



THE MONUMENTAL MILLENNIAL DIFFERENCE

Millennials: Changing the World One Selfie at a Time.

We are the Millennials. We are those teens and twenty-somethings waiting around with iPhones in hands. Our Facebooks are more up-to-date than our résumés. We read our novels on Kindles and seriously weigh the pros and cons of a café without wifi. We get our news from apps and stream our entertainment. Our extreme integration of technology is our calling card. It's what sets our generation apart. It's what makes us unique.

We are different for lots of reasons. Millennials are those of us born between 1980 and 2000. We are also known as Generation Y. We experienced the Great Recession and most of us remember September 11th. According to the Council of Economic Advisers, we are the largest, most diverse generation in the U.S. population. The vast majority of us are also educated and in debt because of it. And most of us are likely to say that losing a phone or computer has a bigger impact on our day than losing a car.

This is because our formative years were inundated with the excitement of technological advancement. Not only does this give us fun, new gadgets that make our everyday life simpler and more entertaining but the zeal that accompanies these discoveries is infectious. The enthusiasm generated when we are doing something that has never been done before rapidly spreads. Like the Renaissance or the Industrial Revolution, innate human curiosity ignites innovation like wildfire.

And every Millennial is curious about technology's latest and greatest achievements. But our curiosity is of the kinesthetic variety. Because we have unprecedented access to modern developments in technology, most of us Millennials sate our inquisitiveness in a hands-on fashion. We acquire the newest smart phones, tablets, laptops, and gaming systems, because we can. We don't have to understand it in theory; we can purchase it for ourselves.

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Since most Millennials are learning about these technologies in this manner, it becomes necessary for our methods of communication to keep up. We automatically construct our lives and daily routines to accommodate these innovations. If smart phones are required for common interaction and participation in social norms, then we will acquire and utilize a smart phone. Because the Internet is now the primary medium for social broadcasting of opinions, we actively take part in social media. We make and use Facebook, share memes, write blogs, and post Twitter blurbs.

For almost any Millennial it is absolutely vital to communicate with friends and acquaintances via technology, which has changed the way we communicate. We have text speak that uses acronyms like “OMG,” “BRB,” or “WTF” incorporated into spoken conversation. Instead of ending an exchange with “see you later” or “let's talk soon,” there is a technological expectation. Rather, we say things like, “I'll text you” or “invite me on Facebook.” And our dialogue has come

to include anecdotes and happenings that were purely virtual: “So I posted this picture on Instagram...”

But this technological obsession has affected more than just our relationships. The way we shop, for instance, is more online now than ever. We are making Amazon the new Wal-Mart, and Ebay or Craig’s List the new yard sale. And because we are a very environmentally and humanitarily conscientious generation, shopping online provides options we wouldn’t otherwise have. We can buy fair-trade and organic that would be impossible in our local area.

Almost everything is available online. Even the way we drink is being molded to our technological paradigm. The Tasting Room by Lot18, for instance, is a wine site that specifically tailors its selection according to customer preference. The clientele sips a provided selection and rates online. Then the site can send new things to try that are most likely going to be enjoyable. And this all wouldn’t be possible without the alacritous accommodation of technology.

Think about the trademark phrase, “There’s an app for that.” In our current society, this is pretty much true. But, more than that, it sells the idea that everything we do can be converted to digital format. Everything in tangible reality can be translated to our ubiquitous virtual reality. Whether it’s our shopping, our friends, or our beliefs, we can carry them on little buzzing devices. It seems so inconsequential, yet it transforms how we live.

In past generations, such a wide array of options was not possible. Shopping was done in the surrounding area. Relationships were those that could be kept up in person, through letters, or over the telephone. Their scales were smaller. Their worlds were more concrete. Unless you were a celebrity or politician, your voice was not heard on a large scale. They spoke to each other, not the masses. Whereas most everything we say—on the Internet at least—is, for all intents and purposes, said to the masses.

Our generation, by contrast, provides a megaphone to everyone. Before our generation, only a few voices were allowed to speak. Only a few were heard. But now all can be heard. Someone with the right YouTube knowhow can become a sensation overnight. The whole world virtually has access to these voices.



But it is becoming hard to hear amidst the cacophony of available voices.

We like it that way, though. We all have the opportunity to think, share, and argue. We can pick what and who we listen to. We can focus in and delve deep or fan out and broaden horizons. It’s up to us.

We are the Millennials. We talk, shop, and think differently. Our world is changing because we are changing it. Our profuse implementation of technology makes our culture grow in diversity and choices. Everything is faster, more accessible, and more customized. With every selfie, download, and online post, we are telling the future we want it to look a bit like this. We are telling ourselves and each other that what we need is a little more technology—and what we do have can be enhanced. We have to keep improving, keep moving.

Because we’re Millennials and that’s what we do.