

Museums and Millennials Worksheet

Starting Points to Improve Engagement

We all want more visitation from young people. Here are a few questions and concepts to get the dialogue started in your institution to pave the way for better millennial engagement.

Subject #1: Affordability

Think about the millennial budget. Millennials have vast buying power; how they choose to use that power is key. Keep these ideas in mind:

- For most millennials, money is scarce due to a poor job market, rising debt, lack of job stability, and absence of work-related benefits like healthcare and retirement
- Millennials have limited funds and associate dollars with value
- Millennials are more willing to use any extra funds they possess to have experiences, rather than buy products
- Millennials expect the money they spend to contribute to their quality of life and like their entertainment venues to provide a form of escapism

How might these concepts translate to your institution? Do you feel your programs, exhibits, and admission prices are marketable to them? Why or why not?

Subject #2: Uniqueness

Take a step back from your role as an insider and view the site as a first-time visitor. Then, ask yourself these questions:

- Look at the narrative your facility puts out to potential visitors. What are you promoting?

- Can you clearly identify your museum's mission from the advertising? How?

- Is there something in the mission, or in the collection itself, that is unique to the museum?

- How can the museum improve in promoting what makes it unique?

Subject #3: Relevance

What does it mean to be relevant? In short, it can mean anything from creating a sense of nostalgia to advocating for certain rights or groups. Relevance also entails a commitment to your institution's mission.

Think of an exhibit, event, or program you feel should be reaching a millennial audience. To determine if that item is in alignment with your museum's mission, ask yourself these questions:

- What are the core values of my facility? Are those values reflected in the event description and marketing plans?

- Will offering this event simply expand my audience, or will it also expose that audience to the museum's values?

- What will visitors take away from the experience? Will they walk away with an accurate idea of who we are, what we do, and what is important to us?

Subject #4: Accessibility

Accessibility refers not only to the physical structure, but to the relationships millennial patrons have with staff, the exhibits and program themselves, and in online formats like social media. Here are a few pieces of advice to ensure you are starting on solid ground:

- Place clear signage at all entry and exit points to the facility and to individual exhibits on display
- Train front desk or entryway staff to instruct visitors on the layout of the facility as they enter
- Conduct staff meetings to ensure all staff who interact with guests are effectively communicating and reinforcing the same information
- Remind staff that it is not their job to tell people how to experience the museum; millennials want to be the designers of their own experiences

Now, think about your institution.

What are some barriers to engagement that come to mind, physical or otherwise?

Do you have an active response rate to patrons on social media? Is there someone specifically dedicated to that task?

How many steps does the average patron have to take to get to the point of walking through your front door? Are there barriers you never thought about along the way?

How often are phone messages or emails returned?

How do you react to online reviews? Millennials check these sites first to determine if you are worth a visit. Are you responding to every single review, good or bad? (The answer needs to be yes!)

I hope this worksheet helps you start those important conversations to not only improve millennial engagement, but relationships with all of your current and future patrons.

Need more help? Check out my book *Museums and Millennials: Engaging the Coveted Patron Generation* from AASLH and Rowman & Littlefield, or reach me directly at www.jaclynspainhour.com.