THE EIGHT NET GENERATION NORMS

Tapscott – growing up digital

1. **They want freedom in everything they do, from freedom of choice to freedom of expression.** We all love freedom, but not like this generation. Choice is like oxygen to them. While older generations feel overwhelmed by the proliferation of sales channels, product types, and brands, the Net Gen takes it for granted. Net Geners leverage technology to cut through the clutter and find the marketing message that fits their needs. They also expect to choose where and when they work. They use technology to escape traditional office constraints and integrate their work lives with their home and social lives. Net Geners seek the freedom to change jobs, freedom to take their own path, and to express themselves.

2. **They love to customize, personalize.** When I was a kid, I never got to customize The Mickey Mouse Club. Today’s youth can change the media world around them – their desktop, Web site, ring tone, handle, screen saver, news sources, and entertainment. They have grown up getting what media they want, when they want it, and being able to change it. Millions around the world don’t just access the Web, they are creating it by creating online content. Now the need to customize is extending beyond the digital world to just about everything they touch. Forget standard job descriptions and only one variety of product. As for government portals, they want “my government” customized online.

3. **They are the new scrutinizers.** When I was young, a picture was a picture. No more. Transparency, namely stakeholder access to pertinent information about companies and their offerings, just seems natural to the Net Gen. While older generations marvel at the consumer research available on the Internet, the Net Gen expects it. As they grow older, their online engagement increases. Businesses targeting the Net Gen should expect and welcome intense scrutiny of its products, promotional efforts, and corporate practices. The Net Gen knows that their market power allows them to demand more of companies, which goes for employers as well.

4. **They look for corporate integrity and openness when deciding what to buy and where to work.** The Internet, and other information and communication technologies, strip away the barriers between companies and their various constituencies, including consumers, activists, and shareholders. Whether consumers are exposing a flawed viral marketing campaign or researching a future employer, Net Geners make sure company values align with their own.

5. **The Net Gen wants entertainment and play in their work, education, and social life.** This generation brings a playful mentality to work. From their experience in the latest video game, they know that there’s always more than one way to achieve a goal. This outside-the-box thinking results from 82 percent of American children aged 2 to 17 having regular access to video games. It’s a fast-growing industry: in the United States, video game sales were $8.4 billion in 2005, with worldwide sales expected to hit $46.5 billion by 2010. This is a generation that has been bred on interactive experiences. Brand recognition alone is no longer enough, something leading companies recognize.

6. **They are the collaboration and relationship generation.** Today, youth collaborate on Facebook, play multiuser video games; text each other incessantly; and share files for school, work, or just for fun. As evidenced by sites such as Yub.com, they also engage in relationship-oriented purchasing. Nine out of ten young people we interviewed said that if a best friend recommends a product, they are likely to buy it. They influence each other through what we call N-fluence Networks – online networks of Net Geners who, among other things, discuss brands, companies, products, and services.

7. **The Net Gen has a need for speed – and not just in video games.** In a world where speed characterizes the flow of information among vast networks of people, communication with friends, colleagues, and superiors takes place faster than ever.

8. **They are the innovators.** When I was young, the pace of innovation was glacial. Today it’s on hyperdrive. A twentysomething in the workforce wants the new BlackBerry, Palm, or iPhone not because the old one is no longer cool, but because the new one does so much more k.