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Why You Should Reach Out Now To Generation Y Aug 22, 2007 12:31 PM

By Gregory Florez

As we try to find ways to service Baby Boomers and Generation X'ers, we are not paying enough attention to our next generation of members, that mercurial group known as Generation Y—comprised of teen-agers or "tweeners." This generation is perhaps the most elusive, making very different choices than the generations before them.

You are already aware of the epidemic number of Generation Y'ers who are obese, less interested in fitness and use technology as an integral part of their lives. This combination of poor health combined with their embracement of technology represents a unique challenge—and an opportunity.

Gen Y'ers have a different lifestyle. For them, work/life balance is not just a buzzword as it has been for Boomers. Gen Y'ers are much more interested in making their work lives accommodate their personal and family lives. They want jobs with telecommuting options and the ability to go part-time or leave the workforce entirely when they have children. This generation does not expect to stay in a job or career for too long. They want to control their own destiny.

And, of course, this is the iPod generation. A recent survey of the buying patterns of 500 teen-agers suggests that Apple's iPod market share grew to 82 percent from 79 percent just last fall and that 84 percent of students had heard of the iPhone, which was launched earlier this summer. The research firm Piper Jaffray revealed that 25 percent of those surveyed said they would find a way to purchase the \$500 iPhone. Furthermore, Apple and other technology companies believe that the teen market is the key to the future.

Teens are key to your future as well. Here are some things to consider as you prepare to market to this group that will be on your doorstep within the next five years:

Club-specific workouts using your equipment that runs on iPods, Microsoft Zunes and other MP3 players.

Podcasts that are educational, motivational and geared toward the stressors and interests of this generation. These will include stress management, meditation and the growing interest in other mind-body-related topics. These should be available for access in your club.

Using text messaging instead of e-mail to keep in touch with lapsed members. This technology is so ubiquitous with younger generations. Some reports suggest that this group looks at e-mails less than twice a week yet review text messages daily.


Connecting members with members. MySpace and FaceBook are here to stay, and young people are using them in record numbers. You must find a way to penetrate this space by providing everything from workout music ideas to success stories related to their peers.

Club blogs that include new programs and the ability to connect with other like-minded members. Blogging will be an important element to include in your offerings.

Technology-based programs that are interesting and relate to their lifestyles outside of work and the health club. This will include training for kayaking, snowboarding, mountain biking and other adventure-related activities.

Enticing this generation to participate in exercise programs in your club will be challenging. Quite literally, this generation is proving to be less interested in exercise for exercise's sake and the benefits traditionally associated with older populations. We don't have the answers yet, but the successful club owner will closely follow how these future members are using technology. Running your club business is challenging as it is, but you can't afford not to be mindful of the things that are important to your next wave of members.

Gregory Florez is CEO of FitAdvisor Health Coaching Services and First Fitness Inc., which was rated as the No. 1 health coaching online training service by *The Wall Street Journal*. Florez can be contacted at gregory@fitadvisor.com.

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Pamela Kufahl
Editor

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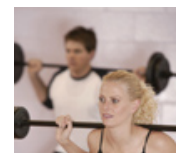
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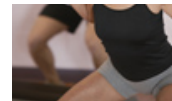
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For these answers and more check out our **industry statistics**.

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