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Fitting Gen Y Into Your Marketing Plan

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If Generation Y, also known as the Millennial Generation, is your target audience —and who doesn't want a piece of the \$43 billion youth market? — you're probably finding out those darn kids aren't as easy to understand as you thought.

Tina Wells, CEO of Buzz Marketing Group and author of "Chasing Youth Culture and Getting it Right: How Your Business Can Profit by Tapping Today's Most Powerful Trendsetters and Tastemakers" (Wiley, 2011), helps business owners understand who Gen Y really is and how to market to them.

She tells BusinessNewsDaily that there are "four tribes" of Gen Y, each with its own distinct preferences and styles. Understanding the groups will help you determine the best way to market to them.

The Wired Techie

To the Millennial Generation, "The Wired Techie" is the trendsetter for how modern things work, said Wells. Techies are constantly coming up with new ideas to make life easier and they've turned [technology](#) into their own fashion.

Known by some as "nerds" in previous generations, "Techies" have now become popular, have sex appeal and [build startup companies](#) overnight. They are now the front-runners to gain fame and notoriety. Consider the founders of Facebook, Foursquare and Twitter. With technology constantly changing, the knowledge and expertise of this tribe is in high demand.

Techies interact with brands that respect their knowledge, challenge their skills and provide them with a cutting-edge, high quality product. After all, this tribe embraces innovation and the future.

The Preppy

Preppies are easily identifiable and consider themselves popular, explained Wells. This tribe needs to conform, obey the rules and play the game. Preppies want the expected outcome and actively seek acceptance in brands that make them feel part of a larger group or movement. The need for inclusion makes Preppies effective communicators. Essentially, this group serves as megaphones that bring messages to the masses.

Preppies gravitate toward [products with style](#), trendiness and a brand experience that resonates with their need to fit in. As conformists, Preppies will usually not be the first to try something new, but they will embrace brands that provide the necessary tools to make them feel trendy and part of the group.

The Always-Mellow Alternative

Dubbed by the New York Times as "The Why-Worry Generation," Alternatives are relaxed, laid back and contemplative. What makes this tribe so alluring is their disregard for social conformity and need for independence. They have no fear in trying new things and effortlessly adopt trends and ideas into their lifestyles. It's important to pay close attention to this group, Wells said.

Alternatives have a passion for [doing good works in the world](#). This group started the ecologically conscious green trend years before its explosion into mainstream society. They are the group most likely to start their own companies and nonprofits. Once an Alternative decides to take action on a particular cause, they will do it quickly through research online or participation in volunteer groups to voice their concerns.

Because they crave independence, businesses that target this tribe must respect their space and allow them to adapt products to their own individual use. Alternatives discover their values independently through their own journey and become loyal to brands that correlate with their beliefs.

The Cutting-Edge Independent

Independents align themselves with brands and concepts that are new and cutting-edge. They deviate for the sake of deviating and find trends through blogs and by word-of-mouth from their friends.

Independents like to help brands break into the mainstream but will abandon trends once they reach the



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Franchises under \$30,000

masses. This tribe thrives in indie environments that are exclusive and provide a creative outlet. By definition, Independents need to be autonomous, passionate thinkers and their need for self-expression comes to fruition in what they wear. Fashion is an extension of their passion.

Independents consistently want to make a statement about who they are and what they stand for. This plays a major role in the brands they choose. Independents gravitate toward brands that reflect their rebellious, selective nature and provide them with value for their money.

- [What Gen Y Job Hunters Need to Know \(For Starters, Lose the Flip Flops\)](#)
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