

**Generation Y** (roughly 70 million born 1980-2000, aka Millennials, Generation Me, Generation Next, Echo Boomers) have grown up and are shaped largely by the rise of “instant communication” such as emailing, texting, instant messaging, YouTube, and Facebook. This group is used to receiving more than 1,000 images a minute and are, therefore, often better at processing information quickly and multi-tasking, especially when compared to other generations. This generation saw another huge shift (compared to Gen X) where families became smaller and parents main focus because their children’s activities and schedules.

This group is sometimes referred to as the “Peter Pan” Generation because of the perceived tendency that they rely on the parents, living with them for longer than recent generations (i.e. live with the parents until they find that perfect job). This “delay into adulthood” is said to occur because of the economic crisis their parents faced (i.e. dot-com bubble in 2000) and because of Gen Y’s tendency to define adulthood based on certain personal abilities and characteristics rather than more traditional "rite of passage" events. In fact, some research suggests that they will expect you to organize work and tasks around them and their commitments- they are not typically prepared for the reality of hard work. However, because they are so tech savvy, they often end up having the upper hand in working environments.

This group is more culturally tolerant having grown up with "diversity" and "multicultural" as buzz words. They are highly educated, aware of social changes, and accustomed to collaboration and networking. Their number one priority is themselves and they want to spend their time doing meaningful and useful things, no matter where or what they are.

Research done on this group is consistent with results gathered from the Generation Y focus group, which was conducted with the intent of finding out more about why and how this group chooses to volunteer. Research and focus group findings have been combined in this paper and, together, will be used to more effectively target VolunteerMaine.org’s message to engage more Maine citizens in service.

Generation Y has a powerful spirit of volunteerism and volunteering, in general, is at an all time high with this group. The focus group largely identified volunteering as “helping the community, giving your time.” They became initially involved in volunteering by “helping a neighbor rake leaves (as a kid), helping my mom in nursing homes (as a kid)” which indicates they literally grew up volunteering and are continuing to do so. To them, the word *service* meant, “service project, AmeriCorps, needs based, time commitment, more focused work than just volunteering.” According to our group, people volunteer for a number of reasons including “self improvement, peer pressure, want to give back because of life experiences, build resume and because they’ve been involved from a young age.” This is consistent with research that states that says that most workers in their 20’s want to work for companies that encourage, support and even provide volunteer opportunities.

Most members of our focus group volunteer and continue to do so, “to give back to the community, fulfill their sense of obligation to do so (it’s your civic duty to volunteer), for fun, and to learn more and have more experiences”. What keeps people from volunteering? According to our group, “they don’t realize the benefits, transportation issues, not being asked, don’t have the time or don’t want to give their time, and lack of time management skills.” A particularly interesting comment was, “if people want to volunteer, they will find a way.”

Generation Y’s are rapidly taking over and are examined by marketers and social scientists as much if not more than Baby Boomers. The good news is that they are ready and willing to volunteer. To successfully recruit and retain this group, it’s important that your organization is Gen Y friendly: let them lead, include them in the decision making process, practice diversity and inclusion, develop a brand that is “cause driven” or socially aware, and last, but not least, be online!

This group spends a lot of time on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. They also frequent national news websites (CNN, BBC, MSN, Yahoo) and local news sites. A very effective way to reach them is by email or text. In fact, this group said that they would expect to hear from “you” at least 1x week. So come up with something relevant that keeps you in frequent contact with your group of Gen Y’ers. In your advertising message, be clever and funny; make it personal and about something they can relate to as a Generation; be catchy with songs and colors and don’t be afraid to pull at those heart strings. One focus group participant recalled a particular ad that called them to action- several times- and keeps calling them to action whenever they see it: the SPCA save animals campaign.

**We showed the focus group our initial marketing piece design, seen below.**

**63.4 million**  
people volunteered at  
least once in 2009  
-U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Volunteer Opportunites...  
available to fit your  
lifestyle.

**EVERYBODY**  
wins when you  
volunteer!

**VOLUNTEER**

Boost your Resume  
Advance your Career  
Network with your Peers  
Give Back to your Community

Communities,  
working together with  
Volunteers,  
can help make a  
difference in the lives of  
individuals in need.

**SEARCH  
ONLINE 24/7**

Volunteer  
opportunites at  
your fingertips!

**Find us online!**

[www.VolunteerMaine.org](http://www.VolunteerMaine.org)

We received terrific feedback that helped us create and design the example below. They wanted to see the VolunteerMaine logo, change the order of the “benefits to me” listed, get rid of “cheesy” tag lines such as “Everybody Wins”, use more pictures and simplify the colors, make the words easier to see, provide localized information rather than national stats, more white space.

## **FINAL MARKETING PIECE**

<p><b>www.VolunteerMaine.org</b></p>  <p>367,000 volunteers in Maine contribute 52 million hours of service each year.</p> <p><b>Volunteer Today!</b></p> 	<p><b>Become a Volunteer!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give Back to Your Community<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Network with Your Peers</li><li>• Boost your Resume</li></ul></li></ul>  <p>Statewide opportunities available to fit your schedule.</p> <p><b>www.VolunteerMaine.org</b></p>   
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Resources:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation\\_Y](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Y)

[http://www.usatoday.com/life/lifestyle/2006-06-28-generation-next\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/life/lifestyle/2006-06-28-generation-next_x.htm)

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1640395,00.html>

<http://www.volunteerpower.com/articles/Newsletter31.asp>