

What does this mean for your practice? It means that client interaction doesn't always happen in your office. If you want to engage with millennials, you need to be where they are — online. Make sure your website is user-friendly and regularly updated. Incorporate online appointment requests, customer portals, digital forms and multiple contact options. Respond to emails as quickly as you do to phone calls.

Perhaps most important, your practice should have a strong presence on social media. This is one of the best ways to engage millennials (and internet-savvy pet owners of all ages). People use networks such as Facebook to talk about their experiences, both favorable and unfavorable, with businesses. They ask online friends for recommendations when looking for a new veterinarian. They also share details of their daily lives, with their furry friends being a favorite topic.

Pay attention to relevant trending topics. For example, last year a video of a cat frightened by a cucumber went viral. A slew of similar videos followed, along with articles explaining the behavior and warning about the stress that these stunts create in animals. At the time, veterinarians were inundated with questions about what actually frightens cats and why. Be ready to join in the conversation online and discuss these topics in your office.

The Millennial Mindset

Millennials are more financially, conscientious, informed — and sometimes misinformed — than their parents and grandparents. They tend to research online before visiting a veterinarian, and they are likely to enter your office with very specific ideas about what is ailing their pet and how it should be treated. How can you connect with this unique and increasingly important generation?

- Offer natural treatments. Over half of pet owners in this age group will try natural and holistic remedies before turning to conventional veterinary treatment.² They appreciate the availability of herbal medicine, therapy as an alternative to surgery, nontoxic flea treatments and similar offerings.
- Focus on preventive care. In previous generations, “healthy” was a rather vague concept. While most baby boomers would define health as “lack of illness,” millennials have a broader definition,³ one that includes diet and exercise. They extend the same focus on wellness to their furry and feathered family members.
- Choose food carefully. Seven in 10 millennials prefer to feed their pet food with natural ingredients,² and most worry about contamination. Stay up-to-date on the latest trendy brands, because these clients expect you to be able to recommend the best one. If you board animals, be sure to provide (at least optionally) organic, human-grade, non-GMO, all-natural foods and treats. Bowls and toys should be free of BPA and other potential toxins. Also, be aware that this group tends to be environmentally conscious, so eco-friendly green practices are important.
- Use multi-platform marketing. The majority of millennial consumers use social media daily, access the internet from multiple devices and interact with brands online.⁴ They use the internet to research, so they appreciate educational content. In addition, they are more willing to share advertisements that seem

authentic, but they dislike promotional materials that appear deceptive. Offer quality, sharable content that can be accessed on any size device screen.

- **Provide an interactive experience.** Engagement is about two-way communication. Millennial consumers are looking for active discussion; they will not be happy if you lecture them or passively listen. They appreciate openness and friendliness among your staff, and they expect replies when they comment on Facebook posts. About two-thirds of millennials would like more ways to share their opinions and interact with brands.⁵

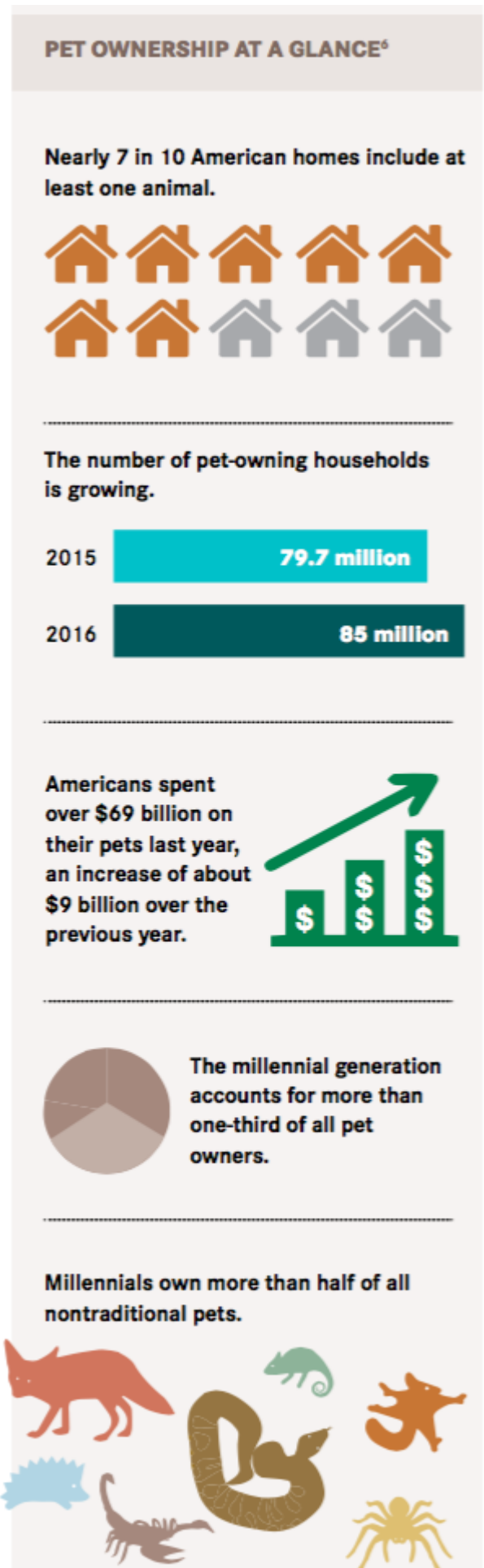
Conclusion

If you aren't marketing to millennials and making an active effort to engage them, then you are missing one of the most important sectors of your market. These consumers are looking for good value, good quality and a high level of engagement. Most of all, they are looking for someone they can trust with their most precious family members.

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