

MARKETING 101 in 2019

Authenticity Reigns



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Marketing 101 in 2019: Authenticity Reigns



In 2019, socially conscious businesses and earned media will thrive thanks to the growing power of millennial and Generation X buyers.

Consumers are increasingly immune to traditional advertising and have become adept at tuning it out. The public's fatigue with paid and owned advertising has created an opportunity for other types of marketing and public relations to flourish. Of these, earned media is poised to have the greatest impact in 2019, particularly with Generation X and the millennial audiences who crave authenticity and contribution to the greater good from businesses they frequent.

Earned media

One untapped marketing tool that small businesses, in particular, often overlook is earned media, which is when a business or business leader is written about, quoted in or contributes to a publication or website. **As consumers grow more and more fatigued with traditional advertising, earned media continues to deliver results when it comes to establishing a business's credibility and name recognition.**

With the number of small businesses increasing, earned media can help differentiate a business from its competitors and usually reaches a large audience. Studies from Nielsen show that audiences trust earned media significantly more than they trust traditional advertising. Technology buyers especially rely on reviews, blogs, videos and articles by experts to guide their purchases.

Until relatively recently, earned media has been underutilized in marketing strategies, but particularly by the small business market. Large businesses traditionally have relied on the credibility of earned media to grow their reputations and customer bases, but in 2019, expect to see small businesses adopt earned media strategies.

In addition to increasing a business's credibility and brand recognition, earned media provides broad media coverage and establishes positive relationships with members of the press, which is always good. Once a media outlet uses you as an expert, they often will turn to you when they need a quote for an article, a quick interview or last-minute editorial contribution.

The rise of millennials and Generation X

In 2019, expect to see the values of millennials and Generation X start to dominate mainstream American culture. Millennials make up 25 percent of the U.S. population and Gen Xers account for 31 percent of the country's income, so they certainly have purchasing power and influence.

Many millennials and Generation Xers don't have the same wealth that their parents and grandparents did and carry tremendous amounts of debt, so they do lots of research before committing to major purchases. They often distrust traditional advertising and rely on peer reviews to guide them. Both generations also care about the greater good, the environment and how and where the goods they buy are made.

Implementing an earned media strategy that specifically targets forging brand loyalty with millennials and Gen Xers is the key in 2019. **If businesses commit to truly engaging with audiences on social media, highlighting customer success**

stories, and using authenticity and humor in their messaging, they'll have a pretty good shot at reaching both generations.

Marketing (and public relations) professionals can help businesses strengthen their brand messaging and foster positive relationships directly with millennial and Gen X consumers with creative storytelling that includes video, podcasts and live events.

Businesses that give back

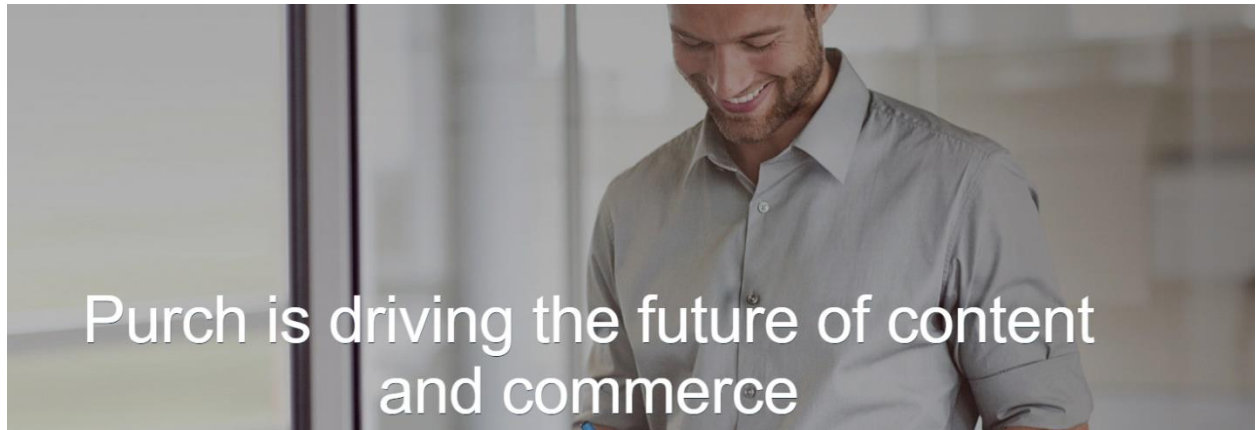
Unlike many baby boomers, millennials and Gen Xers are willing to pay slightly more for products when the brand also donates to charity. Businesses like Tom's and Patagonia, which are socially conscious and donate to those in need, are winners with both generations.

Tom's offers a one-for-one match: For each pair of shoes purchased, a new pair of shoes is donated to a child in need. Despite spending billions of dollars on advertising, Nike has been unable to dethrone Tom's shoes as the shoe of choice for millennial buyers. Since 1985, Patagonia has given 1 percent of its sales to environmental preservation, in total awarding \$89 million dollars to grassroots environmental organizations. The company also helped create 1% for the Planet, a nonprofit that encourages other businesses to donate 1 percent of their sales to environmental causes.

No matter if you're a microbusiness, small-to-medium-sized organization, a nonprofit or corporate giant, keeping these principles in mind in 2019 will help win buy-in and brand loyalty from two generations whose influence is only growing.

The businesses that thrive and continue to do so are able to adapt to changing culture and thinking, and we'll see that play out in 2019.

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