What is Gen Z?

In past years, marketers put time and effort into learning how to market to Millennials. Now, there’s another generation that demands recognition: Gen Z, or the youngest of the five generations. Brands should neither ignore these newcomers nor treat them the same as Millennials. **Gen Z has grown up in a post-9/11 world during which their parents struggled through the Great Recession, and for these reasons their world has been more uncertain than it was for Millennials coming of age.** Brands today would be wise to understand this socially-native, rapidly growing generation as its spending power and influence increase.
Why Should Marketers Care?

Because Millennials and Gen Z are adjacent generations, it’s easy to assume that they behave in similar ways, yet research about Gen Z states otherwise. Marketers have learned that to resonate with Gen Z, reaching them on their own terms and the ground of their choosing is imperative.

To connect with Gen Z, brands must understand how their growing influence is shaping culture and how important it is to stand for causes that matter to this generation. Marketers cannot afford to remain ignorant about what these young consumers expect of brands today.

How Can It Help Your Business?

Engaging effectively with Gen Z can certainly provide economic advantages. These future consumers already account for $29 to $143 billion in direct spending. As the fastest growing generational segment, and on track to becoming the largest cohort of consumers by the year 2020, Gen Z is nearing the end of its generational birth year range.

The brands that gain mindshare and loyalty with this generation today stand to reap the rewards in a not-so-distant future. As Gen Z enters adulthood, their influence will only grow, making them even more powerful advocates of the brands they prefer.
“Generation Z is one of the most powerful consumer forces in the market today. Their buying power is $44 billion and expands to $600 billion when considering the influence they have on their parents’ spending.”
What Gen Z Expects from Brands

Brands that want to connect with Gen Z should measure themselves against these expectations.

Take a stand.
Gen Z is watching what brands do and expects them to stand for something more than just the bottom line. They will support those that take a stand on issues they believe in, especially regarding human rights, race, and sexual orientation.

Prove it.
Gen Z requires proof and this is frequently seen through a brand’s advertising. This generation doesn’t want great storytelling; it wants great story-living. Brands must live their story and purpose through their products, hiring practices, and all business decisions.

Get real.
This generation expects transparency, authenticity, and originality. For this reason, brands are finding out that Gen Z prefers to see real people in advertisements instead of celebrities.

Play by their social rules.
Gen Z expects brands to educate themselves on, and adhere to, their detailed rule system for using major platforms: Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.

Support “brand me.”
Members of Gen Z are attracted to brands that help them curate and manage their own personal brand by listening to them, reflecting their values, building trust, and engaging and inspiring them.

Blend their worlds.
Gen Z doesn’t separate their online and offline experiences, and they value brands that seamlessly blend the physical and digital worlds.

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