



Q&As:

Interview with NPAFE CEO Cliff Brody about NPAFE's White Paper: "Why Millennials Are NOT That Different From The Rest Of Us"

Why did NPAFE write the report?

Our nonprofit's mission is supporting the Performing Arts. Whether theater, music, or dance, this industry is increasingly populated by Millennials. Every last one of them is entrepreneurial, a hard-working risk-taker, hardly fitting the often-negative characteristics people assign to Gen Y. It made no sense to us that the real live Millennials we know were so different than the definition. The more we read up about the subject, the more we found that marketers were missing that point. NPAFE approaches corporate marketers for support for the Performing Arts, so we thought we'd share what we found out with them.

What value does the report offer?

The 50,000 foot answer is: it puts reality back into what people should be thinking about Millennials, what they strive to achieve, and how, at the end of the day, they want the same things as do their elders ... and the up-and-coming Gen Z. As a practical matter, it points to significant ways that corporate marketers can save major sums when creating campaigns to market their products and services to Millennials and just about everyone else.

What are the top line findings?

That Millennials do, and would do, the same things as their predecessors if they had the money to do it. That includes marrying and raising kids.

What conventional thinking are you challenging?

That Millennials are really some sort of strange, different, lazy, unmotivated group of people from another planet. That there is nothing out there in the way of data that accurately describes who they are, what they care about, and how hard they work to get to where they want to go.

Where did you get your information?

From every major world-class consulting firm, from the Wall Street Journal and New York Times, from the U.S. Census Bureau, and even from a couple of major business schools, including Harvard and Duke University's Fuqua School. Not to be left out: Wunderman and Ad Age. And Women's Wear Daily.

What surprised you the most?

We were blown away by how much quantitative data there is out there that prove not only that Millennials really are like the rest of us, but also how much self-reporting there is among corporate marketers that they cannot measure the impact of their social media marketing. There clearly is a herd mentality that if you light up their smartphone screens, "they will come". For years now, numbers have been mounting definitively proving that they won't come.

Why should people be concerned about your findings?

If I were a marketer, I'd be worried about how much money I was throwing into the Big Dark Hole of marketing just to Millennials. Too many CEOs and CFOs know there is little ROI (Return On Investment) from doing it. There is A LOT of data about Board Room unhappiness with this, including the fact that almost half of polled marketers from major companies cannot even measure the impact of their social media marketing spends.

My own views really shade my thinking about why people in general should be worried about this. When we undervalue people by grouping them, whether by age, race, sexual orientation, religion or whatever, we are denying ourselves the value of their individuality and self-worth. Intolerance bothers the hell out of me. All the off-hand comments you hear about Millennials fall into that category. They fly in the face of the truth about Millennials (and everyone else), people who are individuals with wants, needs, hopes, dreams ... and the drive to get to where they want to go. If I want them to respect me as an individual, they I better be prepared to respect them as individuals, not as a group of anything.

What will Millennials think about being the "same" as everyone else?

On one hand, the statement may seem to rob them of their identity (sort of). On other hand, they're tired of being told that they are lazy, unconnected, entitled, whatever. Like everyone else, they respond very favorably when they're acknowledged for who they are in their day-in-day-out lives.

Why do you focus on marketing?

That's our job at NPAFE. Yes, we are using the sports marketing model, but we are proving that the audiences who attend performing arts events are more attractive *and valuable* to corporate marketers, much more so that the thousands of people in some stadium, many half-drunk, who will never change their airline or bank account because some electronic banner ad sparkles from the grandstand.

What counts the most in your analysis of Social Media?

That people of all ages turn to it as much as or more than Millennials, that we use it for personal reasons like staying in touch with our friends, and that they dislike — so much — all the digital ads that pop up and get in their way.

Why did you include the information about how people use smartphones?

We did that to show that as much as the marketing world may believe that smartphones may once have been the playground of Millennials, they aren't anymore. Older people use them as much or more. More importantly, *everyone* who uses smartphones use them first and foremost to see what's going on in the world, then to stay in touch with people they like or love, and much less so to shop particular brands than most people think. Especially clothing: the success of Wanelo and its meeting the user's need to uncover the best in "fast fashion" irrespective of brand explodes the notion that brand-oriented social media messaging can magically capture Millennial's attention or anyone else's.