2016

Publishing Trends For Millennial Brands

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It’s one of the most exciting times in history to be in marketing. If you’re like most marketers, you love the big-picture of strategy and planning. And while you may not be the biggest fan of implementing and incorporating your big vision every day, you love knowing that the pieces can magically be put into place when you’re ready.

In this white paper, we’ll show you how to put the many moving pieces of your marketing in place by telling you: 1. top publishing trends in 2016 that brands are adopting in order to reach Millennials and 2. how you can put those trends to good use in your content marketing strategy.

Now let’s get started.
Millennials... seek brands that can offer it all:

experience, authenticity, social responsibility and a good health profile.

Even better if it’s a good value.
Millennials are a unique breed of creative, idealistic, and connected individuals who like to rally together to create more meaning in the world. And they’re willing to spend money on brands who achieve all of these things (and we do want all the things and believe we can have it).

Millennials, or Gen Y, will spend more than $200 billion annually starting in 2017, and $10 trillion in their lifetimes.¹

So, what does this mean for publishers who want to market to Millennials?

It means something super important: You’ll need to strategize your content marketing with a fancier approach—TTM: Time, Trust, and Memorability.²

When you deliver all three of these aspects in your marketing, you’ll become more influential with Millennials’ product choices and purchase decisions.

¹ AdAge  
² Crowdtap’s Social Influence Research Paper
64% of Millennials surveyed said they respond more positively to brand messages that are tailored to their cultural interests (music, movies, sports, entertainment)
Trends come and go. But when you incorporate these top 5 trends, your content marketing will be on the right path to targeting those Millennial minds.
Create Undeniable, Glorious Connections

One of the best ways to get the trifecta for your time machine is to create Undeniable Glorious Connections, or User Generated Content (UGC).

Millennials are spending over five hours a day consuming UGC—and this content influences what they buy.

When you make UGC the center of your content marketing strategy, you create content that acts as memorable experiences for your brand.

UGC is 40% more trustworthy than traditional media sources.

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3 www.studiom.com/blog/how-to-turn-user-generated-content-into-undeniable-glorious-connections/
4 Crowdtap and Ipsos MediaCT Research
Mobile is the Main Screen

This isn’t “breaking news.” But it’s something that you’ll want to keep in mind. Millennials don’t just want brands to be on top of their mobile game—they expect it.

Mobile is their primary screen, and they want brands to understand (and respect) how they consume their information.

If that wasn’t enough of a reason to show the addiction to screens, Elite Daily found that 87 percent of Millennials use two to three devices at least once a day. So, what does this mean for your brand if you’re not only trying to reach this transient generation – but trying to reach them on various screens?

When you create content across various channels, you will have a higher likelihood that your brand will be seen as engaging.

5 Nielson
6 Think With Google
It’s all about cross-promotion to get in the Millennial game.

TIPS

Here’s some tips for how your brand can think multi-screen:

1. If you post a video to YouTube, you can follow up with creating a conversation about it on Twitter using a particular hashtag.

2. Or, you can post a “behind the scenes” shot on Instagram that captures the essence of the video to pique interest and to allow Millennials to engage a two-way conversation.
Align with a Cause

Cause marketing is evolving in exciting and fun ways, and the brands who are getting on board with this trend are the ones who understand the importance of social impact.

If you’re a publishing company today, you’ll want to prove your commitment to your cause.

Millennials seek out brands that align with their values. Aligning with a cause has the added benefit of also helping your company with employee recruiting and retention. When your organization truly cares, it’ll garner more respect and admiration.

Millennials want to know that your company is “doing good” when they purchase your product. Companies who demonstrate this through their values will win loyal fans.

89% of Americans are willing to switch brands in order to support a cause. 7

7 Cone Communications
4

Don’t be Boring

This trend could have been called “embrace trends” but saying to embrace trends in an paper about trends may or may not be a bit too meta for Millennials. So, why don’t we discuss the millions of other ways that something as strategic as “branded content” works better than using a word like “trend.”

Like, all of the thousands of ways your branded content needs to stand out and be unique in the seaweeds of the web’s waters.

Oh, here’s just a few of the million things\(^8\) that your branded content needs to do to stand out:

Brand content on social works for Millennials if it is...

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\(^8\) Yahoo Content Marketing Ingestion study April 2013
According to bcgperspectives.com, “Millennials are leading indicators of large-scale changes in future consumer behavior. They are influencing and accelerating shifts in consumer attitudes, spending habits, and brand perceptions and preferences among Gen-Xers and even baby boomers. As a result, this generational transition is ushering in the end of consumer marketing as we have long known it.”

No pressure or anything.

But let’s get super serious with some perspectives from an impressive sounding brand.
Collaborate with Creative Agencies

Collaborating with a creative agency can be one of the most efficient ways of investing in your company, especially when it comes to building credibility and influence. In a world where advertising isn’t as effective as it used to be, it’s crucial to be a connector through creative content.

“Agencies will become connectors. Brands want to connect with people through artist relationships and artists want brand dollars. Agencies will be the force that brings them together in partnerships that are about more than just pay to play.”

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9 FastCoCreate
Even though your business may not focus exclusively on Millennials, this generation is important to keep on your radar.

Millennials, or Gen Y, will spend more than $200 billion annually starting in 2017, and $10 trillion in their lifetimes. This stat alone reveals the need to more effectively implement the trends in branded content.

In Part 2 of this paper, we’ll show you how to become a more entertaining, relevant publisher (because you can now more easily market to Millennials).

Learning the ins and outs of the latest trends allows your business to thrive from all of the new ways that we’re connecting. It’s through the conversations in your marketing that will you allow you to bypass the traditional advertising and become a beacon to what works (hint: advertising is no longer as effective).
FACT

84% of online users ages 25 to 34 years old have clicked out of a website because of an “irrelevant or intrusive ad.”

Irrelevant and intrusive is not the goal of content marketing and especially not what aspiring branded content should resemble at all. How does your content become less? We share even more trends in how other brands are doing it right and how yours can too.

International Journal of Online Marketing Research, 1(1), pp. 32–39
First, understand that trends come and go. But when you connect with your customers through inspiring conversation, you’ll never go out of style—and you’ll move your marketing in the right direction.

Millennials may be picky and selective. But they are also the most loyal generation. The tons of information at their fingertips, coupled with their education and the amount of content they consume makes this generation smart and savvy. Once a brand wins them over, they are fans for life. This is one of the many reasons why brands need to appear authentic in everything that they do by incorporating simplicity with their messaging in a human way.

Plenty of proven, research-backed ways use this strategy well. Here are a few approaches to market your content to your audience (including the savvy Millennial) in a trendy, likable way.
The marketing landscape is endlessly evolving. No one wants to make things more complex than they need to be. But if you’re a leading publisher today, it’s often more challenging to simplify the ideas of your team when everyone wants to chime in.

The good news is that one of the biggest visual trends in 2016 lies within appreciating the paradox. This means that we’ll need to seek inspiration outside of what’s “expected.”

**FACT**

The ability to connect and the urge to unplug are the two trends dominating our culture.¹¹

How do you do this? Here are **3 guidelines** borrowed from the best Millennial branded content that you can implement.

“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.”

Albert Einstein

¹¹ Shutterstock
Use Visual Opposites to Feed Off Each Other to Make Creative Trends Come Alive

While mobile is the main screen, technology is forcing many companies to “opt out” of the “always on” approach. The bright, fluorescent lights in your corporate cubicles coupled with the glowing lights of your computer screens is forcing many Millennials and marketers to be more mindful of what they choose to see—both in the real world and on their screens.

An example of a brand who used this approach well is REI. Instead of encouraging customers to shop indoors at REI during Black Friday, they ran an #OptOutside campaign\(^1\) to help remind customers that they should be enjoying their holiday by spending time outside with nature, friends and family.

\(^{12}\) [www.studiod.com/blog/black-friday-marketing-misfits/]
Capitalizes on the Current Mood of Your Customers Through Photos and Hashtags

This helps you to market accurately based on time, place, and manner.

Clothing company Carhartt is a great example of this. They asked their followers to tweet a photo of their “live or cooked chicken” during the Superbowl and used the hashtag #showyourchicken for a chance to win one of their jackets. Users from around the globe tweeted in images of everything from chicken coops to chicken wings. It was a fun, engaging way to get a feel for the mood of their customers—while allowing them to interact.

13 www.twitter.com/Carhartt/status/696544825101844481
Couple Images of Nature with Thought-Provoking Quotes to Inspire Your Audience

Even better if the thought-provoking quotes align with a cause.

Lean In is a fun, feminist account that does this well. This brand highlights successful women with motivating quotes and high-quality, human-centric images.

WE DO NOT NEED MAGIC TO CHANGE THE WORLD. WE CARRY ALL THE POWER WE NEED INSIDE OURSELVES ALREADY.

—J.K. ROWLING

14 www.instagram.com/leaninorg/
Some Helpful Tools

Here are the best tools to implement this approach:

Canva is a simple graphic design software with an excellent customer support team. The simplicity of the background images coupled with the ease of adding text makes this an ideal way to implement nature into the big picture of your strategy.

WordSwag is available for $3.99 in the iTunes store. It’s an easy way to turn your words into beautiful photo text designs.

PicLab is another photo editing option available to iPhone users. It has a beautiful yet simple interface that makes editing a breeze.
Article Trends:
Custom Content and a Solid Customer Experience Through Finding a Truth

Truth may sound like a philosophical concept. But custom content (and the Truth that derives from creating custom content) is often the catalyst for a solid customer experience. For example, Zappos taps into their culture of “happiness” throughout all of their customer experience “truth-telling” touchpoints. Recently they announced that they’re making February 29th a national holiday with their #taketheleap campaign. They’re encouraging people to take the day off because it simply “makes sense!” Zappos plans on publishing stories of people who are inspiring, who are using the day to “Take the Leap!”

“Marketing used to be about creating a myth and telling it. Now it’s about finding a truth and sharing it”

Marc Mathieu

15 www.zappos.com/take-the-leap
“Research shows that every time the size of a city doubles, innovation or productivity per resident increases by 15 percent. But when companies get bigger, innovation or productivity per employee generally goes down. So we’re trying to figure out how to structure Zappos more like a city, and less like a bureaucratic corporation. In a city, people and businesses are self–organizing. We’re trying to do the same thing by switching from a normal hierarchical structure to a system called Holacracy, which enables employees to act more like entrepreneurs and self-direct their work instead of reporting to a manager who tells them what to do.”
Creating a Solid Customer Experience

One of the ways that Zappos sets themselves apart from other companies is their ability to create a solid customer experience. Their culture is based off of a holacracy, which is one way to pave a profitable path to loyal customers.

The reason this works is because customers can more easily learn about a company through their culture (and content) that comes from having a solid customer experience in place (minus any advertisements). This approach is supported by research.

“If you want to kill any idea in the world, get a committee working on it.”

Charles Kettering
It’s now a necessity to create engaging, entertaining content that connects with your customers through your company culture. And the good news is that this is exactly what your customers are looking for. 78 percent of young people want to build a good relationship with companies that offer custom content.\(^\text{16}\)

**FACT**

70% of consumers prefer to get to know a company via articles over ads.

But **how** should you implement custom content into your strategy?
Use empathy.

According to Webster, empathy is “the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.” When you can incorporate empathy into your articles, you can resonate more than traditional advertising and grow a loyal following.

Build rapport.

One way you can implement this approach is to ask a question in the captions on Instagram to see what your fans are thinking or feeling. This is a good way to learn more about your audience so that you can create future content that resonates in a meaningful way.

Find a Truth.

The brands who build loyal, engaged fans on social media know how to tap into the truth of the collective conscious. The “collective conscious” is “the set of shared beliefs, ideas and moral attitudes which operate as a unifying force within society.”

17 www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_consciousness
Website Trends: Minimalism

Minimalism is the undercurrent that runs through many Millennial trends. According to DesignShack, a “good minimalist designer understands that simplicity in the aesthetic tends to be a byproduct of simplicity in the structure.” The focus on simplicity and minimalism means that the quality of a product needs to be key when it comes to impressing Millennials—and creating loyal fans.

In an Elite Daily study that polled 1,300 Millennials, half of them were said to appreciate the quality of a product as the most important attribute. When you use minimalism in your design, coupled with a high-quality, beautifully appealing product you can seamlessly connect to your customers through your branded content in a way that’s relevant. Brands who find a way to say more with less can easily capture the attention of their audience.

18 www.designshack.net/articles/graphics/5-traits-of-successful-minimalism/
The future of business is experiential. Knowing how your customers experience your brand allows you to better appeal and engage with them. The importance of a solid User Experience (UX) is crucial to taking your users on this journey. The Mercedes–Benz website is a beautiful example of how a brand takes the user on a journey. Their website has an eye–catching layout that takes the users on an experience. When you arrive on the site, you feel like you’re getting world–class individual attention.
One simple call-to-action is often all that’s needed to streamline the navigation of a website. When you eliminate the chaos (and often confusion) of an enormous website, then you can simply stick to a landing page that has a way for users to easily “opt-in.” This simplifies your strategy in a way that nothing else can.
How to Incorporate Website Trends Into Your Strategy

3 Establish a framework for meaningful metrics.

The one good thing about minimalism in web design is that it allows you to get super specific about your overall vision and goals. It’s important to know when, what, and where to post to make sure that you’re hitting the right metrics.
To sum up, create glorious conversations to build trust (and to market to Millennials). The good news is that these conversations don’t need to be complicated.

Incorporate visual trends by using simple images that communicate a deeper meaning with your audience (perhaps even aligning it with a cause).

Create custom content that aligns with truth; humanize your brand and connect with your loyal consumers in an equally loyal way.

Strive for a minimalistic website that shows you’re putting the user first, and you’re actually saying more with less.
It’s an exciting time for marketers to get inspired by their own culture. Simplicity and creativity through custom content takes you there. Use the tools, tips, and ideas in this white paper to transcend “business as usual” to reach your customers, and the younger generation. When you incorporate these trends to stay ahead, you’ll create content that takes your conversations to the next level.
We create custom content for awesome Millennial brands like Samsung.