



NEWS PHYSICIANLEADERS MAGAZINE HEALTHFAX eNEWSLETTERS ROUNDTABLE CAREERS EVENTS MARKETPLACE TOP LEADERSHIP TEAMS
 FEATURES INVITE A FRIEND SUBSCRIBE

- [Federal Government](#)
- [Business](#)
- [State/Local Government](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Pharmaceutical](#)
- [Trends](#)
- [Managed Care](#)
- [Research](#)
- [All Stories](#)
- [Archives](#)

Click! The sound of additional revenue brought to light.

SEARCH: GO

NEWS
 FEATURES
Healthcare Marketing

Reaching the Next Generation of Healthcare Consumers

By Joy Scott and Marna Bungler, for HealthLeaders News, January 31, 2006

The ISI Group, Inc.
 www.thessigroup.com
 We Make Everything Click!SM

Download our Revenue Cycle Vendor Comparison Matrix.

The aging of the baby boomers has captured the attention of healthcare companies as a bonanza of marketing opportunities. Yet, while it's true that this affluent generation will be spending millions in its pursuit of good health and driving demand for a wide range of healthcare products and services, industry marketing strategies should not be so focused on this immediate opportunity that they neglect to build market share and brand equity with the up-and-coming healthcare purchasers--Generation Y.

Also known as "Millennials" or "Echo Boomers," Generation Y consists of the group of people born between 1977 and 1994. As a generation of consumers, they follow "Generation X" (1965 to 1976) and the Baby Boomers (1946 to 1964). Numbering at least 60 million and representing about \$200 billion in annual spending, this generation is the largest consumer group in U.S. history. Every market segment, including healthcare, can and should be vying for their dollars. Whereas marketing to Generation Y may have previously been considered "teen marketing," that is no longer the case. It is a coming of age of a new generation.

Who are they?

This generation, now ages 10 to 28, rivals the baby

- E-mail Story
- Print Story

FEATURES

Security that Fits is a Business Imperative

IT solutions, in one form or another, have been used to assist with healthcare delivery processes for more than 40 years. In that time, the world has changed. H...

By Robert Seliger, for HealthLeaders News, Feb 02, 2006

Reaching the Next Generation of Healthcare Consumers

By Joy Scott and Marna Bungler, for HealthLeaders News, Jan 31, 2006

Increased Scrutiny Ahead for Nonprofit Hospitals

By Lew Lefko, for HealthLeaders News, Jan 26, 2006

HealthLeaders Media
TOP LEADERSHIP TEAMS
IN HEALTHCARE
2006
CALL FOR ENTRIES
DEADLINE: MARCH 30, 2006

Quick Poll
What's your forecast for Medicare Part D?

- Mostly cloudy for seniors
- Partly successful in attracting enrollees
- A political storm

Submit!
[View Results](#)



Magazine
 January 2006

- Online News**
[FREE daily and weekly emails](#)
- HealthFax**
[California fax newsletter](#)
- Event Listings**
[Events Calendar](#)
- [Submit an event](#)

boomers in size and buying clout. Gen Yers are an active and mobile population. They are the first generation to grow up with personal computers, Internet access, downloadable music, instant messaging and cell phones. Any information they'd like to get their hands on is at their fingertips. They expect easy, immediate and convenient access to information. They are Internet-savvy shoppers.

Most have also been raised in either dual-income or single-parent households. Family demographics have made them more independent and given them more financial responsibility. As a result, they are practical planners.

Three key things make this population category attractive:

1. **Spending power:** They are used to having their own money.
2. **Influence:** Older Generation Yers are making their own healthcare purchasing decisions. Teens and pre-teens are key "influencers" in their households.
3. **Brand loyalty:** This generation has grown up in an ad-saturated environment. Early brand intervention creates deeper relationships.

As Generation Yers reach adulthood and strike out on their own they will be making significant healthcare decisions for the first time. They'll choose between over-the-counter medications, locate their own physicians and other healthcare service providers and decide what brand of pharmaceuticals to take. As they marry and start families, they'll have even more decisions to make, but it's not just providers who need to start thinking about this generation. The group will be choosing health plans to replace their parents' plans.

How do you reach them?

This generation is quickly becoming dependent on the Internet for all of its information needs. Healthcare is no exception. Members are also more aware than the earlier generation that the world is a global marketplace. If one resource doesn't have what they want, there are hundreds of other options just a few clicks away.

As this group enters the marketplace, its members are making it clear what kind of communication they respond to. First of all, they must be acknowledged. Healthcare providers should speak to them not to their boomer parents. Second, they want to have a more intimate experience and not be fed a diet of generic mass-marketed messages. Third, peer-to-peer communications is key. They respond to messages in places where they come together (in physical groups or online) so that they can compare experiences with people in their age group. To reach them, marketers should take the message to the places Gen Yers gather then speak their language.

If your healthcare organization isn't marketing on the Internet, you are missing a brand building opportunity. A 2003 survey of 2,500 youths ages 13 to 24 conducted by Yahoo! Inc. and media services company Carat North



America, discovered the Internet was the primary medium of choice instead of television. The amount of time spent online surpasses all other forms of media. In an average week, Gen Yers spend 16.7 hours online (excluding e-mail), 13.6 hours watching television and 12 hours listening to the radio.

Healthcare marketers should build Web tools into their budgets to reach this group. For example, you can offer online interactive services such as webinars or "talk to an expert" sessions to hit multiple marketing goals: provide information, build brand preferences and create the peer-to-peer communication. Toymaker Fisher-Price developed a method to reach first-time mothers in their early 20s by developing Web-based parenting guides. These twenty-something parents grew up chatting online, so they may respond positively to a site that offers a chat function or blog commentary where they are given an opportunity to voice their opinion or question.

Gen Yers will rely on the Internet to research health issues that are important to them. The company that can answer their questions and provide them with accessible, easy-to-understand information will have a competitive advantage. They'll also use the Web to select providers. Provider and health plan "report cards" will be important resources, as will reports from regulatory agencies, consumer groups and customer satisfaction ratings. If a company can't communicate by email, this wired generation will be suspicious. Conducting business by phone, fax or in person alone will be considered out-dated and simply will not fit in with their lifestyles and communication styles.

E-mail can be used by healthcare marketers to:

- **Stay in touch.** For example, American Airlines launched a college version of its popular Net SAAver program, which offers discounted fares to subscribers by email in an effort to capture early brand loyalty. Some health systems are utilizing this tool to reach out to Gen Yers by incorporating a Web-based newsletter that is e-mailed to those who sign up whenever it is updated.
- **Make appointments.** New web tools will enable self-scheduling.
- **Maintain medical and health plan data.** These consumers will be comfortable keeping and updating their medical information at secured sites and will want the convenience of online updating and tracking of expenditures and reimbursements for new consumer-driven plans.
- **Provide electronic consultations.** Notwithstanding privacy, liability, and reimbursement considerations, this generation will definitely expect email communication from providers and doctors, and will want to be able to email their physician with questions about their condition and get an answer.

Research shows patients tend to be more open about their symptoms when they are sending

an email to their doctors in the comforts of their own homes. Studies have also proven that office visits reduced to 15 percent based on a scenario where an e-mail was set up in a doctor's office.

- **Offer telemedicine services.** Monitoring blood pressure, glucose levels, weight and other vital signs via the Internet will be a boon to this mobile group.

Reaching Gen Yers may also be accomplished with offline tactics that tap into this group's desire for community and peer-to-peer communication. Grassroots efforts effective with this group include the use of street teams--teams made up of young volunteers and supporters of an organization or cause who go to places where young people meet to talk about and build buzz around a campaign. While they have been primarily used for entertainment marketing, street teams are a perfect vehicle to build brand awareness for healthcare organizations. For instance, street teams can go to an event and hand out educational pamphlets on issues ranging from smoking and safe sex, to nutrition and exercise. They can also distribute CDs, t-shirts, stickers and fliers to garner interest in organizational health promotions.

Crafting the message

Gen Yers are not an easy sell, nor are they easy to reach with a message. This group has been bombarded with brand messages since birth. To gain their trust--and their attention--messaging should be subtle and localized. Campaigns should be innovative and interactive, yet simple and free of jargon.

California-based Kaiser Permanente, one of the largest nonprofit integrated healthcare systems in the nation, uses its "Thrive" ad campaign to target health-seeking consumers, including Gen Yers, who are known to underutilize healthcare services. The campaign focuses on Kaiser's strength in delivering total healthcare, not only when a person is ill but also when a person is healthy. Kaiser emphasizes aspects of care that go beyond treating an illness and presents itself as an advocate and resource to managing health, not just physically, but also mentally and spiritually. After more than three months in the marketplace, the ads made the top 15 percent of all health and health insurance advertising in terms of recognition, attribution and likeability.

Blue Cross has also introduced "ToniK," a healthcare benefits program aimed at Gen Yers who have an aversion to excessive paperwork. The program allows people to apply for coverage in a quick and easy manner--it typically takes only 15 minutes to apply, and 24 hours to receive approval information--and employs lingo and graphics that capture a younger audience. It consists of three varieties of plans nicknamed "The Thrill Seeker", "The Calculated Risk Taker", and "The Part Time Daredevil." The plans are fitting for individuals who want coverage for only an accident and a few doctor visits annually, for those who prefer low deductibles and coverage for an infinite number of doctor visits as well as full coverage for

accidents, and for people who are somewhere in between, respectively.

To date, 70 percent enrolled in Tonik are under the age of 30 and 70 percent were previously uninsured, according to Blue Cross membership data figures.

Pay attention to the future

As Generation Y grows up, its members are becoming the primary healthcare consumers of tomorrow. Some of the biggest brands on the market today got their start by bonding with the baby boomers early and following them from youth into middle age. Healthcare market strategies that have been focusing on the baby boomers should capture the Generation Y psyche today to capture the healthcare consumer of tomorrow.

Joy Scott is president and Marna Bunger is a consultant at Scott Public Relations, based in Canoga Park, Calif. They may be reached at joy@scottpublicrelations.com.

[SEND TO FRIEND](#) | [EDITORIAL GUIDELINES](#)

[MAGAZINE](#) | [NEWS](#) | [eNEWSLETTERS](#) | [HEALTHFAX](#) | [ROUNDTABLE](#) | [CAREERS](#) | [CALENDAR](#) | [HOME](#)
[ABOUT US](#) | [CONTACT US](#) | [ADVERTISING/SALES](#) | [MARKETPLACE](#) | [TERMS OF SERVICE](#) | [PRIVACY POLICY](#) | [SUBSCRIBER SERVICES](#)

© 2005 [HealthLeaders Media](#)