



# Your Blind Casting

## Diverse clients, diverse approaches

By Christopher M. Roy

By now, you've figured out that the one-size-fits-all approach probably isn't the best way to attract the diverse cross-section of clients that you are looking for in your business. So how do you make sure to cast a wide enough net while making each client feel as though you are targeting them directly? How do you get your message across the first time and represent your strengths in a way that your prospects can understand what you're all about? Have you considered targeting based upon the diversity that each of us brings?

How are you going to differentiate yourself from competition?  
What will make them want to meet with you as opposed to the competition?

# Generation Next

Before we begin, please consider that much of what is being written here is assuming generalities in the characteristics discussed, and may be considered stereotypical by some. It is not my intention to imply that one characteristic is more important than another, or to diminish the diversity of skills, experience, upbringing and life lessons that make each of us unique. I personally believe that diversity is what makes our companies and clients stronger, and that diverse teams are superior to those that insist its members are mirror images of each other. For the purposes of this article, there are some groupings of the workforce that allow us to discuss how to adjust your approach accordingly.

Let's start with a seemingly simple characteristic to understand differences between age, or more eloquently referred to as "generational differences." You have probably heard and read a lot about Generation Y and how they are moving into the workforce in greater numbers.

This generation is generally defined as those born between 1982 and 1993, and while most commonly referred to as Gen Y, they are also called Generation Next, Nexers or Millennials. They have never experienced life without computers or cell phones, and are proficient with social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook and Twitter, to name a few.

To grab their attention you will need to focus on technology and on making things eye-catching and fun. Traditional marketing techniques will likely fall short

with this generation. So throw out the glossy, tri-fold brochures and don't expect your newspaper advertisements to garner much attention.

Facebook and MySpace are two powerful avenues that are familiar territory to Gen Y. So start there with your marketing campaign since they grew up and are comfortable with these technologies. But remember that while using these tools you still need things to be to the point without the MBA language and flowery words to tell them what you can do for them.

Born between roughly 1943 and 1964, the baby boomer generation is the largest generation of talent in the workforce, constituting roughly 80 million people. They are typically competitive, career driven, optimistic and focused on achieving financial and career goals. While some may be more

comfortable with technology than others, they are typically seen as more traditional and may rely on more conventional modes of communication.

A personal note or face-to-face meeting to introduce yourself will go much further with this generation than a slick Web site or a blog. So instead of sending an Outlook, call them or work with their assistant to schedule an in person meeting. Traditional media including brochures and PowerPoint decks will make sure you are well represented when talking to them, though do not neglect professional networking sites like LinkedIn.com as this group is quickly moving into that area.

In the middle is Generation X, whom as you might expect, have some of the characteristics from the other two generations. They are only about half of the size of the other generations (40 million Gen X as compared to 70 million Gen Y and 80 million baby boomers), and they are often referred to as the MTV generation, since they were generally born between 1965 and 1982. They were the first generation to use computers in school and played a major

role in the Internet revolution. Gen Xers are very self-reliant and want to understand how issues and solutions are going to impact them personally and their ability to succeed within the company. Your messaging should be targeted to this point.

A combination of various media types works best for this generation. Although they are heavy users of technology, they also respect traditional media. So mix it up and try to personalize your approach to how you can help them and you succeed. As you consider how to approach the different generations with your sales pitch, consider what your message is.

With the recession in full swing, there are a lot of companies with lots of pain points but unfortunately not enough funding to do anything about them. So while your ideas and assistance are wanted and needed, they may not be able to engage you due to a lack of funding.

Maybe now is the opportunity to hone your relationship building skills so that when things turn around, you have a leg up on the competition. This can easily be accom-

plished because you have already made your initial introductions and have seeded them with ideas for the future. Currently, most of the clients or prospective clients you are targeting are also probably being targeted by the competition. Their telephones are probably ringing off the hook and their e-mail boxes are probably exploding with ideas and requests to meet with them.

How are you going to differentiate yourself from competition? What will make them want to meet with you as opposed to the competition? We are all pitching the same ideas and services. However, it's how you pitch them that make all of the difference.



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