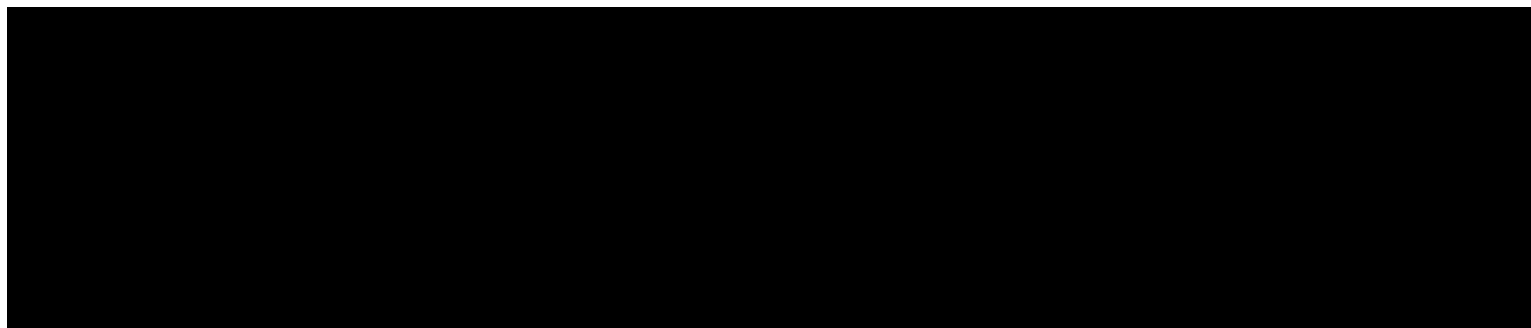
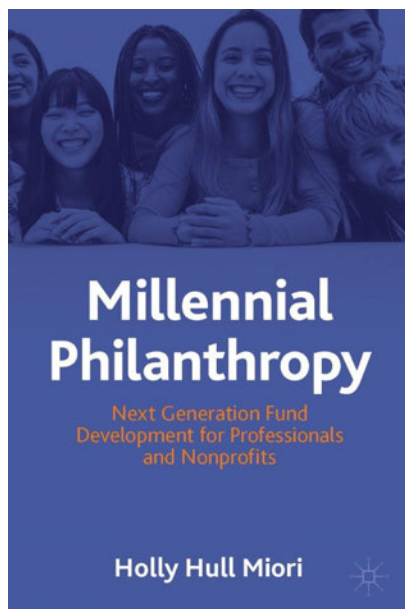


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## Tapping Your Talents: Millennials in Philanthropy — Understanding the Millennial Mindset

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It's worth your time to understand how this generation views philanthropy

***Are millennials worth a nonprofit's time? As a researcher, fundraiser, and elder millennial myself, the short answer is an emphatic "yes." The millennial, born between 1980–1999, is a lot like a Rubik's cube—multi-sided and a bit complex. Yet, as fundraisers, we must know how to engage this generation.***

At 75 million people, millennials are the largest generation. These individuals are racially and ethnically diverse, politically and socially engaged, and they stand to

inherit \$15 trillion to \$30 trillion in the upcoming transfer of wealth, leaving nonprofits with undeniable opportunities. But nonprofits cannot simply have their hands out. We ask people to invest in our missions, and although the need to build meaningful relationships with them remains steady across every age, some tactics have changed. While attaining my doctoral degree in public affairs, my research uncovered many tangible results for our fundraising community.

## Social Media

Millennials are digital natives, so nonprofits should engage with websites and social media, while also having shareable and visual materials. Millennials will be your best digital ambassadors and engage their networks—like Snapchat, Twitter, and LinkedIn—but their platform choices constantly evolve. Like the generation before them, Facebook tends to be the choice of older millennials. This sub-group counts family, friends, colleagues, and others as a critical part of their network, and they often blur the lines between work, social activities, and philanthropy.

## Events

Millennials view galas as low-priority extravaganzas that do little to help them achieve their social networking goals. The days of the chicken-and-broccoli dinners are dead, notes one nonprofit founder. While they will engage in face-to-face events, millennials would much rather be involved in planning and having a seat at the table with you—the organization. Here, events can support the opportunity to discuss the mission while networking, socializing, and being philanthropic. Most importantly, they expect a high level of financial transparency from nonprofits. During events, the organization can share where the funding is going and how the millennial can help and engage in the mission.

In researching millennials, I developed the understanding that the tenets of fundraising and philanthropy—relationships and communities—are still paramount with this generation, but our tactics must evolve. ...We must meet them where they are.

Millennials will attend events that involve volunteerism or hands-on activities. One of my favorite nonprofits, BvB Dallas, hosts a powder-puff football game and has raised nearly \$5 million, with millennials driving their fundraising efforts. Other millennial-friendly events include bowl-a-thons, virtual Bingo, golf tournaments, and

ugly-sweater bar crawls during the holidays. Each market has different trends, but the biggest factor is millennials taking the lead and engaging their social networks.

## Face to Face

While social media is essential in engagement, the millennial generation still wants the nonprofit to make the ask in person, just like the previous generation. However, the connection needs to be a multimedia approach using email, website, social media, phone, and in-person. This generation has caused fundraisers to reconsider how they form connections with volunteers and donors. The millennial may look at your postcard or email to learn about your mission but will use the QR code or link to gather more information.



## Biggest Influencers

Research participants have shared that their parents barely influence their nonprofit engagement. As nonprofits prepare for current giving, they need to focus on what is influencing millennials: their social network. During my research interviews, most millennials noted that they came to the nonprofit through their peers and because they were asked. During the interviews of one millennial-based organization, I learned that nearly all donors got involved due to one-on-one asks. The power of the ask and relationships is still important. However, fundraisers should remember that, while millennials maintain their social networks via social media, face-to-face interactions still play an essential role.

Millennials want transparency and actively seek opportunities that provide this. Is your organization offering appropriate and engaging volunteer opportunities?

## Global Issues and Local Connection

Millennials think about the greater good and are concerned with global issues. However, local impact is most important. Nonprofits should examine their business model and review their messaging. For example, a large, national nonprofit focused on education needs to ensure that its messaging shows its local impact and

discusses the roles of social justice and access. A large national cancer organization might show its work locally in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Think about how you can highlight personal connections: How did you help a local single mother in her time of need? How did you help her stay employed? How did you provide access to care when no one else did? Organizations must answer with certainty that they are making an impact in the community that they serve.



As fundraisers, the main question is: Are millennials worth our time, and do they matter to us as nonprofit executives? Research shows millennials will donate anywhere from \$481 to \$580 per person annually. However, when coupled with volunteerism, millennials end up giving roughly double that amount, up to \$1,050–\$1,700 per person annually.

Millennials want transparency and actively seek opportunities that provide this. Is your organization offering appropriate and engaging volunteer opportunities?

In researching millennials, I developed the understanding that the tenets of fundraising and philanthropy—relationships and communities—are still paramount with this generation, but our tactics must evolve. We have an entire generation—75 million strong—that is coming of age. They can help us build our nonprofits, support our philanthropy, and volunteer with our organizations, but we must meet them where they are. How will you support your organization with this information?



Holly Hull Miori, PhD, MTS, MPA, MTS, CFRE, has nearly two decades in fundraising and foundation work, where she has raised funds both locally and nationally in higher education, health care, arts, human rights, and Holocaust education. She serves as a fundraiser, educator, researcher, an advocate for millennials, and promotor of best practices in the nonprofit sector.