

MARKETING IN THE “PHIGITAL” WORLD OF GENERATION Z

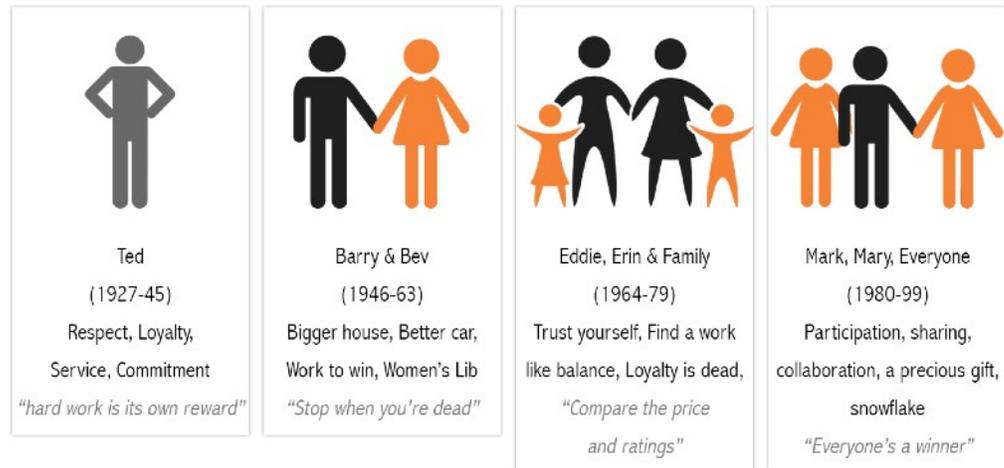
By **Ian James**,
RetailTribe CEO

‘Phigital.’ It’s a lovely word, isn’t it? I came across it in a book I was reading about Gen-Z. Yes, I know you’re just about coming to terms with Millennials, but the next generation has hit the workplace, and now has disposable income. And they’re very different from Millennials.

Investing time in the meaning – and implications – of “phigital” is really important for you.

‘Understanding the Consumer’ is central to the development of any business that wants to offer a service or product to consumers. And while one of your important advantages is that you’re dealing in a market size where you can, and should, get to know each customer as an individual, you need to understand the behavioral patterns of different generations and genders. That way your message will reach and appeal to potential new customers. And

So far we’ve battled, or not, with 4 generations on our golf courses and at our golf clubs



Now add the challenge of Gen-Z to your marketing

you need to be very aware of how those consumers will want to engage with you.

In truth, the golf industry hasn’t been great at understanding the consumer because it hasn’t had to—or so it believed. Try asking any golf committee or management group a question like, “How have you altered the design, scheduling, and timing of golf events to accommodate Gen-X working mothers?” Go on, try it.

Or take a flyer and tell committee people they should imitate PGA Junior League by adding 6-hole flag competitions to the club’s Saturday competition—in the name of increasing the number of winners at the awards ceremony. Believe me, your Millennials appreciate everyone being a winner, and it keeps their interest going throughout the round. (Cue snorts of derision from Traditional Ted on that committee.)



Non-playing spouses of Boomer males are a massive opportunity for the Player Development industry. Tough to teach, but desperate to share a retirement with their husband.

Some in our industry have an approach to the consumer that boils down to: “We built it long ago, and if you don’t like it, don’t come.” Many of these attitudes can be found at the more prestigious clubs. And unfortunately the decision-makers at those clubs are often seen as “leaders” who stand “at the pinnacle of the industry.”

Fortunately, there’s a transformation happening. At the PGA, and at the Club Managers Associations I work with around the world, there’s an increasing awareness of the need to first understand the consumer and the value they’re looking for, and then to structure the operation around delivering that value.

There’s some rapid catching up to do, because while all the media attention has been on Millennials, the golf product hasn’t even evolved sufficiently to cater to Boomers—meaning, it hasn’t kept up with their changing needs. As Traditional Ted and his cohorts depart this mortal life (and the fairways), the golf industry is discovering that Boomers:

- A. don’t totally retire and thus aren’t available to play golf every day, or even every other day
- B. pursue a “shared retirement”—and no Boomer wife is comfortable being a golf widow
- C. are much more inclined than prior generations to travel in their retirement and even pick up stakes to move closer to grandchildren.

As it happens, that’s a real opportunity for golf coaches, but for this article we’re focusing on the other end of the spectrum—Gen-Z, the people born after 1999.

This is a generation upon whom we’ve already inflicted considerable unpleasantness. They endured the Great Recession and they live with the permanent and seemingly unwinnable war on terror, plus significantly heightened homeland security. They learned protocols in case of school shootings. They’ve read about countless institutional fraud revelations, including those that created the 2007 housing collapse. During their childhood, threats of chemical and nuclear warfare have re-entered our narrative.

This generation knows they are going to struggle to acquire the wealth and lifestyle



The ‘Hunger Games’ and ‘Divergent’ are iconic stories for Gen-Z. They are stories of rigged, manipulative systems, of struggle and loss.



For Gen Z the #1 device is the smartphone. Per week each will spend on average 15.4 hours accessing videos and information on their smartphone.

that previous generations have attained. And their expectation of their political leaders being able to do anything to foster prosperity is at an all-time low. Sensationalized 24-hour news channels have seen to that. Want to know what they think of big business? Even lower ratings than politicians.

These are not political comments. They are social observations that will shape the outlook and behavior of this generation. Gen-Z members know that everyone can't be a winner.

In the area of communication, however, they've experienced vast abundance. This generation has been connected since birth. They don't know any other life. The digital revolution isn't something they've lived through, it was completed by the time they entered school. Hence the word "phigital." For every physical activity, there's a digital aspect that's integrated into the process. Devices and the online world are not separate from their lives. They're part of everything they do. They're more than an access point.

Any particular piece of knowledge (for example, initial ball direction is 80 percent caused by clubface angle) has much less relative value than it did when information was so much less scarce. The ability to quickly find out anything you need to know, when you need to know it, is the core skill



If your video is over 2 minutes, it's too long. If in 8 seconds your appeal isn't obvious, you're gone.

this generation possesses. YouTube, not Mister Rogers, is their educator.

Video matters, by all means. But here are your two great challenges: Over 70 percent of Gen-Z members say that if they notice a video is more than two minutes long, they shut it down instantly. And behavioral studies have determined that you have no more than eight seconds to appeal to this audience. If that eight seconds goes by and they aren't intrigued, it's *sayonara* and back to the YouTube search.

Along with these challenges comes some good news for golf coaches:

- A. This is the hyper-customized generation. They want everything to be customized to fit their needs. Therefore when you talk about a "personal development and practice plan," that's a winner with this crowd more than with any other. Just make sure the plan is truly personalized.
- B. Gen-Z rejects the notion that "everyone is a winner just for participating." People of this generation recognize a need to differentiate themselves through skill-development and accomplishment.
- C. Throughout their school career they received instant online feedback on whether they'd completed their assignments and what

WEEKLY TV USAGE

(average hours/week)



"The relevance of TV as a media channel continues to decline. Rather than having a channel they watch regularly, Gen-Z will follow (and communicate with) individuals they trust / admire on social networks".

score they attained. They expect this immediate feedback, even need it, and they respond. These are much better “students” than generations that have gone before. Give them feedback online.

- D. All that said, this is not a generation that hides behind technology. Surprisingly enough, in a recent survey 73 percent said that they welcome face-to-face feedback from their educator or job supervisor.
- E. To Gen-Z people, television and traditional TV channels have a significantly diminished importance. They prefer to connect to an actual person, whom they trust, and to connect via YouTube, Instagram, SnapChat and the like. The individual they follow is much more important to them than a program or TV show.

LIFE VALUE



“Balance work with family time”



“Never confuse your career with your life”



“We are the ‘always on’ generation”

“They’re always connected and they’re going to expect you to be always connected”

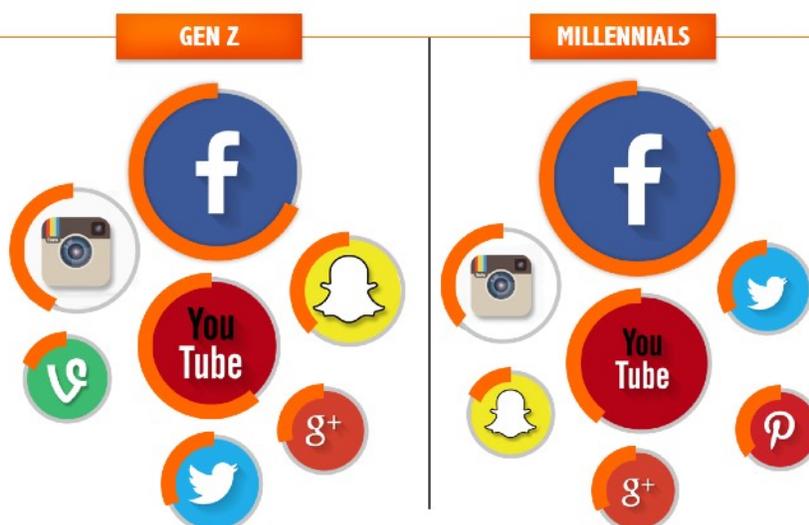
It is easy to reach this generation. Their smartphones are more or less bodily appendages and they expect to receive at least 1,700 different posts and messages per day. Yes, that’s a lot of noise to get through, but they’re available to you.

The final piece of great news is that, so far, despite all the hype you hear about Gen-Z wanting different digital hang-outs, they still occupy the same digital locations as Millennials. That means your investment in Facebook and YouTube marketing is effective for both generations.

The ‘phigital’ generation offers you new opportunity. For this generation, if you asked them to set up a meeting with a potential new customer, they’d first see if they could arrange it using an online service like GoToMeeting. Show them a video and launch monitor data and ask them to “zero out” their numbers, and they’ll rent time on your simulator to achieve the target you’ve set. Ask them to video their swing and send it through along with the results from their launch monitor, they will do so dutifully. This is truly a generation of technology savants.

And remember, this generation isn’t interested in TV. They want to follow, and communicate with, someone they believe in. Make that you. **PG**

TOP SOCIAL MEDIA SITES USED DAILY



“While some social media sites have disappeared or emerged, the big 2 remain the big 2 across both Millennials and Gen-Z. Note what % use YouTube daily”.