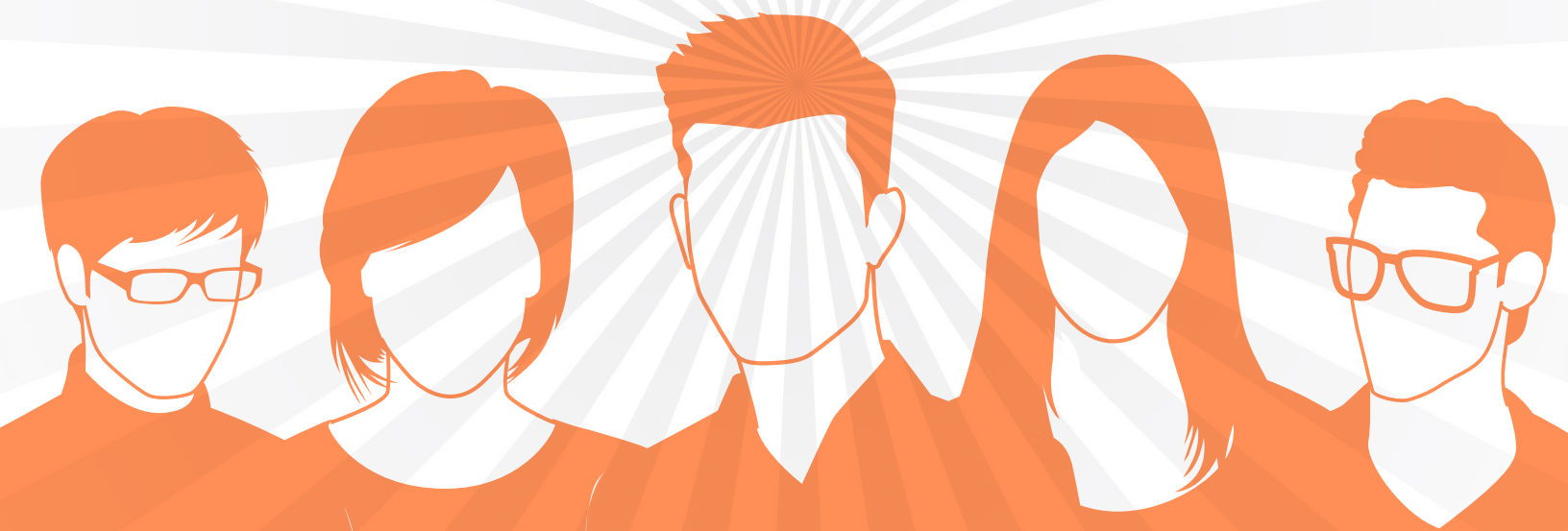


# THE POWER OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

EMBRACING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS & THE CHANGING MEMBERSHIP LANDSCAPE



**GrowthZone**  
smarter association software

[www.growthzone.com](http://www.growthzone.com)

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## Introduction

**Generation Z** - born after 1997, actively entering the workforce

**Millennial (Generation Y)** - born between 1984 and 1996

**Generation X** - born before millennials but after Baby Boomers

## Workforce Numbers:

- 5% Generation Z
- 35% Millennials
- 33% Generation X
- 25% Baby Boomers
- 2% Traditionalists

Young professionals are sure to determine the future of associations, making their participation critical to the vitality and longevity of member-based organizations.

So how do you take advantage of this demographic shift to attract young professionals to your association?

Smartphones and tablets help us keep track of our appointments, engage in our social networking sites, and map our routes so we don't get lost. They also serve as a digital lifeline that connects us to everyone and everything that matters most to us. If your association hasn't yet gone mobile, now is the time to take the plunge.

## Myths & Facts

**Myth:** Millennials are "Generation Me," the self-centered generation.

**Fact:** Nothing can be further from the truth. Young professionals volunteer more than any previous generation. A recent survey showed that 47% of Millennials had volunteered in the past month.

**Myth:** Young professionals are not willing to join or take an active role in an association.

**Fact:** They're willing, but participation needs to be a win-win; it must benefit others as well as benefit them personally. In order for survival, associations must learn to reach young professionals and adapt to their culture.

## Why Young Professionals Don't Join

### #Cost&Time

Young professionals need employer support. Many employers won't pay or subsidize dues and refuse time off for association activities. Therefore, associations must educate and communicate the value of membership to individuals AND their employers.

## Get Young Professionals Through Your Association's Door

### #WordofMouth

Word of mouth is one of the best ways to attract new members. Young professionals aren't going to believe what you say about your organization; they're going to believe their peers. This generation is connected to large networks via social media, so getting a few younger members advocating for your association can go a long way.

## What's Their Ulterior Motive for Joining?

### #Education

The continuing education curriculum required by many industries results in young professionals seeking out learning opportunities. Providing certified classes is an ideal way to generate membership growth.

If you offer continuing education opportunities:

Make sure your courses are current and relevant.

Be brutally honest when evaluating your association's continuing education offerings. Are your courses taught by volunteers who may not have the skills needed to deliver quality content via the latest technology? Consider using online resources to conduct training for volunteers to become skilled and valuable contributors.

Think about a "freemium" model by offering basic education at no cost. Provide "upgraded" professional development opportunities for individuals to invest in expanded offerings.



## Make Sure Young Professionals Like What They Get

### #LearningStyles

Young professionals may be put off by dated education not conducive to their preferred learning style, which likely consists of electronic textbooks, blended learning environments including virtual classrooms, and online options. Peer-to-peer instruction is valuable, yet many volunteer instructors may not be familiar with educational technology advancements, don't have cutting-edge delivery skills, or lack knowledge in current course content design.

Make your association's training content succinct, entertaining, mobile, and self-directed. Keep in mind that young professionals don't want to sit through overly structured training; they want to learn when it fits into their schedule and at their own pace.

## Now That You Have Their Attention, Tell Them Why They Should Stay

### #Orientation

All new members, but especially younger ones, need to learn about the association system itself. They should know how it works, how various activities complement and reinforce one another and, most importantly, where they fit and what they can do to personally see the association achieve its mission.

Integration of young professionals should be done in at least two ways:

- Provide events/meetings just for younger members to give them a "safe space" to interact and identify with one another.
- Provide an opportunity to engage with all members, regardless of generation. It's one of the reasons they join.

### #Feedback&Recognition

Members who are acknowledged for their contributions tend to stay "on the move," actively working to make their mark on the association. Waiting for the annual banquet to recognize younger members won't cut it.

## Ok, They've Decided to Join Your Association, But for How Long?

### #Participation

Don't tell younger members to challenge the system and then shut them down when they try. Keeping them motivated is all about asking for their ideas. To stimulate innovation, allow their best ideas to rise, then discuss them and funnel them into a plan of action. Millennials and Gen Z actively seek organizations aligned with their causes and interests, but are disillusioned quickly when they are under-utilized and their ideas are not included.

## Give Young Professionals a Way to Give Back

### #Volunteering

Remember, Millennials volunteer at the highest rate of any generation, and getting them involved is easier than you think.

The ASAE conducted the Next Gen 13 Millennial study and shared the following statistics.

When Millennials were asked why they volunteer in an association, these were the top two replies:

- 61% to gain professional expertise
- 51% for networking

When asked why they don't volunteer in an association?

- 45% said they simply weren't asked to volunteer



**"I would volunteer a lot more if it meant I was able to connect with higher up members in the organization. Often though, you don't meet anyone except the volunteer coordinator."**

~ survey respondent, The Millennial Impact Project

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## Keep in Touch – the Right Way

### #Communications

Young professionals want to hear from you. But they also want to seek out information independently.

Go mobile - Younger professionals are more likely to communicate by text message than a phone call or email. After you've connected, stay in touch by text. Everyone texts. You need to, too. And keep your association website updated! According to 75% of survey respondents, the biggest turnoff is information that has not been kept up to date.

Connect often - They are hyper-connected and want to know what their peers are doing and where they are, around the clock.

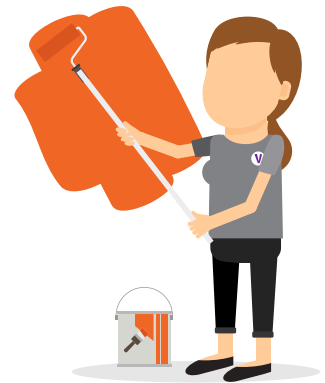
Preferred contact methods:

1. Text (including IM apps) | 2. Email | 3. Social Media | 4. Phone Call | 5. In-person

When you do make contact, keep it relevant and streamlined. Young professionals prefer specific information on:

**79%** - Updates on programs and services

**70%** - Volunteer opportunities



**56%** - Information about fundraising events

**56%** - Activities and events for young professionals

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## Conclusion

Engaging with young professionals is important because they are energizing, creative, and innovative. They delight in making positive systemic and organizational change. Which begs the question: Can you afford not to engage them?

10 Takeaways:

- Use technology
- Provide learning and development opportunities
- Younger generations care about causes and want to be involved
- Explore ways to reduce barriers to membership
- Focus on what you can do to help young professionals succeed
- Provide a path to leadership
- Stay in tune with issues they are facing
- Offer a variety of ways to volunteer
- Successful onboarding makes a difference
- Don't delay recognition

“The greatest asset our country has is not oil or gold, but the minds of our young people.” - **Irving Fradkin**

## About GrowthZone

GrowthZone AMS helps organizations grow and retain membership, engage and inform members and prospects, and streamline tedious tasks. The cloud-based system is powerful, easy to use, and designed to manage all the day-to-day operations of your organization.

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