

A Nonprofit Guide for
**Reaching Younger
Supporters**



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If you've stepped outside in recent months, you've likely noticed those winds of change blowing in. These are strange times. And they call for novel responses, and flexibility.

For nonprofits to stay relevant, they need to reach a new generation with their missions. But this isn't as simple as setting up the same marketing campaigns, then dropping a new target audience in at the end.

When we asked our community about their current funding sources, the imbalances came to the forefront. [Boomers were well ahead of other cohorts, bringing in 46% of donations.](#) Gen X contributed 36%. But zoomers and millennials only scraped together 17.6% — and that's when their efforts are combined.

To reach younger supporters (and donors!), nonprofits need to rethink everything. From messaging to platforms, the times have a-changed.

Nonprofits with staying power — and growing power — are going to smile at these changes. And they're going to act fast. Let's talk through a few of the things they're going to do.

Only 17.6% of donations come from zoomers and millennials.



You likely won't go viral

It's impossible to talk about reaching younger supporters without talking about the places where you'll meet them — social media sites. It feels like there's a new one everyday, so no, this isn't going to be a complete guide to everything social media marketing.

But we do think it's important to run an audit at your nonprofit to see if you're on the right platform for reaching the people you want to meet, especially if you're looking to make friends with millennials and zoomers.

One caveat before we jump into some of the key platforms where you'll reach those younger generations: everyone wants to go viral, which sort of means not everyone will.

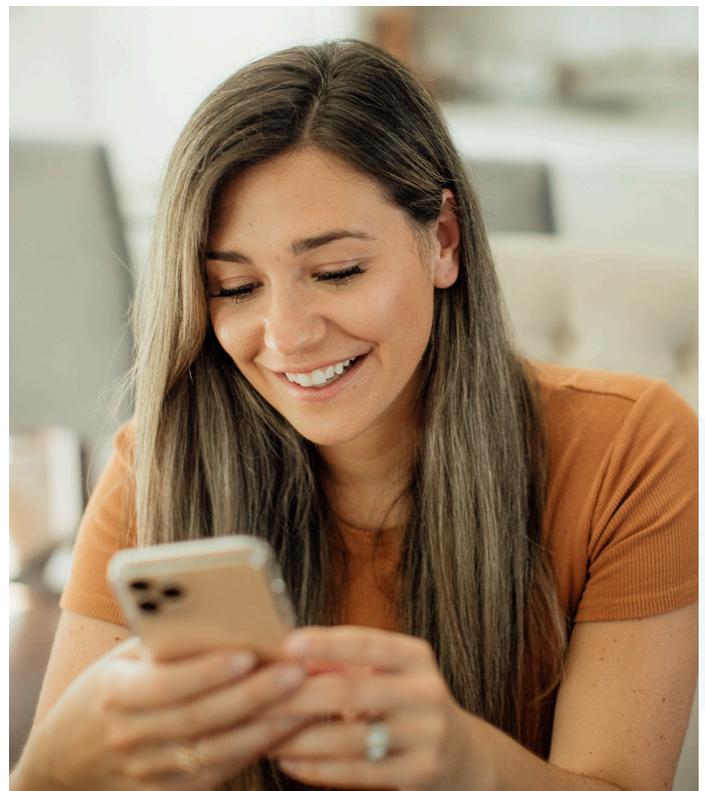
Because of the massive volume of content being put on these websites, the only other way to have everyone go viral would be if everyone spent a lot more time online. And that's [hard to imagine based on how much time younger people are already spending online.](#)

Now, should you build campaigns with the opportunity of going viral? Sure! Why not?

But instead of thinking that you're going to win the lottery, how about doing the hard work of taking the next step with younger supporters, meeting them wherever they take you?

You might not go viral even after investing in social media. But if you invest in the relationships that you start on social platforms, going viral may not matter much at all in the end!

Let's break down the top 10 social platforms in descending order (based on how large a percentage of the American population they've grabbed). And we'll talk through what each of these platforms offers to the people who use them.



1. Facebook

If you're looking for the base facts without much commentary, our core numbers are being pulled from a recent [PewResearch survey you can find here](#). But as a nonprofit marketing platform, we're going to be focusing more on how nonprofits should interpret those statistics.

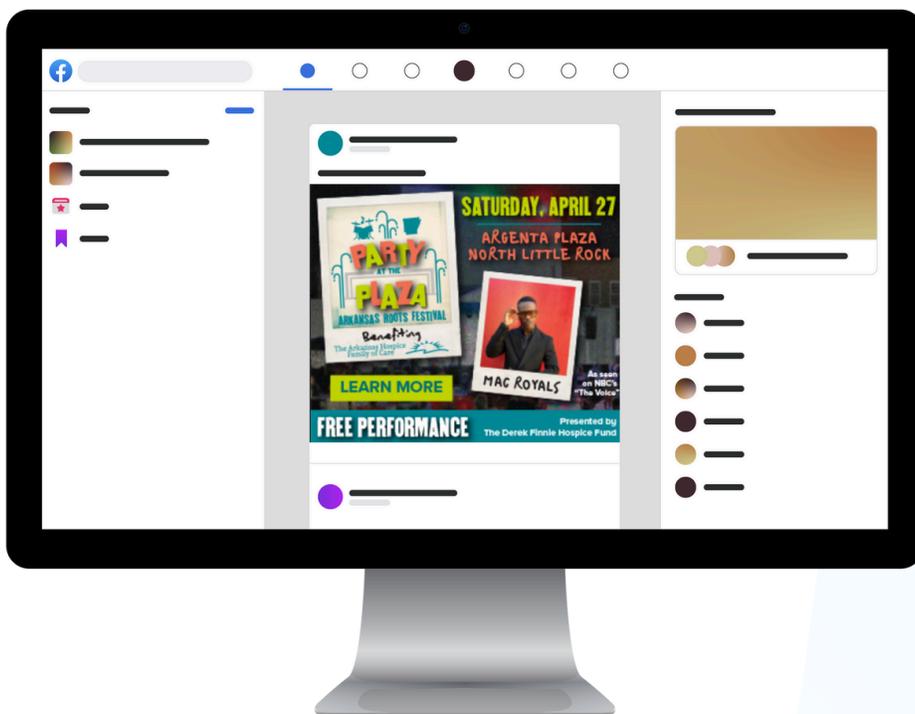
So instead of just dropping facts, let's dive into what to do as a nonprofit with the fact that [68% of Americans are on Facebook](#).

Facebook is the only pure social media platform that engages with over half of our population. What that means in simple terms? You should be on it.

There's a lot of talk about how Facebook skews toward older generations. And that's absolutely true if you're comparing it to any other platform. But the reality is that about three-quarters of those between 30 and 49 are on the platform.

Facebook is likely going to be your first line of defense. Use it to hold onto boomers and Gen X cohorts, but broaden your messaging to include Gen Y and Z age groups. Keep in mind that being in the same place as younger generations doesn't necessarily mean you're reaching them! You've got to talk to them too! And remember – showing up on *multiple* channels is how you ensure you'll catch everyone somewhere.

The Arkansas Hospice Foundation has a presence on Facebook, but they make a point of running diverse multichannel campaigns. By [connecting the dots between social media, email, and ads](#) they've grown their audience and increased event attendance.



First steps with Facebook

[To master Facebook \(or to take your first steps on the platform\)](#), you're going to need to take advantage of these three unique Facebook functions:

1. **Go live:** You can livestream on Facebook. And everyone still likes the feeling of reality that we get when we see things happen in person. This is much of the magic of sports. We don't know what's coming next. And that's exciting!
2. **Leverage that donation button:** Most social platforms make it really hard to get off of their website, but they give a huge benefit to nonprofits by allowing them to include a donation button. This makes it so easy for people to give to your cause without even getting off the platform.
3. **Get in a group:** I remember the early days of Facebook where it was all about forming communities. And it still is — they just call them groups. Find groups of people who are interested in the things that drive your cause forward. And become an active participant, and listener, in that community.



CRF shows the impact that sponsoring a child can have and uses strong visuals to drive attention.

2. Instagram

Instagram is the next most popular platform with [47% of Americans fessing up that they're users](#).

Everyone and their mother (literally) is on [Instagram whether or not they want to be](#). But use that data as inspiration to bring them into the life-changing work your nonprofit is doing.

Instagram skews younger too, so this is going to be the number one place in terms of social media to start reaching younger generations.

Here's a stark fact about Instagram: "[78% of 18- to 29-year-olds say they use Instagram](#), far higher than the share among those 65 and older (15%)."

Instagram is all about visuals. You don't need to have a professional photographer or videographer (though that probably wouldn't hurt), but you can't simply snap a blurry picture on your phone and call it a day.

And if the marketing team at your nonprofit doesn't have anyone between the ages of 18 and 29, then before you have the team start posting on Instagram, have them consult (and preferably hire) someone in that cohort first.

We don't think that every millennial and every zoomer is better than their elders when it comes to using social media. What we do think they're mostly better at is understanding other millennials and zoomers.

And when it comes to marketing your cause, before you're able to convince younger supporters to join the cause, you're going to need to understand them. What better way than including them as a part of your team!

If we were trying to reach new audiences in Spain or Germany, we likely wouldn't post in English. And although translating technologies are getting better, it would be a far better idea to get a native speaker to help you with your posts.

Now generations may not be that far apart, but you'd be surprised (or you already know from experience) how easy it is to miss each other because of a single word.

47%
of Americans use
Instagram

Making your nonprofit instagrammable

Again, [there are three keys for success when uploading that pic:](#)

1. **Tell your story:** Instagram stories are posts that disappear after 24 hours. But similar to livestreaming on Facebook, people love that feeling of being in the moment. So let your Instagram followers in on the day-to-day life of your nonprofit through keeping your story filled with unique moments.
2. **Copy, paste:** When you're building a post for Facebook or for Instagram, do yourself a favor and share it on both platforms. If you have different groups that you're trying to reach on each platform, do a little bit of work editing the post. But if you're trying to reach similar audiences on both platforms, just share it both places.
3. **Find influential friends:** Each of us has a finite number of followers on any platform, which is why they're meant to be social places. Make friends with influential people, and don't be above begging them to repost your stuff. Ok, maybe you don't need to beg, but you should always ask.



@savethemanteclub uses strong visuals to tie back to their mission, while also leveraging user-generated content.

3. Pinterest

Now we're getting into deeper waters. The next 3 platforms are only getting about a third of the US population, but [Pinterest has a slight lead with 35% of Americans on the platform.](#)

And although Pinterest skews young, it particularly skews toward women. Half of women report being on the platform while only 19% of men are there too.

Unless your nonprofit is intending to grow specifically among women, this likely isn't your platform. On Pinterest, people create "boards," where they collect "pins," which are pictures, articles, and videos that relate to the topic or "mood" that they're interested in exploring.

The platform is especially useful for saving ideas for design or fashion, which is probably part of the explanation why it skews so much toward women! That's not to say that all of us shouldn't care a little more about what we wear and the spaces we inhabit.

4. TikTok

TikTok is by far the fastest growing of the bunch. The platform [went from 21% of Americans on it in 2021 to 33% in 2024](#). That's a pretty steep growth curve.

And like Instagram, TikTok is primarily visual. But in this case, it's all about videos — and short videos at that. While videos can be up to [60 minutes long](#), the average is much closer to 20 seconds. And if you do decide to use the platform, it's highly recommended to get to the point relatively quickly — [TikTok recommends somewhere between 21 and 34 seconds](#).

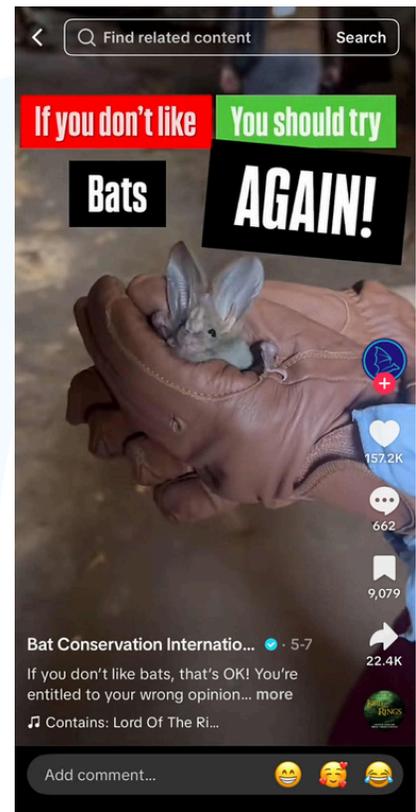
And like we said with Instagram, you definitely don't need professional video quality before you jump on the platform, but you'll likely benefit from working with people who know the audiences that are there.

Although all of us have the opportunity (nay, responsibility) of talking across the aisle — or in this case, the age gap — it might not be the best strategy to have a boomer who isn't versed in the lingo or platform to simply go for it.

Putting the Tik in the Tok

Since TikTok is likely a new platform for many nonprofits, outside of making those videos short and sweet, these [2 tricks will help you gain even more support through the platform](#):

1. **Put a donation sticker on it:** Similar to donation buttons on Facebook, TikTok donation stickers allow a viewer to make a donation in the app. This makes it so simple, which means that it's much more likely that someone will end up donating then and there.
2. **Be generous with your hashtags:** Hashtags are still totally a thing. And they help a ton when it comes to people looking for things related to your cause. TikTok lets you add up to five per post, so be sure to make 'em count!



On TikTok, Bat Conservation International is mission-driven but playful, using trends to connect with their audience.

5. LinkedIn

[LinkedIn captures 30% of Americans](#). And this platform is all about the dollars and cents.

The platform primarily serves people with a bachelor's degree (53%) as opposed to those with some college education (28%) or no college experience (10%). That's partially because it's used as a way to find work, especially in technology and what are more traditionally labeled "white-collar jobs."

While certain nonprofits should definitely be on the platform, it's worth noting that most people engaging on the platform are either selling a product or trying to find a new gig.

This isn't exactly the opportune time or place to try to sell your mission or ask for a donation, though it could be a great place to recruit talent, or attempt to build partnerships with other local businesses trying to get their brand out there.

But if you're simply looking for younger generations, we'd recommend Instagram or TikTok before LinkedIn. And that's because people on LinkedIn aren't typically looking for a cause to champion. 9 times out of 10, they're looking to network and get ahead in their career.

A better strategy may be to find people who are looking away from themselves instead of professionally navel gazing (look, I'm on LinkedIn myself, but let's call it what it is). Or if you are trying to capitalize on LinkedIn audiences, they may be more open to participating on your board or volunteering during a strategic event more than they're ready to write a check (but also don't ask them for a check as they likely won't have one handy).

Honorable mentions

The next 4 all fall below the 30% mark, so we're going to breeze through them.

WhatsApp (29%): This is hardly a social media platform. As an all-in-one messaging and phone app, it's popular for travelers who want to sidestep roaming charges. Majorities of Hispanic and Asian adults use the platform while only 31% of Black adults and 20% of White adults report activity on the app. As a nonprofit, you'd really need to have demographics in mind and ways to gain their contact information before really building a movement on the platform.

Snapchat (27%): ["65% of U.S. adults under 30 report using Snapchat."](#) Snapchat messages only appear for a short time, so it's sort of the social media way of "living in the moment." And like WhatsApp, this is really a way to message people you already know, so we aren't saying this can't be done, but it's not the typical way that we think about social media.

Reddit (22%): Reddit has grown so much that it's [recently become publicly traded](#). I'm sometimes surprised by this fact because in essence it's a public message board. The unique thing is that people can find their groups, called "subreddits," and keep up to date on the things that interest them while finding people like themselves. [Reddit has been growing very quickly](#) partially because it's really wonderful when you find people who share your passions.

Twitter (22%): To be clear, a lot of people call this platform X, I'm just not one of them. But maybe that shows my age. This used to be near the top of the list, and the format of short text (280 characters or less unless you get a premium account) results in quippy quotes or quick mentions rather than long form content. It's a great opportunity to feature a big win or share thanks, as seen in this example from Freestore Foodbank.



On Twitter, Freestore Foodbank shares useful resources, impact stories, and strong community support.

But wait...the last is the first

If you were counting closely, you'd realize we've only delivered 9 of the promised 10. So here it is.

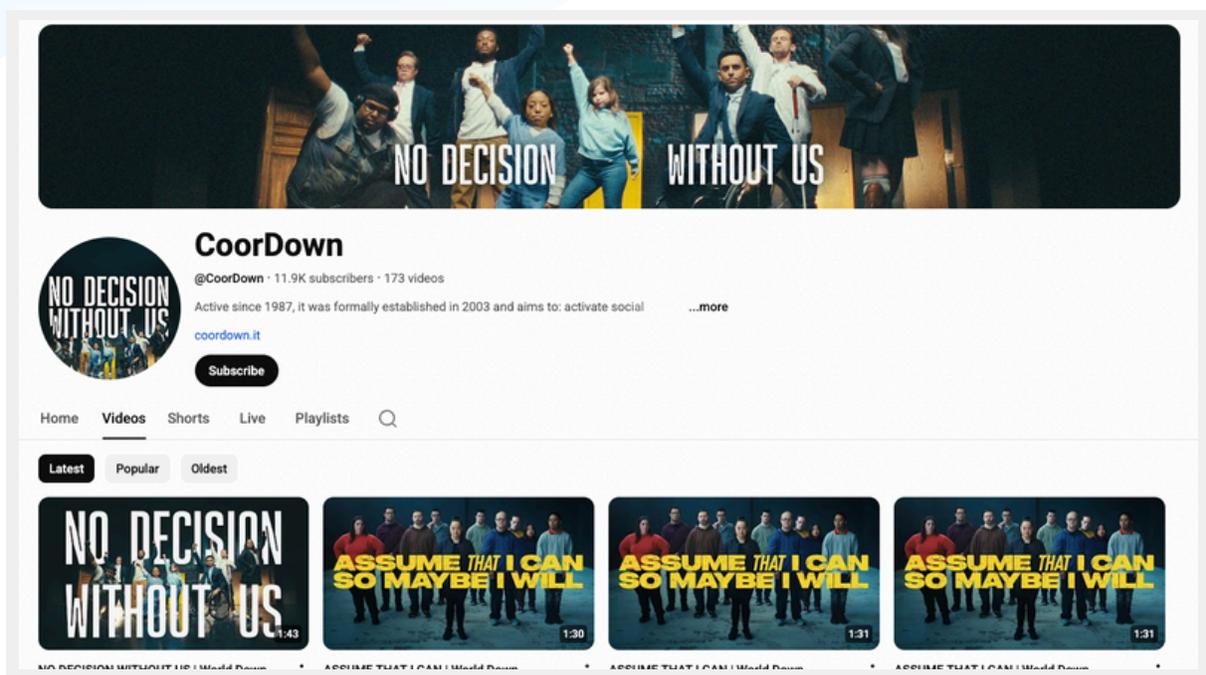
And it's technically the winner too! Ok, YouTube can't win the social media game because it isn't really a social platform — at least in my humble opinion. [But it grabs a larger share of the American population at 83%](#) — so it technically even beats Facebook!

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So even though YouTube might get the biggest slice of the pie, it isn't a traditional social media platform. But that certainly doesn't mean it isn't a good place for you to share your story. [Some instead consider it to be the second largest search engine](#), which obviously has its own advantages.

If your nonprofit has the ability to make great videos — huh, this seems to be a recurring theme — then please drop those videos on YouTube. And then after you do that, spread the word on your other favorite channels.



With viral videos, CoorDown aims to activate social communication around the potential of people with Down Syndrome and promote their inclusion in school, work, and sport.

Personal vs. universal

Going back to the idea of building a viral post, we wanted to surface 2 examples that bring to light how differently boomers and millennials think.

In 2006, everyone was talking about [the Sarah McLachlan commercial that brought greater awareness to animal cruelty](#). This was before the proper years of viral posts, but let's be generous and call it a viral moment nonetheless.

People were talking about the commercial, and Saturday Night Live was poking fun at it (they say that any press is good press). And at the end of the day, it [brought in about \\$30 million for the ASPCA](#).

That's a tremendous amount of money going to what we all know is a critical mission. But let's jump to a more recent example.

Created in July of 2025, [Joshua started a GoFundMe to help raise money to cover medical costs for his wife](#) to receive new lungs. And over the course of a week they raised over \$222,000!

I'm impressed by those numbers, especially since Joshua likely launched this as something he shared among his circle. But things like this can take on a life of their own. Maybe it ended up on the local news, and then people in cities nearby started getting roped in.

The point of both of these examples highlights what we believe is a massive sea change in the way that younger generations and older generations view fundraising. Though Gen Y and Z do donate to causes that are global, they're much more inclined to give to a friend in need.

Younger generations ([especially Gen Z](#)) are hesitant to give to institutions — even if those institutions are responding to big needs. And many boomers think that these individuals on GoFundMe may not be the most effective administrators of their charity.

Both perspectives are valid. And nonprofits that will effectively build relationships with younger generations will do so because they prioritize the relationships before expecting cash to be handed over.

Even this millennial thinks that causes like the ASPCA's (or yours) deserve greater support, but the way to get there will likely be through more individual conversations and relationships.

Every project requires the right set of tools

At this point in the guide, you may be overwhelmed by the choices. If you're only on one platform right now, you may be spinning, thinking about the 3 new ones you need to jump into.

And while that may be a good idea for some nonprofits, we always think it's better to do one thing really well rather than 10 things poorly.

But one way to do a lot of things really well is by using the right social media management tools to make the many feel more like a few:

- [Hootsuite](#) offers up to 60% off platform fees to eligible nonprofits.
- [Later](#) is a relatively low-cost tool that offers discounts to orgs fighting for racial equity.
- [Loomly](#) is another cost-effective option with easy calendar views for overwhelmed teams.

As for design work, [Canva offers nonprofits free access](#) to all of its premium features, empowering teams like yours to create beautiful ads, videos, and other creatives to drive your mission forward.

And what about when it comes to email or digital advertising? Do you have a good way of [automating thank-you emails](#) when someone does become a supporter?

Do you have ways of reaching new people who are [attending local events](#)?



How influential is your nonprofit?

Influencer marketing may not be the next step for your nonprofit, but sometimes the best way to reach a different group of people is by engaging someone that they're already tuned into. This is likely part of the explanation for why you see celebrities in every commercial ever.

But the reason why a lot of nonprofits shy away from influencer marketing is because they think only celebrities can be influencers. And this simply isn't the case.

When you decide on what demographic or generation you want to reach, to get into their head space, start researching who they're following and what type of people they respect or align themselves with.

Damar Hamlin is a football player for the Buffalo Bills, and the NFL encourages all of their players to partner with nonprofits to make an impact outside of the game. When Damar Hamlin was injured during a game in early 2023, [his nonprofit received \\$10 million dollars.](#)

So maybe an NFL player feels out of your league, but what other sports teams are in your city? Who can you build strategic partnerships with to amplify your message?

Online bloggers, podcasters, or general social media influencers are always good choices. But if no one in these categories comes to mind, you may consider empowering your staff to share. Studies have shown that [employees are twice as likely to be trusted compared to CEOs.](#)

And what about your current sponsors? You've already built the relationship. Now it's time to think about ways for them to spread the word.

It may feel like there's an art and science to building influencer campaigns, but the reality is that influencers are people too. So don't trust someone who tells you that there's a 3-step process that ensures it's going to happen. Forming connections with influencers is both as easy and as hard as building any other relationship. But it all starts with someone taking the initiative (that's you!).



How to message with a millennial (and a zoomer)

One of the bigger differences between generations is going to be in the words they choose to express themselves. Each of us has a unique way of communicating our experience, and this is one of the easiest ways to miss someone from another generational cohort.

But a lot of messaging boils down to authenticity. If the words you choose make your organization feel more like an organization instead of a group of people, it's going to push younger supporters away. They know it's a person on the other end, so they want it to feel like another person.

Here are a few examples of ways to rethink your messaging:

If you're a historical preservation society focused on protecting and preserving your city's landmarks, think about saying "[Reclaim and amplify untold stories](#)" instead of the classic "Preserve history." Or what about "Revitalize our community's shared spaces" instead of "Save historic sites."

Anytime you can get [closer to the why of what you're doing](#) instead of only the how is going to help you connect with hearts and minds.

Or what if you're a conservation nonprofit. For younger people, "Fighting for environmental justice" might feel more compelling than "Protecting the environment." Or what about "Invest in our only planet" instead of "Saving wildlife"?



At the end of the day, there isn't a one-size-fits-all answer for messaging. What works for one person won't work for another — even among those in the same cohort! So be open to feedback, and [listen to the results of your marketing campaigns](#).

If you don't know how well your messaging is currently working, that's always step one. We can't fix the things that we don't see.



The elephant in the room

Ever hear the phrase “life is a journey”? Well, I for one hope that it isn’t quite that trivial. But there is something behind the idea of learning. Or maybe the better word here is understanding.

If we’re to make any progress in our own lives or with each other, we’ll likely all need to expand the range of our understanding. And I know I need this when it comes to appreciating, respecting, and valuing the generations that came before me or the ones coming up from behind.

But when the conversation is focused on engaging younger supporters, as a millennial, I feel like I’m in as good a place as any to share some of the reasons why we don’t appear to be very cheerful givers.

Within your organization, think about the first millennial or zoomer that comes to mind. What role are they in? Could you guess — or do you know — their salary? Now, how much does it cost to pay rent or hold down a mortgage in your town? How much do you think they have to spend on groceries and utilities?

How much is left over? Yeah, we guessed it, not much! And would it even be a good idea to give that money away or would it be a whole lot smarter to build up an emergency fund, or pay off the school debt, or pay off the credit card debt from back when they were in school, or invest it in their kids’ future education.

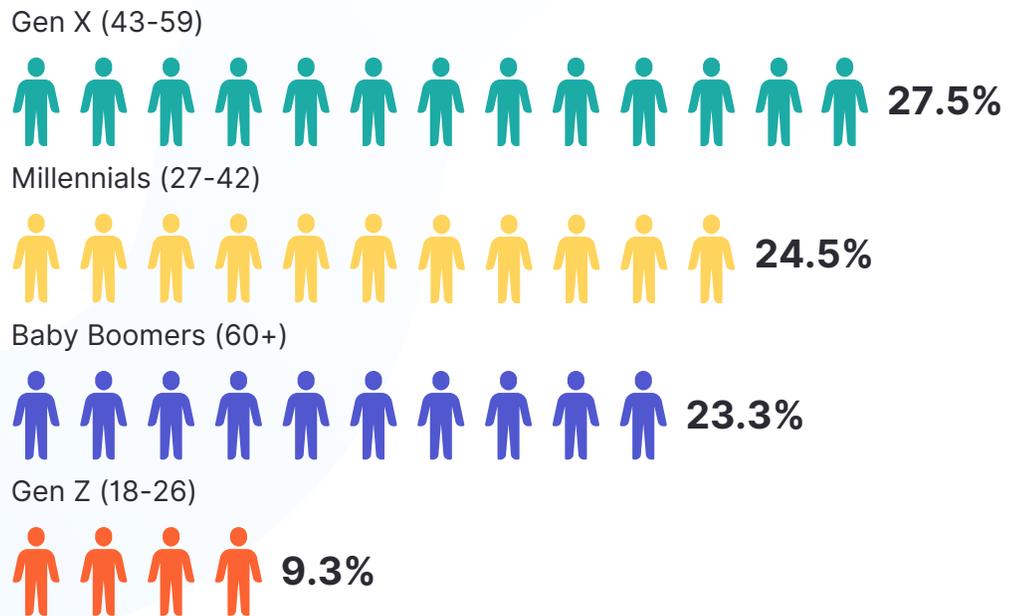
We know that not every millennial or zoomer is in the exact same spot. And we know that those in the nonprofit sector often make less than their for-profit peers. But a fair share of that person’s peers make far less than them. So is it reasonable to assume that these cohorts are going to pitch in their “fair share”?

And that brings us to the next question: what is their fair share? If you compare millennials’ net worths to other generations, [it comes in at 5.2% of the total](#). So is that what you’re hoping to gain for all this hard work? 5.2% of donations?

Ok, we are about to go through the single largest transfer of wealth in human history ([Wikipedia already has a page dedicated to this ongoing historic event!](#)), but if you aren’t winning hearts and minds today, what makes you think that these millennials are suddenly going to act like boomers once they have something in their pocket?

One of the more promising things we surfaced while building the [State of Nonprofit Marketing 2025](#) was the fact that generations skewed younger when it came time to volunteer. Gen X may have won by composing on average 27.5% of volunteer populations. But millennials are close behind at 24.5% while boomers are at 23.3% and Gen Z is at 9.3%.

Volunteer rates by generation



It simply isn't true that younger generations don't care. But they will likely need to be offered new ways to engage with your organization.

Jumping to conclusions

Don't let this next fact make you dizzy, but younger generations (under 30) "are far more likely than their older counterparts to use **many** of the online platforms." So although we're against you being on all 10 platforms, if you're using the right tools, you'll be more effective if you can expand to somewhere between 3 and 5.

One thing to remember when picking those social media platforms, and the messaging that you're going to run with, is that "it all depends." We understand that this is the most annoying advice in the world, but it's said all the time because it's almost always true.

If there was one platform that all age groups and demographics were equally on, then it would be a simple answer. But the world is complex, and by that we really mean humans are complex.

And the best way to be flexible with an answer like "it all depends" is by collecting the right team of people. They need to know the people that they're trying to build relationships with, and they need to be good at doing it too!

Step one is accepting that by going in one direction, you're not going in another. It's the reality of life. We learned in elementary school that everyone can't be our friend. But over time we forgot the lesson and tried to market to everyone. It isn't going to work!

At the end of the day, to expand your organization's reach into new demographics, your organization's people need to be open to those groups. If you're annoyed with millennials and zoomers, they may simply not be a good fit for your organization (although in this case, we'd argue you need to rethink how you're moving your mission into the future). But if you have close friendships with people in these younger groups, then bring them into the fold and see how much wider your organization's tent can reach.

Really, it all boils down to our own mindsets. It's easy to say that we want to grow, but growing requires a change of perspective. And that's often painful. If you try to understand (and I'm not even saying agree with) another generation, it's going to go a long way as you build that world-changing partnership.



Get in front of young people

Younger generations are online. So if you're going to make an impact alongside millennials and zoomers, you're going to need to have tools to reach them in the places they go.

Do you have a marketing platform that makes it easy to serve ads to the people you know want to partner in your mission? And [do you know what words are working](#) with your community and which ones are going in one ear and out the other?

If you're looking for ways to take your nonprofit's marketing efforts to new heights, we hope you'd [book some time to talk with us about whether Feathr is the right fit](#).

We want to see nonprofits of all colors, shapes, and sizes make an even greater impact in their community. You may be a nimble, small nonprofit moving really fast. But I wonder if we could go further together!

