

i connect with GenNext

Global Ministry Workshop
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Why the Y? A generation that defies definition

Age:

- born between 1980—1995
- 80 million strong: 3 times the size of Gen X.
- too new to forge a name for themselves they are called - Gen Y, Echo boomers, Millennial Generation, Gen Connect

Ethnicity:

- Most diverse generation to date
- One out of every three Gen Y member is not Caucasian
- 9 out of 10 under the age of 12 have friends outside their own ethnicity
- The internet has shrunk their world. They are growing up in a global society and global youth culture where kids around the world increasingly look and act the same as they do.
- Members of Generation Y are very tolerant of the diversity around them. Working and interacting with people outside of their own ethnic group is the norm, and acceptable.

Home:

- Raised by doting parents.
- They are a generation of broken relationships. 1/4 to 1/3 of the kids born between 1989 and 1994 were born to unmarried women. They are hungry for relationships, and long to be connected.

Money:

- One out of every 9 high schoolers have a credit card co-signed by a parent
- They have large discretionary income. The average teen 3 years ago had nearly \$100 a week for personal spending money.

Connectivity/interaction:

- They are very much aware of social injustices and truly believe that they can make a difference.
- They are experience and feeling-driven.
- Pluralistic: They are very big on not judging, to them there is no one right and so thus no one wrong; they are suspicious of truth, and because of that without a moral compass.
- Instantly and constantly connected
- Impatient: Raised in world dominated by technology and instant gratification.
- Skeptical. They have seen politicians, presidents, sports heroes, church leaders and entertainers behave in unethical ways.
- Blunt and expressive.
- They long for authenticity and are deeply spiritual.

Status:

- Highly restless
- Confident and optimistic
- Eagerly engaged
- They are image-driven
- Very spontaneous, enormously creative and resourceful
- Adaptability:
- This is a learning-oriented generation

Technology:

- Tech savvy with every gadget imaginable almost becoming an extension of their bodies.
- They multitask, talk, walk, listen, type and text at the same time.
- They live in a very visual world that is full of information at their fingertips.
- Unlike past generations, the technological advances in the past decade have put a multitude of choices at the fingertips of Generation Y. The wealth of information available in seconds from the Internet, hundreds of television stations to choose from and a different shopping center every ten miles has given Gen Y members the notion that if they do not get what they want from one source, they can immediately go to another.



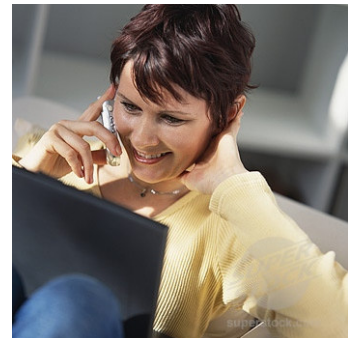
Italk, itext, iserve: connecting technology driven youth to serve a hurting world.

They want to be impact makers

- The volunteer rate for young people ages 12 to 18 in the United States is nearly twice the rate of that for adults. They believe they can make a difference.
- New technologies and a growing global consciousness have created innovative opportunities for young people to connect locally, nationally and internationally for social action.
- The challenge is to find ways of engaging and empowering young people in community participation and social change.
- What roles can information and communication technologies play? The Internet, in particular, enables youth to connect locally, nationally and internationally in unparalleled ways.

Connection on their Journey

- They are constantly 'connected' and constantly 'wired'. In an instant they can be aware of the latest news from around the world, they can be in communication with 20 different friends in 30 seconds.
- Communication technologies can open up opportunities for dialogue and exchange among diverse communities, giving youth access to different networks, perspectives and experiences.
- Part of what sustains and drives this generation is being able to connect and take action and get feedback on that, and work with others and brainstorm,.



What do we need to do?

Historically, mission programs have not been known as incubators of youth involvement but this does not always need to be the case.

Meaningful opportunities for youth involvement exist at all phases of our mission program, from planning and design to execution and evaluation.

- **Be clear on your objective**

- The first question we need to answer is the why?
Why do we want the youth to be involved in missions?
If it is because we want them to carry on what we have started or to maintain our programs—that's the wrong answer. This generation is not interested in our organized program. They may be interested in what our programs are trying to achieve but they

have no desire to maintain or follow the status quo that we have established.

If on the other hand we want to help develop and mentor youth so that they become a generation passionately living out the love of God in the world we will be much more successful.

- **Break down the barriers**

- **Meeting times:** be conscious of their overloaded schedules
- **Meeting structures:** Our mission meetings are rarely designed to engage young people. While they like to brainstorm they have been raised on so much stimulation that they are 'wired' to be restless.
- **Give them ownership and leeway:** What they like to hear is "Here's a project! We want to accomplish this goal and we want you to design it, help us implement, and help us do all of this!" They can get behind this kind of attitude. Don't expect them to do it your way or the way that it has always been done.
- **Make it relevant:** They are looking for a 'cause' and believe they have the power to make a difference. It has to be real, it has to be concrete, and there has to be something they can learn from it.
- **Give them a reason to be involved:** They are a generation that on one hand sees themselves as global citizens but on the other need to see how being involved benefits them personally.
- **Provide mentors:** Pair them with an adult mentor, someone they can admire and emulate, and around whom they can be themselves.
- **Give them an engaging hands-on job to do:** Something with short-term goals and the potential to make a difference in the world.
- **Treat them as expert consultants,** as ambassadors from a foreign land, and listen to what they have to say about their generation and about global issues. Get a Generation Y to be your communicator.
- **Market serving differently:** Use their mode of communication to engage them in serving. Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instant messaging, blogs.
- **Provide a range of volunteer opportunities:** They like diversity.

- **Include learning opportunities in volunteering.** They like intellectual stimulation.
- **Reach them where they feel it.** What impacts them is pictures and testimonies—things they can feel and relate to. Give missions a face and a story.
- **Make it convenient for them to be involved.** They are overscheduled and hurried. Use website, benefit concerts, brainstorming panels.

Mobilize people online to act offline

Today's youth is wired, to the extreme. They are totally connected 24/7, and to a certain extent, always have been. They have short attention spans and are adept multi-taskers. The world is a click away.

Technology makes the world much smaller, much more accessible, and much more tangible.

Examples of how youth have used technology to impact their world.

- Mark Zuckerberg started Facebook when he was 19.
- Three twentysomethings built the *Invisible Children* campaign with a video and the Internet.
- Young people organized protests on May Day in 2006 all through MySpace and cell phones.

Advantages of today's technology:

- Education can be shared to young around the world if they have access to the technology.
- Students can see the needs, quickly see how money and time make improvements and how their work can make a real difference.
- Technology provide the connection to the issues that this generation needs. It can show real faces, real life, and real struggle.
- International pen pals can now be instant messaged, e-mailed, or facebooked.
- Adopting a child can be daily contact through video not just quarterly letters.



Youth offer unique perspectives, ideas, peer connections, and incredible energy – all things we need to make our communities stronger.

Facebook Example

- Facebook originated in 2004 as a student-only social network.
- It currently serves in excess of 36 million users in the U.S. alone.
- Provides connection to anyone in the world via computer or cell phone is near instantaneous, sharing both life-changing words and the most mundane of facts.
- Serve as a brainstorming mechanism and venue for planning and promoting events, keeping participants informed of scheduled gatherings and providing last minute information. It also allows one to extend invitations to others to join the cause
- Facebook is being used as a means of reaching out globally, extending beyond the walls of local ministries.
- Facebook allows you to find others who share your interests and passions and serves as a means of telling stories based on your personal journey, reconnecting with old friends and acquaintances, as well as making new ones.
- Facebook has potential for ministry leaders. Not only can they use it to network and learn from each other, but Facebook can also be used to extend the boundaries of traditional ministry. Instead being restricted by a set time and place, ministries can now engage people regardless of one's schedule or location.
- Experiences can be shared in a tangible way. If a student goes on a mission trip, likes it and posts pictures, stories and testimonies on Facebook page, then the student's friends will see the post.
- Allows participants of mission trips to get connected before arriving or to help build team unity. Allow non participants to be a part of the journey as well.

Connecting with people equals more effective ministry.

Facebook is simply a tool to employ in the process.



Leadershift: mentoring GenNext to maximize their leadership potential

“They are not like you and never will be”

Eric Chester, Generation Y author

Generation Y is different. Their motivation, their technical sophistication, and their demand for respect and responsibility are causing many of the older generations to wonder what can we do with them?

“Generation Y is innovative and creative. They seek to make a difference and want to produce something worthwhile. They’ve been raised to value teamwork and collaborative efforts. They been hovered over, involved in family discussions, and their opinions have been respected. They feel they need to make a difference wherever they go, and they’ve been raised to believe they can do it.”

Leah Reynolds, Generational Change Consultant

Ten strategies to ponder:

- 1. Give them something to do from day one.** There is no surer way to turn this enthusiastic Gen Y members away than to suffocate them with boredom.
- 2. Take their intelligence seriously.** This is the highest educated generation to this point. They have been raised in an environment where their intelligence has been valued and celebrated.
- 3. Give them challenging work that matters.** They’re there because they believe in the mission and because they **WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**. Try to find projects for them to work on that stretch their abilities and represent new learning possibilities.
- 4. Don’t squash initiative.** Because they are exposed to so much stimulation they are creative, and quickly adapt and expand on new ideas.
- 5. Don’t be a slave to the council position description.** Gen Y workers, having grown up on instant messaging and cell phones and using laptops in class, they tend to be particularly comfortable with this type of multitasking and being involved in all aspects of projects.

- 6. Invest in them.** Expose them to as many different situations and ways of doing things as possible. Send them to conferences, classes, give them freedom to explore things outside the denomination. Send them to the mission field.
- 7. Encourage their values:** Any way to show appreciation for their individuality and let them be expressive will keep them around.
- 8. Give them a voice:** Today's twentysomethings' experience of childhood is completely different from that of their parents, due to the technologies that have emerged in the meantime. Their social networks are totally different, their relationship to information is totally different, and their cultural preferences may be totally different as well. It's valuable, incredibly valuable, to have those voices represented at the table when making decisions that affect the organization's future direction.
- 9. Allow them to be part of the team:** Don't be afraid to give them feedback, positive or negative. Make their work valid: Don't just give orders, give the reasoning behind them. Help them see the big picture. If you want them to do something, tell them why, in a way that lets them know the importance of the task to the mission.
- 10. Enjoy them and learn from them:** They have much to offer and we can learn from them as much as they can learn from us.

This is the first generation in a long time that actually likes older people making mentoring relationships a win-win situation for everyone!