

<https://medium.com/unself/millennial-volunteerism-4c472c7fce4d>

Millennial Volunteerism

It turns out, millennials aren't as selfish as we thought.

Feb 19, 2018 · 2 min read



Millennials — the generation born between 1980 and 2000 — are often known as the generation that is entitled, is self-centered and lacks empathy. New studies about millennial giving and volunteerism, however, suggests that the generation is actually much more generous than thought. In fact, **70 percent** of millennials regularly volunteer. Compare this to baby boomers and Generation X, in which **61 percent and 63 percent**(respectively) volunteer regularly.

If millennials are actually more generous than previously thought, what motivates them to volunteer? And why should we care?

Most millennials are more likely to volunteer if they feel connected to the cause. This doesn't necessarily mean that they have been personally impacted by the core issue. It can be as simple as hearing someone's story who has been affected. The point is — this generation is more compelled than other generations to search for causes that resonate with them. Common issues that attract millennials' attention are [education, health care and the environment](#).

Another factor that motivates millennials to volunteer or donate is evidence of impact. [77 percent](#) of millennials are more likely to volunteer if they can use their skill set and if they see examples of the impact of their time or donations.

This generation is more likely to donate their time as opposed to their money. With the average student loan debt out of college being over [\\$37,000](#), millennials consider their time to be a better-spent asset than their money. If they do donate money, it is likely to be connected to an experience such as a [fundraiser walk or run](#).

Millennials want to help their communities and believe they have the power to do so. In fact, [90 percent](#) of millennials in the United States think that they can positively impact the country and make it a better place to live. Now the largest living generation in the United States, their behaviors, intentions, and interactions dictate much of how our society functions. For nonprofits, it is important to consider these behaviors when trying to attract and retain volunteers.

In short, nonprofits can take three simple steps to help retain millennial volunteers:

1. Clearly tell volunteers what your mission is and how their work will contribute to it. Then, update them on your organization's progress and illustrate their impact.
2. Tell a personal story about how someone (or something) has been impacted by the issue at hand and how your cause has helped.
3. Ask them what their specific skills are and leverage that knowledge when asking them to volunteer.

There is no doubt that the vast majority of this generation wants to make a difference — it is just about helping them find the way to do it that is right for them.

<https://hr-gazette.com/millennials-and-volunteerism/>

Millennials and Volunteerism

A recent study^[1] found that 92% of **millennials** are interested in making the world a better place. That got me thinking: Are millennials active as volunteers? How can charitable organizations tap into their potential?

Millennials and Volunteering

Volunteering Trends

The most recent data from Statistics Canada^[2] paints an interesting picture.

- Volunteer participation is highest for the 15 to 19 year old age group. While this is largely attributable to volunteer requirements for secondary school graduation, it does mean that millennials are getting an early introduction to volunteering.
- The next highest levels of volunteer participation are among 35 to 44 year olds; a pattern which has been constant for many years. This suggests that millennials are on the cusp of their peak volunteering years if historical patterns hold true.
- Volunteer participating has been declining and the decline in participation is greatest among the 35 to 44 year olds. It remains to be seen if this trend will reverse as the millennials enter this age bracket.
- The volunteer population is aging. While the boomers have lower participations rates than 35 to 44 year olds, they contribute almost double the amount of time per volunteer. As boomers age, their hours drop off raising questions about who will step in to fill the gap.

5 Tips for Charitable Organizations

Volunteerism trends suggest that charitable organizations would do well to consider what steps they should be taking to attract millennials. Here are some tips that may help.

1. **Communicate Your Cause** – People volunteer for organizations because they have a feel a connection to its cause. Be clear with millennials about who you serve and the value you provide. Millennials want to contribute. Help them see how they can contribute by volunteering with you.

2. **Help Them Develop** – Millennials are achievement oriented – they want to learn and experience new things. Provide volunteering opportunities that will allow them to develop new skills or use their current skills in a different context. If possible make volunteering a social experience with opportunities for networking.
3. **Be Easy to Find and Easy to Serve** – Barriers to volunteering include lack of time and not knowing how to get involved. Get millennials involved by making your organization easy to access on social media. They are comfortable with technology. Use it make them aware of what you do, recruit them as volunteers, orient them and share information. Deal with time constraints by providing a menu of short and long opportunities to choose from.
4. **Be Appreciative** – Most people like to be recognized for their contribution and millennials are no exception. Thank them for what they do for you. They also value frequent feedback – so thank them often and provide coaching on what they are doing well and how they can contribute more effectively.
5. **Leverage Corporate Philanthropy** – Millennials appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the community as part of their job and many organizations are introducing corporate philanthropy initiatives the help attract this generation. Look for organizations that support and encourage volunteerism and find ways to work with them to connect with new volunteers.

Final Thoughts

So back to the study on millennials and volunteering: When millennials were asked why they chose to volunteer 79% said it was because they were passionate about the cause; 61% said it was to broaden their professional skills; and 56% said it was because they wanted to meet new people.

While millennials are not yet volunteering at the levels of earlier generations, I am optimistic that they represent significant potential. Organizations that respond to their interests and engage with them now will be sowing seeds for the future.

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/purpose-is-the-key-to-eng_b_9824326?guccounter=1

Purpose' Is the Key to Engaging Millennials in Volunteering and Giving

05/03/2016 04:34 pm ET Updated Dec 06, 2017

Millennials are known as being more environmentally and socially conscious than the older generations. So it always comes as a surprise to nonprofit, corporate, and governmental leaders when they see that millennials no longer in school do not give or volunteer as much as the other generations.

But it's not that millennials give less, it's that they give differently. Not always more effectively, but more integrated with their lives. Research from PEW Research does a great job of showing some of the contrasts of this generation.

As an example, while a Baby Boomer might donate money to an environmental charity, a millennial will donate less to charity but spend more on groceries to purchase sustainably sourced products. While a Boomer might donate more of their possessions to a philanthropy fighting poverty, a millennial is more likely to purchase products that offer a one-for-one model. One isn't necessary better than the other, and measuring the efficacy of both strategies is rather challenging, but there are merits and risks to both. According to research published in The Washington Post:

While previous generations may have been motivated to volunteer or donate by their companies, millennials are much more likely to be influenced by their peers than by their supervisors, 65 percent to 44 percent. And only 11 percent had their donation deducted from their paycheck, a method that for older generations was often considered the standard way to give at the office.

The key lesson here is that while older generations tend to see philanthropic, personal, and professional lives as different, millennials see them as integrated and strive to do less harm while also trying to do more good. While a Boomer might criticize a Millennial for not giving enough to charity, a Millennial might criticize the Boomer for working at a company that

perpetuates unethical systems. According to Derrick Feldmann, President of the consulting firm Achieve that performed the survey for Case Foundation's Report, *"We've learned in this year's survey that millennials don't check their interest in causes at the door, they bring these passions to work."*

Simply put, millennials want to balance social good in their everyday activities. However, they are challenged to do so because, from a life stage perspective, they are also striving to set their career paths on the right trajectory and also facing major consumerism challenges, like purchasing homes and starting families.

It's this confluence of trends and aspirations that millennials might be seen as more selfish, but in reality, they are just looking for opportunities to align their giving activities with their life goals. So if you're looking to boost millennial involvement, here are tips to create giving and volunteer opportunities that engage millennials:

Purposeful Giving

Millennials are more likely to give money when their social or professional connections compel them to do so, more-so than out of the goodness of their own heart. I'm a living example of this. My parents donate larger dollar amounts to a select few charities he and my mom have vetted and feel most connected to; and I never hear them talk publically about this. Meanwhile, my wife and I donate to many of my friend's causes via online donation tools by giving more, smaller donations to our friends and colleagues.

Think about it... in a corporate environment, if your skip level asked you to make a donation, do you think you'd give more or less than if an employee two levels underneath you asked for a donation? Research from the Case Foundation's Millennial Impact Report shows that *47% of millions have donate to a giving campaign promoted by their employer*. Millennials aren't selfish or focussed on playing politics, but they do try to marry their personal and professional lives, and they donate in ways that help the world while helping them achieve their own aspirations. The same Report shows that *87% had*

donated money toward a nonprofit last year, with the majority of gift sizes being greater than \$100.

Millennials also want to know that their gift is making a real impact. About *half of millennials are most likely to give then they know how their gift will impact an organization's work.* If you want to increase donations from this audience, you should:

1. Create group giving opportunities, online AND in-person (46% of Millennial employees are likely to donate if a co-worker asks them to)
2. Engage employers as part of the experience (27% of Millennial employees said they are more likely to donate to a cause if their supervisor does)
3. Offer incentives that align with aspirations, focusing on promoting the person and their contributions, rather than trinkets or thank you cards (43% of Millennials said they would be more likely to give if a competition was involved)
4. Clearly show how the money will make an impact using vivid pictures and stories

Purposeful Volunteering

Research from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that people age 20 to 24 are the least likely to volunteer. The age group above them isn't much better. However, the Millennial Impact Report shared that *"77% of millennials said they're more likely to volunteer when they can use their specific skills or expertise to benefit a cause."* The same number of people *"preferred to perform cause work with groups of fellow employees as opposed to doing independent service projects"*.

Similar to the way they give money, millennials do volunteer when it integrates with their whole life and their aspiration. A few reasons that millennials are more likely to volunteer include things like enriching their personal life by meeting new friends, finding a romantic partner, or finding interesting activities. Millennials are also drawn into opportunities to aid their career trajectory by diversifying their experiences, practice new skills, and building their professional network.

The career focus is especially strong in this audience: *50% of millennials have volunteered their time for a company-sponsored initiative.* In fact, the same report shows that ***56% are more likely to volunteer if they receive some kind of incentive and 65% were more likely to volunteer if their co-workers participated.***

If you are looking to engage millennials in more volunteer activities, work on the following:

1. Find real, skills-based projects that make a demonstrable impact
2. Create a group-like experience (even if the work is individual in nature, put people in a cohort or networking group)
3. Increase exposure to corporate and nonprofits leaders that can help the volunteer build their network
4. Design transformational experiences that highlight how the work makes a real impact
5. Integrate volunteering as a part of a person's job and growth opportunities (research shows volunteering is a powerful leadership development tool)

In Summary

Purpose is empowering. Just as millennials are seeking to find purpose in their career, they look to find purpose in their giving activities, too. First, we must realize that philanthropic engagement is evolving generation to generation, and even within generations. Second, we need to remember that, Regardless of generation, millennials are people. Individually, each is looking to belong to a social network, feel loved, and know that they are making an impact. Helping them find ways to do so is as easy as connecting them to realize the purpose of their giving and volunteering actions, regardless of the size.

4 Ways to Engage Millennial Volunteers with Your Organization



Key Strategies to Engage Millennial Volunteers and Keep Them Coming Back

There's no shortage of names for them: millennials, Generation Y, echo boomers. No matter what you choose to call them, it's a well-known fact that they're highly sought after by organizations who want them to care about their cause. The process to engage millennial volunteers can be challenging.

In an age of Yelp and Zagat, it's never been easier to make choices between what restaurant, hair salon, or store will best suit your needs, and the same applies to nonprofits. Millennials will do their research to find the nonprofits they want to commit their time and money to. With many different organizations catering to this generation, here's what you can do to attract them to your cause and add more millennials to your [volunteer database](#).

Engage Millennial Volunteers: Make Your Information Accessible

A [Big Duck survey](#) found that 18-34-year-olds had some of the highest levels of awareness of organizations, large or small and across a variety of sectors. There were also more likely than any other age groups to say an organization's mission statement was very or extremely important. Millennials are doing their research to find the cause they want to volunteer their time and money to. Take advantage of this by making your information accessible.

Keep your [GuideStar Nonprofit Profile](#) up to date. The more information you provide, the higher the seal your profile will receive (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum). The higher your profile's seal level, the more likely your organization will stand out from the others. You can also add images to your [GuideStar profile](#) to better capture the culture of your organization and make it easier for millennials to picture if volunteering for your organization will be a right fit for them.

Engage Millennial Volunteers: Clarify Your Cause

The Millennial Impact Report revealed millennials care more about supporting causes rather than specific organizations. If you're looking for millennials to donate time or money to your organization, get them to support your cause and you're more than halfway there.

You don't have to worry too much about selling your organization to millennials. If you create a presence on social media that furthers your cause and it's a cause they support, they'll share it with their friends. While they spread the news about your organization by word-of-mouth, engage with them on social media and build a relationship that encourages them to volunteer.

Engage Millennial Volunteers: Utilize Social Media

Millennials are known for their engagement online and on social media, so make sure your organization has a strong presence across a variety of platforms. According to [Blackbaud's Charitable Giving Report](#), online donations grew 9.2 percent in 2015, compared to the 1.6 percent growth of overall charitable donations, showing millennials are changing how and where people give. The oft-quoted advice in advertising is to "go where your audience is," but why restrict that to advertising? Go to where your audience is, promote your cause there, and while you're at it, fundraise there as well.

Facebook recently announced **Charitable Giving**, where Facebook users can create a fundraising page to benefit a nonprofit of their choice. These pages will link to your **GuideStar profile**, so users and friends can learn more about your cause. Keep your profile updated and encourage followers and volunteers to promote your organization on social media.

Engage Millennial Volunteers: Maintain the Relationship

Once you have engaged with a donor or volunteer, remember the same qualities that brought them to your organization in the first place and respect their desire to be well-informed. Be consistent with your communication and simplify volunteer registering and scheduling. Engaging with donors, regardless of age, is an ongoing process. Whether you connect with them through emails, mobile apps, or text messages, creating a consistent and reliable volunteer process is a successful way to **engage volunteers**. This is the generation that uses Yelp and Zagat to do their research. Once they've done their research and chosen an organization to donate to, a positive experience can result in a positive review. Either on social media or by word-of-mouth, loyal donors and volunteers will spread the word about your organization's cause, so make sure you're doing everything you can to stay in the forefront of their minds.