

How to Engage With Millennials at Events

By Kristen Carvalho (<http://blog.etches.com/author/kcarvalho/>), May 20, 2014



Everyone is talking about how to engage with Millennials lately. From B2B to B2C companies, it is something that senior level management cannot put their finger on. How do I get this younger generation to interact with my brand, company or event? Being a millennial myself, I would say that I have a pretty good insight into what my people (my 80s & 90s babies) are looking for in events and engagement.

Tech

First things first, understand that we cannot be without technology. From the moment that dial-up internet was invented – *I know you all remember the AOL connection sounds* – we haven't been able to do without it. We grew up with it, so we need to have it accessible at all times. You do not want a cranky or unhappy millennial on your hands.

What does this mean for events? Provide top notch technology.

This starts with providing **free wifi** that can handle the bandwidth of your attendees. Do not let your internet connection timeout. Even more important provide ample charging stations. If a phone or tablet dies while they are at an event and there is nowhere to refuel, your millennial attendees will become lost. We need to have the ability to be social, network and gather information in real time with technology. Think about making your event bag digital as well: electronic giveaways, discounts, partner collateral, event information and more all on a USB card. You will be ahead of the trend on this one, and we will thank you for that.

Social Media

Now, being an in generation that grew up on technology we are also over connected to social media. We expect to find things out in instantaneously. That being said, why are you reaching out to us through email? I mean yes we have our phones on us and check our email daily, but we are on social media minute to minute.

What does this mean for events? **Reach out through social media.**

We all get tons of emails a day and it is hard to hear through the noise. Why not go to where we already live– Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter? **Promoting your event on social media** (<http://blog.etches.com/tips-and-tools/maximize-your-event-exposure-with-social-media/#sthash.9fQoFVII.dpbs>) will attract Millennials if it is done the right way. Start conversations with hashtags and twitter chats, start a community on LinkedIn through groups and post updates daily. We want to be involved and feel like we matter. If you give us the opportunity to be an active participant with social media we will be more likely to share content.

Trends

We are the generation that brought hipsters to the world (we are sorry), so we obviously love to be ahead of the trends. In order to get us to engage with you we want to see that you can offer us something that is new and different. We want to see that you thought about new ways to reach out to your attendees.

What does this mean for events? **Integrate new innovations and tech trends into your event.**

Just like Millennials, event organizers want to stay on top of trends as well. You need to be constantly looking for ways to innovate at your events. Think companies like **Catchbox** (<http://getcatchbox.com/>) and **Crowdmics** (<http://crowdmics.com/>) who are changing the way that we project our voice at events. Being able to use your phone as a microphone or throw a cube around like hot potato to speak is just fun. Bring the fun back! Beacon technology is a new trend that event organizers should start using as well. With beacon technology you can send push notifications to your attendees when they walk by a certain area on your show floor to let them know about an exhibitor in proximity or a presentation that is about to start near them. This goes back to this real-time information that we love!

Gamification

Not only did we grow up during the start of the internet, but we also grew up during the age of video gaming. Playing duck hunt or Super Mario was a weekly occurrence for us. As a result, we love a challenge and a little competition – we can't resist.

What does this mean for events? **Incorporate gamification into sessions.**

Not only does gamification involve your audience in your sessions and deliver messages, but it also allows for **networking opportunities**. That is something that is important to Millennials as well. We want to learn from our predecessors in the industry. Giving us the opportunity to participate in a game with them is genius! You can do this by working with all your speakers to have them include a small game at the beginning of their session or during it. Let them know that you will help them facilitate it.

Those are only a few of the ways that event organizers can start to engage attendees. It really starts with stepping in their shoes. Remember the time that they grew up in: technology dependent, gaming, and more. This will help you realize what you need to do get them to engage. It is as simple as showing them that they matter. Give them authentic experiences where they can get something that they could never get online. In the end, all we really want is to be a part of something real and that is going to positively impact us. So show us what these real connections are, show us that you are more than just a sea of session after session.

This post was adapted from a post written by etouches for Social Table's blog (<http://blog.socialtables.com/2014/05/12/four-things-millennials-expect-see-event/>). *Social Tables will be hosting the Revenge of the Floor Plans* (<https://www.eiseverywhere.com/ereg/newreg.php?eventid=90856&categoryid=797588>) *webinar with etouches May 22nd – Don't miss it!*

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