

SPECIAL REPORT

MARKETING GOLF TO MILLENNIALS



ANDREW WOOD

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**Marketing
Golf to
Millennials**

BY ANDREW WOOD



Marketing Golf to Millennials

The Millennial Generation are those born roughly between 1981 and 1997 which means anyone between the ages of about 21 to 37. That's a wide range from anyone just finishing college, to parents well into their careers with kids. They have a spending power of 600 billion dollars in the USA alone. This market is CRITICAL to the future of every golf club and yet NO ONE in the golf business has the slightest clue how to reach them.

Every generation is misunderstood at some point in time, but few have received more negative attention than millennials. Spoiled. Entitled. Lazy. *"Me generation"* But like most stereotypes, they really aren't fair or accurate. If golf clubs want to reach millennials, they first need to understand them. That means looking past the generalizations to understand what makes them tick, then using that insight to create a connection. Millennials are not easily

fooled by marketing and advertising tactics, in fact they hate them. Instead the development of an authentic relationship is vital.



Let's start by looking at what they don't like:

- Rules especially rules about how they dress or when and where they can use their cell phones
- They hate formality and love to poke fun at it at every opportunity. This includes food and dining.
- They find old social customs they find bizarre.
- They hate to wait for anything including on the course, they are used to getting everything on demand. Now!

- They have no loyalty to any of their parents “old” brands. Including clubs, clothing and drinks.
- Many millennials are foregoing car ownership or leasing of a vehicle entirely and rely on a combination of Lyft, Uber, public transportation and bike sharing.

What Do Millennials Value?

- They are very socially conscious. Research also shows that 75% of millennials want companies to give back to society with their profits.
- A global study by Unilever found one-third of consumers buy from brands based on their social and environmental impact. But what does sustainability actually look like? In 2018, the Millennial-minded will look for more from the brands they purchase. They will expect the brands they interact with to not only talk the talk but walk the walk with their packaging, the way they treat their employees, and how they impact the planet
- They want to stay connected wherever they are, Wi-Fi is a must.
- Millennials like information, blogs and authentic content marketing is far more effective than ads of any kind.
- They want opportunities to take pictures and share the highlights of your food, course, range, etc. on social media.
- Social proof is huge, what do your reviews on Google, Facebook and Trip Advisor actually look like? If you are not checking them frequently and responding you are missing the boat!

- They love good casual food
- Although they drink less beer than other generations they prefer craft beers and micro beers when they do. They like wine.
- They are more into experiences than owning stuff
- Doing everything online doesn't make them call for anything
- Basically the "hipster generation" is rooted in counter culture against materialism, chain restaurants, strip malls and the soullessness of corporatism. Good news if you are a mom & pop bad news if you are a soulless big management company!
- They eat a lot of take-out food far more than any other market segment
- There is definitely a trend away from pumping iron for bulk and more towards definition, aerobic, stretching, rock climbing and yoga

That Elusive Millennial Magic Bullet

Everyone in the golf industry is looking for the magic silver bullet. That technological tool, that social media post, email, or YouTube video that is going to drive more Millennial business with little effort. That shiny new POS system that promises to do everything except have sex with you. The wonderful app, that promised a new level of sophistication and communication. The app that immediately after download, disappears into an app black hole on someone's iPhone along with a hundred other apps they never actually use. Texting, marketing automation, autoresponders, sales funnels, all good and all declining. The technological magic bullet is fantasy. Everything the golf industry is currently doing is costing more and producing less!

While it would make sense to improve what you are currently doing with better sales copy, better content, more engaging emails, etc. it's still a losing strategy long-term, so you better be doing something else at the same time. Marketing to Millennials is more complicated than ever because they tune out almost all marketing. That's why you **MUST** start by focusing on the product!

A biker bar is not the same as a sports bar, a martini bar or a hole in the wall drinkers bar. All sell alcohol but all attract a very different crowd with very little cross over. If your club is set up to appeal to a senior crowd like it or not it will automatically repel a Millennial crowd.

Create a Product Millennials Want to Rave About

A product that engages them a product that entertains them the product that makes them feel good about being there. A feeling that they want to share with their friends via social media. That's why my strategy starts with the "one strategy." The concept that you must have one thing in every key touch point that is outstanding. You don't have to be Pebble Beach or St. Andrews, but you need to have one thing you do at every touch point that people remember comment on, take pictures of and share with their friends on social media. You're in the entertainment business, and you must entertain your members, guests, and players where ever possible by any means possible. If you're not willing to take this step to brainstorm what you can do and to deliver a "Wow" experience in multiple ways, on numerous levels the rest of the strategy doesn't even matter. If you're just one of five, ten, twenty or even fifty golf courses that people can go play, and you have nothing outstanding whether that's your range, pro shop a few significant holes or just the best burger and in town, you're already behind the eight ball.

The ["WOW Factor"](#) gives hundreds of examples any club could use but let's look a few key areas.

Clubhouse

Millennials don't like clutter, they like clean and simple designs with lots of space and lots of charging stations. Think the Apple store or Starbucks. They don't like elevator music and they don't like stock art prints. They do like helping local artists though so how about decorating your club with local art that turns your clubhouse into a gallery and hopefully helps support a starving artist. Millennials love businesses that support local art.

Since many Millennials don't have cars would it make sense to have a club van pick them up and drop them off in the city?



Food and Beverage

Millennials are NOT the meat and potato crowd, they love tacos, sushi, street

food, Indian Asian, Thai and vegan. In other words, almost nothing on your menu! They really appreciate food from all over the world and are definitely are open minded when it comes to cuisine. They like fast and creative, small plates and tapas and they love food trucks! The favorite food of Millennials? Avocado toast, Americans spend \$900,000 a month on it, reports CNBC.

Forbes says Millennials are willing to go to great lengths to find fresh and healthy food. Whereas older generations were loyal to specific brands, Millennials are also more aligned with the food movement, which supports such establishments as organic farms, ethnic/specialty foods and small-batch jams. Whereas only 33% of Americans age 65 and older actively try to include organic foods in their diets, 53% of Americans ages 18 to 29 do so.

When it comes to beer the last beers in the world, they want to drink are the heavily advertised rat piss you see on TV. They love craft beers and micro brews not Bud and Miller Lite. 64 percent of Millennials consume energy drink like Red Bull, Monster and Rockstar does your club offer them?

Key Thoughts:

- New menu?
- Organic?
- Locally sourced?
- Craft beers?
- Take away menu?
- Energy drinks



Famed Trick Shot Artist Jeremy Dale

Millennials are Glad to Pay for Unique Experiences

Past generations have been focused on buying “things.” Millennials are more interested in buying experiences. As millennial entrepreneur Taylor Smith told NBC, “We aren’t spending our money on cars, TVs and watches. We’re renting scooters and touring Vietnam, rocking out at music festivals, or hiking Machu Picchu.” They are far more likely to spend \$1500 on a backstage concert experience, a trip to Bunning Man or Coachella, than on a designer suit!

A Millennial may never buy a \$5,000 set of PXG’s but you can be sure they’d be glad to rent them and brag about doing so on social media! Playing Pebble Beach on a simulator of course. Celebrity clinics or pro-am millennials, love star power! Access to

Trackman on the range. The ability to test a dozen new drivers anytime. Cars, statues, goal posts, planes on the range as targets. Local band night on the range. There are many other creative options, one course in New Zealand turned their whole course into an art gallery.

Renting a Golf Board or Fat Tire Scooter instead of a boring old Club Car is a much better experience. I have used Golf Boards and there is no doubt in my mind that they make a round more fun!



Many have dubbed the millennials “Generation Me.” While it might not be an endearing title, it’s hard to debate the fact that millennials are more narcissistic than previous generations. The selfie is now ingrained in our culture as a way to gain recognition the so called “humble brag” your club can leverage this to increase exposure and drive brand loyalty.

Millennials Look to Their Network for Recommendations

A staggering 91% of millennials, buy based on recommendations from friends. While scrolling through their Facebook News Feed, people are bombarded with ads and promotional content. Most people scroll right past and don't read — let alone click on — the content. What gets millennials to stop scrolling is the sight of interesting content from their network of friends and family. This is why it's so critical to get people taking pictures and sharing

Key Thoughts:

- Providing photo ops for social sharing is critical. What photo ops are you providing?
- Where can you up your game and create more?
- How can your club create more “experiences”?

Millennials Won't Wait!

Once you have committed to "one strategy" we can go to the second factor. A factor that's been missing from the golf industry for at least 10 or 20 years. The factor that the golf industry used to pride itself on. And that is good old-fashioned customer service. Developing relationships with your members, guests or players. Very few people are willing to admit that their service is somewhere between alarmingly average and poor. All you have to do is look at the decreases in staffing at most golf clubs, and it becomes apparent that providing excellent service is impossible. When you have one guy at the counter, four guests waiting to check in and two phones ringing you can't possibly give excellent service. Millennials do not like to wait for anything and if you make them, they won't be back!




Staff Up



So, the second factor is to actually staff up to make sure you have enough people in the pro shop to actually meet, greet and communicate with your members, guests or players. That person whoever it is will become the most important person in your operation. His or her job is to make friends with everyone. To turn occasional players into frequent players and frequent Player into raving fans. That person must be trained in the arts of communication, sales, and hospitality, a cheerleader type would be ideal. Spend the money you were going to spend on that worthless app, on this person instead. This will actually have a fantastic ROI.



That's true not just at the counter but on the course as well so you better get that ranger out there and trained properly

 Quick Question For YOU
 Posted by **Andrew Wood** on April 22, 2019 at 1:49pm



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
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Turn Your Website into an Experiential Hub

Step three is the way you communicate with your members and guests electronically, but you are going to do it in a much more intimate way that you, NOT Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram control.

You can go ahead and start by turning your website into social hub. A blog and several landing pages. Landing pages are far more effective in converting prospects to customers for weddings outings, membership, and banquets. Blogs are far more effective in generating Google rankings and in creating interaction with your members, guests, and players.

My staff 100% do not agree with this bold move and you could do both, but think about it how often do people go back to your web site other than to book a tee time? A link you can put anywhere. How often do you update your website with new content? If you are like most clubs that would be Masters' week each year! How many comments do you get on your website? Most places all you get is spam.

Take Back Control

You are going to take back control of your website, blog and social media by making them all something you control. Facebook now shows your posts to just 1% of your fans, the same 25-50 people who like or comment on every post. What's the point of that when you have 2,000 fans?

You will then use your old existing social media Facebook Instagram LinkedIn and YouTube to drive traffic back to your new social hub. You will, of course, have to pay for some ads to reach your existing fans. You will also have to dedicate one hour a day every day to maintain this social hub. You'll have to do things you have never done before. You'll have to create custom content. You will have to humanize your staff, and you will have to go out of your way to create ongoing discussions with your members,

players, and guests. This is doubly important for daily fee clubs.



Using this social hub instead of a website you're going to connect with people more frequently and on the human basis. You'll get introduce members of staff. You're going to share details of the lives of the kids. The dogs, the background whatever personal information they are willing to share. You're going to make them real people, people that your members and guests can relate to not just that guy Bob who cuts the greens. By tuning your staffing to real people with real lives, you will automatically create a stronger sense of bonding with your customer.

“Millennials are 44% more willing to trust experts who are strangers and 247% more likely to be influenced by blogs or social networking sites.”— HubSpot

Millennials Read Blogs Before They Buy

With access to information more available than ever before, people have more ways to research and educate themselves on the products they're interested in before they buy. In fact, 23% of Millennials say they like to research before they buy something. Part of the reason millennials spend time researching is because of the amount of time they spend online. 80 percent of millennials use their phones to research prices while 68.9% use their phones to read reviews. On top of this, 33% of millennials read blog posts before they buy vs. less than 3% who prefer traditional forms of advertising — like TV and magazines.

“Millennials, like to research, they like to feel confident that the club and brand align to their values, and they want to make sure they're getting the best price, so they leverage a lot of channels to find this information.”

Authentic Content Empowers Them

According to AdAge, Millennials spend 25 hours per week online and they craving content driven media. They're scouring websites, blogs, and social media because they feel empowered by all of the remarkable content they're discovering. They're also sharing, liking, pinning, tweeting, snapping, forwarding, and commenting on all of their findings to impart this sense of empowerment to the online community. So, what makes this type of content really resonate with this group? Millennials trust what they feel is authentic.

Millennials support businesses that are dedicated to improving their customers' lives with informative content. Rather than product and service listings and promotions., Millennials want e-books, whitepapers, blog posts, videos, and other how-to information. They appreciate thought leadership and expertise, so this is your club's chance to provide great content that ranks highly in Google and show young consumers that you're the industry expert.

Communication

While email and Facebook are favorites of gen-xers and the boomers, millennials prefer texting and chat platforms like Snapchat and WeChat in Asia.



Create a Sense of Purpose for Your Club

Step four is perhaps the most significant step of all, and that is to provide a purpose for your club. As Simon Sinek would say what is your club's why? This is especially important to millennials they want to do business with companies that have a higher purpose than merely serving that customer's needs and making money. There are many ways you can do this and make it real I'm going to give you a couple simple examples.

50% of Millennials are more willing to buy from a company that supports a cause

Go to the orphanage, boys club or whatever organization serves needy children annual community. Pick a dozen of them and get them to the club several times a week. Provide them with their own clubs which the members will gladly donate. Ask the members to help with teaching and supervising the children. Don't just teach them golf have them watch Great tournaments talk about the history and traditions of the game encourage use into the traits of champions which I'll gladly give you which talks about goalsetting comic Communication assistance and generally planning Live the great life. In the summer have them help on the golf course really get involved in trying to help these people have a wonderful experience. Don't just have them show up once or twice a week and hit balls then go back to whatever they were doing. Actually, try to make a difference in their lives and make that your clubs mission. Golf has given you a lot, it's



giving you friends, it's giving you opportunities to travel, and it's giving you a living. This is an excellent way to give back. It's also an awesome way to generate positive publicity in the community and incredible social bonding with your players.

My wife happens to be a dog lover. She donates a lot of time, effort and money to the local dog shelter. I know especially in England, lots of clubs have a

club dog or the Greenkeepers dog runs around the course. Then there is often a pro shop dog as well. Most people especially ladies are animal lovers. By building your club's reason deter around helping the local shelter dogs find home you will create a wonderful feeling of purpose and the community.

Key Questions:

- What does your club do to help the community?
- How do you weave this long-term commitment into your marketing?
- How do you get your players and members involved?

Too Much Work?

You may think that'll of this is just too much work and I guarantee you that's what 99% of your competitors will think. You may think I'm off base, but I've been in this business for over 20 years. Great sales copy helps. Building a large database helps. Sending out high quality high content emails helps but ultimately a golf course lives and dies on its' people. And on the entertainment value, they provide at the club. If you're not willing to provide a superior entertainment product by using the wow factor principles and you're not willing to create you will not solve your problem, with new technology.

While I think you should adopt any technology that can help you it's people that make a difference. When you become known as the golf club who supports local kids or the local dog home, your social standing will increase. Your bonding with your members and guests will increase, and your employees will have a greater sense of meaning and therefore loyalty in their lives. You will get free publicity in your local community. You'll become known as the only club that's genuinely giving back to the community. You'll also enjoy a stronger sense of commitment and loyalty from your players. Best of all these moves will connect you to the world's biggest market Millennials.

This is a radical change I know, but I guarantee you it's a change for the better and a change that will work. This is the socially positive, humanizing marketing strategy that will pay off in ways you can't yet imagine.

Is it Time to Blow Up Your Club and Start Over?



You can't be half in and half out of this game. If you want Millennials there has to be wholesale changes to your operation. Not just the marketing operation but the product they find when they get there. This may cause problems with older members, but if you handle it right you can minimize them. You really have no choice the older members are dying off and like it or not Millennials are your future.

You might as well start making rapid changes to accommodate their different tastes.

1) Let's start with the basics, your name, logo, look and feel. if your club's name is something boring like Pine Ridge, Eagle Ridge or the name of your town ditch it for something unique. Something totally out of the box, something fun whimsical or crazy. Something you can build a theme around throughout your entire to enhance your entertainment value.

2) Get your creation story right, Millennials like to do business with real people. Show them who you are, where you came from and why you are in business. Be real authenticity is huge with this group. Do not use pretentious

language like all the large management companies do they will see right through it as fake.

3) Get your wow factors in place at every touch point in your clubs from the restrooms to the range. You cannot survive without them. I cannot stress this enough at every touch point!

4) Decide on your community connection, your charity or the artist you will patronize and weave into the fabric of your operation.

5) Create your social hub use all other social media to drive people to your hub, the only one you actually own and control!!!

6) Create your brand statement who are you? Who are you serving? Why are you different? And how are you giving back? All in one or two sentences.

7) Drive traffic to your landing pages and social hub through targeted Facebook ads, LinkedIn and any email list of targeted individuals.

8) Devote time each day to post to your social hub and connect with people. This is where YOU make a difference, go the extra mile to respond to people and get them engaged.

9) Re-think your clubhouse, menus, bathrooms and locker rooms. If they are NOT taking pictures, it's not working

10) Explain to existing members that you would love their support. That you are making changes to insure the future of the club. That they won't agree with all of them, but you will still take great care of them to the best of your ability.



If you need help executing this powerful program, on my current schedule I can assist three or four clubs.

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