Target Millennials
Engaging and Attracting the Next Generation of Arts Patrons

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The national audience for multiple art forms is aging faster than the rest of the United States population. Arts administrators are worried that they will not have new audiences to replace the current audience when they are no longer able to support the organization. Loyal donors or patrons are not made over night, so arts administrators need to act now if they want to secure the future well-being of their organizations.

The Millennial Generation has become the target for nonprofit organizations across the country hoping to attract and retain new supporters. However, the same methods of attraction and engagement may not work on members of this generation, who have grown up in an age of socially-networked community and new technologies. Arts organizations must adapt to accommodate the preferences of this generation, as they have done for the generations before them. In a review and analysis of previous studies, this thesis will examine the characteristics and behaviors of Millennials; their preferences for engagement, involvement, and communication with nonprofit organizations; and how arts organizations can apply these to best attract and engage the elusive audience of the Millennials.

Goodman Theatre and Steppenwolf were used as case studies to examine how nonprofit regional theatres are using their knowledge of Millennial behavior and characteristics to attract and engage members of the Millennial generation. These theatres are both based in Chicago and attempt to attract similar audiences, which allows for an accurate comparison of techniques employed. The areas of social media, volunteerism (through young professional boards), and ticket discount programs were the subjects of the research.
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**Introduction**

Nonprofit arts organizations are worried. They are worried that they are rapidly losing their audience to the inevitability of aging. It comes as no surprise to arts organizations that their base is considerably older than other organizations. But the potential decrease of attendance is not the only reason that arts organizations are worried—they also have to worry about the potential loss of funding they get through individual donors. It is likely that the majority of the donors helping to sustain these organizations are over 50 years old.

What will happen to these organizations when their key supporters are no longer around? Loyal constituents are not typically made overnight. It may take years to cultivate the relationships that lead to a major gift. Arts organizations need to act now if they want to ensure the stability of their organizations. While it is true that the average amount of giving increases as age, education level, and income increase, this does not mean that younger people should be ignored because they are not able to give at high levels currently. Building relationships with younger audience members, and people who have yet to experience the organization’s work, now is likely to pay off in the long-run because they will reach those higher income levels as they age.

People from the Millennial Generation view the arts and philanthropy in a different way than previous generations. How are Millennials different from previous generations in the way they interact with nonprofit, and specifically arts, organizations? And with this knowledge, how can nonprofit theatre organizations respond to these changes in a strategic way? Knowledge of these differences can help inform an organization’s strategy for engaging and gaining younger patrons. The regional nonprofit theaters of Goodman Theatre and Steppenwolf, two theaters vying for the same audience in Chicago, will be
examined for their implementation of policies and strategies appealing to millennial patrons.

**Who are the Millennials?**

The Millennial Generation, also known as Generation Y, is the largest generation, surpassing the Baby Boomer Generation in size. This generation follows Generation X, but researchers have not yet reached a consensus on the beginning and end dates. All studies and surveys do not all use the same demographic definition, making it difficult to determine the unique attributes of this generation compared to another. Definitions can range from those born after 1977 to 1982 onwards or a more definite range, as in born 1981 to 1991. The author's preferred definition of the Millennial age range is those born 1981 to 1993 because it encompasses a group of people who were old enough to remember 9/11. The generation following the Millennial Generation has yet to be defined, but some claim the next generation begins with those born in the early 2000s.

Generational cohorts are largely defined by shared events during a particular time span. The impact of external events can change the trajectory of generations. For example, the Silent Generation is defined as the children of the Great Depression and World War II. These events made them trusting of the government, loyal, and indifferent. For the Millennial generation, events such as 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the recession of the late 2000s changed the world in which they came to maturity. While large in scale, these events also had an impact on the individual worlds of the generation’s members. The full effects of these events may not be seen or understood yet.
A generation can also be defined by engaging in the same behavior or activity. For Millennials, this activity would likely be the use of technology. Unlike previous generations, Millennials grew up using and being exposed to computers, cell phones, and other technological advancements. Computer and technology literacy is similar to language fluency—it is easier to learn at a younger age. People in this generation approach technology natively, while members of other generations had to learn the technology while already adults, making it more difficult to acquire the same skills. In a Pew Research Center study, when asked what defines their generation, 24% cited technology use as the distinctive factor of their generation (Pew Research Center, 2010, p. 5). This use has transformed the way people of this generation interact with one another. An estimated 75% have a profile on a social networking site (Pew Research Center, 2010, p. 25). Social networking has changed the way community is defined for this generation.

Millennials are the most diverse generation in United States history with 61% White, 14% Black, 19% Hispanic, and 5% Asian (Pew Research Center, 2010, p. 1). Subsequent generations will become increasingly diverse. Based on the millennial demographics, it is likely that the next generation will be the first without a white majority. Millennials are also defying other previous generational trends, such as getting married in one’s early 20s. Currently, only 21% are married, but 34% are parents (Pew Research Center, 2010, p. 12). Many Millennials are holding off on marriage because of their financial positions; others may just not value marriage as much, having grown up with divorced parents. The fact that many are still living with family members (47%) may prevent some from starting a family. Millennials are also the least religious generation, with 25% unaffiliated with any religion (Pew Research Center, 2010, p. 85). Politically, this
generation is largely Democrat leaning with 54% reporting as Democrat in 2009 and 62% in 2008 (Pew Research Center, 2010, p. 63).

Since coming into adulthood, many Millennials have faced difficulty in the workforce due to the economic downturn. As of 2010, 37% of Millennials are unemployed or out of the workforce (Pew Research Center, 2010, p. 2). Many are avoiding going into the workforce by staying in college longer. This is putting the Millennial generation on track to become the most educated generation in American history. 39.6% are enrolled in college (as of 2008) while 54% have at least some college. Even with the bleakness of their economic conditions now, the vast majority of Millennials (88%) are optimistic that they will earn enough in the future to live a good life (Pew Research Center, 2010, p. 40).

Many researchers focus on the character traits of the generation as a whole. These “common” generational traits have no statistical backing and are typically based on the perceptions of an older generation. The current debate among researchers is between two conflicting images: an altruistic and civic-minded generation or a materialistic and self-absorbed generation. William Strauss and Neil Howe, in their 2000 book *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, predict that the Millennial generation will have a strong sense of global and local community. Jean Twenge, in her 2006 book *Generation Me*, points to personality survey showing increasingly narcissism in this generation to construct her image of the Millennial generation as a materialistic and self-absorbed one. Surveys and studies have been gathered to make the case for each side, showing how difficult it is to construct one, complete image. Such characteristics cannot be applied to or representative of an entire generation.
Millennial Involvement and Engagement in Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations rely on the involvement and support of individuals in their community. There are multiple levels of involvement for individuals in nonprofit organizations, each requiring a different level of commitment. Some individuals could just attend their events or use their services. Others could volunteer regularly or just one time for the organization. Others may choose to support the organization financially, by making a donation themselves or fundraising on behalf of the organization. The spectrum of involvement in nonprofit organizations is wide and allows individuals to dedicate as much time as they see fit. Involvement is dictated by the individual, not the organization. Some opportunities may require an invitation from the organization, but the majority can be initiated without the organization’s consent or knowledge.

An organization can traditionally measure engagement by the number and amount of donations from an individual, the amount raised for an organization, the number of events attended, or the number of hours volunteered; however, this gives no indication of the people who have the interest but need an extra push to become actively involved. An organization has no way to measure how many friends an individual has told about the organization’s mission, how often an individual reads the newsletter, or how many posts an individual has liked or shared on Facebook. Because of this, it may be difficult for nonprofits to measure the level of engagement of certain groups while they may be able to gauge the involvement of the most traditionally involved.

Once organizations begin to rethink what engagement or involvement means for their organization, they will be better able to connect to current supporters, attract new patrons, and serve their constituents. Hopefully, organizations will be able to see the value
in targeting and engaging Millennial constituents, who are typically overlooked for the inability to give at higher levels or pay for multiple ticketed events. The following sections address how Millennials are becoming involved and engaged in nonprofit organizations through social media, volunteering, donating, and fundraising, and their preferences for these activities. These sections will also include discussion on how organizations can adapt to the changing technologies and expectations. The application of these concepts to arts organizations is addressed further to create a better understanding of the limitations of certain practices and how they can best be utilized for this generation.

**Applying a New Model of Donor Engagement for the Next Generation**

The traditional model used by nonprofit organizations to find, engage, and cultivate donors and other supporters is an orderly and linear process. The first step aims to bring in a large number of potential supporters at a low level of engagement through techniques such as direct mail or phone calls. After sorting through these potential supporters, the most promising are moved up the “pyramid” or “ladder” by being asked for larger and larger donations. Increasing efforts to engage an individual typically result in increasing commitments to the organization. Communications used are adapted to each level of engagement. The ultimate goal of this model is making the right ask at the right time for the right person—hopefully getting the largest monetary gift possible.

Julie Dixon and Denise Keyes (2013) believe this model is now outdated due to the advent of the Internet and social media. The point of entry is becoming increasingly complex, with more opportunities for an individual to be influenced by forces outside of the organization’s control. In “The Permanent Disruption of Social Media,” Dixon and Keyes
(2013) found that donor behavior and communications preferences have changed due to social media and that a new model needs to be adapted to reflect these changes.

For many fundraisers, social media has yet to be proven effective as a stand-alone fundraising tool. Increasingly, however, social media has become one of the main sources for gathering and processing information, especially for young people. Fundraisers view social media as part of the bottom of the engagement pyramid, believing it does not require much commitment of behalf of the individual. The ultimate goal is still to move the person who likes the organization on Facebook up to a major donor. The problem with this perspective is its lack of understanding of how people engage with organizations today (Dixon and Keyes, 2013).

Based on a survey conducted by Georgetown University’s Center for Social Impact Communication, respondents first become involved with supporting causes in five ways: donating money (40 percent), talking to others about the cause (40 percent), learning more about the cause and its impact (37 percent), donating clothing or other items (30 percent), and signing a petition (27 percent). These results demonstrate that people enter at various levels of engagement, which is not supported by the traditional model. The results also found that people are not necessarily progressing up to the next level of engagement but instead tend to remain at the level of the first engagement (Dixon and Keyes, 2013).

Social media is not necessarily a gateway for engagement, going against the donor-engagement models that place this activity at the bottom of the ladder. Only 9 percent of Americans first get involved by joining a cause group on an online social networking site like Facebook (Dixon and Keyes, 2013). This kind of engagement is often looked down upon for its low level of required commitment. People who engage only in social media
support of an organization are typically accused of “slacktivism,” based the assumption that the activity is a replacement for more traditional forms of engagement. The study found that these so-called “slacktivists” supplement donating and volunteering with promoting the cause through social media. It is more likely for people in this group to have first donated or volunteered with the organization and then engaged through social media—which is considered going down the “ladder” with the traditional model. All of these findings indicate that an individual’s engagement with an organization is not as clear as the traditional model indicates. People are engaging with the organization on multiple levels, not slowly moving up a “pyramid” or “ladder” (Dixon and Keyes, 2013).

Nonprofit organizations do not have to choose between only using traditional methods and only using social media. The most successful organizations integrate both online and offline channels and allow for two-way communication.

People are influenced by their friends and family, and they in turn also influence their friends and family—these factors are not within the control of the organization. A donor-engagement model should account for the peer-to-peer influence that most people experience and hold in high regard. According to Dixon and Keyes (2013), a model of donor engagement for this new environment would incorporate the following characteristics:

- Allows for a donor to be engaged at different entry points and to move easily between them during the life cycle of his engagement
- Has no fixed end point for a donor’s engagement
- Allows for the donor-engagement footprint to expand or contract in ways that are unique to and driven by the individual donor
- Places the donor’s needs—not the organization’s—at the center of the engagement
- Accounts for the influence of other people on the strength of the donor-organization relationship
Instead of the traditional pyramid of ladder, this model is best represented as a vortex, with the individual at the center. The vortex is expanded as the commitment deepens and as the individual is influenced by peers (Dixon and Keyes, 2013). The benefit of this model is that it destroys the hierarchy of engagement, which defined a person's contribution mostly by monetary giving. Activities, such as volunteering and promoting the organization through social media, are no longer considered bottom tier engagement, but instead valued equally to a financial contribution. Through this model, an individual's value lies in their ability to influence and share your organization’s cause with their network.

Bhagat et al. (2010) found that 36 percent of Millennials get information from their top charity through their website, 17 percent through social media, and 29 percent through emails and e-newsletters (p. 6). This finding supports Dixon and Keyes’ theory about the influence of the Internet and social media on donor engagement. The top information channels for Millennials are all based on the Internet, while only the eldest generation is still getting their information mostly through the mail.

The way people learn about their favorite charities is also changing. 27 percent of Millennial respondents learned about charities through mainstream media while 22 percent learned through word of mouth. Many Millennials become dedicated to their top charities early on in life, with 52 percent first learning about their top charities in childhood. This is significantly different from when other generations first learned about their top charities. 55 percent of Boomers and 68 percent of Matures (those born in 1945 or earlier) learned about their top charity in their thirties, mainly through the mail or mainstream media (Bhagat et al., 2010, p. 8).
Also in support of Dixon and Keyes’ theory, Bhagat et al. (2010) found that the first engagement with the organization is not always at the bottom of the traditional donor-engagement model, as was expected. For 42 percent of Millennials, the first engagement they have with their top charity is a direct donation (Bhagat et al., 2010, p. 9). This action is more likely to be the first engagement for all older generations, but there is still a large percent of Millennials engaging in this way. Visiting a website and attending an event were more prevalent among Millennials and Gen Xers, 27 percent of Millennials visiting the website and 19 percent attending an event (Bhagat et al., 2010, p. 9). When asked about how the individual believes they could make the most difference in their top charity, giving money was a smaller factor for Millennials, who preferred spreading the word, fundraising, or volunteering for the charity (Bhagat et al., 2010, p. 10).

Engagement at any level is beneficial to a nonprofit organization. It is important not to discount someone who only volunteers or only supports through social media at this point in time. If an organization values only those who make large donations, they are undervaluing their constituents, while sending the message that donation is the deepest level of involvement possible. An individual engaging at multiple levels is actually better for an organization, as this person is likely to have a higher investment in the cause. Many Millennials believe that they can contribute in more ways than just giving a donation. Encouraging them to act on this impulse will engage them with the organization and increase their interest. As mentioned previously, Millennials use social media at higher rates than older generations, making them more likely candidates to support your organization through social media. Having Millennial supporters share your organization’s
cause to their social networks can increase visibility and possibly result in gaining new supporters.

**Connecting with Millennials**

When examining the strategies for engaging and connecting with Millennials, the assumption is the internet is the key. While technology use is a large part of what separates Millennials from other generations, other traditional means of engagement, such as volunteering and donating, should not be ignored. Too often organizations equate their social media strategy with that of a “youth” strategy. This ignores the increasing prevalence of other generations also using social media to connect with organizations, and many times can be seen as pandering to a younger audience.

For Millennials, social media and the organization’s website are the first interaction they may have with the organization—their first impression. They may not know the organization’s reputation in the community or have any other knowledge of their work. Ensuring that the website and social media are clear, concise, and welcoming will lead to a well-informed individual.

Social media and technology is not only about content sharing, but also about relationship building. It is important to view social media as a two-way conversation—providing content, but also involving the audience. Social media can also act as a sounding board for new ideas or help your organization receive valuable feedback about what you are currently doing. Older and more established nonprofits may find it more difficult to adopt a social culture. By using social media, the organization is going to the younger people where they are, instead of asking them to come to you.
The Power of Social Media and Its Limitations

In early 2012, Invisible Children launched a 30-minute documentary on YouTube called *Kony 2012* about African warlord Joseph Kony. The number of views exploded, going from 50,000 the morning of the launch to tens of thousands later that day, and they kept growing. How could a video about an African warlord become so popular in just a matter of hours? The reason is that Millennials are the group’s main support base and the largest users of social media. Jason Russell, Invisible Children’s chief filmmaker, designed the video specifically for the target audience of teenagers and twenty-somethings using Facebook and Twitter. Before the video launch, Invisible Children had about 440,000 Facebook fans and now have about 3.6 million across all social media platforms. The internet is largely responsible for much of their exposure and support, with 82 percent of its funds coming from online donations (Suddath, 2012 Aug 30).

By the end of the first week, over 112 million people had seen the video and nearly 2 million visited the donation page within the first few weeks of the launch. The average donation size was $20. According to Richard Honack, a nonprofit marketing expert and professor at Northwestern University, “Baby boomers and most Gen Xers give to what they know: their churches, universities, maybe a cancer society. But [for] younger people, a buzz cause will come on, like the Haiti earthquake or Invisible Children, and they’ll donate money without even thinking about where it’s going. They just assume they’re doing something good” (Suddath, 2012 Aug 30).

This mentality can be dangerous for the nonprofit world. Organizations that are not fiscally responsible can receive a windfall of donations if they find a way to become the hip new cause, but may not actually do anything beneficial with the money. More established
organizations find it difficult to raise money in this same spirit since their cause and brand are well-established.

After Kony 2012, Invisible Children received well-deserved scrutiny and backlash about their financials and their ability to address the problem. With only 37 percent of the money going to direct services in Africa, many people began wondering what their donations were doing for the cause. The executives of Invisible Children even admit that they do not know how international aid works. A month after the launch, the Invisible Children poster campaign that the video promoted was a flop, with few online supporters turning out in person (Suddath, 2012 Aug 30).

The major achievement of Invisible Children’s video is not that it solved any of the problems feature in the video, but rather that it convinced the elusive, yet connected Millennials to give money. Invisible Children’s strategy is not one that many other organizations can or should use; their success is the exception, not the rule. While the video did get many views and convinced many to donate to their cause, it is likely that those people will never have much involvement with the organization again. As demonstrated, the online supporters had even forgotten about the cause one month after the initial hype.

Like the ASPCA commercials flashing images of sad-looking puppies and kittens while Sarah McLachlan croons in the background and briefly provides information about animal cruelty, the Kony 2012 video claims to be educating viewers about the problem, yet the emotional manipulation is quite apparent. The problem with this strategy is that it does not educate the potential supporters or make a case for further involvement past a one-time donation. This model does not create loyal donors or constituents. The donor gave because of what they felt at that moment, not what they think about the issue.
The exploitive technique used by Invisible Children could likely never be used by an arts organization, but this example does provide an interesting case for how to use social technologies. The appeal of arts organizations to its constituents is rarely an emotional one, but rather an intellectual one. Arts organizations can use videos to educate about their programs, promote performances, provide additional information, or make a call to action. It is not very likely that the video will get over a million hits like *Kony 2012*, but it can act as an introduction to the organization or pique interest in upcoming events.

**Social Media and Technology Use by Millennials**

The organization’s website is the most important to Millennial constituents. According to the Millennial Impact Report by Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates (2012), 65 percent of responding Millennials prefer to learn about nonprofits through their website (p. 6). The top places Millennials look on an organization’s website are the mission page, how donations are used or the impact made, volunteer opportunities, videos/pictures, and the events calendar (Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates, 2012, p. 7). It should also be noted that 77 percent of respondents said they have smartphones. With the increasing prevalence of smart phones, it is necessary for organizations to make sure their website is compatible.

Social media outlets are also important to many Millennials, but are not a substitute for a well-designed website. 55 percent of respondents preferred learning about a nonprofit organization through their social media (Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates, 2012, p. 6). Nonprofit organizations may be surprised by the lack of interaction they receive from those who like their page. According to the Nonprofit Social Networking
Benchmark Report by NTEN, Common Knowledge, and Blackbaud (2012), the average Facebook action rate (the number of likes and comments) is 2.5 for every 1,000 people who like the page. To put this in perspective, if an organization has about 20,000 likes for their page, they can expect about 50 people to interact with them regularly. Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates (2012) also support this lack of interaction. 67 percent have reported interacting with a nonprofit on Facebook. For the majority, this meant just liking their page on Facebook, while only 74 percent have ever liked a nonprofit’s post and 69 percent have used it to follow news and updates (Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates, 2012, p. 11). These survey respondents also said they would be most likely to share events, statistics, news, or volunteer opportunities from the nonprofit’s Facebook page if they were to interact. Many organizations have started asking supporters to check-in on Facebook or Foursquare. However, this may not be worth the trouble since 54 percent prefer not to check-in (Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates, 2012, p. 10).

Even fewer Millennials are interacting with nonprofits on Twitter, with only 28% having done so (Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates, 2012, p. 12). If they were to interact, they would follow the organization, retweet something about the nonprofit, or use a hashtag for a nonprofit event. Twitter allows for fewer interactions between the organization and the supporter. For this reason, many nonprofits focus on their Facebook page than their Twitter page. Little research has been done about other social media platforms that nonprofits may be pursuing in the future, such as Pinterest or Instagram. However, not all new social media platforms become popular, so the organization must decide if the website will be useful to them or if they should just let the
fad pass. Sites such as Foursquare and Google+, whose popularity has decreased over time, are examples of sites that could never gain a large enough following to become useful to nonprofit organizations.

It is also important to note that e-mail correspondence is still valuable to about half of the Millennials surveyed. The most important information from the e-newsletters was news and updates, volunteer opportunities, and information about upcoming events. However, this audience does not want to receive emails very often. If emails are sent out too frequently, they will automatically delete them.

**Volunteerism of Millennials**

Volunteering is typically a bridge between regular participation in the organization’s activities and making a donation to the organization. Those who volunteer for an organization are twice as likely to make donations (Millennial Impact). Many who are unable to give a financial contribution chose to make a contribution of their time and efforts. Since many Millennials are not in the financial position to make a sizeable donation to an organization, they volunteer instead.

In the Millennial Impact Report by Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates (2012), 63 percent reported volunteering for a nonprofit organization in 2011 (p.16). However, based on the Volunteering in America survey by the Corporation for National and Community Service (2012), only 21.6 percent of Millennials volunteered in 2011--the lowest generational rate with Generation X at 29.2 percent being the highest. Obviously, there is a noticeable difference between these reported volunteering rates. Volunteering in America used a sample of about 100,000 people while Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle,
and Associates (2012) used a sample of about 6,500. The rate of 21.6 percent may be a more accurate representation of Millennial volunteerism.

The most performed activities for Millennial volunteers were fundraising, general labor, mentoring youth, and preparing, distributing, or serving food (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2012). However, Millennials may not be satisfied with these volunteer activities. According to Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates (2012), Millennials want experiences where they can use their background experience, participate in event planning, serve on a board or committee, or do anything involving interaction. While they may wish to do these activities, many Millennials may not be willing to make the time commitment. 58 percent of respondents said they wanted to do short-term volunteering, while 46 percent said they preferred ongoing commitments (Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates, 2012, p. 17).

Of those surveyed, 20 percent were currently on a board, 24 percent were on a committee, and 13 percent were on a young board. Half of those surveyed were interested in joining a board or committee. For those not on boards, they cited lack of time, no invitation, or the expectation of a financial commitment as reasons for not participating in these leadership positions (Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates, 2012, p.20).

Organizations need to advertise their open opportunities if they want people to get involved. Even with the proliferation of technology, Millennials still hear about most opportunities from people, not social media outlets or other technology. 81 percent reported learn about opportunities through a peer, while 72 percent learned through email, 67 percent through a website, and only 55 percent through Facebook (Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates, 2012, p. 18). People who learn through these
technological outlets may be spreading the word to their friends, further emphasizing how connected this generation is.

Arts organizations do not typically have many volunteer positions available. Theaters may offer only ushering to all people, while offering board positions to a select few. Only 3.5 percent volunteer in sport/arts organizations and the majority of their volunteers are over 65 years old. Millennial volunteers are most likely to serve in an educational or youth-serving organization (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2012). To engage Millennial volunteers in arts organization, it may be beneficial to invite them to join the board, the young board, or a committee where they can feel they are using their background experiences.

Are Millennials Really Donating?

Philanthropy is an area in which organizations do not see the value of Millennial patrons. No matter how dedicated they are to the organization’s mission or how interested they are in supporting the organization, the fact remains that the majority of people aged 18 to 35 just do not have the expendable income to donate. While this generation is on track to become the most educated, they are typically leaving college with thousands of dollars in debt and their first jobs do not reflect their higher level of educational attainment. However, development is not only about securing gifts now; it is also about building the relationships that will lead to gifts in the future. When considering how an organization can involve this new generation, it is best to think of the interactions as building blocks.
According to a study conducted by the Center on Philanthropy (2008), Millennials give consistent with their income, education level, frequency of religious attendance, and marital status. After controls for income, marital status, race, education, region of country, religious attendance, and age of youngest child in household, there is no generational difference in total giving. However, the average gift size is obviously much lower for members of this generation compared to others. The reported average gift total for Millennial is $593 for secular giving. Nonprofit organizations should be optimistic about the future giving capacities of Millennials. The study found that charitable giving increases as education increases, and as stated before, this generation is attaining higher education at higher rates than all other generations. If this correlation remains true, Millennials are more likely to increase donations when their income levels increase.

Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates (2012) also reports more Millennial giving than what is generally expected. 75 percent of the responding Millennials say they made a financial gift to a nonprofit in 2011. This statistic may seem promising for nonprofit organizations, but as expected, the financial contributions tend to be on the lower side of giving. Over half of the respondents gave gifts under $100 (34 percent between $1 and $50 and 24 percent between $51 and $100), while 16 percent gave gifts of $500 or more. Financial donations are not how most of Millennials prefer to support their favorite organizations. The majority prefer to give time (47 percent), while many prefer giving both time and many (37 percent) and few prefer only giving money (16 percent) (Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates, 2012, p. 23).

As supported by the case with the *Kony 2012* video, many Millennials (42 percent) give to whatever inspires them at the moment. This can prove frustrating to many
nonprofit organizations that are used to having a relationship pay off after a certain period of time. But this spur of the moment giving does not mean the individuals are not interested in what their gift will do in the long-term. Respondents said that one of their biggest donor pet peeves is not knowing how the gift will make a difference. Millennials also find some of the traditional giving techniques to be a nuisance, such as a nonprofit telling how much they should give or getting long letters in the mail (Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates, 2012, p. 26). The successful solicitation channels that an organization can use for Millennial donors include email, phone, letter, or Facebook. However, the most effective solicitation channel is when a friend asks for money. This goes back to the idea that a new donor engagement model is needed because this generation is largely peer-motivated when it comes to giving.

Millennials are more likely to adopt the new ways of giving, with 70 percent reportedly giving their gift online while only 34 percent did so through the mail. However, this generation does not embrace all technologies that nonprofits have tried to implement in their fundraising. Some nonprofits see mobile giving as a new avenue that should be pursuing to get younger donors. Surprisingly, only half of Millennials would only consider giving using their smartphones, and only about 15 percent have done so (mostly via text). Millennials are also unwilling to give directly through Facebook, as some organizations have tried. The main reason for not wanting to is because of security reasons—they want to know that their gift is safely reaching the organization (Millennial Impact). This could also be one of the reasons why they have not embraced mobile giving. Millennial donors make donations through traditional donation channels as well. The most popular channels
include: making a checkout donation, through the website, through the gift shop, or a check by mail (Bhagat et al., 2010, p. 6).

Bhagat et al. (2010) are more conservative with their prediction of Millennial giving, estimating that 56 percent of Millennials give compared to the 75 percent reported by the Millennial Impact Report (2012). However, the estimate of giving ranges is similar to the ones provided by the Millennial Impact Report (2012) with 58 percent of gifts being less than $100, 28 percent being between $100 and $499, and 5 percent being $1000 or more. Organizations should have hope that this generation will give at higher rates in the future. This study estimates that an average Millennial donor gives approximately $341 total to causes they support and approximately $161 to their top charity. Even in the short term, increased giving from members of this generation is likely. A higher portion of younger donors plan to increase charitable donations (31%), compared to Gen X (24%), Boomers (17%), and Matures (8%).

**Millennial Arts Participation**

In the 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, more Millennials were eligible to take part in the survey than in any previous NEA survey. This survey represents the first information gathered about how Millennials participate in the arts, as compared to previous generations. The youngest participants were born in 1990, making them 18 at the time of the survey. However, the age ranges used are not entirely representative of all Millennials. The age range of 18 to 24 is a sample entirely of Millennials, the oldest being born in 1984, while the age range of 25 to 34 includes some Millennials, but also some Gen
Xers, as the eldest of this category were born in 1974. Both age ranges will be considered because of this cross-generational representation.

When examining the arts participation across all fields, 33 percent of 18 to 24 year olds and 36 percent of 25 to 34 year olds attended at least one “benchmark activity.” Benchmark activities include jazz, classical music, opera, musical plays, non-musical plays, ballet, and art museums/galleries, which were selected to facilitate the analysis of long-term trends. For perspective, in 2002, 36 percent of 18 to 24 year olds and 40 percent of 25 to 34 year olds reported attending at least one benchmark activity in the past year (National Endowment for the Arts, 2009). Overall, Americans born between 1935 and 1954 are more likely to participate in arts-related activities than those born since 1955 (Stern, 2011, p. 21). Arts administrators have noticed that the audiences are aging and younger generations are not filling those spots at the rates of previous generations.

Since the case studies presented later focus on nonprofit regional theaters, which present both musical and non-musical plays, the findings for those two benchmark activities are considered of the most importance. The 2008 study reports that musicals drew 17 percent of all adults, and non-musical plays drew 9 percent. In 2008, 11.1 percent of 18-24 year olds attended musical plays and 11.2 percent attended non-musical plays. 16.9 percent of 25-34 year olds attended musical plays and 17.2 percent attended non-musical plays. It is the popular assumption that theater audiences are filled with older patrons, and this is confirmed by the study. About 38% of the audience for non-musical plays is over 55, while about 35% of audience for musicals is over 55. The younger attendees do not go to the theater very often either. The average attendances for 18 to 34
year olds for musical plays were 2.2 and 2.4 for non-musical plays in the past year (National Endowment for the Arts, 2009).

The statistics presented in the 2008 National Endowment for the Arts study are useful for measuring current arts participation and audience make-up, but they are not necessarily predictors of future arts participation. It is undeniable that the audiences of multiple art forms are aging faster than the rest of the American population. However, in *Age and Arts Participation: A Case Against Demographic Destiny*, Mark Stern (2011) concludes that age and generational cohort difference account for less than one percent of variance in the total number of arts events that Americans attended. Age consciousness has penetrated our society to the point that one's membership in a particular generation is often cited to explain particular behaviors. This kind of thinking allows arts organizations to ignore the underlying factors of why people in these cohorts are not attending, and instead blame it on generational differences.

Stern (2011) believes that the diminishing of arts education in public schools may be responsible for the decline in arts participation. Though age and generational cohort are typically thought to act as a predictor, participation in arts lessons and classes is the most significant predictor of arts participation later in life. Long-term declines in the reported rates of arts learning align with a period in which arts education has been devalued in the public school system (Stern, 2011, p. 11). Other influences, such as educational attainment and gender, also have a much stronger role in explaining arts participation than age and cohort (Stern, 2011, p. 15).

The findings from this study suggest that age and cohort do not determine destiny. Just because the arts participation of Millennials is low now does not mean that they will
not attend more in the future. The ability of arts organizations to attract an audience has more to do with their ability to connect to their potential audiences than the membership in a generational cohort (Stern, 2011, p. 22). Arts organizations need to reach out to the Millennials that already have an interest in the arts, instead of dismissing an entire generation as unwilling to attend arts-related activities. People are most willing to try new activities when they are younger—it is the organization’s responsibility to convince them to try something new, and hopefully create life-long arts patrons.

**Nonprofit Theatre’s Approach for Millennial Arts Patrons**

Many arts organizations have already recognized the need to appeal to and attract members of the Millennial generation. In the city of Chicago, 27 percent of the population is between the ages of 20 and 34 (United States Census, 2010). Millennials are a considerable portion of the city’s population. Chicago arts organizations are already trying different tactics to get this cohort involved in their organizations, whether it is through leadership positions, discounts, or social media. Goodman Theatre and Steppenwolf are the focus of two cases studies. They are two of the largest theaters in Chicago and often find themselves competing for the same audience.

**Case Study: Goodman Theatre**

Goodman Theatre is Chicago’s oldest and largest not-for-profit theater. Under the guidance of Artistic Director Robert Falls and Executive Director Roche Schulfer, the Goodman has produced both classic and contemporary works. The Goodman Artistic Collective, a diverse group of outstanding theater artists, has given the Goodman an artistic
identity of richness and variety. The Goodman is dedicated to three guiding principles: quality, diversity and community.

Goodman Theatre was established in 1922. Originally located in the Art Institute of Chicago, the Goodman moved to its new location in the heart of downtown Chicago in 2000. Notable productions in the Goodman’s recent history include Artistic Director Robert Falls’ stagings of *The Iceman Cometh* starring Brian Dennehy, *The Night of the Iguana* with Cherry Jones and William Petersen, and his reimagining of Chekhov’s *The Seagull*. The Goodman is known for its annual production of *A Christmas Carol*, which is in its 35th year. Since Goodman Theatre is such an established organization, it can be difficult to change organizational practices. However, the Goodman has adapted their strategies for social media, ticket sales, and board membership to attract the Millennial cohort.

**Social media**

Social media has become essential for nonprofit organizations to use, not only as a promotional tool, but also as a way to connect with current and soon-to-be supporters. Goodman Theatre has a presence on multiple social media outlets, including Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, YouTube, and Foursquare. Madeline Wolfe acts as New Media Assistant for the organization, a position that did not exist two years ago. The creation of her position is representative of the Goodman’s commitment to utilizing new media to engage their audience outside of the theater environment. The Goodman’s main objectives with their social media use are two-fold. First, they want to give their audiences the feeling that their experience goes beyond the theater walls. Goodman Theatre’s Facebook page regularly features behind-the-scenes media, including photos, videos and blog posts; offers
ticket deals and contests; shares reviews and discussion topics pertaining to current and upcoming plays; and shares Goodman history for all who follow their activity.

The second objective is to hopefully encourage ticket sales. For example, when the Goodman posted a ticket deal for Teddy Ferrara in conjunction with the passing of the gay marriage act in the Illinois Senate, the ticket sales increased. The social media audience is younger and typically has less expendable income, so these ticket deals for their followers are helpful for their sales efforts. At the same time, Goodman Theatre also had a Twitter campaign and an active cast using social media to help spread the word about the show. Especially with younger casts, Goodman has found more and more that cast members will promote through social media, assisting them in their efforts. Through the use of Google Analytics, Goodman can now track the impact of their social media efforts on ticket sales. Google Analytics can tell an organization how many times a person came to your website and from where before buying a ticket. It may not be completely accurate since many people know use multiple devices and frequently switch between them. Additionally, Google Analytics relies on cookies, so it may not get an accurate read on someone if they clear them often. However, Google Analytics has been helpful for Goodman Theatre in figuring what people find interesting and where to optimize their resources (whether it is increasing social media presence or increasing internet advertisements).

When creating and planning posts for the social media outlets, Wolfe recognizes that their audience as a whole and their audience on social media are vastly different. If looking at Goodman’s audience as a whole (like most theatres across the country), they skew to the older side of the patron scale because they have a large base of long-term subscribers who have been with them for decades. Their audience on social media, however, tends to be
younger, with the Facebook audience tending to be older than that on Twitter. Overall, Wolfe tries to keep the content light and current, while also following social media trends.

At the time of writing, Goodman Theatre has over 20,000 likes on their Facebook page. Six percent of the users who liked their page are in the 18 to 24 range and 26 percent are in the 25 to 34 age range. Their greatest reach on Facebook is people in the 25 to 34 age range (30.5%). Of those who like their page, 29.5 percent of the people who are talking about their page are in the 25 to 34 age range (6 percent in the 18 to 24 range). Wolfe has noticed that on Facebook Goodman gets many “likes,” and a few comments, when they use visuals. They tend to get more comments when they ask short, direct questions, or ask people to wish a cast “break a leg” for an opening night. Many of these Facebook interactions tend to skew older, with a fair amount of Millennials in the mix (though they tend to be older Millennials rather than in the 18 to 24 range). A lot of Goodman’s followers who interact with them regularly are either avid theater fans or have been connected to the theater for quite some time. As their plays are typically for adults, Wolfe admits that younger audiences may not have had a chance to see much of their work yet.

Goodman’s Twitter has 7,250 followers, at the time of writing. For Goodman, Twitter tends to be where more of the conversation happens. They have avid fans that tweet before and after shows, and they tend to be younger people as compared to Facebook. About 11 percent of their Twitter followers are in the 21 to 24 age range and 38 percent are in the 25 to 34 age range. Wolfe believes that Twitter is a great tool for getting out quick bites of information. They also post much more frequently than they do on Facebook because content flies by much faster on Twitter. Wolfe tries to get into deeper conversations with patrons on Twitter as well.
Beyond the typically utilized social media outlets, Wolfe is experimenting with some of the lesser used ones. For their show Measure for Measure, they created a Tumblr to share bits of information about the show, or things that are inspiring to the show. Wolfe is also curious about how Goodman can use a new app called tapestry. Tapestry is an application that provides an interactive way to share photos. For Goodman, this app could be used to share short interactive pieces of art that could pique someone’s interest about a play. They are also curious about how they can use Vine, an app used to create six second video clips. Wolfe is experimenting with new ways to use their current social media outlets as well. For example, Goodman Theatre recently hosted a live tweet Q&A with director Robert Falls, in which many Millennials participated.

Ticket Discount Programs

Goodman Theatre is not currently experimenting with any Millennial-targeted ticketing programs, but they do have multiple ticket discount programs that Millennial patrons qualify for: 10Tix, Mezztix, and the Scene Subscription.

10Tix offers $10 tickets to students that are available at 10am each performance day. The seats are in the mezzanine and partial view boxes, seats that are typically not sold by the day of the performance. Mezztix offers half price tickets that are also available at 10am each performance day. These tickets are open to all; there are no age restrictions on who can purchase them. Like the 10Tix offer, the seats are located in the mezzanine level.

The Scene Subscription is intended for a young audience, but they do not place any restrictions on who can purchase the subscription packages. The subscription includes two plays in the Owen Theater and two parties for the price of $95. Adding events with a ticket purchase are a common tactic to appeal to Millennial age patrons.
The Scenemakers Board

Goodman Theatre has a board specifically for young professionals, the Scenemakers Board. The Scenemakers Board was established in the 1990s, and has seen several forms since, such as the Scenemakers advisory board and the Scenemakers council. The objective of establishing this board was to get a younger audience in the theater and create new leaders in the theater sector. In 2010, the board was reestablished as its current form. Brittany Montgomery is the staff contact for the Scenemakers Board, a position she has held for the past two years.

The Scenemakers Board is a relatively young board. Currently they have 18 members under the age of 35, with 27 total members. Though the membership dropped in its transition from council to board, the membership has increased since Montgomery has been there, fluctuating between 30 and 35 a year. The board typically tries to add five new members a year. The Scenemakers Board relies on referrals from board trustees, Women’s Board members, and other Scenemakers to increase their board membership. When one of them makes a referral, Montgomery asks that they bring the potential member to an event to see if they are interested in getting involved.

The Scenemakers Board requires a financial commitment from its members. Currently, individuals can participate at the board member level or the associate level. The major difference between these positions is the commitment from the individuals, both financially and time-wise. Board members are required to give a minimum of $250, with a $1,500 give/get. Associate members are only required to make a $75 contribution.

Montgomery has found that the most active members of the Scenemakers Board are typically older. For the younger members, one of the greatest impediments to their
participation is time. Many of them are early in their careers or have young families. Others are involved with many other organizations, requiring them to divide their commitment.

Many of the board members have positions at corporations, so they use their board leadership to fulfill their interest in the humanities. Beyond the Scenemakers Board, the current board members are involved in other arts organizations throughout Chicago, the Special Olympics, and other social welfare organizations. For some of the current board members, the Scenemakers Board is their stepping stone to their goal of getting a position on the Goodman Board of Trustees.

The current board members are most interested in events, in line with the findings of many Millennial studies referenced previously. They enjoy the opportunity to socialize through these events. Montgomery has found that event planning gets a high level of engagement from the board members because they want to make their mark on the events. For many, this is their opportunity to make an impact at the organization and engage their friends and colleagues in their philanthropic interests.

The Scenemakers Board has three main events, as well as their own event for each season opening. Their first event is a recruitment event, where the current board members are encouraged to bring your friends and see if they have an interest in the board. Their second event is an audience development event that tries to appeal to people who are interested in theater in general, not necessarily a leadership position. An example of this kind of event is Cocktails and Cacti, in which attendees paid $60 for a ticket to *Other Desert Cities* and a cocktail reception. Their third and final event of the season is The Scene Soiree, a fundraising event that supports the education programs. Last year was the first year for this event, and based on the success, they have decided to make it a signature, annual
event. It also motivated the board members to make the event even bigger. For this year’s event, they have already secured three large sponsors; last year, the event only had one. This is likely due to the board’s presence in the social pages of Chicago publications. Beyond these three events, the Scenemakers Board also co-hosts events with Board of Trustees and Women’s Board.

In the coming year, the Scenemakers Board plans to make some changes to their current structure. First, they are eliminating the associates position. And second, they are restructuring the Scene package. Montgomery found that the package was not bringing in the younger audiences they wanted. This issue is linked in part to the involvement of the older (in their forties) members. The older board members would sell the majority of the packages, and they were selling them to their colleagues, who were around their age. The new model for the Scene package will be more flexible, allowing purchasers to choose the dates they want to attend. The old package only offered tickets to shows in the Owen Theater, which typically only shows newer works, while the new package will add a popular show to the line-up.

Montgomery is encouraged by the strength of the current leadership. In the first year of the board’s current iteration, the Goodman set their fundraising goal as $15,000. Now, the board is responsible for a goal of $35,000. Montgomery hopes to continue this momentum and secure a larger membership, while increasing the board’s accomplishments, in the coming years.

**Case Study: Steppenwolf**

Steppenwolf was founded in 1975 by Terry Kinney, Jeff Perry, and Gary Sinise. The expanded ensemble included H.E. Baccus, Nancy Evans, Moira Harris, John Malkovich,
Laurie Metcalf, and Alan Wilder. Steppenwolf’s mission is to engage audiences in an exchange of ideas.

Since its inception, the company has expanded to producing plays that went on to receive national and international attention. In 1991, Steppenwolf built its current theater on North Halsted Street in Chicago. Steppenwolf now has a company that includes forty-three ensemble members, who do acting, directing, playwriting, and textual adaptation. One of their most notable productions in recent years is *August: Osage County*, premiering in 2007, which went on to Broadway and won five Tony Awards. Since Steppenwolf is a somewhat new organization, at least compared to Goodman Theatre, they have been able to take more risks in their programming and organizational practices. This is reflected in their social media, ticket discount programs, and young professionals board.

**Social media**

Steppenwolf has a social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Foursquare. Brenna Kearney acts as Social Media Content Coordinator for Steppenwolf. Steppenwolf’s objective with their social media is to stimulate conversations with our followers and encourage them to have conversations with each other through their social media platforms. They want to be able to engage our followers like their audience members in the lobby of the theatre. For Steppenwolf, social media is not a platform for just pushing out information; social media is for a two-way conversation. Steppenwolf wants their followers to feel like they want to hear from them—they want to hear about experiences at shows and their experiences with Steppenwolf as an institution.

Kearney considers the Millennial audience when creating posts for Facebook and Twitter. She noticed there is a wide age range, especially on Facebook. The older followers
are most interested in ensemble information. Millennials are also interested in ensemble information, but are also very interested in individual shows and Steppenwolf as an organization, or even as a potential employer. There is an aspirational element to Millennials when it comes to Steppenwolf. Millennials, however, are more likely to engage with them on Twitter than the older followers. They also are more likely to tag Steppenwolf on Facebook or Twitter. The older followers are more likely to comment than younger followers, and they like to share their Steppenwolf experiences from the last 30 years.

Steppenwolf has a little under 20,000 likes on Facebook. Of these “likes,” 15 percent are in the range of 18 to 24 years old and 25 percent are in the range of 25 to 34 years old. The reach of Steppenwolf’s posts is 20 percent 18 to 24 year olds and 39 percent 25 to 34 year olds. For those talking about Steppenwolf on Facebook, 17 percent are 18 to 24 year olds and 31 percent are 25 to 34 year olds.

Currently, Steppenwolf has a little over 16,000 Twitter followers. Kearney finds Twitter to be just as useful for Steppenwolf to use as Facebook. She uses Twitter to engage one-to-one with followers, which is much harder to do with Facebook. On Twitter, she tries to communicate mostly individually, having conversations with followers. Facebook gives people a chance to share their experiences both with Steppenwolf and other followers. Twitter allows Kearney to discuss an experience with a Steppenwolf follower and to get them to expand on it. In terms of other social media platforms, Steppenwolf is focusing their efforts on these two platforms at the moment, but they may pursue others in the future.
**Ticket Discount Programs**

One of the greatest barriers for younger individuals to go to theater performances is the price. At Steppenwolf, the lowest ticket price for a weekend season performance is typically around $50. For any person under 30, a night at the theater would be considered a pricey night out. Understanding this problem, Steppenwolf has created the RED card program. The program, restricted to people in their twenties (21 to 29 years old), offers the deal of six tickets for $100 to be used at any performance. The purchaser is able to “recharge” their RED card and get an additional six tickets any time.

The RED program is new to Steppenwolf, having started in September of 2012. The program stemmed out of their commitment to fostering a multi-generational audience. In the past few years, they have placed a particular emphasis on growing their Millennial audience. Steppenwolf has performed qualitative and quantitative research to understand Millennials’ perception of their organization, and figure out how they can improve that perception. The end goal is to increase Millennial representation in their audience. Based on their understanding of Millennial characteristics, they developed the RED program to be easy to use, affordable, social, and noncommittal. Millennials are less likely to commit to a traditional subscription series because it does not allow choice and flexibility. With the RED program, cardholders can select whichever show they want to attend, how many people they want to bring, and when they see the show, all at their own convenience.

Steppenwolf also offers RED card subscribers additional perks, such as a dollar off any drink, invitations to special events, and two-for-one tickets offers. In March, Steppenwolf hosted a free late-night party in their Garage Theatre. The event featured a DJ, free drinks, and a performance by Salonathon, the first act in their new late-night series. In the future, Steppenwolf plans to offer restaurant discounts to RED card members.
Steppenwolf has about 320 RED card members, with about ten refills as of their third subscription show of the season. When they first announced the RED program, they got more interaction on social media than ever before. Many said that it was “innovative” or that they “hit the nail on the head.” Many also thanked them for making theater affordable. For their most recent subscription show, *The Motherf*ker with the Hat, over 300 RED members booked tickets, a larger Millennial group than any previous Steppenwolf subscription show. After this trial year, Steppenwolf will be evaluating how the RED card program has increased the number of Millennials in their audience and their frequency of attendance.

Beyond the RED program, Steppenwolf offers student discounts to performances, which some Millennials may be eligible for. Tickets are $15, but buyers are limited to two tickets per order. They also offer a student subscription package which provides tickets to all five season plays. The cost per show is $24, half the price of a normal subscription, but actually more expensive than the RED card.

**Young Professionals Board**

Steppenwolf’s Auxiliary Council was established in 2000 to develop a young demographic of supporters and future leaders for the theatre. The founder of our Auxiliary Council, Nora Daley, is now the Chair of Steppenwolf’s Board of Trustees. Currently, Kaleigh Lockhart is the staff contact for the board. Though Lockhart does not keep track of the exact ages of Auxiliary Council members, she estimates there are around 40 members under the age of 35 on their board of over 100 members. The size of the board has fluctuated from year to year. During the recession, the membership decreased, but it is gradually building back up to its previous numbers.
The Auxiliary Council has two membership levels: Associate and Governor Members. Auxiliary Council Associate and Governor Members are responsible for paying membership dues, which are, in fact, annual gifts to the theatre. The Associate level members are required to make a gift of $75 and the Governor members are required to make an annual gift of $250; neither is responsible for any separate individual fundraising. Lockhart has considered a “give/get” requirement for the Council, but it has not been implemented. Governor members are also asked to purchase a $250 VIP Ticket to their fundraising event, The Red or White Ball.

The Auxiliary Council attracts young people who are looking to expand their social circles and build new professional networks. New board members are typically acquired through word of mouth, social media, and membership recruitment events. Most of the members have philanthropic interests in theatre and arts education, but many have a wide range of interest and are involved with other junior boards, as well. Lockhart believes that most members will not pursue a board of trustees position in the future. However, those who have been very involved and hold currently or have held previous leadership roles may.

Lockhart believes that working with a volunteer group is always challenging no matter the age. She works with both the Auxiliary Council Board and the Board of Trustees and the same challenges occur in both groups. To avoid such challenges, very focused, concise and clear communication is critical and can effectively alleviate many common challenges with these types of groups.

Auxiliary Council members are most interested in social opportunities, such as events, hands-on volunteering, and behind-the-scenes theatre access that their position
allows them. The Auxiliary Council recently hosted their 10th Annual Red or White Ball in support of Steppenwolf’s nationally recognized arts education program, Steppenwolf for Young Adults. The event has raised nearly $1 million since its inception.

Comparing Strategies

The strong institutional structure of Goodman Theatre informs their young professional board’s practices and their social media policy and strategy. This level of organization makes these programs seem more successful in terms of benefiting the organization. Steppenwolf’s strength is in the uniqueness of their ticket discount program, the RED card. With its direct targeting of Millennials, the organization is clearly considering their organizational future to be in the hands of the next generation. When compared against each other, the strengths and weaknesses of the Goodman’s and Steppenwolf’s programs become apparent.

Goodman’s Scenemakers Board creates a greater level of involvement for its board members. With over 100 board members, Steppenwolf’s Auxiliary Council cannot give each board member a high level of responsibility. The “give/get” policy for the Scenemakers Board gives members the responsibility of fundraising for an organization while also making a commitment themselves. Those who become a part of the Scenemakers Board are more likely to make a commitment to future board member positions because they are learning how to be an effective board member now. The Goodman clearly prefers having these more committed members as they are getting rid of Associate level positions. The Auxiliary Council seems more like a social commitment for those at the Associate level.

In terms of ticket discount programs, Steppenwolf has the upper-hand in appealing to a Millennial audience. Their RED card program is targeted specifically at this
demographic, and they have already had some success with the program. Though Goodman Theatre has yet to debut their new Scene Subscription package, it is likely that it will perform better than their previous program in terms of getting younger audiences in to the theater. Younger audiences prefer flexibility and the ability to choose. Adding a more popular show will also likely attract more people to the purchasing the package. Generally, most theater-goers do not want to see only unknown works; they want to see something recognizable, as well. The Goodman may need to lower the price of the Scene Subscription if they want stay competitive with Steppenwolf. The RED card is a much better deal for Millennials who only have to pay $100 for six tickets to any season production; Scene Subscription holders are currently paying $95 for only two shows in the less-costly theater at Goodman.

Though the RED program is an interesting and appealing idea for arts organizations to adapt, the program may not be beneficial for the organization in the long run. Because the tickets are dramatically cheaper than regular season ticket prices, having too many people purchase these discounted tickets could decrease revenue on a show. For example, if someone uses their six tickets to see a popular show where the lowest ticket price is $50, the theater would be losing a minimum of $200 from that purchaser. Surprisingly, the RED card program tickets are cheaper than the student subscription package—something that may seem unfair to students who have less income than people in their twenties. Steppenwolf is likely relying on potential long-term benefit. They may believe that creating this relationship with the Millennial theatre-goer now makes it more likely for them to buy full price tickets when they are no longer qualified for the program.
In terms of social media, it is difficult to determine which organization has a better strategy. Steppenwolf may have a better strategy for Twitter, by interacting with all who tweet at them. But, the Goodman has a much more analytical approach that will measure the effectiveness of their actions on social media. The effectiveness of their social media strategies lies in the objective of their social media use. For Steppenwolf, the objective is just to engage; for Goodman, the objective is to engage and sell tickets. The Goodman has a much more measurable objective in selling tickets, so it may be easier for them to determine whether or not their strategy is working.

Overall, the strategy for most nonprofit organizations when trying to attract and engage Millennials is to add a social aspect to their organization’s offerings. This can be seen in both Goodman Theatre’s and Steppenwolf’s strategies. The social media for both organizations attempts to engage the followers in a conversation and get their feedback, something that organizations were not able to do ten years ago. With subscription packages, the organizations are both adding a social aspect in the form of an event. With the young professionals board, both are focused on holding events in support of the organizations’ education programs. With greater evaluation of and alterations to their current strategies, Goodman Theatre and Steppenwolf will be able to find the best way to attract the elusive Millennial generation.

**Conclusion**

The study of millennial arts participation and involvement is an underdeveloped area with a great potential to expand. Because of the ways in which nonprofit track donors, few organizations can provide exact evidence of the giving of certain age groupings. In the future, if more organizations keep track of donor age in their databases, researchers can
produce accurate statistics of generational giving rather than estimations or speculations. This tracking also applies to ticket buyers. Few organizations are tracking the ages of their audience members, and are instead relying on surveys.

The most compelling research about the Millennial arts participation and philanthropy will occur when the generational cohort is in their forties, fifties, and sixties. This should be the prime age for participation and giving, based on the trend of older individuals giving and participating at higher rates. These studies will also confirm or disapprove the current commonly held belief that this generation will participate at lower rates than previous generations.

The Millennial Generation, while similar to previous generations in many ways, is defined by their technology use. This is a generation of native-technology users and it has become ingrained in the way they interact with others and live their lives. Arts organizations must understand this about the people of the Millennial generation to connect and engage with them in a meaningful way. Many of these adaptations are not just appealing to the Millennial cohort; older generations will find benefits in an organization engaging with them on different levels, such as responding to their post on Facebook or inviting them to spread the word about their organization’s work. Once arts organizations determine the best practices for attracting and engaging this generation and implement these practice, they will be able to secure the patronage of the Millennial cohort. And then they can start working on attracting and engaging the next generation of arts patrons.
**Bibliography**


Appendix: Questions for Goodman Theatre Case Study

Board Involvement

When was the Scenemakers Board established?

What was the objective in establishing the Scenemakers Board?

Has board membership increased since it was first established?

What attracts people under the age of 35 to the Scenemakers Board?

How do you get more members to join?

What are the board members' philanthropic interests?

What activities seem to interest the members most?

Do you believe that many of these members will pursue a position on a board of trustees in the future?

What are the difficulties of working with a board of younger members?

What are the most recent accomplishments of the Scenemakers Board?

If you know any of the members under 35 who would be willing to be a part of my research, I have included some questions for them:

How did you get involved with Goodman Theatre?

Why did you join the Scenemakers Board?

Are you a member of any other boards? If so, which boards?

What has been the most rewarding experience for you from your involvement in the Scenemakers Board?

What are your thoughts on the requirement of a financial contribution?

Social Media

What is the objective of using social media for Goodman Theatre?
Do you think about Millennials (people aged 20-35) when creating posts for social media or the audience as a whole? If so, how do you incorporate that into what you post?

Based on your experiences, how do Millennials interact with Goodman Theatre through social media? (For example, are they more likely to post on your wall, like photos, or tag that they are there, etc.)

What percentage of Facebook "likes" are in the 18-24 and 25-34 age ranges?

What percentage of Facebook "reach" are in the 18-24 and 25-34 age ranges?

What percentage of Facebook "talking about this" are in the 18-24 and 25-34 age ranges?

Do you find Twitter to be as useful as Facebook for nonprofit organizations?

What other social media outlets do you want to pursue or further develop in the future?
Appendix: Questions for Steppenwolf Case Study

Ticket Programs

For how many years has the RED card been offered?

What was the motivation for creating the program?

How many people purchased the RED card this year?

How many recharged their RED card this year?

If this is not the first year, has the number of RED members increased?

What special discounts, events, or other perks were offered to members in the last year?

What has been the feedback from the RED campaign? Has the number of young audience members increase?

Board Involvement

When was the Auxiliary Council established?

What was the objective in establishing the Auxiliary Council?

Has board membership increased since it was first established?

What attracts people under the age of 35 to the Auxiliary Council?

Are members required to make a financial contribution? If so, how much?

How do you attract more members to join the Auxiliary Council?

What are the board members' philanthropic interests?

What activities seem to interest the members most?

Do you believe that many of these members will pursue a position on a board of trustees in the future?

What are the difficulties of working with a board of younger members?

What are the most recent accomplishments of the Auxiliary Council?
If you know any of the members under 35 who would be willing to be a part of my research, I have included some questions for them:

*How did you get involved with Steppenwolf?*

*Why did you join the Auxiliary Council?*

*Are you a member of any other boards? If so, which boards? How is the experience different than the Auxiliary Council?*

*What has been the most rewarding experience for you from your involvement in the Auxiliary Council?*

*If financial contribution required: What are your thoughts on the requirement of a financial contribution?*

**Social Media**

*What is the objective of using social media for Steppenwolf?*

*Do you think about Millennials (people aged 20-35) when creating posts for social media or the audience as a whole? If so, how do you incorporate that into what you post?*

*Based on your experiences, how do Millennials interact with Steppenwolf through social media? (For example, are they more likely to post on your wall, like photos, or tag that they are there, etc.)*

*What percentage of Facebook "likes" are in the 18-24 and 25-34 age ranges?*

*What percentage of Facebook "reach" are in the 18-24 and 25-34 age ranges?*

*What percentage of Facebook "talking about this" are in the 18-24 and 25-34 age ranges?*

*Do you find Twitter to be as useful as Facebook for nonprofit organizations?*

*How do you change your strategy for Twitter, compared to Facebook?*

*What other social media outlets do you want to pursue or further develop in the future?*