



ADULTING

with
Jane

How To Reach A Millennial / Gen Z Audience



01

Entertain, Inform, and/or Inspire... Quickly

Both generations (and arguably all people) can be successfully reached through compelling storytelling. **Make us laugh** or **make us cry**. **Teach us something new**. **Make us want to get off the couch**. Moreover, in a time where there is so much content out there, and with our particularly short attention spans, it's important to do this in **short, immediately compelling**, and **out-of-the-box** ways. This can be difficult given the amount of time or space you have per post, but one or a handful of truly wonderful things can win over a Millennial or Gen Z'er for life.



Our all-time favorite ad campaign is Patagonia's "Don't Buy This Jacket." While Patagonia has taken meaningful action to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in its direct operations, consumerism is not inherently ecologically-friendly. They know this, and their products are no exception. The "Don't Buy This Jacket" campaign actively discouraged customers from buying more than one or two necessary products. Their transparency and handle on conscious consumerism made us immediate fans. We already understand that we can't always choose perfectly when it comes to the environment, but we know a conscious choice is better than a thoughtless one. Every little thing counts.

Be Authentic 02

Make content that represents your brand. Misrepresentation is the fastest way to make people angry. Really. It's the equivalent of a dating profile pic that doesn't look like the real person. **Represent your brand authentically, and the right audiences will find you.**

On Perfectionism:

We've all been inundated with the concept of "perfection" and we all know that not only is it **impossible to achieve**, but to most of us, the concept and those that spend their lives obsessing over it are utterly boring. Instead of trying to showcase your brand's flawlessness, which we all know isn't real anyway, **focus on building customer trust and an empathetic connection** by being authentic - about the good and the bad.

03 Be a Two-Way Street

Interact with us. **We want our voices heard and to be understood.** (This is an every generation thing as well.) It's important to create a dialogue in and around your content that allows us not only to **interact**, but to **share, co-create**, and legitimately **affect change**. (Listen to your fans. They will give you everything you need to know about how to guide your brand if you pay attention!) Recognized and reciprocated participation gives us a sense of belonging and self-efficacy. Both generations are young enough to still need a lot of both of these things - and you know how much we love our participation trophies!

Another important component of creating a two-way street is to **give us the choice to not engage at all**. Think of the "skip ad" button on Youtube videos. If we don't want to interact with you, we won't, but if there is a "no" option, we will feel more empowered and heard in the process - and markedly less resentful. We know our spam very well and can tolerate and appreciate some of it some of the time. Don't be the bad spam.





Provide Real Value 04

Provide us with real monetary, cognitive, social, or emotional value. Don't sell us on garbage.

Most of us can see through inflated or no-value propositions. But, if we do fall for it the first time, we won't likely make the same mistake again or allow others in our purview, or on any public ratings site, to remain uninformed. There are a lot of important areas many of our lives are lacking in - **find a way help us improve in any one of those areas, and we will return the favor with brand loyalty.**

Ask a handful of older Millennials what brand they are most loyal to, and you're bound to get at least one or two people to happily say "Apple." Why? Apple products have made most of our lives quite a bit easier and more streamlined than they were before. In addition, many of us are more than willing to pay more for an Apple product than for a competing product even though we know that phone will only make it two years and the computer only one or two more if we're lucky. The ever-improving reliability of its functionality, service, user network & interconnectivity advantages (such as iCloud), and user friendliness is well worth the extra out-of pocket.

05 Don't Talk Down to Us

The media tends to paint Millennials as entitled, lazy people who believe everything should be handed to them, and Gen Z'ers as vapid, fickle phone addicts.

But, in spite of the negative stereotypes, most Millennials and Gen Z'ers are busy finding ways to survive and in many cases, thrive, with minimal job prospects, job security, disposable income, or savings to speak of, all while operating as passionate pioneers in inclusivity as well as social and environmental change. **In short, most of us are scrappy, passionate, and making it work the best we can with limited opportunity and resources.**

There are also thousands of articles on the internet, even on the exact topic of this particular piece that have headlines such as "Tap into Zillennial Fomo" and "The Baffling Reason Many Millennials Don't Eat Cereal." Although these reductionist strategies may work in the short-term, they don't lay the groundwork for quality brand-audience interaction. It doesn't take long for us to catch on.

All people, not just Millennials and Gen Z'ers, see the choices we make as small reflections of ourselves. We want to believe that the brands we've chosen to invest in have our best interest at heart, and we, like every other generation, are willing to part with our money and/or time if the value is there. **The sooner you meet us where we're at and treat us like the important-to-your-business customers that we are, the sooner you start to develop real trust and life-long customers and fans.**

