

## [savvy special report]

By Beverly Smirnis

# Get to Know “Trophies,” “Onlines,” & Generation App



Technology and the recession are significant variables dividing the millennial generation. In

fact, Rebecca Lindland, founder and consultant at [rebeccadrives.com](http://rebeccadrives.com), spoke on the topic to a group of auto dealers at a recent auto show I attended while wearing my other hat — that of an auto journalist. I'm always fascinated by the similarities between the automotive and homebuilding industries, particularly when it comes to demographics and buying habits. For example, Lindland noted that car buyers are concerned about affordability, and more shoppers are being pushed toward used inventory. She said consumers are doing more research online and visiting fewer dealers in person. Does any of this sound familiar?

And here's an interesting note: 61 percent of buyers who recently purchased or leased a vehicle said their most recent purchase experience was the same or worse as previous purchases. Could auto dealers be guilty of putting focus on enticing them online but faltering in simplifying in-person processes and experiences? On their list of top annoyances: filling out paperwork/contracts, negotiating price, dealing with a salesperson, searching

inventory, valuing their trade-in, and applying for financing.

So, what did Lindland have to say about those millennial minds we are all trying to understand? She started by defining the “Trophy Generation,” born between 1978 and 1988. The oldest among this group was 8 years old when the internet became available to the public. “Trophies” were hugely impacted by 9/11 and the 2008 Great Recession, which hit when they were 20 to 30 years old. As parents, Trophies seem to be more like their own parents, the Boomers.

Trophies:

- Were coddled and protected by “helicopter parents.”
- Seek experiences rather than possessions (live for the moment).
- Include their children in major life decisions.
- Are image-conscious, motivated, and optimistic.
- Expect instant gratification.
- Embrace diversity.
- Are not responsible for failures. (Everybody gets a trophy!)
- Are environmentally conscious.
- Are tech-savvy.

When it comes to vehicles, according to Lindland, Trophies seek an

“aspirational” brand but are open to brand resurgence and new brands. They value “in-your-face,” statement-making design and technology. In their teens and young adult years, Trophies wanted premium Hummers and Audis. Today, they still want Audis and have added Tesla and Land Rover to their list of favorites. Delivery and service experiences are critical to loyalty; the vehicle must be “responsible for itself.”

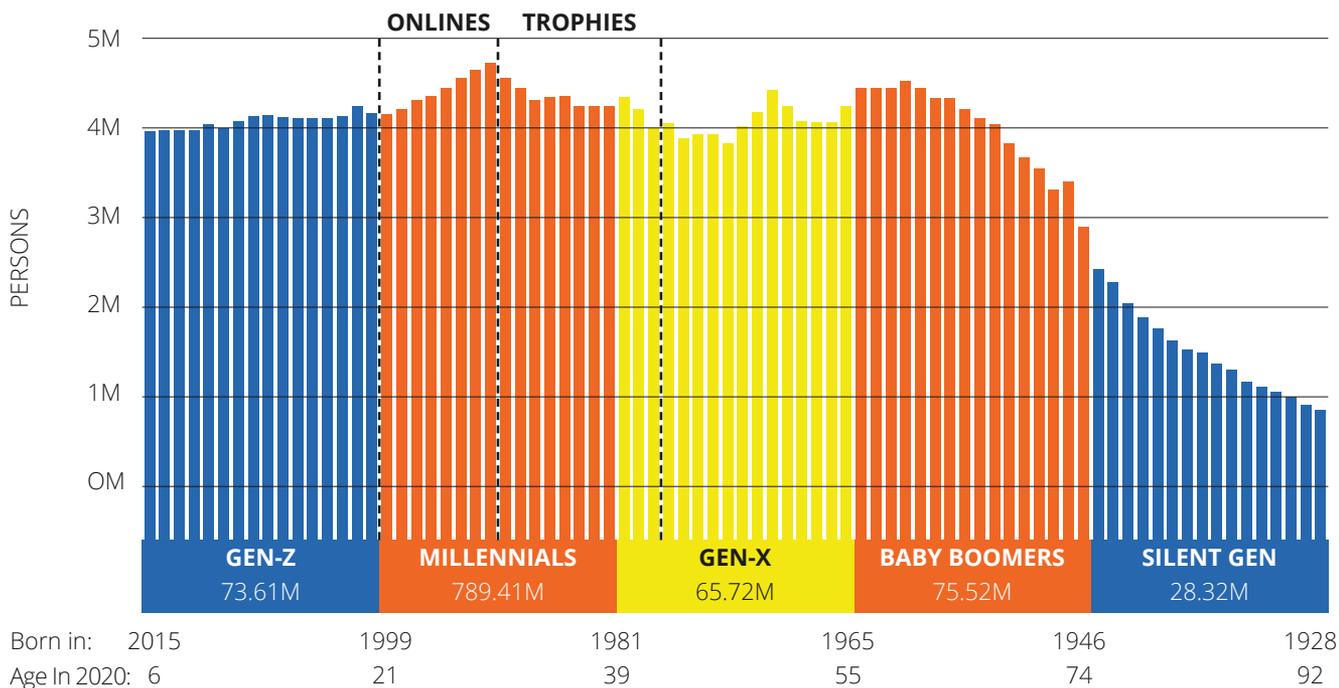
### **The homebuilder take on the Trophy Generation:**

- Focus on the sales and delivery experiences.
- Staging and merchandising are important; sell the life experience.
- They'll look for killer home designs with high-tech bells and whistles — things that impress and make life more convenient. (Life is not supposed to be difficult!)
- Low maintenance is a must; they'll expect someone to remind them and perform it for them. (Sell or refer maintenance services.)
- Wow the kids; remember, they're part of the decision-making process.
- Build your brand.

Younger millennials in the “Online Generation,” as Lindland calls it, were born between 1989 and 1999. While they

# Total U.S. Population by Age and Generation

(as of December 2015 per Viz of the Day by Tableau Public)



share many characteristics with the Trophy Generation, the post-recession years during their young adulthood had a more lasting effect on them. Many grew up in comfortable lifestyles that were abruptly halted by the Great Recession and its aftermath. They are confident yet cautious, with an eye toward authenticity; they are willing to put off a full-time career for life experiences and stamps in their passport. The Online Generation is ambivalent about vehicles and is the first generation not defined by car ownership. Technology is their ticket to freedom; Uber and Lyft are a way of life. They are quick to adopt shared mobility models and ready to embrace autonomous vehicle technology, with Tesla reigning supreme as their favorite brand.

## The homebuilder take on the Online Generation:

- If your marketing is not online, get ready to retire. Don't rest on brand longevity, either; the new guy has an

equal chance.

- Remember that buying a house isn't at the top of their priority list; talk up the investment upside/resale value. These are not emotional buyers.
- Don't try to push them toward the highest end or most amenities — they will fear getting in over their heads.
- If they don't have children, don't assume they want to.
- Don't expect them to embrace today's mainstream housing product; for one, they may not want a garage.
- They may embrace mid-century modern because this generation spent more time with their grandparents, Lindland says.

## What's Next?

Like the Onlines, Generation App (aka Gen Z), born after 1999, has a combination of baby boomers and Gen Xers as parents. While Gen Xers treat kids like friends and indulge their every whim, Boomers are more strict and traditional parents, which makes this

generation difficult to generalize. This generation is causing the most disruption and angst for marketers because their mindsets are diverse, splintered by the broad age range of their parents and influenced by technology now adopted in months and years instead of years and decades. Generation App has no recollection of life before smartphones, the internet, social media, and Uber/Lyft. Steve Jobs is a historical figure to them — the oldest in this group was 12 when he died in 2011. *What will we build for them?* ▼

*Rebecca Lindland's demographics expertise and Beverly Smirnis' veteran homebuilding industry experience are a powerful combination! Contact us about training your sales and design teams to understand and anticipate the buying habits of today's and tomorrow's homebuyers by emailing [thesavvylist@gmail.com](mailto:thesavvylist@gmail.com).*