

Being a Millennial: Primed for Converged Media *Jill Heggen, Swanson Russell Public Relations Counsel*

My name is Jill and I'm a millennial.

I grew up before the internet and digital media and on-demand TV. I grew with digital media as it was born, grew up and then blew up. This has helped me to understand how converged media – paid, earned, owned and shared – plays a role in our audiences' lives.

Like me, your audiences expect more. I'm a millennial and yes, I want it all. And you know what? So do the other 80 million millennial customers in the U.S. So, how do you reach millennials utilizing converged media?

Show me that you know me.

Use the channels I'm using. Talk to me where I am, when I am. Don't underestimate my ability to conduct online research as well as seek out peers for their experiences with your brand or services. Find the right place and moment to connect with me.

Did I post an adorable picture of my pooch on social media? Feel free to like it. Am I looking for advice on how to handle my dog's anxiety over the Fourth of July holiday? Send a link to your blog post with tips and advice. Provide current customers with valuable information and incentivize referrals.

Engage me in a variety of ways.

I invite you to have a conversation with me. Ask me what I need and then tell me about how your product solves my problem. Let me know how it will make my life easier or help me to have a better experience. And don't just have these conversations with me online. I enjoy reading print (magazines, newspapers, etc.). I occasionally listen to the radio and podcasts. I love to get mail, especially when the message breaks through the clutter. (Hint: I will even share your mailer on social if it really speaks to me!)

Send a survey, or ask me about my needs when I am in your office for an appointment. Tell me about your extended nights and weekend hours that fit into my busy schedule. Personally, I love that my veterinarian's office sends annual appointment postcard reminders with a picture of my dog on the front. You bet I'm keeping that piece of mail!

Don't sell me on something I don't want.

Please don't try to persuade me to purchase your product, especially if I've already said no. I'm not being stubborn. I know what I want because I've done my research and if you can't help me to see how your product or service will benefit my life and make it easier, then don't bother. I'm not your customer and your resources would be better served connecting with someone else.

Don't sell me the brand of food you carry in-store. I'm good with what I've been feeding Sparky. I need a veterinarian who knows my animal and even better, knows how to reach me where I am.

Of course, you can continue to send singular messages through narrow channels to prospective audiences, but the key to successfully using converged media is to individualize your messages by platforms and timing.

Show your target audiences that you know their pain points and engage them with solutions when they need it most. Do your research. Work collaboratively with your team to bring messages to life through all communication channels. This will help you to gain customers and over time, loyal fans (on Facebook and in life).

A version of this post first appeared on www.SwansonRussell.com.

About the author: Jill Heggen joined Swanson Russell in 2011 with previous work experience in public television and college communications. During her time at Swanson Russell, Jill has developed and furthered relationships with some of the agency's largest public relations clients, including AgriClear, Buckeye Nutrition, FMC Agricultural Solutions and Merck Animal Health. Reach her at jillh@swansonrussell.com.