



Marketing to Millennials for Manufacturing



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OVERVIEW

There are currently 12.84 million manufacturing jobs in the United States. According to **MarketWatch**, the U.S. had as many people working in the manufacturing sector in December [2018] as it did 69 years ago. It continues to be a major driver of the American economy, as billions of dollars of goods are still produced here.

We have had the great privilege of knowing and working with many people who run manufacturing companies. Undoubtedly, conversations with manufacturers go one of two ways: they either are struggling to sell to younger buyers or they are struggling to get younger people to work for them. Both issues are equally holding them back from achieving their growth goals.

While many manufacturers make things we easily recognize - mobile phones, cars - many make items that are more niche and behind the scenes. But valves, actuators, and electronic panels are all necessary for our existence. Without them, we wouldn't have trains, clean water, or heated gloves. So many objects vital to our lives are created by manufacturers.

This eBook is intended to help manufacturers rethink how they are communicating so that they can attract millennials as customers and employees. First, we will lay out three major shifts in how people consume information today. Second, we'll take a look at some new



OVERVIEW



ways to get attention for your products. Next, we'll make recommendations on how to position your company as an employer of choice. Finally, we'll provide some insight on how to go about getting help if you choose to take a new approach.

The contents of this eBook do not exclusively apply to manufacturers. They can apply to any business or industry that has a hard time connecting with people under 40. Distribution, warehousing, and retail are all in the same boat.

This is not the first time the manufacturing industry has seen generational change. Consider this: there have been eight or nine generations since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Meanwhile, the youngest people in the workforce today are the first ones to have grown up in the Technological Revolution.

This is a dramatic change for an industry that did things the same way throughout its existence. Companies and leaders who want to survive it will need to consider doing something dramatic to match it. Let's start with some small steps that can lead to big change.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

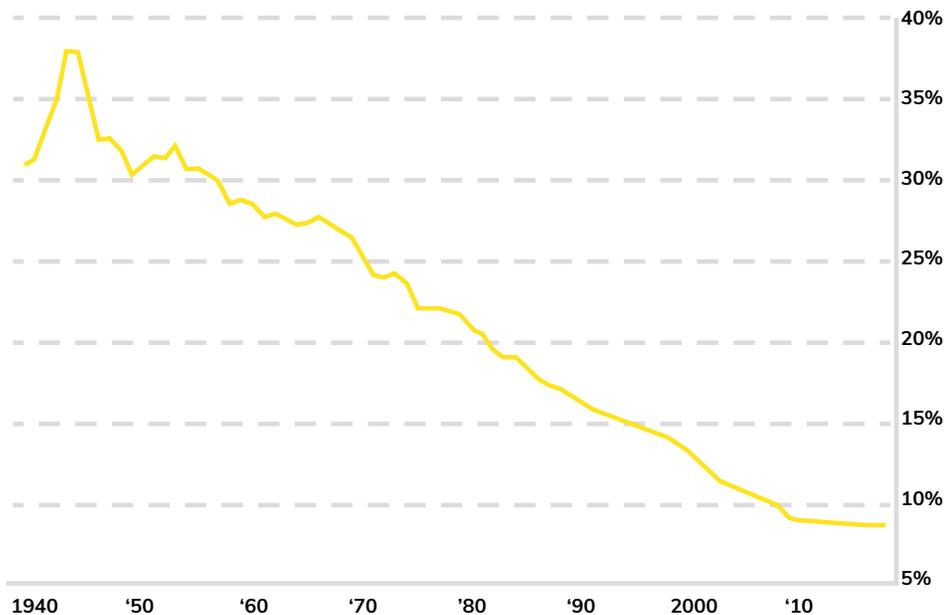
- 3 SECTION 1
Who are the Millennials?
- 5 SECTION 2
The Marketing Shift Trifecta
- 8 SECTION 3
Recommendation: Digital-First
- 9 SECTION 4
Recommendation: Surround Sound
- 10 SECTION 5
Recommendation: Reuse and Repeat
- 15 SECTION 9
Conclusion



SECTION 1 Who are the Millennials?

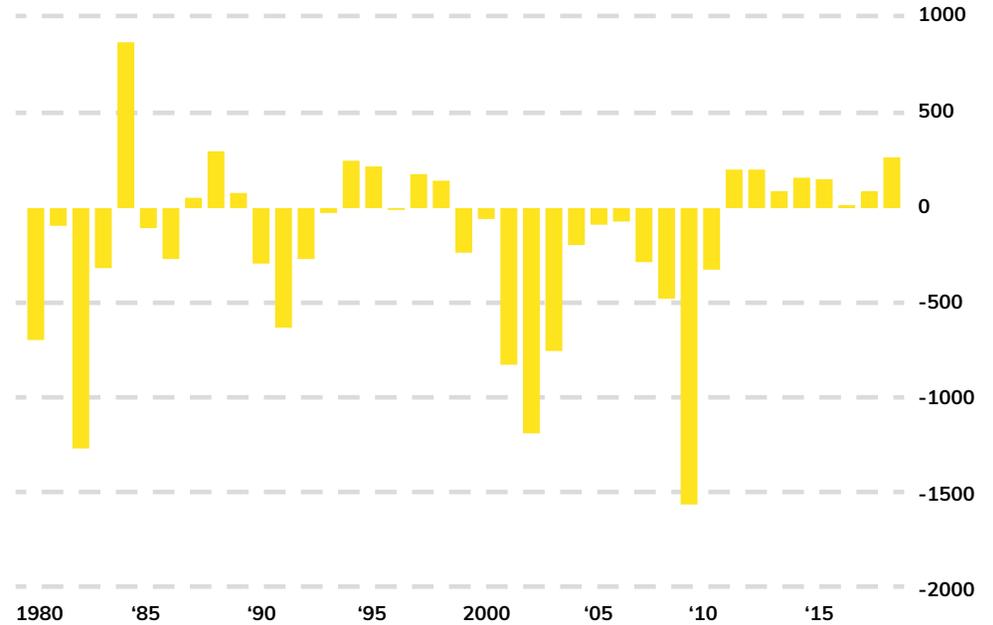
Being a millennial means you're among a population of 73 million Americans--a population expected to grow through immigration. By contrast, in 2019, there are expected to be 72 million boomers and 66 million Gen Xers in the United States. The average age of a **person working in manufacturing is 44**.

Manufacturing share of U.S. employment
Percent of civilian workers in manufacturing



New manufacturing jobs per year

In thousands, seasonally adjusted



According to Pew, Millennials are people born between 1981 and 1996. The eldest millennial is 38 years old in 2019, and the youngest is 23. Perhaps a few are finishing up college or their graduate education, but most are in the workforce. They are, in fact, the largest generation in the workforce.

SECTION 1 Who are the Millennials?

To level set, here is some background about how this population was raised:

- They had computers in their homes from the time they were in middle or high school.
- They had mobile phones in their teen years.
- The oldest had Facebook in college or young adulthood and the youngest as soon as they turned 13.
- They all had LinkedIn by the time they were in college.
- They all grew up with video games; video games were hand-held by the time they were in middle school.
- They could stream music (for free) in their teens.
- They were able to send text messages in early adulthood, or earlier



The most important point to take away from this is that they've lived most of their lives with a lot of information at their fingertips. They were able to communicate with each other in writing - not letters - from their teens. Neither of these things is true for any other previous generations.

Industries built on the golf course or over a handshake are having the hardest time adjusting to this new way of communication, for obvious reasons. But the thing about communication is this: it requires people to receive it. Otherwise, it is not communication, it's just screaming into the void

SECTION 2 The Marketing Shift Trifecta

There are three major trends that are changing how people buy. All of these are driven by professionals under 40, but they are starting to appear throughout the workforce.

12 Searches

According to **Google**, “those involved in the B2B buying process are already **57% of the way down the path** to a decision before they’ll actually perform an action on your [web]site.” Consumers do an average of 12 searches for products and services. About 71 percent do a generic product or services search, which means they’re not looking for a particular provider or brand. They’re open to options, and want to know what’s available. They’re used to having all the information. And they’ll get it before they even have a conversation with you.

Millennials are conducting job searches in the same way. They look at a variety of information sources to learn about an employer. Unsure what people say about you on Glassdoor? It could very well be the reason young people aren’t applying. Have a weak or nonexistent LinkedIn profile? That’s not very transparent of your business. Your company Instagram is all memes and quotes? Please. Each public post and piece of information about your company should be intentional since it will help applicants determine their perception of your company.



SECTION 2 The Marketing Shift Trifecta

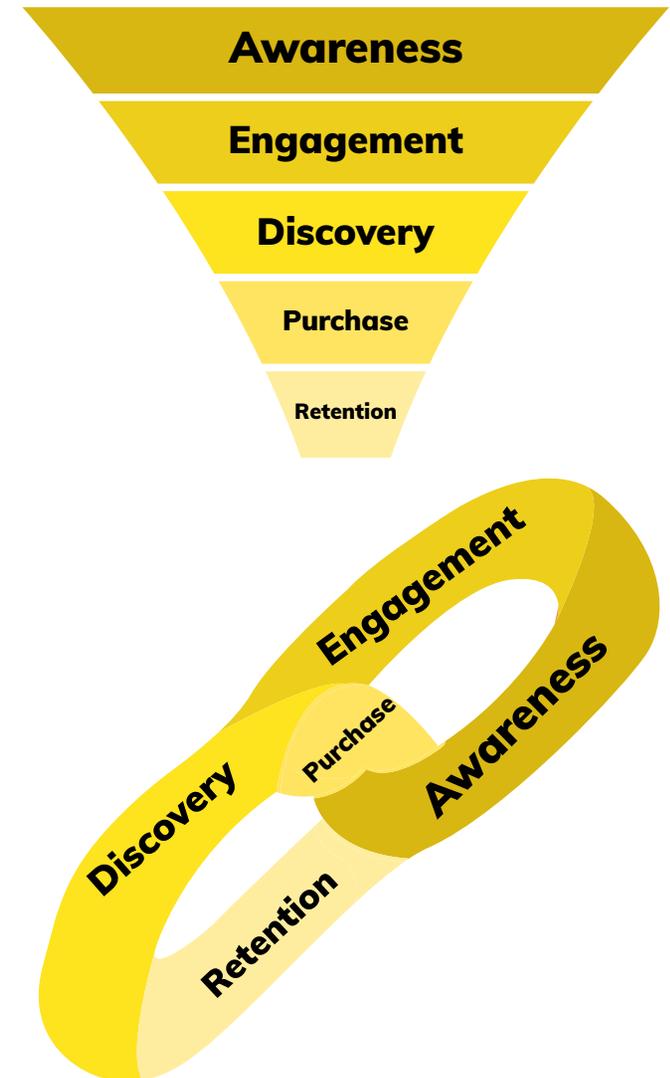
Because B2B buyers have access to so much information, they do not move through the traditional sales funnel. Salespeople are no longer controlling the information customers have. The customer now has more control over the timeline and the overall process.

Sales Pretzel

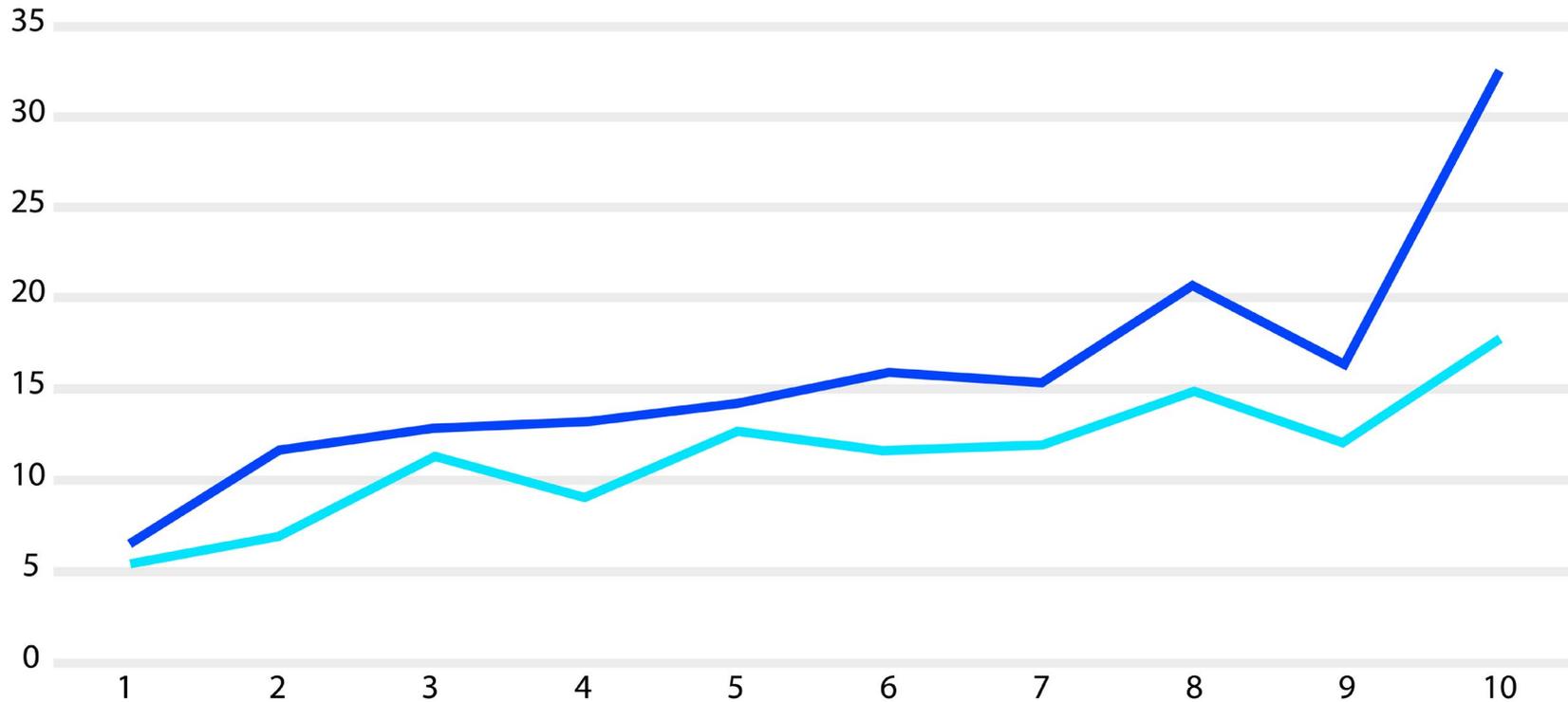
Now, the sales journey is more pretzel-shaped. And we're not saying that just because we're a Philadelphia agency.

Customers have access to so much information from so many different channels, and so they experience twists and turns through the process. They may begin with a search, which takes them to your website. But they're just doing research. So they check out your products and your company. They may sign up to get newsletters from you, if that's even an option. Then they click over and check out the company on LinkedIn to get more of an idea of the company. The company seems to be ok, so they check out the profiles of the people that work there. They may seek common connections. Then they move onto something else. A few days, weeks, or months later, they get an email. They may sign up for a webinar or attend an event. They may order a sample. The sample is good, but not have an immediate need. So weeks go by. An article pops up about you in their LinkedIn feed. They see you at a trade show or conference. The list of potential interactions goes on. Eventually, they reach out and have a conversation with your salesperson. Or they finally take the phone call. And then, maybe, you get a sale. But the decision about whether to work with you has already been made.

The potential employee experience is no different. Just swap about some of the details and you have the same story.



SECTION 2 The Marketing Shift Trifecta - 10 Times



10 Times

The Rule of 7 is a long-standing belief that states people need to hear or see something seven times before they understand it or will take action. Unfortunately, the loads of available information means it is increasingly challenging for messages to reach people in a way that resonates.

According to Neilson, the number of times you need to communicate with someone - whether in a sales or recruiting situation - is now over 10. An Australian study showed a direct correlation between awareness and intent after having seen an offer 10 times or more. The Rule of Seven has grown, which means manufacturing companies need to deliver messages over and over, especially in highly technical situations.

SECTION 3 Recommendation: Digital-First

There are some basics that all manufacturing companies must have today in order to attract customers and employees under 40:



Website

We know young people start here when determining whether or not they want to work with a company. Your website must have a strong brand presence, clear information, high quality and original images, and an easy way to be contacted. If you're hiring, have job descriptions featured prominently and make it easy for people to apply online. If it doesn't have all the bells and whistles, that's ok - technological expectations within the manufacturing industry are low right now.



Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Since most people start with a generic search for a product or service, your website has to be optimized to show up when people are looking for you. If you have a lot of competition, SEO might be hard or expensive. But it's essential and worth the money spent.



LinkedIn / Company

After the website, most B2B buyers go to LinkedIn. You need to have a company page with a consistent brand and description. It should feature your products and your people. It should be easy to find and should have followers to prove your credibility.



LinkedIn / Leadership

People like to work with people they like. Each member of the leadership, sales, and HR team should have an updated LinkedIn page that links back to the company page. They should have professional images and personal descriptions. Any young person considering working with or for you will research the company and leadership on LinkedIn. Be sure you are represented well.

If you do nothing else in the coming year, do these things. They are the foundation to all marketing and recruiting today.

SECTION 4 Recommendation: Surround Sound

The sales pretzel means that people seek to gather need to get information about from you in many different ways throughout their self-directed journey. Many of them will like to get emails while others expect to see news and information when they open LinkedIn. You can see the complete picture of all the marketing and communications tools and tactics in the infographic, but here are some of the most effective methods for manufacturers:



Email Marketing

Believe it or not, people still check and want to receive emails. Even Millennials. A regular update

email broadcast with product information, case studies, testimonials, and job openings goes a long way to keep you top-of-mind over a long sales cycle. These are also great opportunities to showcase some personality and humor. Unlike your website, the lifecycle of an email is short, so it is the perfect opportunity to try something new or creative. Remember, people like to work with people they like.



Conferences, Trade Shows, and Events

One thing you may know about Millennials is that they prefer to

spend their money on experiences, not stuff. This extends to their professional lives as well. They like to travel, see new places, and spend time with people. But the way they do it is a little different - they always have their phones in their hands. Consider adding a digital component to your trade show marketing. Send emails before, during, and after inviting people to meet with you. Don't stop your personal connections - extend them.



Social Media

You just have to do it. All of your younger customers and employees are on social media, every single

day. Start with LinkedIn. Become proficient at communicating your brand there. Share content that is helpful to people. Showcase your amazing team. Spend some dollars on advertising to push information about your products in front of the right people.

Sales and recruiting are journeys, just like they've always been. But with all the new twists and turns, you need to make sure you're showing up at every intersection and rest stop.

SECTION 5 Getting Help

In addressing the challenge of effective frequency over 10, manufacturers should play to their strengths: efficiency. There are things that you have already created - product descriptions, proposals, trade show materials, one-pagers, brochures, company bios, press releases, demo videos, webinars - that can be used again and again. Get creative and turn one of your marketing materials into 10 touch points across your website, email, and social media.



There are times when you do not have the skills, capacity, or budget to do the marketing you need internally. A marketing function may not be large enough for full-time employees, but it could make sense for permanent employees in the future.

So how do you know whether an agency is right for you? This Agency Selection Organizer will help you ask and answer the questions that are most critical for selecting an agency that will help you achieve your marketing goals.

SECTION 6 About Us



Cassandra Bailey is the president and CEO of Slice Communications. She believes that public relations, social media, and email marketing are critical for growing businesses looking to accomplish their business goals. In addition to her work with Slice Communications, Cass is also the host and emcee for Mashable’s Social Media Day in Philadelphia, one of the largest events of its type in the United States. She is involved with her community, serving as the Marketing Communications Chair for both the Entrepreneur’s Organization of Philadelphia and the the Business Leadership Forum at the Union League of Philadelphia, and as an Executive Committee Member of the Small Business Board at the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.



Slice Communications exists to get people to pay attention to our clients. It is who we are as people, what gets us up in the morning, and what keeps us going. Since our founding, we have put our collective innate need for attention to work for our clients. We are proud that we have helped them achieve their business goals and grow strategically.