TIAA-CREF Institute

Helping Gen Y Achieve Long-Term Financial Security

At a symposium hosted by the TIAA-CREF Institute in September 2013, a range of experts discussed financial issues concerning Gen Y. This publication, which is part of a series, presents experts' views and recommendations on engaging Gen Y in their financial wellbeing.

Want to make Gen Y good financial stewards? Let them learn from each other—and be prepared to give up control.

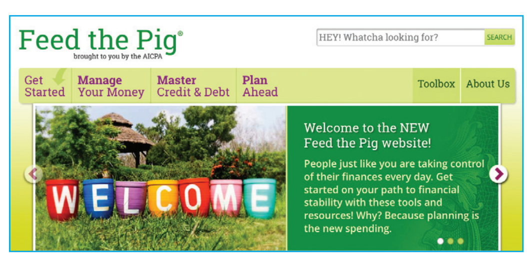
Going Online Is Just The Start.

As part of a national campaign team during the 2008 presidential election, Jonathan Kopp, chief interactive strategist for The Glover Park Group, needed to get young voters to the polls on Election Day. Kopp knew this would be a challenge, so he and his colleagues tried a new approach, tailored to the concerns and interests of Gen Y. The strategies they used can work equally well in other realms, such as encouraging young people to practice good money management. Here's what they did:

- **Start a conversation:** The campaign's website let users create their own profiles and post comments—both positive and negative—about the candidate.
- **Share brand control:** The campaign team created a custom logo for young voters, and gave them the freedom to use it as they wished.
- **Incorporate Gen Y's ideas:** Campaign posters used as headlines verbatim quotes from young people saying why they planned to vote.
- **Provide tools:** A smart phone app let the campaign's supporters manage their own contact lists for registration, recruitment, fundraising and voter turnout.
- **Appeal to self-interest:** Campaign materials promoted voting as a way to voice frustration, using the tagline "Don't get mad. Get registered."

The result? According to Kopp, the 2008 election had the highest turnout ever among 18- to 29-year-olds.

Adapting The Message



Melora Heavey, senior manager of communication and consumer education at the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, suggests a light touch when broaching financial topics with Gen Y. Heavey manages AICPA's *Feed the Pig* campaign, which combines an interactive website, advertisements, social media, mobile technology and other tools to encourage 25- to 34-year-olds to save regularly, pay down debt and manage discretionary spending. "We try to make the message fun and engaging," says Heavey. "Doom and gloom are not motivating."

First launched in 2006, *Feed the Pig* has evolved over time based on research with the target audience. "The key to success," says Heavey, "is adapting to changing attitudes and expectations. What works today won't necessarily work tomorrow."

In response to user feedback, the campaign updated its core message. Prior communications stressed the long-term benefit of saving small amounts of money. Then the recession came and the financial markets crashed, leading some people to question the value of saving. So the message shifted from future benefits to immediate gratification, under the theme "Put away a few bucks. Feel like a million."

Keeping It Relevant

Jackie Shoback, who leads individual and retail marketing at TIAA-CREF, believes you need to meet young people where they are. "Our research shows that only 13% of Gen Y looks to financial advisors as a primary influence for financial decisions. So while we encourage one-on-one advising, we also provide personalized information through self-service digital channels," says Shoback.

To make financial education meaningful to Gen Y, TIAA-CREF organizes the advice and guidance pages of its website according to common life events—such as buying a home, becoming a parent or changing jobs. To teach young people the basics of budgeting, investing and debt management, Shoback's team has used online games, videos and social media quizzes.

"If you want to have an impact," she says, "you need to deliver relevant content in the right format."

Raising Financial Literacy

Daniel Denecke, associate vice president of programs and best practices at the Council of Graduate Schools, is collaborating with TIAA-CREF to boost the financial skills of graduate and undergraduate students. Denecke manages a program called "Enhancing Student Financial Education" that helps universities develop a personal finance curriculum. Here's how the program works:

Enhancing Student Financial Education	
Objective	Prepare students to make informed decisions about saving, spending and borrowing
Channels	Web resources, social media, mobile apps, face-to-face interaction and surveys of users
Content	Financial strategies to achieve career goals, ways to manage debt effectively and salary implications of job choices
What's Next	Integrate financial literacy across higher education programs broadly for students and faculty

"Given this country's student debt crisis, financial literacy should be part of everyone's education. But in practice, it rarely is. We aim to change that," says Denecke.

Rules of engagement with Gen Y

- Encourage peer learning and interaction
- Provide customizable tools and resources
- Keep the tone light, fun and entertaining
- Use online, social and mobile channels
- Address Gen Y-specific financial challenges

C14968