



# ExecBlueprints™

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## Action Points

### I. What Are the Inherent Challenges in Targeting the Millennial Demographic?

First of all, you need to resist the temptation to over-generalize this group. For example, not all Millennials embrace technology; some resist it. Even so, you will probably have to switch up your marketing messages more frequently. While targeting the younger demographic, remember not to distance your Baby Boomers by altering core messages; they will still be consistent customers for years to come.

### II. The Bottom Line

How do you measure success? Nowadays, marketers have more tools than ever – from traditional focus groups to web analytics. You can use all the fancy metrics that you want to assess your campaigns' costs and impact on brand health and awareness, but if sales and profit are not coming, and customers are not returning, then nothing else matters.

### III. Must-Have Branding Considerations When Developing and Targeting Messages

You know that the notion of "brand" constitutes the emotional link that customers have with your product. But here's the tricky part: how do you keep this positive image intact among your existing customers while courting Millennials? The key is to retain its core messages while developing a personalized, interactive voice for new communication channels.

### IV. The Golden Rules for Communicating via Social Media

As long as you are able to accommodate positive and negative user-generated content, social media channels provide rich opportunities for spreading your messages and interacting with customers. But keep in mind: paid advertising can quickly be perceived as invasive, and quality engagement is more important than having many followers.

### V. Essential Take-Aways

As they represent the future of your business, you need to market to Millennials. Like all generations, they have certain characteristics your campaigns will need to address, such as the way they expect their brands to talk *with* them and be supportive of causes. Be aware that Millennials *will* research your brand before they even interact with your product.

The marketing leaders from Jockey International, The Alter Group, and Haggar Clothing Co. on:

## Marketing to Millennials: How to Create Connections with the Internet Generation

*Dustin Cohn*

*Chief Marketing Officer, Jockey International*

*Tom Silva*

*Principal, Silva Brand (formerly Senior Vice President of Marketing and Strategy, The Alter Group)*

*Richard M. Honiball*

*Senior Vice President, Marketing, Licensing, and e-Commerce  
Haggar Clothing Co.*

**E**ighty million strong, the Millennial generation represents a big business opportunity for your company. While its members have been pejoratively described as self-absorbed and narcissistic, deeper research reveals a group that feels vulnerable as a result of having grown up in the economically uncertain post-9/11 era, values the support of varying causes, and yearns for connection with both people and brands. This ExecBlueprint offers insightful guidance for marketing to Millennials. First, it is important not to overgeneralize their qualities. There are, in fact, many "tribes" among this age group, and not all of them are tech-obsessed! Depending on your product, more specific research may be necessary to get your messages right. Social media is, typically, an effective way to reach them, but remember that interactions must be two-way. Imbue your brand with personal qualities such as authenticity or warmth. Keep your syntax simple and jargon-free. Be open to feedback. Ultimately, to ensure marketing strategies are based on a solid understanding of Millennial culture and interests, go out and meet some. You will probably be surprised at what you discover. ■

## Contents

|   |      |
|---|------|
| About the Authors .....                   | p.2  |
| Dustin Cohn .....                         | p.3  |
| Tom Silva .....                           | p.6  |
| Richard M. Honiball .....                 | p.10 |
| Ideas to Build Upon & Action Points ..... | p.13 |

## About the Authors

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**Dustin Cohn**

*Chief Marketing Officer, Jockey International*

Dustin Cohn is the chief marketing officer of Jockey International, makers and marketers of premium underwear, active wear, and apparel. Joining Jockey two years ago, Mr. Cohn has been the key architect of a companywide transformation, including a major rebranding effort. Prior to Jockey, he served as CMO of Optimer

Brands, a Sterling Partners Private Equity portfolio company.

In addition, Mr. Cohn has served as director of marketing at PepsiCo, leading advertising, national promotions, retail/customer marketing, entertainment marketing, and product/packaging innovation for the Gatorade and Propel brands. His experience also includes agency

leadership roles, such as VP management director at Foote Cone & Belding.

[Read Dustin's insights on Page 3](#)



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**Tom Silva**

*Principal, Silva Brand*

Tom Silva was senior vice president of marketing and strategy for The Alter Group, one of the nation's leading commercial real estate development firms. Mr. Silva previously served as communications director for PM Realty Group, an international full-service commercial real estate firm. He was the recipient of the CoreNet Global

Chicago Chapter's inaugural Michael Kaczmarek Leadership Award.

His work has been recognized by the Publicity Club of Chicago, the International Academy of the Visual Arts, and the Web Marketing Association. He is also a filmmaker and musician whose work has been reviewed by *Rolling Stone*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, public

television, iTunes, and in arts publications in Europe. For more information about Mr. Silva or The Alter Group, please check out [www.altergroup.com](http://www.altergroup.com).

[Read Tom's insights on Page 6](#)



**Richard M. Honiball**

*Senior Vice President, Marketing, Licensing, and e-Commerce, Haggar Clothing Co.*

Richard Honiball is the senior vice president of marketing, licensing & e-commerce for Haggar Clothing Co. In this role, Mr. Honiball is responsible for leading the company's branding and advertising strategies, developing its licensing partnerships, and spearheading the growth of its online strategies.

Prior to joining Haggar, Mr. Honiball was the vice president of PD, Design & Trend for Men's & Kids at JCPenney, where he was responsible for leadership teams that led JCP's private label brands with an annual sales volume of over \$2.4 billion.

Over the span of his career, Mr. Honiball has held extensive retail positions at

Brooks Brothers and Jos. A. Bank in merchandising; brand development and marketing; product development and sourcing; multi-store management; and new business development. Early in his career, he also owned two retail concept stores.

[Read Richard's insights on Page 10](#)

# Dustin Cohn

Chief Marketing Officer, Jockey International

## Addressing New Trends Among Consumers

We recognize that younger men are becoming more conscious about the way they look and dress and are starting to understand what women have known for a long time: your underwear and base layer affect how your outerwear looks. In the past, men did not think about using or wearing different underwear and T-shirt products based on what they were wearing that day. They tended to wear the same thing regardless of whether they were working out, going to work in a suit, or hanging out in skinny jeans. The trend with this younger mindset has been that they now understand that a base

*We have discovered that the number of followers [on social media] is not as important as maintaining an ongoing engagement with the consumer.*

layer affects their outerwear, and our goal is to tap into this trend.

From a woman's standpoint the brand enjoys incredible loyalty among more mature consumers. However, to ensure the future growth of the company it is important for us to bring in younger consumers, introduce them to the Jockey brand, and create loyalists.

Consequently, roughly 75 percent of our marketing efforts are targeted at the Millennial generation. The investment in Millennials has increased significantly over the last few years not only because it is a big business opportunity

but because it is also aspirational for our more mature consumers. Targeting the Millennials helps reinforce that we're a more contemporary brand to all of our consumers.

## Use of Social Media to Target the Millennial Generation

A big part of how we use social media with the Millennials is through branded and user-generated content to create engagement and an ongoing dialogue. We want to ensure that we not only create a rational connection to our products but an emotional connection to our brand as well.

Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest have been the platforms that we use the most when targeting the Millennial generation. Tapping into the blogger community is also a critical component to our social strategy, as it creates third-party endorsements for us. We do, however, try to stay away from paid advertising in social media because we have seen some backlash when brands invade the consumer's personal space. We are visitors in their social media world and as good visitors we like to not overstay our welcome; advertising seems to cross that line.



**Dustin Cohn**

Chief Marketing Officer  
Jockey International

*"We want to continue to create a true collaboration with our Millennial consumers over time, and need to understand how and when their thinking evolves."*

- With company for two years
- Previously CMO, Optimizer Brands
- Former PepsiCo's director of marketing for Gatorade and Propel brands
- B.B.A., University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Completed Executive Leadership Program, Harvard Business School

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We have created branded pages and actively seek followers on specific sites. That said, we have discovered that the number of followers is not as important as maintaining an ongoing engagement with the consumer. It is more about the quality of the communication and engagement, not just the quantity.

## Gaining Insights into All Consumers

Consumer insights are key to everything we do, whether it is

marketing communications or product development. We leverage many consumer research tools from conducting traditional focus groups, to performing online quantitative studies, to observing consumers in their environments like home and in stores. Based on these different methods we have been able to refine our messaging in our product development and also test different concepts with these consumers.

Consumer segmentation is also involved in understanding not just what will resonate and be relevant to the Millennial generation but what will not offend or disenfranchise our more mature consumer. We ensure all of our messaging does a good job at positioning our brand as relevant for consumers who seek quality, fit, and on-trend items. This commonality is what keeps us from offending older consumers while being relevant to the younger ones.

## Expert Advice

**Target Market** We target men and women who are fashion-conscious but not trendy. They're consumers who are looking for quality, comfort, and fit, but who do not want to sacrifice style. We have products that target a more conservative consumer who likes traditional-fitting products. But we also are engaged in a separate effort to go after younger-minded consumers who tend to look for prints and colors that are a little bit more fashionable and also a fit that is slimmer with less coverage. We target by mindset, not by demographic.

## Millennial Generation's Relationship Expectations

Millennial consumers expect to be listened to and to be part of your decision-making process, whether that involves product innovation or the type of content you provide to them. The big difference between the expectations of the Millennial generation and those of our more mature customer is that Millennials want to take a seat at your table and be involved in a collaboration with a brand, versus having a brand talk to them; in other

words, they expect a brand to talk *with* them.

Another pointed difference for the Millennials is that they expect brands to positively contribute to the community at large. This is an important thing — and you cannot fake it. Contributions have to be genuine, real, and honest. For example, our chief executive officer and owner was adopted and our cause is to help support families who have adopted children. This is something that is embedded in our culture and it is real and honest. Millennials, while they want to know you are giving back,

## What Are Jockey's Keys to Engaging Millennials?

Addressing current fashion trends for colors and coverage while remaining true to basic brand values: quality and fit

Engaging audiences in conversations through Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and blogs

Talking with consumers about product innovations and message content

Demonstrating how the company is positively contributing to the community at large

also want to know that it is being done in a way that is in your culture's DNA.

## **Anticipated Challenges**

I think the biggest challenge is avoiding being a flash in the pan or the trend *du jour*. Our business

is about establishing long-term relationships and emotional connections to the brand while also providing consumers with a rational reason to believe in our products. Sustaining this combination is especially a challenge with Millennials. To ensure the relationship between the Jockey brand and the

Millennial generation is an ongoing one, we are continuing to have the aforementioned two-way conversations. We are continuing to listen to the Millennials, evolve our thinking, evolve our product offerings, and evolve our messaging based on what we hear. ■

# Tom Silva

*Principal, Silva Brand*

## **Alter Group's Target Market**

Alter Group's target market consists mainly of commercial real estate brokers who represent Global 2000 companies as well as small- to medium-sized businesses. They represent the ultimate end-users of our buildings. That is how high-capital B2B works; you never go straight to the customer, you are oftentimes going through a senior-level consultant or broker.

In the last five years there has been a great shift in the demographic makeup of the target market. The Baby Boomer generation is starting to retire and pass the torch to those of us in Generation X, who are becoming the senior managers of corporations. The 80-million-strong Millennial generation is also starting to become the rank-and-file in the brokerage industry and, in some cases, they are leaders as well. It is the Millennials who are out there pounding the pavements, doing the deals. They are frequently the people who are actually working the accounts and being responsible for client engagement — that's true on our side and on the client side as well.

Because of this, approximately 40 percent of our marketing efforts are targeted specifically at Millennials. Because these touches are mostly through low-cost channels like social media and eblasts, they only constitute 15 percent of our marketing budget. That's an important point: marketing to Millennials is cheaper because it relies less on expensive channels like broadcast TV or print media. As an example, Procter & Gamble is reportedly slashing \$1 billion from its marketing budget over the next five years by using more lower-cost

*The Millennials have traded in the permissiveness of Boomers and the bravado of GenXers for something more ineffable and ambiguous.*

Tom Silva

Senior Vice President of Marketing and Strategy

The Alter Group

digital marketing channels to reach consumers one-to-one.

## **Communicating with Millennials Through Social Media**

When communicating with the Millennial generation, we use social media on a large scale. We started this in 2008 when we put together a program that included paid search, e-mail, pay-per-click ads, podcasting, and blogging. In addition we use the major social media sites to place content. For example, we typically tweet three or four times a day. We have established a community of thousands of people who have come to our site and liked our page; we also have been able to procure lists of people who fit Millennial demographics. All of this has allowed us to reach them directly. I would say that we are one of the few companies in the industry that has a full-time social media person in-house.

Social media has exerted a large influence in how we have changed our branding. Modern branding has existed since the 1930s but really hit its stride in the "Mad Men" era of the 1960s. The basic



**Tom Silva**

*Principal, Silva Brand  
(Formerly SVP of Marketing and Strategy, The Alter Group)*

*"Now I think we are being driven by the Millennial generation — their unpretentiousness, their strong sense of community, their drive to do better."*

- Previously communications director, PM Realty Group
- Work recognized by Publicity Club of Chicago
- Also filmmaker and musician
- Graduate, Long Island University
- M.A., Humanities (in progress), University of Chicago

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notion behind branding is that the customer relates to brands on a personal level (Kevin Roberts, CEO Worldwide of Saatchi & Saatchi, calls them "lovemarks.") A brand resides in the minds of your customers. This is important because it is not tangible.

There is an interesting narrative about how the branding phenomenon came to be recognized by corporations. In the 1960s and onwards, the large holding companies of the age started to sell off some of their business units. So, naturally, they looked at what the

assets of these entities were worth. If a food company, for example, was thinking about selling off one of its breakfast cereals, they would look at what the plants, the processes, and the people were worth. Initially they might assign a value of \$2 billion, but then they would go out to the market and the analysts would say the entity was worth \$16 billion. This happened over and over again. The companies would wonder why such a discrepancy existed. Quite simply the only explanation was branding. The difference was the value added by the power of the brand. That is why branding is so important: because it has a real multiplier effect, it can return real cash value.

Online branding has further evolved the notion that a brand should be extremely personal: it should have the attributes of a person, whether it is ambition, adventurousness, creativity, or warmth. Online extends this by giving brands an interactive voice. They now need to be able to converse with customers. That is why 79 percent of Millennials say Amazon is their favorite brand, because Amazon does not simply project a monolithic image. Amazon is a brand that is a composite of interactions. People come in, they ask questions, they get answers, and that is what constitutes a brand today.

Consequently, these relatively new expectations have changed the nature of brands. We try to imbue our company with personalized qualities, which is at the heart of branding. The online world has opened up the idea that a brand now has to go one step further; rather than simply projecting an

## Expert Advice

The Millennials grew up in an age of economic decline. That's materially different from the 1980s and '90s. And so what characterizes Millennials is a particular mix of disappointment and hope, ambition and anxiety, jadedness and innocence. According to a 2013 Pew report, just 63 percent of Millennials are employed and a third are living at home with parents. The Millennial films, sometimes pejoratively called "mumblecore," gesture at these realities. Filmmakers like the DuPlass brothers, Joe Swanberg, Lynne Shelton, and Lena Dunham often have mute, tentative, or socially withdrawn characters who can't make sense of the world. (The film *Jeff Who Lives at Home* is typical – a 30-year-old slacker emerges from his shell by saving someone's life.) The affectlessness of these characters and their desultory lives is more illuminating than a lot of the social theorists and their formulations because we all know young people like this.

image, it must invite people into a dialogue.

## Expectation Differentiation Among Millennials

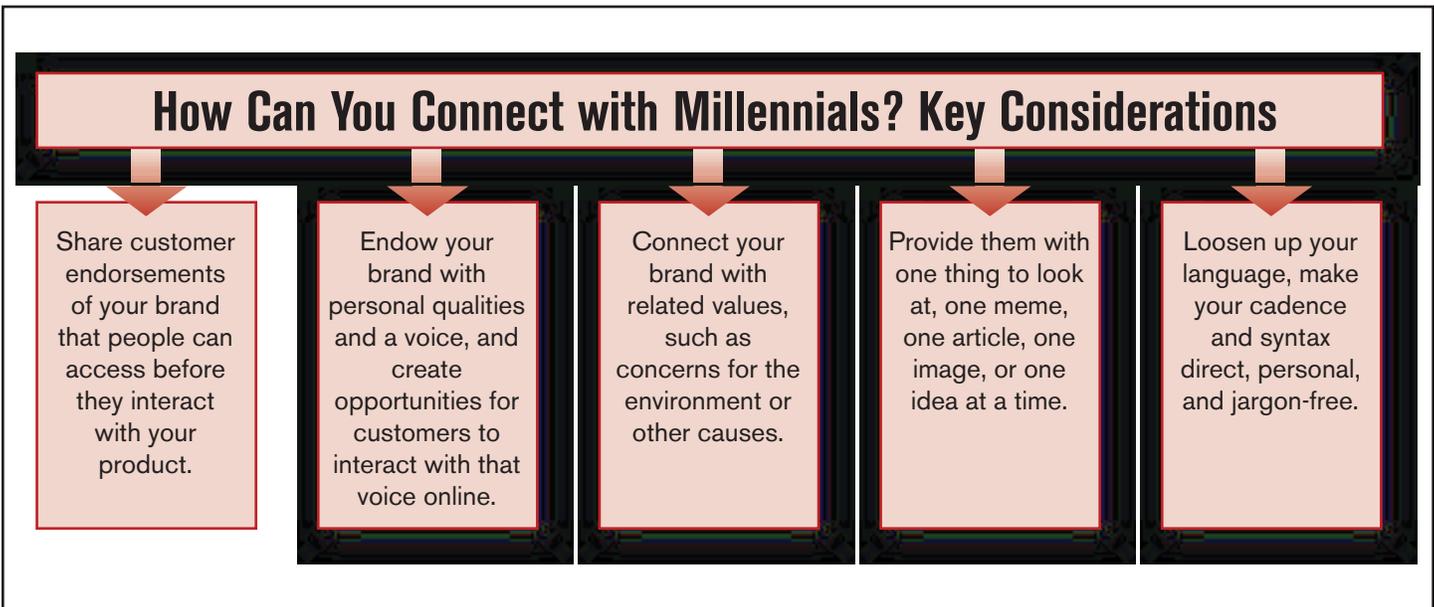
Authors like William Strauss and Neil Howe, and companies like Boston Consulting have done a lot of research on Millennials. Reading them, you realize that there are a lot of misconceptions about the generation. *Time* magazine did a Joel Stein cover story that defined the Millennials as "The Me Me Me Generation." The whole idea was that they are all self-absorbed and narcissistic, and their social skills have been attenuated by technology; this is the stereotype of Millennials. However, what these organizations found in some of their deeper studies (and what I have found as well in my own experience) is that Millennials can be extremely civic-minded with a strong sense of community. Some of the studies are saying that Millennials are very concerned about the environment, and they are much more concerned about causes, which attracts them to brands which support those values.

Being environmentally friendly has become a huge deal.

Here are a few more observations about Millennials: firstly, they need a large amount of validation from groups. Because of the nature of the way they operate, mainly through technology, group activity and group validation are extremely important. It is socially important for Millennials to embrace the right values and to be seen embracing those values; this is something that must be recognized when branding to the Millennials as your target market. Secondly, the Millennial generation wants to get in and out. When marketing to Millennials, provide them with one thing to look at, one meme, one article, one image, or one idea at a time. They no longer want to go to a web site and spend 20 minutes reviewing the material; that is not the way Millennials are wired. The modular approach works much better for this generation of customers.

## Ensuring Marketing Strategies Will Resonate with Millennial Culture

To ensure your marketing strategies are based on a solid understanding



of the culture and interests of the Millennial generation, you need to get out there. You need to get out of your office. You are not going to be able to get any sense of who these people are if you don't interact with them. When I got back into academia, I started to spend a great deal of time surrounded by people who were in their early 20s. I was quite surprised by how little I knew about their concerns even though I always considered myself to be fairly in touch. I certainly listen to much of the same music they do and I am aware of what is happening in pop culture, but I was not aware of the way 9/11 and the economic crash affected them growing up and the vulnerability it created. The only way you really understand this generation is by trying to find a way to truly be sympathetic and understanding.

Also, let me say that I don't look just at marketing publications or academic research to understand Millennials; I look to the artists. Marketing people need to pay attention to popular culture

because this is where you will find the voices of the new generation. They tell a more nuanced, embodied account of what the Oh-Oh Generation is about, one that doesn't emerge from algorithms or assumptions. Books like Karen Russell's *Swamplandia*, Adelle Waldman's *The Love Affairs of Nathaniel P.*, or *The Tiger's Wife* by Tea Obreht can teach you a lot. They paint a world that's all its own — one of indeterminate relationships, emotional fragility, and an inexorable search for authentic experience. The Millennials have traded in the permissiveness of Boomers and the bravado of GenXers for something more ineffable and ambiguous.

### **Appealing to Millennials Without Alienating Other Generations**

As long as the things that you are doing are based on the eternal principles of marketing, you are not going to alienate people. You must create content that is meaningful

and you must present that in a professional but also personal way.

The Millennial generation has a low threshold for what I call "managerial" language; the sort of business school buzzwords that are a part of our bygone era of communication. I have found that to reach the Millennial generation you need to loosen up your language, even when you are in the B2B field. You must make your cadence and syntax direct, personal, and simple, with single syllable words and clean language that is not overloaded with jargon. In doing so, you are far more likely to get engagement without alienating any of the older generation. In fact, I think you will find that the older generations will come along, relieved by that simple approach.

We have been through several cycles with Baby Boomers and Gen Xers where we saw corporate marketing-speak and business-speak become so ubiquitous that we started to recognize that a great deal of it was just not semantically meaningful or effective. I think

these past communication trends caused wholesale erosion of our powers of expression. As Millennials are much more about a dialogue, the marketing CMOs are adjusting their marketing language to accord with that. This language is now much more personal, much more interactive; it is about asking questions and putting as few words on the page as possible.

## **Current Plan to Adapt Marketing to Appeal to Millennials**

The current buzzword is the “zero moment of truth.” This precedes the first moment when somebody encounters your product, the first time they see it in an ad or the first time they go to the dealership and see the car. The zero moment of truth, a term coined by the

people at Google, occurs before the consumer interacts with the product. It evokes a generation of people empowered by technology who are able to do their own research; that is the moment where you want to get in your marketing message. The strongest marketing message of all is a job well done and receiving the endorsement of a satisfied client or expert. Cultivating the key influencers in your industry is more important than ever, whether they are bloggers, CFOs, or critics.

We just launched a rebrand of one of our companies. We created the initial brand in the mid-2000s and when we did the relaunch we took all of the corporate institutional language out of our messaging, and instead filled it with our customers’ voices entirely. Now people go on the site and instead of hearing us talking about our

company, they are hearing other customers telling them what the company has done for them.

Another thing that is important to recognize is that the 12-month marketing plan is dead. Twelve months is too far into the future to plan effectively because the cycles have contracted. Social media is marketing in real time. If you’re running a campaign, you can tell within days if it is going well. If not, you can go in and instantly make adjustments. It is important to recognize that when I now do my 12-month budgeting and planning, I feel like I am creating certain categories and buckets to be able to assign dollars to. When push comes to shove, I know that I will need to make adjustments and sometimes rewrite strategy throughout the course of the year. ■

# Richard M. Honiball

Senior Vice President, Marketing, Licensing, and e-Commerce, Haggag Clothing Co.

## Target Market

We consider ourselves a “macro” brand that has a much broader reach than a highly targeted brand. Our goal is to tailor our marketing message to different segments and demographics based on need, like The Coca-Cola Company, Ford, or McDonald’s. Like those companies, we may have specific programs, or in our case, fits, that may tailor to a more specific consumer. However, we do not want to limit our message given the way that today’s consumer shops.

From an age-range perspective, we are seeing strong growth in the Millennial age group even though Baby Boomers still greatly favor our brand. However, the consumer is no longer breaking by age as they were even a decade ago. It is a mistake to assume, for example, that a younger customer only wants modern or slim-fitted products, much like it is a mistake to assume that an older customer only cares for classically styled or fitted products. We do not want to over-project in our marketing.

In my opinion, one of the biggest challenges facing brands today is this desire to over-segment or micro-target consumers to a point where we make assumptions that limit us. Many companies are working to gain the trust and business of Millennials, which we

*In my opinion, one of the biggest challenges facing brands today is this desire to over-segment or micro-target consumers to a point where we make assumptions that limit us.*

Richard M. Honiball  
Senior Vice President, Marketing,  
Licensing, and e-Commerce  
Haggag Clothing Co.

should do, but research shows that this group falls into many different “tribes.” Yes, Millennials are more likely to have a stronger connection with technology and the Internet, but typecasting this group as different than Baby Boomers could cost brands. We prefer to look at similarities between the groups, common threads that we can market to.

## Brand Expectations and Changes in the Target Market

Because we are a multigenerational brand, the target market makeup has not changed over recent years, but the way that different generational groups perceive the brand has changed. In fact, the way that



**Richard M. Honiball**

Senior Vice President, Marketing, Licensing,  
and e-Commerce  
Haggag Clothing Co.

*“New ways of marketing are not simply targeting a Millennial; they are targeting those that want to be communicated with in that manner.”*

- Responsible for company’s branding and advertising strategies
- Previously VP of PD, Design & Trend for Men’s & Kids, JCPenney
- Member, Board of Trustees, Hugh O’Brian Youth (HOBY) Leadership
- Member, Board of Governors, UNT School of Merchandising
- B.S., Marketing (minor in Communications), Southern New Hampshire University

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different generations have looked at brands in general has changed. For example, while a few years ago Millennials saw celebrity-endorsed brands as more relevant, many today are looking for brands that are more authentic. It is one thing if a celebrity happens to wear or use your brand — that is cool — but consumers are seeing the insincerity that can happen when celebrities are paid to endorse a brand without having any loyalty to it.

## Expert Advice

**Marketing to the Next Generation** Your brand must remain relevant. If McDonald’s simply targeted families and did not reach after a younger demographic, someone could come in and develop a relationship with younger customers earlier in their life cycle and take those potential customers away. That is why luxury automobile brands introduce lower-priced value editions: to get a younger consumer into their brand earlier in the process and build a relationship that can last over the long term.

Millennials are leading the demand that brands need to be authentic, and Gen Xers and Baby Boomers are now placing the same importance on a brand's authenticity. With technology today, it becomes easier to see if someone is trying to play the "vintage" card or if they have the heritage to back it up. We like the saying, "You cannot fake heritage."

## Millennial Generation's Impact on the Target Market

The apparel industry in general is going after the Millennial market, and many are hiring people and teams to address this specific market. Looking at the size of the market and how much it will grow over the coming years, it makes sense to do that. The danger is spending so much time on Millennials that you alienate your existing customer.

We are spending more money on social media and "non-traditional" means which attract Millennials, but the advantage of marketing today is that it also reaches Gen Xers and Baby Boomers. Speaking from experience, I would say that it is inaccurate to claim that social media only appeals to Millennials. In fact, some platforms like Facebook have more penetration with Baby Boomers than Millennials.

What social media allows us to do is be there 24x7, both with branded content that the customer may want access to and with a platform where customers can share their opinions, positive or negative. We welcome positive feedback as it helps to extend and strengthen the brand; the negative feedback allows us to not only react quickly and try to resolve the issue but also to learn from the issue and continually improve. Customers will punish you for not being responsive, but they

will also reward you for listening and taking their concerns seriously.

## Ensuring Marketing Strategies Encompass the Culture and Interests of Millennials

For many years, diversity has been a topic in the workplace, focused mainly on protecting the rights of every group. I look at diversity as the best possible way to connect with consumers. Having a diverse workforce means having representation for all of the groups that you market to. One cannot pretend that having a few Millennials on the workforce suddenly makes us experts in marketing to that generation, but not having them at all is a handicap. We must be able to connect with each generation and each segment of the population, and that starts with a diverse workplace. We also look to work with different groups and smaller



agencies that provide expertise in various segments.

If your current core customers are Baby Boomers, do not turn away from them. Instead embrace them. Baby Boomers will be active consumers for many years to come and will punish you for turning your back on them. It is important to find common ground. If you must alter your core product, message, and beliefs as a brand too greatly to appeal to a younger generation, then perhaps your brand cannot support that wide of a spread. Instead, look to tailor your message while still honoring your core beliefs

and values so that regardless of the generational segment, the customer does not feel alienated.

We also need to resist the urge to overgeneralize Millennials into a broad category. Our research has shown, and it should not be a surprise, that not all Millennials behave the same way. They do not all embrace technology, some avoid it. Many are more family-oriented and have started their own families. Some respond to “green marketing” while others do not see the value. Some invest in their careers, some in their hobbies, and others in a specific cause.

## ***Calculating Return on Investment of Marketing to Millennials***

You can use all the fancy metrics that you want; but I think that profitable sales, both initial and return sales, are the best metric to use when assessing marketing strategy. Surveys, feedback, brand health, and awareness are all important, but if the sales and profit are not coming, and the customers are not returning, then nothing else matters. ■

# Ideas to Build Upon & Action Points

## *I. What Are Inherent Challenges in Targeting the Millennial Demographic?*

You may be tempted to assume that as long as the things you are doing are based on the “eternal principles of marketing,” you should have success in connecting with all potential audiences interested in your brand(s). While theoretically that may be the case, marketers can still encounter pitfalls in reaching out to this youngest group of adult consumers, especially if they represent a new segment for the company. These include:

- Over-generalizing the traits of the Millennial group, and thereby missing opportunities to craft more nuanced messages that appeal to particular groups
- Losing audiences by failing to adjust marketing plans and strategies as soon as response wanes
- Failing to build long-term relationships (due to the fact that your offerings are perceived as trends of the moment)
- Offending or disenfranchising existing customers by changing core messages — and even products — to fit Millennials’ perceived tastes

## *II. The Bottom Line*

Campaigns appealing to Millennials, especially those posted on social media, run in real time. This means you can tell within days if they are going well and, if not, make instant adjustments. But how do you make this assessment — what should you be looking for, both for the short and long term? Today’s marketers should employ a mix of both traditional and newer marketing measurement methods, including:

- Focus groups
- Customer observations in stores and homes
- Customer surveys on brand health and awareness
- Cost-effectiveness of various channels, from broadcast TV to print media to social media
- Positive postings on social media sites

- Quantity of profitable sales from both new and repeat customers

## *III. Must-Have Branding Considerations When Developing and Targeting Messages*

We now know that a brand resides in the minds of customers; its image represents their emotional connection to your product — and when this is positive, it can exert a real multiplier effect on the value of your company’s assets. While you may be thinking of recasting your brand’s identity for greater appeal to Millennials, you should consider the following:

- What do your existing customers look for in your brand?
- How can you tailor your brand’s messages to different segments and still maintain its core identity?
- How can you ensure that new messages will still resonate with existing customers?
- How can you use social media channels to imbue your brand with even more personal qualities and give it an interactive voice?
- How can you bolster your brand’s authenticity or heritage (a requirement of many Millennials)?
- In order to sustain its life, how can you make your brand relevant to younger generations?

## *IV. The Golden Rules for Communicating via Social Media*

One great advantage to marketing on social media is that not only does it cost less and have easily measured impacts, it also appeals to Baby Boomers and Gen Xers. But when using these channels, important points to keep in mind are:

- To create engagement, you will need to encourage and accept user-generated content.
- The blogger community can also play a critical role in your social strategy because it generates third-party endorsements.

- Paid advertising on social media can create a backlash effect if customers perceive that it is too invasive.
- Large online communities are built using multi-pronged efforts that include e-mail, pay-per-click ads, podcasting, tweeting, and blogging.
- Negative feedback can enable your company to learn from and resolve issues quickly, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction.
- The number of followers is not as important as maintaining an ongoing engagement with your consumers: quality is better than quantity.

## *V. Essential Take-Aways*

It’s obvious: for a brand to remain viable and grow over the years, you must continue to bring in customers early in their life cycle before competitors can take those customers away, perhaps for good. Branding to young people (in today’s case, the Millennials) can also appeal to more mature customers because it reinforces your efforts to be a contemporary brand to all your customers. Key insights into the character of members of this generation that the report’s authors have learned from their marketing efforts are:

- They expect to be listened to and participate in your decision-making process.
- They want brands to be environmentally friendly and contribute positively to the community at large in a way that authentically fits with the company’s culture.
- They seek to embrace the “right” values (which are frequently defined by their peers), and be seen embracing those values.
- They are most attracted to short, simple, jargon-free messages: one meme, one article, one image, one idea at a time.
- Before they have interacted with your product, they will have done their research and learned what your customers have to say, positive or negative. ■



## 10 KEY QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS

- 1 What is your company's target market? Are you primarily B2B or B2C? If you are B2B, what types of companies do you target? If B2C, what is your target demographic?
- 2 Has the demographic makeup of your target market changed at all in the last three years? If so, how? What factors have driven these changes?
- 3 What percentage of your target market is part of the "Millennial" generation? Is this typical of your industry? How quickly do you expect this percentage to increase?
- 4 What percentage of your marketing efforts is targeted specifically to Millennials? How does that compare to efforts targeting other generations? What percentage of your marketing budget is spent targeting Millennials?
- 5 To what extent do you use social media to communicate with Millennials? Which platforms are you currently using? Do you create branded pages and seek followers? Do you place targeted ads on social media sites? Do you use social media to create dialogue with customers?
- 6 How do you use mobile and e-mail marketing to target Millennials? Is this different from how you use these channels to target other generations? Do you use any apps that target Millennials?
- 7 How do you ensure your marketing strategies are based on a solid understanding of the culture and interests of Millennials? How can you appeal to Millennials without alienating other generations? Do you vary the tone or content of your advertisements based on the targeted demographic?
- 8 What expectations do Millennials have for brands that differ from the expectations of earlier generations? To what extent is perceived social value important? How important is the "greenness" of a company's products and practices? Do Millennials expect more personal engagement with brands?
- 9 How do you benchmark how effectively you are reaching Millennials? What is measured? Do you compare your performance to that of your competitors?
- 10 In the next 12 months, how do you plan to change your marketing strategies to appeal to Millennials? Will you be launching any new campaigns? Will you be expanding your social media presence?