



Generation Y Marketing

Generation Y: ages between 11 & 27. Of significance: this age group, you guessed it, represents the majority of your clientele: seniors, brides and new mothers. And to add more complexity to the marketing equation, Gen-Yers cannot be marketed to as though they are the same as Gen-X and a baby boomer. Why?

Let's attempt to get a handle on why Generation Y is significantly different and why possibly taking a different marketing approach is good advice. Generation Y is 2X the size of Generation X and almost equal to the baby boomers in population. Marketing to Gen-Y requires a totally different mind set and perhaps will require a totally new perspective on communications to engage with this "New Online Community." Simply stated, Gen-Yers communicate with the world as if it is inside an "electronic bubble." Studios must refine on how to interface and connect to Generation Y. They communicate using cell phones, text messaging, MySpace, iPods, U-Tube, wireless plasma screens and view cable networks: the Daily Show and Colbert Report. Hard copy advertising media is no longer relevant. Gen-Yers receive and spread product information by word-of-mouth via the cell phone, blogs, chat rooms, U-Tube, text messaging, etc. Put a big "?" mark on effectiveness of non-electronic direct mail and news paper advertising in the future. Research is now indicating that Gen-Yers are very good at filtering out ads that impact and motivate only Gen-X and baby boomers to buy. Now what?

Gen-Yers are motivated by the concept of "interaction" where content is both fun and entertaining. Let's face it, Gen-Yers have been entertained all their lives and continue to want to be entertained. Example: continuing to listen to music 24/7 via the iPod and reality TV. Electronic communication is the world of the Gen-Yer. To successfully market to the Gen-Y population base, you the photographer must enter their world on their terms. Photographers must develop and construct media that transforms "need & wants" into a dynamic and an entertaining presentation that motivates the Gen-Yer, not only to buy, but also to share your media content (as electronic word-of-mouth) with their network of friends and associates. This may be a daunting task, but it must be done for continued business success. Suggestion: start with in-studio productions of short media content beginning with movie/video and

entertaining-interaction online games on your web site. Free software (Mac's iMovie & PC Window's Movie Maker) can be a good starting place.

Communication is the first problem to resolve, but what about product: i.e. what to sell. Our photo industry needs 'futurologist' who can function as a systematic, elite band of trend spotters by providing the portrait studio with glimpses into the future. Ideas become product: Personal images are transformed into that product. Always keep in mind that many trends will never materialize, and false prophets selling snake oil will appear on the scene. Do not fret, most trends will become "old hat" within 12 to 18 months anyway. What is needed is a constant flow of ideas and trend possibilities beyond Photoshop to keep Gen-Yers interested and motivated to buy. Best and most profitable products will be those that consumers cannot produce for themselves.

As trends evolve or just play out, savvy photographers must become adept 'paradigm-shifters' almost overnight. Converting trends into product and profits will require fast action by studios to provide new marketing content and the procurement of new assets on part of labs. Studios must then directly feed new products into the Generation Y's pipeline (their social network) where your marketing media content, both entertaining and interactive, will be spread by word-of-mouth. This is your future. Embrace it. Give us a call to get started.

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