

Project: Who Does the Future Belong to?

Santa Clara County Leadership Academy 2014

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Transcript:

(Stephanie)

1. Introduction

[Video Clip] – What is your vision for Silicon Valley?

How will governments engage with Millennials now and in the future?

Our presentation tries to answer the question, “Who does the future belong to and more importantly, why does it matter?”

We looked at the next up and coming generation, the Millennials, and asked: Why is it important to engage them?

It’s important because Millennials are affected by land use decisions being made today which will shape the communities they live, work, and raise their families in. It will also impact their ability to keep their multi-generational family unit local. If we don’t understand what Millennials value and prefer, how can cities design desirable communities for future residents?

[Video Clip] – Why does engaging Millennials matter?

Who are our current decision makers and do they adequately represent the community at large? Our findings show that they do not.

2. #SantaClaraCounty2040:

Millennials are the biggest generation since the baby boomer generation, and yet they are not getting involved in shaping the land use decisions being made in the community that they will inherit.

Millennials are not engaged with how government funds are being spent on land use development projects and decisions that directly affect them.

Our group looked for underlying causes behind this disconnect and tried to think of ways to bridge the divide.

We started with the three basic questions:

1. Who are our decision makers?
2. Who are our voters?
3. And who is Santa Clara County?

It is clear from the data we extrapolated that Millennials are not a part of the conversation.

3. **#DecisionsDecisions**

Graph #1

Looking at our decision makers' age statistics, we find that well over 50% of our decision makers are over the age of 40.

Graph #2

The same is true for the current voting population in Santa Clara County.

Graph #3

However, if you look at Santa Clara County's' age demographics, over 50% of the population is under the age of 40.

Does this seem at odds to you? This probably isn't new news.

Graph #4

Our group also found that there is a big difference between the overall ethnicity of our decision makers and the representation of ethnicity in Santa Clara County.

The group that appears to be missing from the decision makers and the voting population are the Millennials.

So, if your target audience is Millennials, the question is: how do you successfully and effectively bring them into the picture and how do you engage them in land use decisions?

But first, you may ask, who exactly are Millennials?

4. **#Millennials101**

Millennials have been called the Greatest Generation yet to come.

They were born in the early 1980s to early 2000 (which include teenagers to early 30 year olds).

Millennials have various characteristics and have been and continue to be studied a lot.

Among many characteristics, they are:

- Digital natives
- Highly educated and networked
- More ethnically diverse
- Adaptive
- Tolerant of differences
- Optimistic

They expect things to happen fast.

(Jeff)

5. **#GetItTogether**

So, how do we know all of this? No, we didn't just cut and paste from Wikipedia.

We asked really smart people, aka "experts" – subject matter experts.

We read a lot.

We mined data.

And yes, like true Millennials we did do some Googling.

6. **#Selfie**

After we did all of this research, we found that for governments to engage Millennials basically boils down to three things:

Know yourself – we in local government need to take a look in the mirror, then hit the Staples Easy Button. Truly embrace this change in mindset throughout the whole organization or it will be very challenging.

Know your audience – they will look and act different, but this happens to every generation. Each generation looks at the new incoming one and scratches its head. Wait 'til Millennials have to figure out the Z'ers.

Know where they are – no, they're not here in our city council chambers...they're here at the local food truck event.

Every generation has a “cool” place to hang out. We just have to find out which are the Millennials’.

Also, consider how do we communicate? We gave up the toilet paper roll and string method back in elementary school.

Millennials have not given up their toys.

Just guess what new toys Millennials are going to saddle you with now – phones that track your every move, even how many calories you’ve burned, and tell you where your next meeting is and what texts have just come in...

7. **#Government’s Disconnect**

So, where is the disconnect?

- It’s not in our culture – do our organizations use the right vocabulary to effectively communicate with Millennials? What brilliant Millennials decided to rename the pound sign a hashtag? Have we kept up to date with how Millennials communicate? Are our Facebook and Instagram messages being pushed out effectively through the right channels?
- We aren’t set up for it internally. Local governments often don’t have the staff or funds – a department or team dedicated to engaging Millennials? Not yet a common occurrence in our organizations.
- Marketing – Millennials are the most marketed generation in history and are picky, so unless we can make our ideas as memorable as Jake from State Farm, forget it. (Don’t know who Jake is? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47cAxRX3aDg>) We can’t do this on our own because our organizations don’t have the expertise or know how. We know how to run our counties, cities, and towns, but we probably don’t know enough about marketing or public relations, so hire the consultants who do. Get help!
- Relationships – do we have any Millennials as friends or associates? If not, it’s probably because they’re busy live tweeting their latest meal on their phones. Or we haven’t tapped into the Millennials we already know. We all have Millennials working in our organizations; maybe it’s time to involve them in staff focus groups to mine their knowledge and solve this engagement issue.
- Outdated processes – as digital natives, Millennials represent a generation of true technological engagement. If there is not an on button or it does not light up, we will lose interest. How can technology improve our current engagement and public input processes and make them enticing to Millennials? Surely we can find ways to engage effectively and still meet public noticing laws.

- Are you ready to change the way you do things? Millennials need a lot of attention, so are you're prepared to commit to engaging them? You'll need staff dedicated to social media because if you're successful in reaching Millennials, they'll be communicating fast and furiously! You'll have to be able respond equally quickly.

(Angelica)

8. #WhyDon'tWeEngage

So, if you are ready to change you need to understand what stops Millennials from not engaging.

Here are some of the barriers we've identified...and note that many of these also apply to everyone, not just Millennials.

- There is an age divide – and with that comes a misunderstanding amongst generations. The older generations always look back at the younger ones with critical eyes.
- Within our community you will find cultural and language diversity to be prominent and possible divides between decision makers and the community.
- We have also come to understand that there is a lack of trust in government as well as a lack of interest from the younger generations – just look to the concern among Millennials about the NSA looking into people cell phones
- Because of the communication channels that we are using, or sometimes not using, as an local government organizations, there is a gap in having information at users' fingertips. For Millennials, it is important to have information easily accessible with a simple Google search from smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc.
- As we've also seen in many generations some may feel that one person cannot make a difference, or changing family structures leave us with little time to get involved.
- If we look at the current government processes we could easily understand why some may feel unwelcome. It is also intimidating that that there is an adversarial "us versus them" setting at council meetings. Not everyone is comfortable standing at the podium and addressing a dais of elected officials.
- There are also practical things like time issues – with many work/life balance movements, the 9-5 work schedule is not so common anymore and evening meetings don't always mesh with people's schedules.

So, what are some things you can do to overcome these barriers and start engaging Millennials?

9. #IdeaKit

We've put together a kit of ideas to help you take action in engaging the Millennials in your community. And you could consider using these to connect with everyone. Continue to search online and amongst your peers to mine for new ideas and ways to reach people, Millennials and all age groups alike...whoever is missing from your table...

COMMUNICATE & MARKET

One of the most important pieces is going to be Marketing & Communication. As of June 2014, the leading social media apps among 18-34 year olds were Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. How many of you are effectively using these communication channels to engage your community? Do you know how to really reach them? How active are you? Do you update often? Do you respond to comments on your page?

It is also important to understand that with Millennials these apps and communication channels are constantly changing. It is important that our organizations change as quickly as the next smartphone does.

You need to take this seriously. You need to market and learn about your audience! You need to figure out where Millennials hang out, and get some experts in to show you the way! Millennials go to food truck events, not to city council chambers.

Don't be afraid of comments! Don't be afraid of people expressing themselves! That's just a part of what the millennial generation does!

PLAY

Another piece to our iDeaKit is the concept of making the contact with government fun, interactive, with real life instant results. We've included several websites that already execute this type of "play" really nicely.

Many cities have started using Mindmixer as a forum to obtain public input online, which better meets the needs of people with busy lives. <http://readwrite.com/2013/04/17/mindmixer-helps-citizens-engage-with-their-communities>

LEARN & SHARE

Here we're not asking you to re-invent the wheel. Learn from what other agencies are doing and share what you've learned. Millennials do this all the time through blogs and discovery tools like pinterest.

We thought the San Mateo County Connect forum was a good example of this concept of information sharing. <http://connectsmc.org/> Takeaways were posted for the 2014 forum. <http://connectsmc.org/take-aways-2/>

Another forum is Mobile Government 2014 forum. <http://pspinfo.us/event/mg2014/> Post event information is available. http://pspinfo.us/post-event/?event_id=2076

Civics 101

What we learned from our research is that as a society we need to start engagement sooner. Start younger and bring civics back to our public education system. A recent panelist discussion on KQED highlighted the missing civics education in our current school curriculae.

<http://www.kqed.org/a/forum/R201408070900> Resources from this forum include information on how to engage Millennials.

<http://www.kqed.org/a/forum/R201408070900>

Partner with your school districts and participate in City Council 101 classes and activities.

We've covered a lot material and we know every community is different. What will work for one city may not work for you. This will take a lot of thoughtful discussion and soul searching, but so you don't get in the weeds, our team thought of some quick action items you can take while you think about the longer term strategy:

1. Form a Millennial advisory committee from your own staff who can give you pointers on how to best communicate with their generation.
2. Create a staff position solely dedicated to managing your social media efforts – if you're successful in engaging, you're going to need bandwidth to manage a lot of people communicating with you. Consider that in the private sector some organizations have entire departments just devoted to social media, but for now, at least just start with one person.
3. Create a multi-age focus group led by Millennials who actively and creatively tackle this problem and come up with options to present to the executive team.
4. Set up a table at your next food truck event.

And the last piece to our #IdeaKit is what we dubbed the Deep Thoughts we would like you to ask yourselves as our government leaders.

10. #DeepThoughts

Engagement boils down to a few fundamental questions that you should ask yourselves before you even begin the engagement process. If you can't answer these questions, you may not be ready for true, authentic engagement.

We'd like you to take these #DeepThoughts back to your organization and ask yourself:

- Who's missing from the conversation? Who are you trying to engage? Are your current communication efforts attracting the right audience?
- How ready are you to meaningfully engage your community? In other words, is it built into your organizations culture to set aside the time, staff resources, and funding? Do you have your council's support to give it all you've got?

- What is your role in teaching civic engagement to youth? Is it ever too early to engage? Our current focus is on Millennials, but what about teaching civic engagement in schools? Partnering with schools? Introducing civic engagement in Recreation Programs?
- How does your organization define successful engagement? Does it mean a lot of bodies in a room or is it defined by a small group of highly knowledgeable residents?
- How will you adapt to the language of future generations? How will you ensure that you're using the right methods to reach your target audience? Are you set up to adapt to changing technology?
- Lastly, what happens if you don't engage? What is at stake?

The bottom line is that we want (and need) you to Engage Us!

Our last thoughts for you as you begin your engagement journey are:

We are your future.

We are different.

You may not understand what we want.

But do you care to understand?

Don't ask us to your meetings.

Join us in the cloud!

Links:

Presentation (Prezi): [Who Does the Future Belong to?](#)

#IdeaKit Website: [Who Does the Future Belong to?](#)