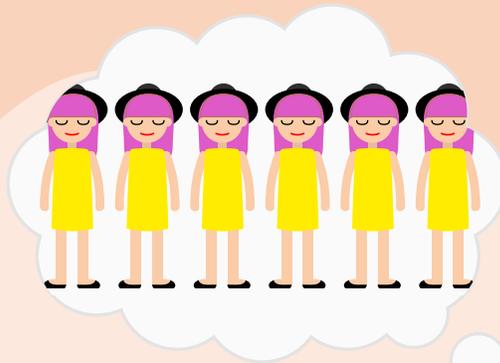
DO'S & DON'TS

There are a few things that resonate very well when you are directly interacting with millennials, vs. just opening your information and campaigns to them. and a few things that don't. First, we've made some helpful lists to summarize for political candidates what to do and not to do when engaging millennials, with some summaries as to why each approach is important in the millennial's mind attached.

Here is an action guide on how to engage millennials:



**Do text me.
Don't spam or call me.**



**Do see me for me.
Don't lump us all together.**



DO'S & DON'TS



**Do approach me online.
Don't make me come to you.**



**Do be transparent.
Don't lie or bullshit me.**

DO'S & DON'TS



**Do make your asks easy.
Don't make things hard to do.**



**Do be social, honest,
real, vulnerable.
Don't guilt trip me.**

DO'S & DON'TS

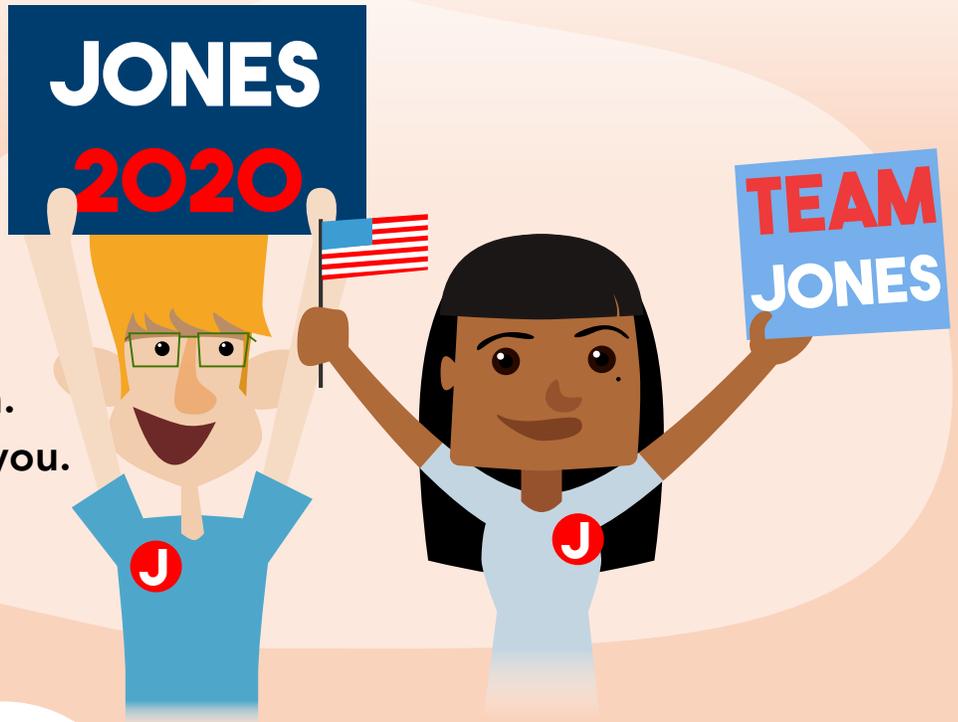
**Do have humility.
Don't pander or preach.**



**Do know pop culture.
Don't force it too hard.**

DO'S & DON'TS

Do let me join a team.
Don't make it all about you.



Do reach out to influencers.
Don't assume that's all you
need to do.

HOW TO WIN WITH MILLENNIALS

How can you translate this information into meaningful interactions, a growing team around you, and a win?

At the 2018 NewFounders Conference, there was a breakout session around engagement of millennials in politics that asked this direct question and millennials answered, in force. There were five eloquent learnings to come out of the conversation, and these learnings best summarized how to take this paper and turn it into action.

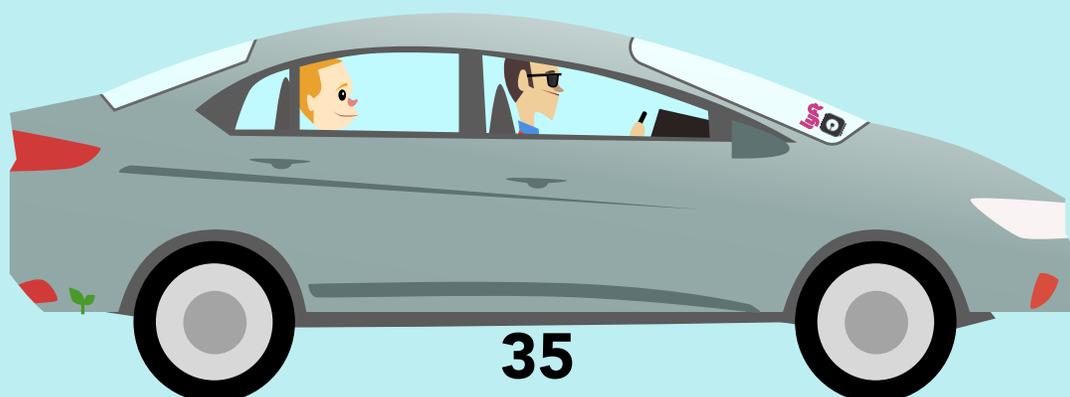
The first major advice to come from this group—which was mostly led by and run by millennials, but had a surprising amount of non-millennials as well—was that millennials were highly driven by goals and beliefs, and less driven by party politics. Personality engages more than any party or system ever will. So, while press might be raising hell over the prospect of millennials creating their own party, the real situation was just that millennials are eager to support people and not parties at all. Parties, to this group, seem as hypocritical as having one claiming to have a set of morals and doing another set of things that deceives those morals. Anyone who has seen a "religious" politician go down due to a series of affairs, or seen a figurehead lie about or downplay a situation that is deeply serious can understand why this feeling makes sense. Also, it's more than just the person too that's key. It's their story, honesty, humility and approachability that needs to register in order for engagement to happen. Don't focus on getting this demographic to "vote blue." Don't waste your time. Just focus on getting them to vote for you and win their trust.

Second, personality is what millennials will vote for, but not just any personality. Honesty, transparency, and humility are the most ideal personality traits. Candidates that focus on a compelling narrative, one that engages a team towards massive world problems, embraces social media as a conversation hub, and always strives for transparency and realness have an excellent chance at winning with this group. Millennials want someone to represent them who is a "real person," someone who can represent their morals, and have an instant impact on society. Don't just nail this in one speech either. Repeat it all of the time and never deviate.



Third, assume that millennials will back you and help you, if you give them a pathway to engage, a narrative and personality they can believe in, and, ideally, a problem they can solve alongside you. The key here is having a mission larger than self, and understanding that mission will motivate this group. Yes, turnout by millennials in the last election was low. Don't punish those that don't support you before examining the cause of millennials shutting down---how can they support someone or a party who does not welcome them? Be self-aware enough to realize that it's often a two-sided situation and that perhaps we should make politics more millennial, instead of trying to make millennials more political. In fact, take this further and build pathways for millennials to be solution-builders, and the engagement will shock you. "Let politics be the place where people can fix problems themselves and not just vote for someone else to do it" was a very memorable quote from this breakout.

Fourth, millennials are trying to "adult" as hard as they can but facing terrible challenges...they need allies, not chiding parental voices. They are in massive debt, facing a jobs market that is not ready to handle them and an economy that is about to be laden with aging people, all while trying to make their own way. This generation is seeking adult mentors that can aid them in "adulthood," but needs these mentors to also be champions to confront alongside them the very real challenges that they are facing. Often, they don't even really understand a lot of what is going on, since party politics has shut them out so definitively. They just know that there's madness going on and no one will explain it. From the need to overhaul education and student loans system to fears about healthcare, housing, jobs, immigration and the economy, they need a sympathetic voice to be a guide and champion. Time is also an issue for them, and a real mentor and ally will recognize that. Often, millennials don't have time to engage politically in massive ways because their job schedules are so challenging. Facing payback of college loans, many millennials don't just work one job. The sharing economy has created opportunities, but often at wages that lead to millennials barely scraping along. Sure, you can snap up a pet-walking, babysitting or driving job in seconds, but it requires tons of them to actually make the rent, much less groceries or a political donation. For this reason, some of them are working incredibly hard and living with parents. The caricature of millennials as lazy and dependent on their parents is downright cruel when these circumstances are considered.



They are, as one participant said, "motivated but undercompensated." Jokes about avocado toast and advice like "get a real job" is salt in the wound. They see America today as a rigged system—and one rigged against them. They need hope. Shame will never work with this demographic, nor should it. It will only turn them against you, fast. Problem-solving as a team, with an ally, will work.

Finally, you must understand that this is a generation that has been trained that initial ways to engage and organize a social network are online and that things come to them, quickly and be presented in a bite-size way so they can consume at their own pace. This generation has next to no time due to a changing economy, consumes products and systems regularly that are built with high usability and accessibility at the center (News sites, Facebook, Nike, iPhones, etc.) and values moral-driven narratives. It is hard to get face to face with a millennial unless you approach them on their own turf and make it easy for them to know you and support you "in a blink." When approaching this market, the more bite-sized the better. Videos should be short, fast, to the point, and give options throughout for the millennial to choose to continue consuming or move to another module or information source. Conversations should be entered into and held on social media, with a strong sense of how things go viral and how millennials act, consume, talk and what they care about. Everything needs to begin with a person-centric narrative, not a party plea. Tell them why they should care, and present that information with as much realness, humility and accessibility as you can. This allows millennials to crowdsource their information from each other. They build opinions based on seeing what others support. At the time when they are ready, they will come to you to check in personally and do a "gut check" about your character and sincerity, and often you will find that one gut-check equals fifteen or twenty, given how far social recommendations will go. Make it easy for someone who meets you to snap a colorful picture, have a meaningful interaction, or get to know you so that you can ride this sharing wave to their friends and beyond.

"Millennials don't hear socialism and think about USSR or about the Cold War. We hear socialism and think about Canada, Switzerland, healthcare, social security, affordable college, and affordable housing. Big generational difference." Nathan Rubin, millennial strategist, influencer and public speaker



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