

How to Increase Your Selling Effectiveness to Generation Y

For many selling professionals and sales managers selling effectively has become a cumbersome task. The proliferation of the electronic media and instant availability of products and services allows more power into the hands of clients. However, there is one area where the selling professional can achieve more effectiveness by trends and social issues. One of the largest, yet daunting, areas of research today relates to the Millennials or aptly called Generation Y.

To achieve greater selling effectiveness, professionals must realize that we operate in a multi-cultural, multi-gendered, and multi-generational workforce. For purposes of this article, our focus relates to generational issues. Many selling professionals, consultants, and employers have not taken into consideration that four generations exist in the workforce. There exists:

- Veterans = 20 Million /ages 65 and above
- Baby Boomer = 65 Million /ages 47 – 60
- Generation X = 50 Million /ages 38 - 45
- Generation Y = 78 Million /21 – 40

The manner with which each purchases is based on behavior and values. To achieve selling excellence, it is imperative to quickly comprehend the value differentiation of each.

Veterans

Veterans have important buying power and been doing so for well over 50 years. This group, because of many socially historical issues, usurps brand value. This group tends to remain very loyal to products and services and does not like change. More importantly, their age creates a need for physical relationships and they find instant communication frustrating.

Boomers

The 78 million Americans who were 50 or older approximately 5 years ago controlled \$28 trillion, or 67% of the country's wealth. This group has tremendous buying power. However, many Boomers worry about retirement and savings. This group resists spending during economic uncertainty, since they pay with cash not credit. To achieve sales excellence, it is imperative for selling professionals to create a bond with Boomers.

Generation X

Generation X makes up about 17% of the U.S. population and ranges in age from 38 to approximately 45 years of age. This generation is very open to technology and is also well educated. If this group needs information, they know where to get it, so selling professionals need to illustrate differentiation. Generation X wants issues resolved

expediently and deplores lengthy “sales pitches” in favor of solutions. Coincidentally, the dearth of email has Generation X desirous of personal interaction and paper correspondence. Selling effectiveness is uncompromised using more traditional marketing means.

Generation Y or Millennials

The largest and clearly the most influential group of purchasers since the Baby Boomers is Generation Y. This group is on the minds of many selling and marketing professionals. With 78 million potential buyers, it is impossible to avoid this large group. They are influential, have the money to spend, and are many in number. Generation Y are very well educated. As a group, they believe in real time connection with the Internet – a “must” medium. Generation Y is all about instant connectivity and most importantly instant gratification.

Our research in this area finds these influential areas pivotal for effectively selling to Generation Y.

Cool

Online and print medium requires change. Generation Y desires importance and self-actualization. They buy the “now” and the hottest item on the market. Those that follow this trend will thrive. Avatars such as Apple are very proactive in this area. Sales of iPods and iPhones flourish. Generation Y desires to be part of the experience. Selling to them requires a value proposition focused on current trends and social issues.

Brand

Generation Y differs from all prior generations. They are not brand loyal. Due to the increased connectivity, Generation Y follows social trends. Generation Y have acute attention spans as they await the next trend. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article illustrates how Six Flags is aligning with Disney (movies and television shows) simply to capture the attention of the Generation Y. Do not build a brand for them; rather, build a brand with them. Apple, Southwest, FedEx, Facebook, and Google all build products with advice from this influential group.

Content

Content is king. This is true for Generation Y. The proliferation of Internet technology allows Generation Y instant access to information. Sellers must provide uniqueness with content not found through regular Internet channels. Further, since content travels at the speed of light selling effectiveness can increase with viral marketing.

Language

Generation Y uses different lexicon. Whereas the other generations use complete articulate sentences, Generation Y speaks in a language encrypted with messages similar to the DaVinci code. Sellers must speak and connect to Generation Y in their language.

Risk

The increase of viral marketing and information enable Generation Y to take more risks than preceding generations. In fact, due mostly to youth, Generation Y are riskier; they have less to lose. Sellers and marketers must challenge Generation Y. Buyers represent three purchase groups: a) early adopters, b) followers c) not a chance. Generation Y devours risk by adopting the “cool” trends. Sellers must understand the trends to advise the consumer to be a recognized leader.

The need to dissect generations is vital to selling effectiveness. Today’s sales professional requires the research skills of the finest detectives, uncovering every clue and unearthing every angle. Additionally, selling effectiveness requires spontaneous information leveraged by the lexicon of the contrary party. It is impracticable to estimate if each issue resonates with Generation Y. Sellers intuitively realize that trends continue to change. The only way to get ahead is to be a leader. Clearly, as the Generation Y matures, there is another entourage. Selling effectiveness requires intuition, content, and resolve.

Drew Stevens PhD is known as the Sales Strategist. Drew assists organizations to dramatically accelerate business growth. He is the author of seven books including Split Second Selling, Split Second Customer Service, and Little Book of Hope and is frequently called on the media for his expertise. Drew was recently nominated as one of 50 Top Sales Experts. Download a free copy of Drew’s White Paper on “Selling Effectiveness” or “Business Building” e-book at <http://www.drewstevensconsulting.com/freestuff>.

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