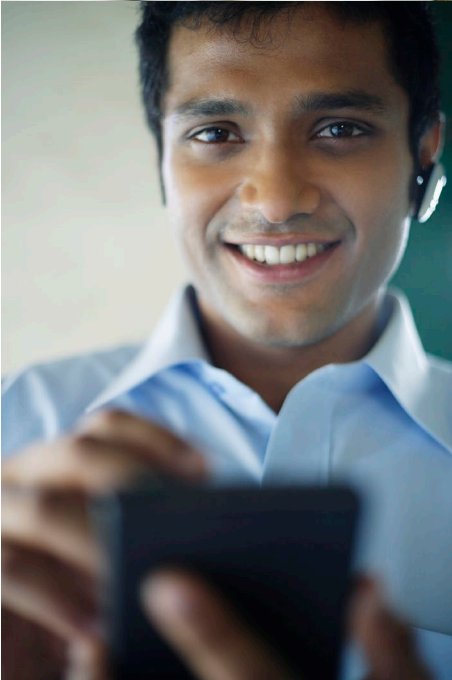
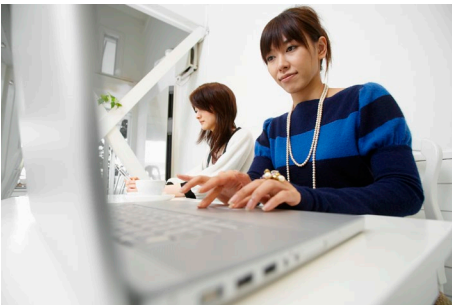


Job #1 is already done:

Millennials *want* to engage!
We'll show you how, where,
and why social media just
scratches the surface.

4
SECRETS
TO MEETINGS
MILLENNIALS
LOVE



Born between 1980 and 2000, the roughly 70 million members of the Millennial Generation are starting to make their mark across every industry. Not only are they far more numerous than Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980, and representing just 16 percent of the current workforce), the Millennials (who will make up 46 percent of the workforce in 2020) have the distinction of being the first generation to grow up with that gusher of information and communication known as the Internet—in fact, about two-thirds of Millennials never knew life beyond elementary school without it.

This has had a profound effect on Millennials' educational and social styles, as well as their needs and perceptions in the workplace—including at the meetings and incentive programs they attend. Consequently, planners of these events must understand the motivations of Millennials, and adapt their programs accordingly.

**ADVICE FROM
THOSE WHO KNOW
MILLENNIALS**



Karen Hamilton
Executive Vice President,
Minding Your Business Inc.



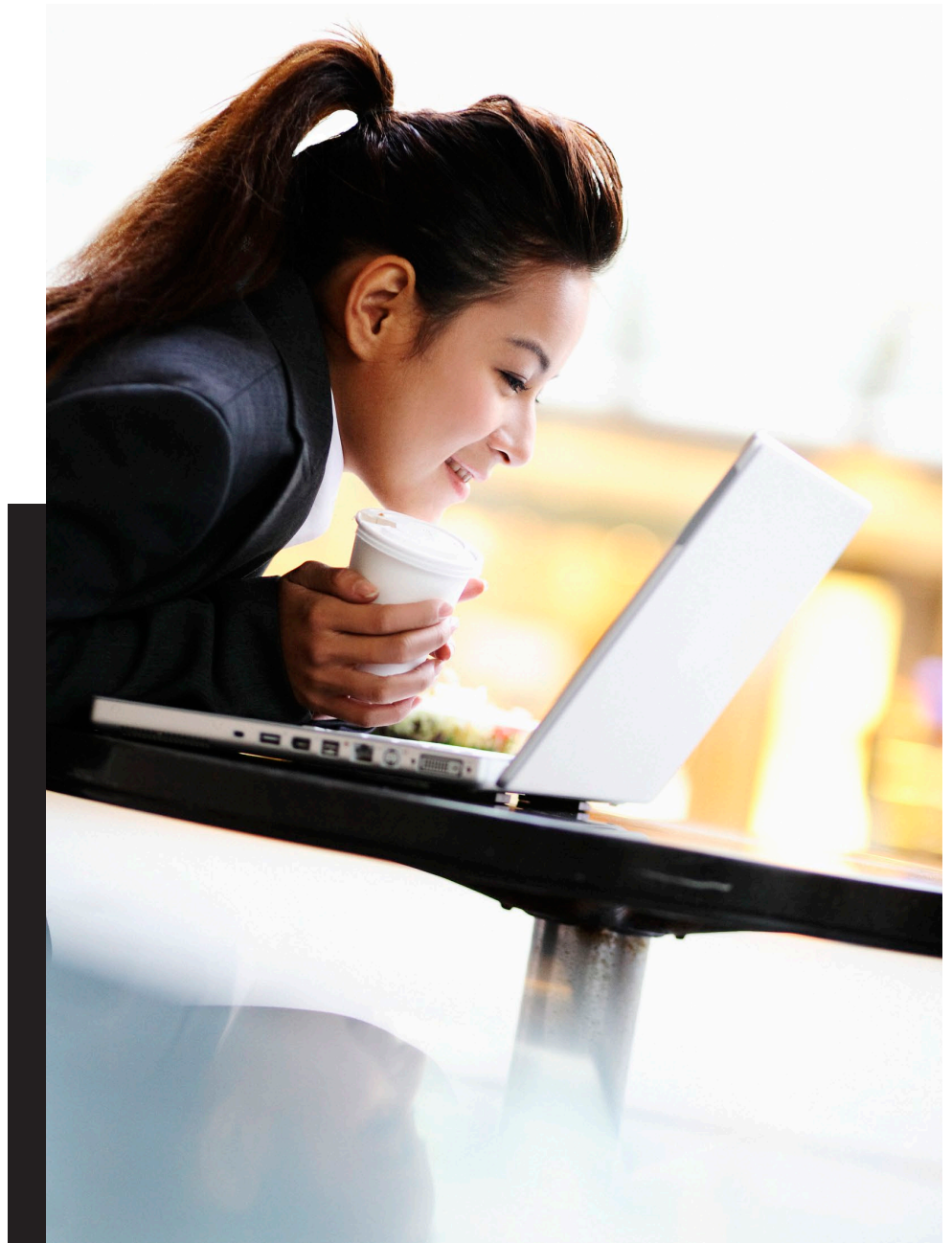
Crystal Kadakia,
Principal, Career
Indulgence LLC



Trevor Roald, Manager
of Industry Relations,
QuickMobile



Meghan Schilt
Global Events Manager,
Apax Partners



As we explore four key elements necessary at events that have a Millennial component, one overarching point comes to the fore: While Millennials are the most tech-savvy group the world has ever seen, their desire for in-person interaction is nonetheless strong. Consider this comment from a 2012 Edelman report on Millennials: They “see themselves as alpha influencers who shape the behavior of their larger social circles...[but] marketers tend to neglect the value Millennials place on face-to-face conversations.”

So even with the endless amounts of information Millennials can gather via technology—which, by the way, means they won’t accept the barriers to information that corporate hierarchies traditionally put up—Millennials find much value in face-to-face interaction with peers and with senior colleagues. In short, they don’t see it as an either/or proposition—rather, Millennials want those two platforms for learning and networking to be blended for their maximum benefit. This is the great challenge for meeting planners going forward.

“A social marketing strategy is what’s needed to connect with Millennials, not runaway social media.”
—Karen Hamilton, Minding Your Business Inc.

SECRET #1:

Mobile Apps and Social Media

The logistical details of meetings that for decades planners communicated to attendees via reams of paper, then via e-mail and Web sites, are now migrating to event apps for mobile devices. And not only do these apps allow attendees to have access to an event’s agenda and session materials right from their handheld devices, but apps also allow people to register for the event and for individual breakouts, see session schedules and space layouts, connect with other attendees who share interest in specific topics, and start meaningful conversations about those topics several weeks before the in-person event takes place. These apps even serve as platforms for feedback surveys as well as post-event conversations that extend the life of meeting content.

Douglas Hunt, senior vice president of business development for New York-based global events firm McVeigh Associates, is helping many of his clients move toward event apps not just because of their robust features, but also because doing so makes it easier to engage Millennials in a positive way at the earliest stages of the meeting’s life cycle—such as at registration. “Planners have to make the registration process more streamlined and friendly,” he says. “We like [apps] better than typical registration Web pages, which can be a mile long. That is just not attractive to Millennials.”

Karen Hamilton, executive vice president for Minding Your Business Inc., an experience design and engagement agency in Chicago, has clients who use comprehensive event apps such as CrowdCompass and Pathable for both logistical and strategic elements of their events. “Millennials want a tool that falls into the rhythm of their work environment, something they can use a lot of the time. So planners should find a platform they prefer that has multifaceted functionality, and not just for the days when the in-person event is taking place. Any app that will help you create a community by generating prior conversations among stakeholders—not just attendees but executives, presenters, and sponsors—is beneficial.”

But to maximize the benefit and minimize the risk of free-flowing conversations in an event app, planners must have content curators (often called “community managers”) on their event teams—a new duty in the age of Millennials, who are not hesitant to share unvarnished opinions on social-media platforms. Meghan Schilt, global events manager of New York-based financial services firm Apax Partners and immediate past president of MPI of Greater New York, says that these curators “are not censors, but rather guides who keep conversations going in the right direction so that they can be as robust as possible.” She has experience with event apps from Concise and EventPad, which allow for pre-, during, and post-event discussion threads. “There is a responsibility to your brand to curate content,” she notes. One benefit of event apps: They work behind a meeting host’s firewall, so all interactions, from registration to stakeholder conversations, can be accessed only by those involved with the event, particularly important when it comes to corporate meetings.

On the other hand, many planners develop a presence on public social-media outlets for their events, and encourage attendees to use these and other outlets

for meetings-related posts. With Millennials so attuned to Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and other platforms, this surely makes sense for events—but only when done through a well-defined strategy. “Not long ago, so many planners were saying, ‘We need a presence on every platform,’ but planners and attendees alike found that they could not keep up with that,” Hamilton says. “Instead, find the sweet spot of your audience, focus on those platforms, and things will grow organically there. A social marketing strategy is what’s needed to connect with Millennials, not runaway social media.”

Crystal Kadakia, principal at Career Indulgence LLC, an Atlanta-based consulting firm focused on Millennials, notes that content curators are critical to the effectiveness of an event’s public social-media efforts too. “They’re capturing key insights from sessions as well as generating discussion questions, then hashtagging all of those in order to start conversations that can be accessed or continued months after the meeting.”

And to maximize excitement and participation during a meeting, Douglas Hunt will often install “social-media walls” throughout the event space. These large LCD panels display up to 20 posts from attendees at one time, and scroll down every 10 seconds or so to show the newest offerings from attendees, speakers, and content curators.

“Millennials want to know that you are listening to them—that you’re letting them be part of the conversation about what they’re learning,” says Hamilton. “These social media platforms and apps can do that.”



SECRET #2:

Variety in Session Formats

Until very recently, a big topic of discussion among meeting planners centered on how to keep attendees from becoming distracted by their own technology gadgets during meeting sessions. That discussion, though, has morphed into this: How can planners use in-room technology, attendees' devices, and non-technological means—together in a single session—to keep Millennials engaged and learning?

“The way the Millennials' world has always been is to answer an e-mail, then take a phone call, then check a Web site for industry news, then have a departmental meeting, and then post something to Twitter or LinkedIn or Facebook,” says Meghan Schilt. “That constant variety is completely natural to their work life,” and therefore must be present in meeting sessions in order to hold their attention and reach an event's objectives.”

So in meeting sessions, “one thing we've seen is that younger people are using the ‘second screen’ that's in their hands to look things up and to push things out, even while a presenter or a panel is delivering content to them,” says Karen Hamilton. “Organizers must get comfortable with this, especially when they are putting complementary content on their event apps and encouraging attendees to use their social media platforms. These devices have to be welcome in the meeting room.”

In fact, Schilt sees “big adjustments in the way planners have to design sessions. Speakers and panelists now need to be able to handle attendee-generated content on the fly, and let a session become a fluid conversation based on what attendees bring up.”

Another use for technology that would satisfy Millennials: access to an organization's thought leaders. “This generation does not believe that organizational hierarchy should be a barrier to the flow of information, because they've always had information instantly available to them,” says Hamilton. “Millennials want to interact with the leadership, and we have to make sure we have our leadership ready to do that—but not just to give a canned speech.”

So when leaders cannot be physically present, technology could bring them into a session where they address topics the audience requested, and even participate in a question-and-answer format. “This definitely creates value for Millennials,” she adds.

But aside from technology-related tactics, what else can create the kind of variety in meetings that would resonate with Millennials? Crystal Kadakia says that she's seen good results from breaking up a



“The Internet is about transparency. Young people have this constant need to know the ‘why.’”

—Crystal Kadakia, Career Indulgence LLC

60-minute or 75-minute session into 15-minute segments featuring different formats, some of which include off-line presentation styles as well as small-group reflection and discussion.

After all, “What do we see in the lounge spaces and other common areas at companies like Google? Different colors and shapes on the walls, and things to play with,” she notes. “That’s because even the tech-oriented companies know there’s a point where our brains won’t process any more from technology, and that the tactile is critical to the learning experience.” From this, Kadakia advises companies to incorporate at least one segment into each meeting session that uses no technology, and instead “develop a creative, collaborative atmosphere built around flipcharting, sticky notes, and other things that are really tactile and require interaction.”

Lastly, the best way to ensure that Millennials understand why a meeting session uses technology-free segments and other tactics is to simply explain the purpose to them. “The Internet is about transparency, and these young people have always been able to search and find anything,” Kadakia notes. “So they have this constant need to know the ‘why.’ If you explain your meeting design to them, it would help to build buy-in and raise their engagement.”

SECRET #3:

Gamification

The idea of creating games and contests to encourage attendee behaviors that help reach particular meeting objectives is certainly not new. The “passport game” that gets attendees to interact with various sponsors at an event while obtaining

Millennial Voices

stamps in their event-issued passports is just one longstanding example.

When it comes to gamification strategies to engage Millennials, there is an inclination to look to games that take advantage of the latest technology. But while technology increases the number of gamification options, this doesn't mean that those games are any more appealing to Millennials than analog games, nor any more effective in reaching the meeting hosts' objectives.

Trevor Roald, manager of industry relations for QuickMobile, a maker of event apps that include games, notes that "game-player types are not age specific. It's more based on personality, desires, and motivations." Sam Smith, managing director of event consultancy Interactive Meeting Technology LLC, adds that "among any generation, you have attendees who are creators, critiquers, collectors, competitors against others, and competitors against themselves." So the medium a game uses is not as important as the event organizer understanding the attendee "psychographic," and then focusing on the benefits the organizer wants attendees to gain from participating. For instance, Karen Hamilton notes that analog and digital games alike work well not only for fostering interaction among attendees, but also for reinforcing critical content such as new-product information.

Gabe Zichermann, CEO of Gamification Corp., cites the key objectives that games most often fulfill at in-person events: networking, content engagement, marketing, and engagement with sponsors.

And Roald cites the four basic rules for creating an effective game on site: establish desired goals, develop clear rules for attendees, have a feedback system, and make participation voluntary. Lastly, by using an event app or a social-media platform to drive pre-event conversa-

Millennial **Claire Harrington**, CMP, manager, communications, for Social Tables, an event diagramming, seating, and check-in technology solution, reaffirms that a multi-layered approach to a meeting resonates for her. "To be of value to me, a meeting should include leading-edge technology. I would describe my ideal meeting or event as a mixture of entertainment and education, motivation and meaning.

"One example of a speaker I heard at a recent meeting who entertained while educating is Malcolm Gladwell at INBOUND 2014. His insights and motivation were a driving force for how I now go about my life. He spoke exactly zero words about technology or content, which is what INBOUND [Hubspot's annual conference] is about, but his message—which transcended both—was the reason he was so successful."

Harrington also appreciates the personalization/customization that is so important in recognition or incentive programs. "I want to know that the organizer of the meeting or incentive conference really knows who I am and what I value."

For example, she suggests, "send me a book beforehand that speaks directly to me, but that also incorporates the theme of the event. Include real-time surveys with speakers so that I can ask my questions. Use technologies like Catchbox [a plush, tossable microphone for audience participation] to make me feel like a human being, not a robot. Use technology that reads my badge and welcomes me by name when I walk into a room."



tions among attendees, planners can make the competition during on-site games more meaningful to them.

One game that Zichermann's firm recently developed for a conference client, called LiveCube, sought to have attendees "be more present at the meeting, really listening and not so focused on their smartphones and social media. We wanted to drive better interaction and engagement in person." So the game asked attendees to submit the most interesting thoughts or insights they gathered from speakers or other attendees during the event. As the event progressed, submissions were posted to the social media walls in the common spaces and attendees could vote for the ones they found most valuable, with awards presented on the final day. "This game created attendee participation in two ways, so that everyone learned more during the event," he says. It also generated light competition and ongoing buzz

for the duration of the event.

As this example shows, technology can serve to improve how to promote a game and how attendees can follow its progress. Even with games that have the goal of collective accomplishment rather than personal competition—an important goal to socially responsible and civic-minded Millennials—the use of technology to monitor progress and drive behavior is central to success.

For instance, Roald had one client who used a digital board to display the number of environmentally friendly acts done by attendees during the meeting, updated several times each day. The meeting host's goal was 1,500 "acts of green"; the group finished up with more than 1,700. The prize offered by the meeting host: A generous donation to a charity in the meeting's destination, in the name of the group. Roald notes that by working toward a common goal that was important to

“Game-player types are not age specific.”
—Trevor Roald, QuickMobile

them, and seeing their progress on a continuous basis, attendees were energized and forged a strong bond—one that will always be attributed to that meeting.

When it comes to individual awards and recognition attached to winning a game, Millennials do have a distinct preference for experiences over tangible items. An example: The prizes for Zichermann’s client who used LiveCube were announced with a text message instructing winners to come to a particular breakout room at a certain time on the final day. When the winners arrived, they were welcomed to a private roundtable discussion with one of the keynote speakers. Zichermann says that this reward “costs almost nothing to provide, and it’s the kind of experience that young people get really jazzed about.”

SECRET #4:

Recognition and Incentives

Millennials constantly receive highly targeted advertisements and offers from retail chains, banks, and other companies thanks to big data, as brands are continually learning about them and their buying habits and preferences. So it’s no surprise that Millennials expect rewards and recognition they earn in their work lives to be customized to their preferences. In fact, when these things are not sufficiently customized, it essentially defeats the purpose of incentive programs for Millennials.

“Millennials want options, and this means experiences in addition to tangible items,” says Karen Hamilton. “Luxury and reward mean different things to people across different gener-

ations, and even within this same generation.” For instance, one Millennial incentive winner might find great value in playing a round of golf with a board member at the incentive destination, while another might relish an opportunity to meet local artists in that destination. Still others might simply want to be able to bring a spouse or guest and have lots of free time rather than participate in many group activities. “Though it’s a lot of work for the organizers to coordinate at this level, it is often possible to provide all the options people want within the same incentive trip,” Hamilton adds.

But in instances where that can’t happen, some firms have chosen to use “split” incentive tracks. Tony Wagner, vice president of CWT Meetings and Events in Minneapolis, worked with a client whose attendee demographic was divided roughly along the lines of those with young families and those who had no children or who had older children who wouldn’t be attending the program.

“So we did one track at a resort with lots of family activities, and winners were able to bring up to three children and even a nanny,” Wagner recalls. “For the other track we used a more traditional beach destination, with golf and spa available too. We also

gave the latter group opportunities to give back to the community with activities focused on social responsibility. Overall, these salespeople were sufficiently motivated by one track or the other, and the participation rate was off the charts.”

When it comes to incentive travel, research from the Wharton School of Business has found that what makes Millennials happy are experiences that align with their sense of who they are. Furthermore, Rodger Stotz, chief research officer for the Incentive Research Foundation, says that Millennials “value unique experiences that are rare and extraordinary.”

Adds Meghan Schilt, “The reason Millennials respond to ‘experience recognition’ is because they can tell the story on social media. That means something to them; it’s how they live their lives.”

Lastly, Schilt recommends a focus on quarterly programs in organizations with large numbers of Millennials. “Millennials need incentive programs that come to fruition in shorter time frames. It would be exceptionally difficult to get them to work a full year toward a goal,” she explains. “They need more recognition than that, because they were raised with constant acknowledgement and praise.”

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