

HOW TO MARKET A NEXT GENERATION PROGRAM

Connecting & Communicating in a New Era



As the Millennial generation becomes parents and their children, members of Generation Z, grow into their tween and teen years, camps and classes must adapt in multiple ways.

Not only must programming meet the needs of today's digital-native families, but administrators must shift how they market programs to this new audience.

In *How to Design a Next Generation Program*, we offered insights on adaptability, listening to parents' needs and delivering tangible results for participants.

With a forward-thinking program in place, creating a strategy to market to a new generation is the next step to success.

"The biggest challenge I see is in marrying the digital, automated world of today's marketing with the personal, but manual, strategies of the past," says Camarin Wanamaker, ACTIVE Network Digital Marketing Consultant and ten-year industry veteran.

In this white paper, we'll explore strategies for marketing a next generation program:

- + Differentiating Techniques
- + Leveraging Social Media Influencers
- + Understanding Kids' Purchasing Power





SET YOUR PROGRAM APART

Camp directors identify acquisition as their number one challenge. There is more competition in the camp and after-school market today than ever before, and the first key to marketing in this new landscape is ensuring your target audience knows what makes your program unique and desirable.

Differentiation begins with the programming itself. As detailed in *How to Design a Next Generation Program*, flexibility and tangible results lead the list of “musts” for programs that appeal to modern families.

Also consider the following ideas to give your program a marketing edge:

- + Extend seasonal sessions to include year-round options. This can also create additional revenue streams.
- + Alleviate or eliminate barriers to entry such as paying for gear and supplies.
- + Offer programs for different ages concurrently, so that siblings can participate together and logistics are easier for parents.

7 in 10

parents would like to receive program updates

90%

of consumers read peer reviews before making a purchase





HARNESS THE POWER OF SOCIAL INFLUENCERS

“Program directors are amazing relationship builders and have fantastic people skills,” says Wanamaker. “Not only are technology and social platforms where the people are—kids included—but they also provide us with a scalable, trackable and repeatable model to measure word-of-mouth effectiveness.”

Enlist the help of social media influencers to build brand awareness for your program. This includes individuals with a broad or otherwise advantageous reach through social media or on the web, such as the popular carpooling mom who Instagrams her way through the day. When these individuals are on board with what your camp or class is doing, their recommendations can provide valuable promotion.

73%

of millennial parents followed the social media account of a child’s activity/program/organization

Use the following tactics to harness their influence:

- + Incentivize social media stars to share program-related content through points or prizes.
- + Encourage parents and participants to “check-in” to your location and leave a review.
- + Share high-quality content through your program’s social media accounts, to give parents a reason to follow and share your content with their networks.

Remember to keep up with your communication plan and share influencers’ posts throughout the year—not just when you’re holding registration. Programs that fall off the map in terms of communication in between sessions can be missing valuable marketing opportunities.





INCLUDE KIDS IN THE CONVERSATION

Gone are the days of parents as gatekeepers. Parents and camp managers agree that child interest is the number one motivator in program selection, with today's moms and dads acting in more of an advisory role.

Where are these decision-making kids learning about camps and after-school programs? Most list school and their friends as top sources, making communication and word-of-mouth marketing very important tools in your kit. Perhaps counterintuitively, the best way to start a conversation with this group is to listen.

"Kids, tweens and teens just really want to be heard and asked about what they like," says Wanamaker. "Ask them about their favorite celebrities and YouTube channels, and about the shows they're watching. Find out which new Snapchat filters they're using and who they follow on Instagram."

You don't need to become a pop culture expert, but understanding what they think is cool, what makes them laugh or makes them stop and think might give you some insights into how to reach this audience."

In addition to these general insights, administrators may also employ the following strategies to include kids in the marketing conversation:

- + Don't talk down to child consumers.
- + Craft marketing messages that are relevant to the whole family.
- + Reach youth with nontraditional advertising such as Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube ads.
- + Build connections with schools to spread the word about your program.



CONCLUSION

Marketing a next generation program requires understanding your new audience and, luckily, there are many tools at your fingertips. Start by ensuring your program stands out from the crowd and connect with social media influencers as brand ambassadors. Understand that kids and teens are driving decisions with regard to camps and after-school classes, and listen and learn from their insights.

ACTIVE's Camp & Class Manager makes it easier than ever to keep up with the wants and needs of modern families, from flexible program booking for customized session options to integrated email marketing tools, text messaging and social media tools to help you keep in touch with your customers.

It's time for a next generation solution.

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