



Workplace Evolution
Enlightened Expert Series

From Jitterbug to Twitter,
Motivating Each Generation To Buy

About the Author



Sherri Petro, Co-Founder of Workplace Evolution, has a keen desire to understand where everyone is coming from -- and to work with it!

Having been a VP at 26, she is acutely aware of generational differences contributing to misunderstandings, miscues and misfires. She is passionate about *leveraging* generational knowledge for better communication and profit.

Communicating effectively is a most desirable skill and yet we mess it up all the time! Whether we are communicating marketing messages individually -- face-to-face, via landline, cell, e-mail or text -- or collectively through numerous marketing channels we have *issues*. How can we increase profit if we don't understand the market players and cannot communicate in their lingo?

Complicate the scenario even further with the fact that we are using the same language; only it's like we are talking in tongues – the same words mean different things to each generation!

Understanding where each generation is coming from is key to making a connection. We have clues from generational research that tell us what is important and what motivates each generation. As we create messaging to encourage purchases and increase revenues, keep this information in mind.

How would you message to Traditionalists (ages 64-84)?

Traditionalists are frugal, known for purchasing national brands and choosing inexpensive options. They believe loyalty is earned. Motivated by safety, security and stability, they like conservative imagery, longevity and well-known and much loved celebrity endorsers. Their experiences tended to be with the traditional family structure. Image and privacy are deemed important.

Traditionalists are rational versus emotional in how they spend money. It must make sense for them to open their pocketbook. They take their time when buying. Known for communicating face-to-face, they appreciate word of mouth as a marketing tactic as well tried-and-true marketing channels. Their handshake on a deal is as good as law. To optimize profits, maximize credibility and relationships.

Suggestions:

- If you have a new offering, dovetail familiar attributes with existing, appreciated products and services.
- Mention if your organization has an impressive number associated with it.
 - “This widget is based on sound research conducted over 10 years.”
 - “We’ve been in business for 35 years.”
- Use words and phrases in marketing campaigns and on sales calls they resonate with:
 - Stability
 - Earned
 - Honor
 - Respect
 - Take your time

How do you connect with Baby Boomers (ages 45-63) as you market and sell?

Baby Boomers have given us many clues on how to connect as they have aged. Originally dubbed the *me* generation, they have mellowed with age and yet still continue to transform whatever they touch. Buoyed by power, prestige and process as motivators, they are concerned about image and keeping up with the Jones. They also appreciate the back-story.

As Boomers age, they are becoming more holistic, spiritual, and are into living more simply after a wild ride of consumerism. They still value choice. The 60s have been reawakened, working into their love of a cause and being of service. They are sensitive to languaging so watch your semantics! They are ambivalent about change so do not introduce it too fast. While some of them will embrace it, others will turn up their noses. To maximize profits, emphasize relationships and status.

Suggestions:

- If you are offering an upgraded service, emphasize the good things from the past service that come along with the change.
- Since status is important, mention your organization's accomplishments and awards.
- Use words and phrases in marketing campaigns and on sales calls they resonate with:
 - Power
 - Options
 - Choice
 - Transform
 - Time-saving
- Absolute propositions turn Boomers off. Avoid "never" and "always."
- Tell the story in the sales call.

How do you communicate effectively with Gen X (ages 29-44)?

Gen X is the *don't pussyfoot around* generation. They appreciate direct communication and results. No need to warm them up. Just get to it. Gen X is a bit cynical and appreciates humor. They listen intently, get the point quickly and make their own decisions. They are not as impressionable as other generations. They intensely dislike hype and are skeptical. They embrace and value technology as a lifestyle need.

Gen X works smarter and has better work/life balance than Boomers. They can say *no* -- much to the chagrin of marketers and sales people. They want down time and will take it for themselves and their families. They like to create hybrid products and services that match what they need. Products must be effective. To maximize profits, emphasize results and efficiencies.

Suggestions:

- Avoid pie-in-the-sky offers, unsubstantiated claims and long stories.
- Be real.
- Add in humor and remove sexism.
- Choose concise copy and messages.
- Use words and phrases in marketing campaigns and on sales calls they resonate with:
 - Results
 - Challenge
 - Work smart
 - Green
 - Flexible
 - Make it your own

What do you encourage Gen Y (under 28 years old) to buy?

For Gen Y, buying is not to fulfill a need or a want – it's a way of life! Raised in an era of consumerism, they are not hesitant to purchase. They expect, however, to be courted individually with technology. They want to be trendy but still be unique. Using the newest and greatest technology is the way to their wallets. But be green. They will choose socially conscious products and services over those that are not.

Gen Y also values fun, freedom, friends and family. They want a say whether that be input or feedback. Unlike other generations who might have hoped for happiness, they expect it. They desire different experiences, stimulation and authenticity. They embrace diversity and see through race, religion and sexual orientation as a barrier. Isn't that beautiful? To optimize profits, maximize relationships and uniqueness.

Suggestions:

- Emphasize cause, community and creativity.
- Represent all consumers – be inclusive.
- Use appropriate marketing channels/technology.
- Think viral marketing.
- Use words and phrases in marketing campaigns and on sales calls they resonate with:
 - Friends
 - Dynamic
 - Stimulating
 - Flexible
 - Community
 - Socially and environmentally conscious

What universal messages can you use that appeal to something in each generation?

Research shows that while generations have different values, they also have things in common. All generations want to be successful, acknowledged and rewarded. They do not want to operate out of fear, be in conflict, or miss being on the same wavelength.

Clear communication is vital. They do not want to be sold, hood-winked or talked down to. We have an opportunity to create more authentic communication in our sales copy, our messaging, and our marketing.

Suggestions:

- Explore commonalities.
- Review the magic words from each generation and connect the dots.
- Use words that may resonate and have generationally-defined meanings.
 - Less hassle
 - Fits your needs
 - Solves your problems
- Create a sense of community in your messaging that reaches out to all generations and shows the heart, soul and intellect of your organization – think *whole*.
- Work with a company who understands the generations for clarity on internal and external communications. 😊