

Associations and millennials

In my August 11, 2016, column, entitled “Are associations headed for extinction?”, I wrote that the current shift in demographics is one of the five key changes shaping today’s associations and other membership organizations. Many associations have an aging membership, and are now reaching out to millennials.

According to Wikipedia, millennials (also known as Generation Y, Generation Me and Echo Boomers) are the demographic group following Generation X. While there are no precise dates for when this group starts or ends, demographers and researchers typically use the early 1980s as starting birth years and ending birth years from the mid-1990s to early-2000s. So those who are now 30something belong to this group.

At the fourth annual Associations Summit (AS4) of our organization, the 233-member Philippine Council of Associations and Association Executives (PCAA), the country’s “association of associations,” we had a millennial speaker in Albet Buddahim, chief integration officer of IPG Mediabrands Philippines. He had an interesting perspective on the “millennial behaviour and mind-set.”

In terms of millennial behavior, he presented these statistics: 96 percent and 75 percent of them are always connected to mobile phones and to the Internet, respectively; and 99 percent watch news, movies (drama and comedy) mostly online, are opinionated, and share their views through social media. They view life as a discovery, and so they keep checking their bucket list because of the FOMO (fear of missing out) and believe that YOLO (you only live once).

On “their time is now” perspective, 92 percent of millennials want to own a business; 89 percent seize opportunities when they arise; 84 percent want to get to the very top of their careers; and 81 percent enjoy owning high-quality things. Goal-wise, 92 percent say good reputation is important, while 87 percent say people should take them as they are.

Millennials also believe in “peer power than peer pressure,” as 92 percent say it is important to feel respected by their peers; 87 percent like to have close friends

who support them; 83 percent say it is vital that their families think they are doing well; and 79 percent prefer to work as a team than work alone.

There is also this general misconception that millennials are lazy, selfish and entitled when, in fact, Albet said being a millennial is really about discovering, having identity and belonging to a community.

Understanding how millennials think and behave is crucial for associations to know and to adapt their positioning, especially if they are recruiting this group as members. Associations, therefore, should be ready to reply to the millennials' WIIFM (what's in it for me?) question. Are you?