

What can marketers learn from *Game Of Thrones*?

 By Harsha Prag 5 Aug 2016

Game Of Thrones has captured the imagination of millions of people around the world for a number of reasons.

They're hooked because GoT has reinvented the rules for the fantasy genre as well as television storytelling. Unlike every other story out there, this is one where you can't predict what's going to happen next. In fact, the very thing you predict, is probably guaranteed not to occur.

The millennial generation is having the same effect on the world of business, brands and marketing. They're changing the rules, inserting a new paradigm, one that promises to offer up as many opportunities as challenges.

Why? Because they're just so different to every other generation we've created marketing strategies for.

The way they've grown up and the experiences they have had along the way, is having an impact on the manner in which they approach living their lives as well as the role that brands and organisations can play in their lives. As a result, they're only changing the rules of the game, they're changing the game itself.



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Unlike previous generations, where a brand's role was very much focussed on helping consumers express themselves or gain social credibility, millennials are looking for brands to help them bring meaning to their lives and value to the world.

As such, the brands successfully connecting with millennials, are those that recognise that they need to aim higher, that they need to elevate their purpose beyond building shareholder value, or short-term profits. These brands focus on bringing value to the communities they serve. Going beyond launching a new item to purchase, to launching a new solution that works.

Simple Bank in the United States is an example of such a brand. Its mission, articulated by the CEO and founder Josh Reich, is '*To help consumers worry less about money by building a new banking brand that is modern, cool, transparent and trustworthy.*'

To deliver on this, Simple Bank has removed critical customer pain points, like fees. Simple Bank does not charge for account maintenance or overdrafts or low balances. It makes its money through interchange and interest margins.

In doing so, it offers a relationship built on trust and transparency – a quality currently lacking in the financial services category – and one that is helping the brand win over the millennial generation and transform them into powerful advocates for the brand.

Netflix is another example. It broke the 'rules' of broadcasting to bring more enjoyment, flexibility and convenience to its many audiences. By releasing a full series at once, instead of one episode a week, it gives the control to the viewer so they can decide when and how quickly they view a show. It's a simple, elegant solution successfully empowering Netflix viewers.

Oreo, another great example, connects with millennials in a game-changing kind of way by elevating its purpose beyond a other biscuit brand out there. For example, it produced a rainbow cookie in support of gay pride. It also regularly invites millennials in to its think-tanks to co-create fun experiences, involving an Oreo cookie. These experiences tend to receive much social media attention, not only because of great digital strategy, but because they're really fun, surprising and interesting.

How can your organisation respond to the new paradigm that the millennial generation is creating?

1. Elevate your brand purpose and share it

Every organisation, every brand has a role to play in solving the challenges we face as a society. Brands that actively take up that role and do so in an authentic manner are sure to garner attention. Brands that demonstrate commitment with time and money and resources will not only get noticed but also gain fans.

2. See millennials as equals

Millennials do not place brands on a pedestal but regard themselves as equal. As a result, their tolerance for inauthentic endeavours is that much lower. Organise your strategy and put your brand's purpose at the heart of everything you do to make this new paradigm work for you.

3. Be transparent

As digital natives, millennials are inherently sceptical of content. So when things go wrong, fluff pieces, or cover-ups don't work. Better to acknowledge the mistake, learn from it and demonstrate that your brand is stronger because of it.

4. Invite them in

Millennials are trend starters and shapers in their own right. Invite them in and look for opportunities to co-create. Give them a role to play in helping your brand achieve its purpose – and in doing so, you may get the opportunity to help them achieve theirs.

5. Create distinctive experiences and be prepared to experiment

Millennials are not going to waste their time or their data on something they've seen, heard or experienced before. Brand teams that take a 'steal with pride' or 'copy and reapply' approach are therefore going to fall short. Create a space for your creative teams to experiment, to try new things, because that's where the fresh ideas will come from.

6. Be prepared to engage

Millennials will let you know when they're delighted or disappointed with your brand. As such, the better your brand becomes at communicating, the better your chances of winning respect.

The bottom line? To win with this game changing generation, your brand needs to aim higher, be courageous and experiment with new solutions and new ways of connecting. Your brand needs to be more like Khaleesi!

ABOUT HARSHA PRAG

Harsha Prag is a brand associate director at strategic marketing consultancy, Added Value. With 12 years' experience across both agency and client side, she has helped steer the strategic direction and growth of many brands across a number of different categories including FMCG, financial services and automotive. [View my profile and articles...](#)

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