

Generation X (51 million born 1965-1979, aka Computer Babies) were raised during the booming era of video games, cable television (including MTV) and the Internet and are therefore, considered to be technically savvy. This generation's youth was described to be mostly "latchkey kids." These kids had an evolving definition of "family" which was changing to include working moms and/or divorced parents which means they were often left at home alone. This created a sense of independence, resilience, and adaptability within this generation. Social and political events influencing and shaping this group include the fall of the Berlin Wall, end of the Cold War, Desert Storm, Space Shuttle Challenger disaster, and the surge of punk, grunge, and alternative rock. Gen X'ers are considered, by the US Census Bureau, to hold the highest education level considering all age groups.

This is a very diverse group, representing a more heterogeneous generation than their parents and grandparents (in such aspects as race, class, religion, and ethnicity). Therefore, they tend to look for diverse atmospheres that present exciting, adventurous, and/or challenging projects and opportunities. They are independent workers who are confident in their ability and thrive on performance feedback, encouragement, and clear expectations from their authority figure(s). This is the first group to view volunteer opportunities as a way to advance their career and as a "must list" item on applications and resumes.

Research conducted on this group is consistent with results gathered from the Generation X focus group, which was conducted with the intent of finding out more about why and how this group chooses to volunteer. Research and focus group findings have been combined in this paper and, together, will be used to more effectively target VolunteerMaine.org's message to engage more Maine citizens in service.

The Gen X focus group largely identified volunteering as "supporting your neighbor or community, something you are happy to do, giving time freely without expectation or award." What was particularly interesting with this group is that they viewed the word *service* (which the volunteer sector commonly uses to refer to volunteering) as "forced, something you HAVE to do (i.e. community service mandated by law)." According to this group, Gen X'ers volunteer to "build their resume, escape from their day to day routine, feel good about themselves and to show their kids/family the satisfaction of being selfless to others (local and worldwide)". This coincides with our research that shows that X'ers volunteer to build their resume skills, to empower themselves and to feed their passion by doing things they really enjoy (as opposed to doing something because they are *supposed* to do it).

Almost all of our focus group members volunteer on a consistent basis. However, when asked what prevents them, and/or their peers, from volunteering more or at all, most said "time constraints (X'ers are known for seeking balance between work, family and personal time which includes volunteering), not being asked, organizations are too specific and limiting, hard to find the right fit to match their interests, high pressure of not being able to say "no"." As managers of volunteers, just like with any specific group, we need to make "the ask" and be flexible. A more specific plan to have in place that caters to this generation includes making

sure your organization is up to speed with technology- if not, ask a Gen X'er to help you get it up to speed. Communicate with them in their language- don't tell them what you need ask if they will help you get there (empower them!) and listen to their opinions. Think options; don't be too specific or limiting and eliminate the authority and micro managing. Establish project-driven relationships, with dynamic leaders who can explain the expected results of the project at hand. Be sure that an X'er understands that you are depending on them to meet the deadlines.

To recruit from the Generation X pool, start with your local community businesses. According to our focus group, they "shop local to support local Maine businesses- support that local, solid, reputable, and trustworthy history." They gravitate toward advertising messages that are "clear and concise, relatable (breast cancer awareness), establish an emotional connection (Humane Society), localized with messages or statistics, and/or dated (United Way "One" campaign). They still read their local paper, but are more likely to view the publication online. The majority do not listen to radio (iPods, CDs, etc) but if they do, they prefer public radio or classic and alternative rock stations. This group is active online (i.e. if they want to find out about something, they'll go online and Google it) and are receptive to opportunities they hear about at work or through their affinity groups (church, young professional groups, cause related groups, through email campaigns, or through PSA's.

We prepared an initial marketing piece for the focus group to review and critique, seen below.

INITIAL MARKETING PIECE

63.4 million
people volunteered at
least once in 2009
-U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Volunteer Opportunities...
available to fit your
lifestyle.

EVERYBODY
wins when you
volunteer!

VOLUNTEER

Boost your Resume
Advance your Career
Network with your Peers
Give Back to your Community

Communities,
working together with
Volunteers,
can help make a
difference in the lives of
individuals in need.

**SEARCH
ONLINE 24/7**

Volunteer
opportunities at
your fingertips!



 **Find us online!** 
www.VolunteerMaine.org

Our focus group wanted a marketing piece that included a website (including symbols that indicated a social media presence), a clear “what’s in it for me” message, logos and photos, something that “catches the eye” and localized, relevant, recent statistics.

FINAL MARKETING PIECE

<p>www.VolunteerMaine.org</p>  <p>367,000 volunteers in Maine contribute 52 million hours of service each year.</p> <p>Volunteer Today!</p> 	<p>Become a Volunteer!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give Back to Your Community<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Network with Your Peers• Boost your Resume  <p>Statewide opportunities available to fit your schedule.</p> <p>www.VolunteerMaine.org</p>   
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Resources:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_X

<http://www.abanet.org/lpm/lpt/articles/mgt08044.html>

<http://www.volunteerpower.com/articles/GenX.asp>