



Millennials as Parents: Expanding and Accelerating Digital Health and Consumer Strategies

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Millennials, the largest generation of young people currently in the workforce, are now in prime childbearing years. Over the past decade, as this generation seeks changes to what many millennials view as an “out-of-date” workplace, organizations have struggled to understand what millennials want and how they can better attract and retain this group of individuals. Pediatric hospitals across the country are faced with a great challenge. They must not only appeal to their millennial employees, but also to the millennial parents needing care for their children. This article highlights two key areas of focus for hospitals looking to attract millennial parents: reputation and culture.

Background

To understand millennials as parents, it is important to first understand this generation. Millennials, also known as Generation Y, are those who were born between 1981–1996. According to the U.S. Census, there are 83.5 million millennials in the United States surpassing the baby boomer generation in numbers.

Every generation experiences events during their adolescents that could greatly impact how they behave during adulthood. For millennials, the rise of the Internet, social media, cell phones, September 11th, and Columbine are some of the major events that have affected

Key Board Takeaways

To ensure the organization is appealing to millennial parents, boards should have a discussion with management and consider the following questions:

- What is the organization’s online reputation based on search engine ratings?
- How can our online patient portal reach a broader audience?
- What can we do to help millennial parents save money for the care they receive?
- What words do patients use to describe their experience at our organization? If the words are positive, how can we continue to promote that culture? If the words are negative, what can we do to create positive change?
- What is a low-cost step we can take in the next month to help make the organization’s environment more child-friendly?

this generation. For any leader, understanding the why behind a generation’s behavior is the first step to creating a more harmonious environment for all.

Reputation

With millennials being so connected online, reputation is a key factor when appealing to millennial parents. NRC Health found that 77 percent of millennials search online for a physician.¹ A poor online footprint, such as an outdated Web site, poor rating, or low traffic for the organization’s online portal, can drastically affect a millennial parent’s trust and interest in an organization.

Some ways the board can work with management to enhance

the organization’s online presence and reputation include asking:

- 1. How many hits are received on the hospital’s Web site?**
 - If it is underperforming, evaluate the effectiveness of the Web site.
 - If there is high volume on a particular aspect of the Web site, continue to promote the strongest message.
- 2. How many providers respond to text and emails?**
 - If this is not currently being done, consider how to engage providers to offer this service.
- 3. Who is using the hospital portal and how often is it used?**
 - If a higher usage than required is found, this suggests that the organization’s patient population is tech-savvy.
 - If it is only used as required, this might suggest patients

¹ NRC Health, [Millennial Parents: Challenging Conventional Expectation of Pediatric Care](#), 2017.

aren't as drawn to this type of information sharing.

- Check to see if the portal information reveals anything.

4. How many patients have high-deductible and co-pay insurance plans?

- Remember, millennials have high student loans.
- Develop payment-friendly policies for millennial parents.
- Consider cash payment discounts to be more competitive with retail and freestanding competitors.

Culture

Culture is king when it comes to millennials. In the workplace, Witt/Kieffer found that 40 percent of millennials will consider looking for a new job due to a poor workplace culture or environment.² The same idea applies to millennial parents as consumers of healthcare. Millennial parents want a child-friendly environment. Many of the tools used to create this environment can be done in a cost-effective way. According to NRC Health and Morning Consult, here are a few ways to make healthcare organizations child-friendly and millennial-parent approved:

- **Positive atmosphere:** Millennial parents and their children want to feel relaxed and hopeful when they are seeking medical care.

2 Witt/Kieffer, [Emerging Millennial Healthcare Leadership Views and Reflections from the New Generation](#), 2017.

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Leaders should instill a positive attitude for all employees to present to their patients. Remember, happy employees equal happy patients.

- **Understanding and open mindset of clinicians and physicians:** No one knows a child like their parents do. Millennial parents do not want "one-size-fits-all" care when it comes to their children. They want an individualized plan. The more open-minded clinicians and physicians are with their treatment, the more satisfied millennial parents will be.
- **More family-centered options:** When parents come to a hospital for their child's treatment, they often have other children at home. Offering family-centered activities like games, movies, or family nights is a great way for millennial parents to connect with all of their children and make memories, even during the difficult times.
- **Appeal to nostalgia:** Everyone wants to feel like a healthy and hopeful kid again. Have toys, snacks, movies, and activities that millennial parents experienced when they were young. The taste of nostalgia will make parents feel noticed and will help them find joy.
- **Healthy snacks available for the family and patient:** According to Sanford Health, 53 percent of Millennials value wellness, and diet is a huge factor in

attaining wellness.³ Offering healthy snacks for the entire family is a great way to promote healthy habits while still being present and connected during family events.

- **Respite rooms available for families:** For millennial parents coping or receiving tough news, having a peaceful setting could differentiate an organization from its competitors. Everything from lighting to smells to artwork need to be considered.
- **Calming, child-safe area with distractions for all:** In addition to a peaceful and relaxing respite room, a family-friendly area with calming lighting, sounds, smells, and activities is a great way to help millennial parents feel more grounded during these trying times.

Focusing on reputation and culture will help healthcare organization in all aspects. This attention will make employees happier, which ultimately leads to happier patients and parents. Remember, millennial parents want what every generation of parents have always wanted, for their kids to be cared for and restored to good health. Boards of children's hospitals should take time to consider what their organizations can do to attract and retain millennial parents.

3 Katie Nermoe, "[Millennials: The 'Wellness Generation,'](#)" Sanford Health, September 12, 2018.

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