

# MARKETING TO MILLENNIALS

BY **MANDI HARRIS** | Contributor

**T**he Zillow Group released a research report in late 2016 that, among other findings, highlighted the prevalence and power of Millennial homebuyers. The report stated that 50 percent of homebuyers are under the age of 36, and that people aged 18 to 34 have become the largest group of homebuyers in the U.S.

This surge of young, mostly first-time homebuyers presents pest management professionals (PMPs) with a real opportunity to significantly expand their client bases. Below are three key factors to consider when marketing to Millennials:

## 1. VISUAL BRANDING

✓ **Does it look dated?** When it comes to your pest control company's visual brand — logo, color palate, photography and other design elements — Millennials likely will be your toughest critics. This generation has learned the difference between good and bad design through extensive exposure, and they judge brands on their design merits. Brands that look old and outdated may lead them to believe the company is old and outdated.

✓ **Does it inspire a positive response?** If your visual branding doesn't reinforce a Millennial's personal beliefs, it risks contradicting them. For example, if your company touts eco-friendly services, your logo and branding should “feel” environmentally friendly — which, by the way, tends to be important to Millennials (as well as many Gen-Xers, Boomers and Matures, too). Blue and green help conjure up positive emotions, whereas red, black and yellow may not align as well.

✓ **Is it consistent?** All touchpoints — from technician uniforms to vehicle wraps to the website to

invoice headers — should have the same look and feel.

## 2. REPUTATION COUNTS

✓ **What is your stature in your market?** Millennials trust social media, friends and family for referrals. They are educated buyers who conduct thorough research, and often get multiple quotes when considering purchases. Notably for those in the service industry, Millennials, as a generation, have the greatest lifetime value as customers because they are loyal once they make a decision.

✓ **Are you providing timely interaction?** Even more so than their older counterparts, generally speaking, Millennials tend to dislike face-to-face appointments and phone calls. Instead, they prefer to use the internet and mobile technologies for research, purchasing and communication. This generation wants to connect easily and quickly, and receive fast — if not instant — responses.

## 3. HIGH-TECH TACTICS

✓ **Is your company active on social media?** Companies must recognize exactly how Millennials look to social

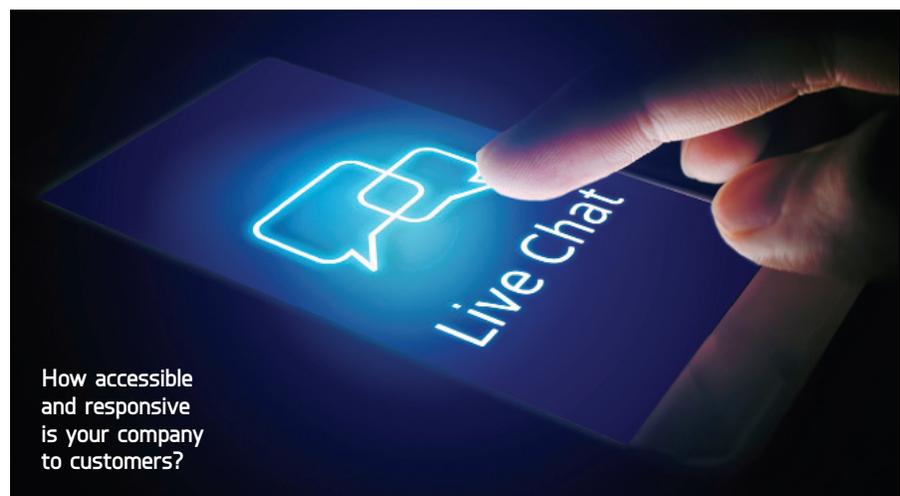
media — and on which platforms — for information and feedback.

✓ **Are you using online advertising?** Millennials value sincerity, ethics, and peer and influencer recommendations. Digital canvassing and pay-per-click (PPC) advertising can play a role in reaching prospects online. Digital canvassing serves customers ads on websites they're already visiting. And PPC programs like Google's AdWords display advertisements when pre-determined keywords — like “pest control Tampa” — are entered into a search engine.

✓ **Does your website offer live chat?** When viewing one of EPS' brand websites on a mobile device, users have the option to “Text Now” to begin a text conversation. When viewing the website on a desktop or laptop, users will see a “Start Chat” button to chat with a live representative.

✓ **Are you offering a text-to-pay option?** Our brands recently rolled out this option, which allows opted-in customers to receive text messages notifying them that a payment is due. The customers can pay their invoices by simply texting back the last four digits of their cell phone numbers. The text-to-pay solution

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How accessible and responsive is your company to customers?

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we use integrates with our business operations software. This not only helps streamline things for us, but also for customers, who can see all their invoices, service appointments, payment details and other key information in their online customer portals.

✓ **Are you keeping an eye on upcoming tech trends, like home voice assistants?** EPS is currently exploring marketing opportunities that use home voice assistants, like Google's Assistant and Home, and Amazon's Echo and

Alexa. Market research company eMarketer predicts that the number of voice-enabled digital assistant users in the U.S. will grow from 60.5 million this year to 75.5 million by

2019. Fifty percent of those users are Millennials.

With Millennials representing the next wave of homebuyers, PMPs have an opportunity to serve a new, loyal generation of customers. A visual brand that resonates, a strong understanding of this market, and high-tech tools to effectively connect with them will lay a strong foundation for success. PMP

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## BAD REVIEWS, GOOD RESPONSES

BY SUSAN HARE | Contributor

**T**he best response to a negative review depends on the underlying reason for the review:

- Does the negative review identify the wrong company?
- Did you fail the client and *deserve* the negative review?
- Is the negative review unwarranted, exaggerated or incorrect on the facts?
- Is the review fake — and can you prove it?

Once you identify the reason for the review, checked the facts, and interviewed staff familiar with the problem, only then are you ready to respond — calmly, rationally, respectfully. In most instances, your first response should be directly to the client, either through the review site or by email if you can identify the client. This private communication is your best opportunity to redeem yourself in the eyes of the client.

Do *not* ask the client to change the review. First, fix the problem. Only after the client is satisfied, can you broach the subject of changing the review. For example, “I’m glad we were able to work through your issues. I hope you will consider updating your review, but whether you do or not, we respect your decision and value you as a customer.”

After you reach out to the client, it’s time to post a public response — even if your response is, “We’ve reached out to this reviewer and hope to soon resolve his/her issue.” Keep in mind that only the first 17 or so words of your public comment might appear before the “read more” hyperlink, so make those first few words count.

Here are more details on how to respond to reviews by type:

- **Mistaken identity.** Your private and public response should begin with,



“Mistaken identity! Your review mistakenly identifies our company ...” Follow up with the reasons why yours is not the company referred to in the review. Be brief and polite. Also, immediately notify the review site of the error.

- **Deserved review.** When you have failed a client, admit it. Attempt to contact the client and correct the problem, but don’t make your offer of a remedy contingent upon removing the review. Instead, make a private and public apology: Acknowledge the client’s complaint, admit you failed, offer remediation, and list the steps you’ve made to avoid repeating the mistake.

*Example:* “I was horrified to learn that one of our trained technicians left a dead rat on this reviewer’s patio table. Being busy is no excuse for making such a mistake. We’ve reached out to the reviewer and offered to have her patio set professionally cleaned. Meanwhile, we’ve retrained our

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