



The New Donor Frontier: Discover How to Attract Gen Z to Your Nonprofit

By Chris Foster

In a recent interview, Jane McGonigal, an author, game designer and futurist, mentioned we spend a lot of our daydreaming time thinking about the future. She mentioned, if we pay attention, we can use information we have now to help us prepare for what comes next.

For nonprofits, there's an exciting future event to prepare for. It's an event that brings together all the most influential factors that speak particularly to nonprofits:

Habit of monthly subscriptions

Desire to be a part of something bigger

Love of authenticity

Loyalty to a brand

Eagerness to consume good storytelling

Oh, and by the way, this event also brings a big time, huge scale opportunity.

This event is the surge of Generation Z. For the nonprofits that prepare and pay attention, it will be an opportunity to engage an entire new donor frontier.

Gen Z is the largest consumer group in the U.S. — currently at 40% of U.S. consumers. With a staggering 67 million people, Gen Zers are also 20% of the U.S. population and have \$360 billion in buying power — more than double a pre-pandemic estimate. They will also be a third of the workforce by 2030 and are the most ethnically diverse generation in America.

The sheer number of Gen Zers moving into positions of income and influence will send shockwaves across the entire economy. For nonprofits, this represents an unprecedented opportunity to tap into the natural behaviors, patterns and interests that are being revealed.

And thankfully, these generational dispositions neatly align with what nonprofits naturally do well, so here are five ways nonprofits can best grow their donor base with Gen Zers.

Gen Zers Love Subscriptions: Leverage Recurring Monthly Donations

This generation has come of age without linear TV, or perhaps even cable. They consume content on multiple devices when and where they choose with 96% having at least one streaming subscription service.

In addition, this is the first generation to watch the subscription model come alive and into homes. As of last year, 15% of online buyers had signed up for subscription services – from Jinx to Ipsy – and that number is projected to grow. Gen Zers subscribe to more types of services than any other generation – from beauty to food, music and retail products.

They are used to subscribing. They are comfortable with monthly installments to a brand or service they sign up for. They habitually send money via Venmo or Zelle with an app.

Don't ask them to write a monthly check — just get them to commit to a \$5, \$10 or \$20 monthly recurring donation. Relate the monthly recurring donation to subscriptions they're already in the habit of supporting. For less than or the equivalent of a subscription, they can become part of your movement.

They Seek to be a Part of Something Bigger Than Themselves: Bring Them In

The movement idea is important — 68% of Gen Zers surveyed said they are very conscious about the role they play in the world and want to do their part of turning it into a better place for future generations. Boy, that bodes well for the nonprofit sector.

Make sure you're welcoming them as part of the tribe that's creating a movement and making real impact. The messaging, language and approach needs to help them feel a part of the bigger picture, and show them how their involvement is making a difference.

By articulating how you're making the world a bit better in a way that makes them feel like they're in it with you — and that they are the ones who are making the world better — you'll draw a direct line from their monthly donation to the impact you'll make together.

They Require Authenticity and Communication: Be Real and Be Everywhere

Reaching out to Gen Z with an honest voice — clearly explaining what you're doing and how they can be a part of it — and using a variety of marketing channels will be must-have marketing habits for successful nonprofits.

So be real since 82% of Gen Z's trust a company more if the images in ads are actual customers or people. They expect brands — and nonprofits — to have stories that reflect reality. The videos they consume, the live events they stream, the rapid dialogue via texts all have combined so they expect to see the real-and-now.

Be everywhere. You already know Gen Zers are on their phones and their streaming devices. With 98% worldwide owning a smartphone, they are our introduction to what it means to be a mobile-first generation.

They're also the generation that has grown up predominately getting their storytelling through videos. Now via TikTok, YouTube and the 300-plus streaming services available, 71% of teens spend three-plus hours per day watching videos.

That means for your message to truly sink in, you have to plan and implement omnichannel marketing. Share your message on a variety of digital channels that are device agnostic, connected TV, direct mail, podcasts and more.

They Will Be Loyal To Those They Love: Keep In Touch Frequently

This generation has gravitated to loyalty programs more than any other. Two out of three Gen Zers participate in at least one loyalty program. So as consumers, they are willing and engaged with the brands they want to embrace.

This generation is looking for a relationship beyond a transaction. They're seeking more meaningful connections with the brands they choose, and that means the nonprofits, too. So keep in touch with regularity. Show them stories they can connect with throughout the weeks and months. And, when you're able to link their involvement (\$10/month) to a specific outcome you're driving (20 meals for a food-insecure family of four) and show their loyalty is making a continued, positive difference, you'll look and feel like their favorite brand's loyalty program.

They Love Great Stories With Compelling Characters: Tell Stories About Your Cause

Everyone loves a good story. With Gen Z, however, including one with your marketing message has become an expectation. Gen Zers have grown up in the world of video- and mobile-first advertising where that storytelling structure has become the de-facto way marketers are communicating to them.

The consumer brands that connect with them tell stories. The apps that allow them to tell their own stories are the most popular. On a daily basis, 64% and 52% of Gen Zers use Instagram and Snapchat, respectively. Those are storytelling apps that show the world how they want to be seen. And BeReal — an authentic-minded app that takes a shared, unfiltered picture in a moment — has grown its monthly users 315% over the last year.

So make sure you tell stories in these channels. Make sure it's not just a constant pitch to donate, but instead a story about impact and transformation that they can be a part of.

I'm optimistic by nature, and I'm very excited to see Gen Zers wade into the fore with their energy, passions, beliefs and spending power. They have the ability to dramatically transform the economic and social landscape, as well as provide a path for the generation after them. Generation Alpha — the oldest being age 12 at the moment — are the siblings of Gen Zers, the children of Generation Y or millennials. The youngest generation is really paying attention and looking at Gen Zers to see what they do.

So if you can get into the hearts and minds of Gen Zers, not only will you have a tie to long-lasting donors with huge potential as they get older and gain more income, you might also have a better shot at those who are following them.

<https://www.nonprofitpro.com/post/the-new-donor-frontier-discover-how-to-attract-gen-z-o-your-nonprofit/>