



## GENERAL ARTICLES

▶ [INSIDE THE MILLENNIAL MIND](#)

*If you want to attract millennials to your business, you first have to understand them.*

They've never experienced life without computers or 24-hour news cycles. To them, the world and all information is just one click away.

Some 75 million strong, they're the largest generation after the baby boomers (80 million). They grew up in an era when children were put on a pedestal and fathers became more involved in parenting. Some say they're the most "hovered over" generation in history, with unprecedented parental supervision and advocacy on their behalf.

The defining events in their lives are the slaughter at Columbine High School, the Sept. 11 attack on the United States, the Enron and WorldCom scandals and the second war in Iraq. Some 38 percent describe themselves as "non-white."

They believe education is good and integrity is admirable. They refuse to conform to traditional standards and time-honored institutions. They don't believe in playing games, valuing authenticity instead. They don't do things because that's the way it's always been done—they do it because it makes sense. They're brutally honest, open-minded, tech-savvy and can spot a fake in a nanosecond.

They've grown up with reality television, so they expect things to be real. They strongly believe technology is a friend, not a foe. They expect immediate gratification. Constant communication is absolutely essential. By and large, they're very social. And they have an overwhelming need to connect on a personal level with just about everything they deem important in their lives, including the brands they purchase.

"They" are the millennials—children of the baby boomers, younger siblings to gen Xers, born between 1981 and 1993. You may have also heard them referred to as generation Y or echo boomers. And "they" are totally changing the world of marketing.

The resulting paradigm shift for North Bay advertising and public relations agencies has been seismic as they attempt to connect with this very challenging demographic.

[The new rules](#)

"Millennials are distrustful of traditional advertising," says Steven Martin, co-creative partner at [Firefly Creative Company](#), a small, cutting-edge advertising agency located in Healdsburg. "They want to know a brand is genuine and they're not being sold a bill of goods. They care as much about what a brand stands for as they do about how much it helps them."

"If you say one thing and do another, they'll know it right away," adds Christine Martin, owner and creative director of Firefly.

David Schuemann, owner and creative director of [CF Napa Brand Design](#) in Napa, notes that millennials are inherently skeptical of large corporations and of being overtly marketed to.

"They like to say, 'I discovered it, it's great and it fits my lifestyle.' A bigger opportunity with millennials is that lifestyle and market opportunities overlap. Take a look at Apple for example. It looked at how people lived and then developed products for them."

"Millennials value immediacy and personal interaction. They've grown up with it and it's their way of life," Steven Martin explains, adding that visual stimulation is very important. "If you can't share it in a picture, it doesn't exist. And if you can't share it immediately, you will totally lose traction. Communication is instant and so is reaction to what you're doing. They can touch 700 people with one click of a computer mouse, and they expect the same from all parts of life. They see technology as a tool of good and a tool of social change. If you can embrace that, you'll achieve a connection with the millennial audience."

[The new media](#)

Chris Denny, co-founder of [The Engine Is Red](#), a Santa Rosa-based creative agency that focuses on national brands (some of its clients are Chevron, Pocket Radar and Enphase Energy) is only 29—a millennial himself. He notes significant differences in

the way millennials consume media.

“We have a different palate and buffet of media,” he says. “We tend toward digital media, not print. When it comes to television, scheduled TV is out and on-demand is in. If you’re advertising in a newspaper, you’re saturating the older generation.”

Ashley Teplin, owner of [Media-ANT](#) agrees with Denny. Teplin formerly worked with the late Pamela Hunter, one of the most respected public relations professionals in the food and wine industry. While she’s well-versed in traditional public relations (putting out press releases, building relationships and tracking media), she’s also firmly grounded in Internet, digital and social media.

Teplin brands herself as an expert in “new-media relations.”

“By that I mean media relations is still there and still relevant. I’m friends with journalists and I hang out with them—and I help them get amazing stories. But by ‘new media,’ I mean video, photography, social networking and online engagement,” she explains. “You just can’t expect to put out a huge press release and have it work anymore.”

#### [The need to connect](#)

For millennials, the need to connect in some way, shape or form is a strong driver. If they can make a connection, they’re more likely to believe something is real.

Teplin oversaw the media strategy and launch of [ToutSuite Social Club](#), an innovative, content generating media company based in Napa Valley. It’s a live, interactive online video social commerce site that was launched last June. The idea is to meet a brand maker online, using a proprietary configuration of streaming technologies to connect ToutSuite members with chefs, winemakers, fashion designers and others. “Millennials look for fakes. They grew up with reality TV and they’ve transferred that to their online experiences,” Teplin explains.

“It’s like ‘Dancing With the Stars’: As the show continues, you get to know the celebrities on a totally different level. In the same manner, ToutSuite lets consumers meet the visionaries behind the brands. It’s important to get to know people and establish a relationship.”

She continues: “Recently, I had the opportunity to work with a millennial-based, nationally distributed beverage magazine called Mutineer on its annual Red Carpet Party in the Napa Valley. I was able to showcase the ToutSuite platform as well as work with the Anchor Distilling Company to create an authentic experience for individuals live and for those streaming online. It was a multi-platform interactive experience that will now forever live on the Internet—a true testament to the power of new-media.”

Because feeling connected is so crucial to millennials, social networking is essential to branding efforts, with Facebook and Twitter the two most currently popular vehicles. Teplin refers to Facebook, which has more than 750 million active users, as an “online personal rolodex and online operating system.” The problem is that just being on Facebook and Twitter doesn’t do much good if it’s not thought of strategically.

“You have to be aware of your online voice. If a brand says the wrong thing, it can be destructive,” Teplin says.

It’s also important to not be overly self-centered on Twitter and Facebook. “No one wants to hear about me, me, me all the time in any conversation, and it’s the same thing if you’re conversing online,” she explains.

Another Media-ANT client is [Kitchen Door](#), a restaurant owned by Chef Todd Humphries (formerly of St. Helena’s Martini House) in downtown Napa’s [Oxbow Public Market](#). Teplin was hired a few months after the restaurant opened to help with their online presence.

“Todd is a family man with two sons in school in Napa. With Kitchen Door, he wanted to return to his roots, which is multi-ethnic comfort food—high quality at a reasonable price that you can get ‘to go’ if you want. This became our brand message,” Teplin says.

“We did videos with Todd, talking about his background and his own personal story; we even did one with him showing how to make his renowned mushroom soup. We established a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube and although he didn’t like the idea at first, I was able to convince him to tweet twice a day about the afternoon and evening specials at the restaurant. On Facebook, we talk about the things the restaurant is doing and what’s going on locally. It’s all about interaction.”

Firefly Creative Company used the same synergy when developing its “Do You Speak Sonoma?” advertising campaign for the [Sonoma County Tourism Bureau](#).

“It was created as an interactive campaign, an invitation to join a dialog,” says Steven Martin. Basically, the campaign invites people to submit “Sonomaisms”—words that are uniquely Sonoma. Like “corkhopping” (enjoying wine tasting at different wineries), “zinfidelity” (extreme loyalty to drinking only one kind of red wine) and “app-etizing” (using Sonoma County’s iPhone app to track down local dining options).

“It’s great outward bound communications, but there’s an investment and ownership among those it reaches. People feel a part of the campaign. It also lends itself well to social media. Our signage on BART cars in the East Bay were made to look like a Twitter page, and the call to action was to text the tourism bureau to get immediate offers on weekend getaways in Sonoma,” he explains.

#### The real thing

By and large, millennials are averse to more traditional marketing campaigns. “They think marketing is lying,” Steven Martin says. “They don’t believe something just because it’s in the newspaper or on the Internet. They’re very skeptical, therefore it’s important for a brand to be authentic and genuine.”

Firefly Creative recently started a new campaign for the local chapter of the American Red Cross, which serves Sonoma, Lake and Mendocino counties. The goal? Getting to know the Red Cross, which is one of the world’s most recognizable brands, on the local level—up close and a lot more personal.

“The biggest challenge is that everyone knows of the Red Cross, but people aren’t aware that the local chapter does many things besides helping out with disasters,” Steven Martin says.

The Firefly suggestion, which the Red Cross accepted, was to take a somewhat lighter approach, have some fun “and take away the guilt tactic regarding giving,” says Christine Martin. Much like the popular Clover Stornetta ads featuring Clo the Cow and a series of plays on words, Firefly took the color red and used it as the base for its word games: “Try the local Red—it pairs well with passion” (red wine); “Are you well Red?” (books); “Get caught Red-handed” (promoting the new hands-only CPR) and “A little Red is riding in your neighborhood” (for their mobile trucks).

“If you can make someone smile or laugh, it’s an immediate emotional connection,” Steven Martin says, “and it covers all age groups, not just millennials.”

What’s more, fun, light-hearted ads done in a series attract followers. “When people look forward to what you’re going to do next, they become invested in the brand,” Christine Martin explains.

#### Circle of friends

Overall, millennials love to be social and they deeply value their friends’ opinions. They share links to websites for products they like. They mention them on their Facebook pages and they Tweet about them on Twitter. “In the old days, we called them evangelists, but they were much fewer in number. Now everyone is an evangelist,” says Steven Martin.

“Millennials are overrun with choices,” Christine Martin says. “They use interaction with their peers to narrow those choices.”

When millennials socialize in person, not online, they generally do so in groups. CF Napa Design Group, which is unique in that it’s 100 percent focused on the alcoholic beverage industry, has used this knowledge to create strategic branding for wines targeted at the millennial market.

“Our research told us that millennials are much more willing to try different things and, when it comes to consuming wine, they do so in groups—in bars, restaurants and even at home,” Schuemann says. “When it’s a group that’s involved, a bottle of wine isn’t that much of an investment or risk, so millennials will try several different foods and wines at a time.”

Hence the development of the wine brand [Tapeña](#), owned by Freixenet of Spain. It’s a combination of the Spanish words *tapas* (small dishes) and *peña* (small groups of friends or small clubs).

“[*Peña*] is similar to ‘my peeps’ [slang for “my friends”] in the United States,” Schuemann explains. “It’s a hip Spanish wine, and we created an icon of a chalk-drawn fork, because daily *tapas* specials are chalked out on boards in the restaurants in Spain. The brand fits right into the lifestyle of millennials and the way they like to sample foods and wine.” The price point of \$8.99 also made it very attractive to a younger audience.

Tapeña was launched in 2008. More than 50,000 cases were shipped in the first 16 months it was on the market. In 2009, depletions (sales by distributors to retail clients) were up 20 percent, which Schuemann says is an impressive achievement considering the economic climate and the number of new Spanish wine brands introduced during the same timeframe. The trend continued in 2010, according to Schuemann, with Tapeña ranking in the top 10 per volume Spanish table wines.

Millennials also have strong opinions that brands need to be socially responsible. More recently, CF Napa redesigned [Clif Family Wines'](#) The Climber brand, another favorite among millennials and others with active outdoor lifestyles, for more shelf impact. And in addition to a traditional wine bottle, Schuemann was able to convince the winery management to offer The Climber in an Astrapouch. "It was perfect for the demographic, because they ski and hike and they can put the pouch in a backpack, take it on camping trips or take it to the beach and other venues where you can't take glass," Schuemann says. "It turns out sales of The Climber in Astrapouch are far outpacing its sales in glass bottles. It's interesting, because you'd think there'd be a high level of skepticism."

The back of The Climber pouch touts its virtues—it has an 80 percent lower carbon footprint than two glass bottles, uses 90 percent less waste and landfill space than its equivalent two glass bottles, is lighter in weight, can be resealed, and the wine can be consumed for one month after it's opened (versus two days for a bottle).

"It's a quality story as well—a great example of innovation and knowing what millennials like, then aiming a product at them," Schuemann says. "But it doesn't mean everyone can put their wine in an Astrapouch and millennials will buy it."

#### [A communications revolution](#)

While this story has put much of the focus on marketing to millennials, there's a bigger movement afoot. What we're really witnessing is a cultural change in the way people communicate across all generations, Teplin says.

"My mother is in her 60s and she's a realtor," Teplin explains. "She just got an iPad; she's trying to find someone to run her Facebook page. She has to do things she might not want to do at her age, but she's thinking of different approaches. She feels the pressure from the younger generation and she knows she has to communicate in a different manner; she has to be more social, use more visuals and be online more. I think people get stuck on the millennial market but don't think outside the box. The fastest growing group on social networks is females age 40 and over. As marketers, we need to be cognizant of all demographics."

Schuemann couldn't agree more. "To ignore everyone else just to market to millennials is a dangerous move," Schuemann says. "You don't want to alienate gen Xers and baby boomers, because quite frankly, they're the ones with the money."

And let's not forget those even older than the boomers. Senior centers all over the country say their most popular classes are those that teach the elderly how to use a computer, email and the Internet.

Case in point, this writer fondly remembers something her now 85-year-old mother once said to her when she was home for a visit a few years ago: "You know, Jane, I was telling your father the other day. If we don't die soon, we're going to have to buy one of those computers."