

TRUST AND THE "Y" GENERATION: RELATIONSHIPS MATTER MOST

Teenagers – Generation Y or generation.com – represent a huge demographic power. “They rival the baby boom in sheer size & their global purchasing power is enormous,” says Marianne Friese, dir Ketchum’s Global Brand Marketing Practice. “But how to best reach them has remained a mystery....”

Tho teens spend hours connecting to digital media & pop culture, no one knows what info sources they trust. Her group surveyed 14-18 year olds around the globe in 1200 face to face interviews to find out “who survives the trust filter.” Sample was selected to represent an equal number of teens from each age group & gender, as well as in various settings. Some key findings:

■ **Parents Still Rule.** Despite the notion that teens want to disassociate from parents as much as possible, they are still their most trusted sources for advice & opinions, including product info. “It was interesting they would look to their parents first,” Ketchum’s Polly Lagana told prr. “There are some product choices where peer opinion comes first – clothing, CDs, some electronics...but otherwise, they trust their parents’ advice.” This finding applies to other issues as well: careers, drugs, alcohol, etc. **It seems in this digital age, relationships still matter most.**

➤ **Asked to categorize 23 sources** “you believe & trust all of the time, most of the time, rarely, or none of the time,” teens name those they know personally (parents, doctors, clergy, friends, teachers) as the top 5 sources they trust all of the time.

■ **Internet Savvy – And Wary.** “They are generally considered to be the most wired & net savvy of everyone, yet they are wary of the Internet.... It’s interesting because it shows that tho they are young, **they know Internet messages are unfiltered & unpoliced,**” says Lagana.

■ **Distrust Advertisements.** As far as messages are concerned, **teens trust editorial content** over ads, including PSAs. They also trust messages in television (which they look to as the first media source to trust) over ads directed at them.

■ **Teen Trust Varies Regionally.** Study underscores **the importance of localizing message strategies.** European teens are the most skeptical of magazines & ads. Teens in Russia trust the Internet. American teens trust celebrity endorsement more than their peers overseas do, especially when it comes to clothing. (Nearly 75% of American teens name celebrities as one of their most trusted sources when making a sports & fitness purchase, only 40% of European teens do.)

➤ **Teen trust also varies within the US.** In LA, teens are most likely to consider media sources as the most trustworthy purchase advisers, even for health products. Here, 76% of teens in Atlanta say they trust parents’ advice first, whereas only 22% of LA teens name parents.

ITEM OF IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Tobacco Company’s Attack Makes Film Maker Happy.** When *The Insider* hit moviehouses, Brown & Williamson launched a media & ad attack to say the film distorts truth & its protagonist’s claims his life was threatened when he turned whistleblower are lies. Disney svp-cc John Dreyer gleefully noted “I guess they wanted to help promote the movie.” Will management ever learn? Being “banned in Boston” guaranteed best seller books in the 30s to 50s. The principle hasn’t changed. In this case, however, B&W committed a worse error than creating curiosity that can only be satisfied by seeing the film. They admitted their attack was based on assumptions because “We have not seen the movie.” Good grief!

15 WAYS TO CUT THRU THE CLUTTER OF OVERCOMMUNICATION

First, of course, practitioners must face the fact overcommunication today is incredible. Many give this concept lip service – but the old-style com’n products they produce & the vehicles they use show their disbelief. They go right back to lengthy, hard-to-read, paragraphic matter – almost habitually. Some feel web sites or e-mail somehow overcome the problem, when instead they majorly add to it.

Second, one must have a sound strategy – & preferably a research-based message platform. Then:

3. **MAKE NO LITTLE PLANS.** People today are also overbusy, only have time & energy for bold solutions & ideas. Think big – or else tie your small idea or incremental improvement to a star.
4. **TAKE CHARGE OF THE ISSUE.** You offer the proposals, keeping opponents on the defensive responding to *your* ideas. Otherwise, they make the proposals & you’ll have to respond. Do be sure you can walk the talk of what you propose, of course.
5. **ISSUE REPORT CARDS & SCOREBOARDS.** Candidly tell how you’re doing, on a regular basis. When the grade is low, explain why – & ask for help in making improvements. If you have environmental problems, put out a monthly scorecard monitoring results. Once stakeholders see you’re reporting regularly, trust levels rise & many even stop paying attention.
6. **CEASE THE 1-WAY INFO BOMBARDMENT & LISTEN.** Substitute Management By Walking Around (in the workplace *and* in the community), advisory boards, focus groups, Ambassador programs & research for traditional information transfer devices – which few want today. Ask *yourself*: do you want to get another newsletter? Go face to face & dialogue.
7. **GET EXACTLY THE RIGHT SPOKESPERSON.** PRSA’s Credibility Index (prr 8/2) underscores again that, today, *who* delivers the message is the most important factor – more than the message itself. College profs & other arm’s length or unexpected spokespersons are tops.
8. **SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION.** Words, rhetoric don’t do it now. Acts do – behavior. Sterling example: when being introduced as the new CEO of IBM – where white shirts/blouses were mandatory – Lou Gerstner wore a blue shirt. Halfway thru the session, he took off his tie. No words were needed to say “things are going to change here”.
9. **USE INFORMATION MAPPING.** Some info demands longer formats. Make it easy to follow with 1,2,3 & A,B,C – plus bullets for sub-points. Organize material into logical chunks. Paginate by topic – don’t cram it in & “save paper”. Half filled pages (because that’s all it took for that topic) are a pleasant relief in a long document. If you know how to do an outline, you can info map.



10. CREATE TRIGGERING EVENTS. Carefully plan actions that make stakeholders have to do something, if they're ready. Can be as simple as a meeting, a special deal with a deadline – but only rarely can it be just info transfer. Example is battery manufacturers. & fire chiefs urging us to change the batteries in our smoke detectors when we turn the clocks back from daylight saving time. A huge preaching campaign, complete with ads & publicity & celebrities etc, would not be as effective due to the link with something we have to do regardless.

11. POINT-OF-BEHAVIOR MESSAGES. Get a message to folks at the time & place where they will or won't do something. Example: plasticized breast self-exam cards with a readymade diecut hook so women can hang them on showerheads.

12. REPEAT WITHOUT BEING REPETITIOUS. Mouth & write those theme lines & soundbites over & over. But let different spokespersons say them ... in different venues ... with slightly divergent emphases. Piggyback them on all communications. Studies of advertising find that about when you & the CEO are tired of them, the messages will just be starting to click with audiences.

13. MENDELSON'S LAW. Repeating points endlessly in issue campaigns or other cases where a rationale or line of thought must be spelled out, & where other viewpoints are contending with yours, does not work – because audiences are waiting to hear the rest of your case. Unlike reiterating theme slogans, the trick here is research to determine when a critical mass has heard & understood point #1, then to move to point #2, etc. Research (listening) transforms the campaign into a virtual dialogue: you speak, research tells you when they've got your point, you move on to the next point. Harold Mendelsohn's studies show that sticking with one point tends to turn off your key targets, who are often the most knowledgeable, so catch on earliest & get bored.

14. SUPERTARGETING. Stop talking to the world, your opponents & those who won't take action no matter what. Concentrate on the stakeholders whose supportive behaviors are needed now, or who are most ready to be supportive.

15. SURGICAL MEDIA STRATEGY. Figure out which media truly reach the opinion leaders in key stakeholder groups – often offbeat or special media. Ignore the general, larger media & get to these opportunity targets with surgical precision. If a key person occasionally reads *NYTimes* but loves *Wilson's Quarterly*, find a way to place something there – where a single story will be more salient than several in the *Times*. Don't try to reach Congress thru DC media but their hometown media.

There are other tactics – but this is a good start.

HOW TO REACH SMALL-BUSINESS OWNERS: PERSONALITY TYPES MAY OFFER INSIGHT INTO HOW COMPANIES THINK, STUDY FINDS

Communicators & marketers commonly lump small-business owners together, using size as a directive. "There is a misperception that small businesses are all pretty much alike," says Pitney Bowes div'n pres Elise DeBois. "If you identify the attitudes & behaviors of small business owners, you identify the attitudes and behaviors that make their businesses successful." But a new study finds **a more reliable criteria is offered by the personality type of the business owner**, which points to key psychological & attitudinal underpinnings of the company's overall success.

Yankelovich Partners (Norwalk, Ct) conducted the study, which outlines the different types of business owners & ways to reach them. *Attitudes and Behaviors That Create Small Business Success*, sponsored by Pitney Bowes (Stamford), deviates from previous research that explored this public from a mere demographic perspective. If you sell to, raise funds from or want to engage small-business firms in community projects, the profiles are valuable.

SEGMENTS IDENTIFIED

The study examined owners of over 1,400 small businesses.

Findings indicate some shared traits, including common values & a driving, competitive spirit. But as differences emerged, Yankelovich identified 5 segments:

1. **Idealists (24%):** (a) enjoy their product or service but hate the details, e.g., financial duties, etc.; (b) most willing to work for somebody else; (c) rely heavily on computers, but (d) are least likely to be looking for ways to improve their businesses; (e) least of all the groups to want to own their business location
2. **Optimizers (21%):** (a) enjoy their work & never want to work for someone else; (b) committed to growth, but they focus on profits, not size of the company; (c) are finance & tech savvy; (d) enjoy the rewards of ownership & feel their work & private lives are in balance; (e) leverage the Internet & use contractors & freelancers; (f) use credit & leasing arrangements to support strategic growth
3. **Hard Workers (20%):** (a) of all the groups, the most interested in managing a large business; (b) report the highest levels of growth; (c) are the most likely to use credit; (d) tend to "sweat the details"; (e) are more interested in trust than the lowest possible price; (f) have a long-term growth plan to which they stick; (g) are big on providing employee benefits
4. **Jugglers (20%):** (a) the most involved & personally invested in their businesses, but (b) lack managerial skills; (c) don't like to delegate or relinquish control; (d) never seem to have enough time or money; (e) big on the Internet; (f) use a lot of credit; (g) are proud of their ability to juggle all the different demands of their business; (h) optimistic about growth, even if they're concerned about the national economy; (i) the most demanding in terms of what they expect from suppliers & often feel shafted
5. **Sustainers (15%):** (a) enjoy their work & have a good balance between work and home life; (b) most likely to have bought or inherited a business rather than starting themselves & they often hire family members; (c) the least interested in technology; (d) would like to put in longer hours to get ahead; (e) the most conservative of all the segments; (f) happy with the status quo; (g) little interest in growth; (h) reluctant to use credit; (i) may prefer to own business sites rather than lease

PRACTICAL APPLICATION TOOL

The researchers say owners can learn which practices have proved most effective for others with similar personalities. PB has developed an on-line series of "roadmaps" offering advice tailored for each of the segments. Visitors to www.pitneyworks.com can fill out the survey, find out which segment they're in, receive helpful hints plus links to other useful resources selected for their profile.