



millennial pulse
2017 SPECIAL REPORT



Millennials are crowdsourcing

YOU

How companies and brands have the chance to do what Millennials think they can't do themselves

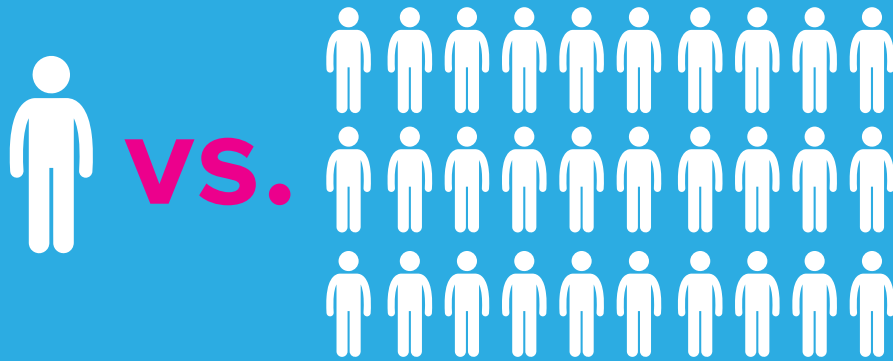


Be the crowd.



Millennials are counting on you.

You're probably used to thinking about crowdsourcing as something *you* do with consumers, and that's usually true. But we uncovered a new kind of crowdsourcing. In this case, **you are the crowd.**



Millennials want you to help with sustainable actions because they're savvy enough to know that while they have the **power of one**, you have the **power of many.**

METHODOLOGY:

The Millennial Pulse questionnaire was designed by Shelton Group and fielded in June 2017. We surveyed a total of 1,000 Millennial respondents, using members of Survey Sampling International's online panel of more than 3.5 million U.S. Internet users. The survey sample was stratified to mirror the U.S. Millennial distribution, using quotas for geography, age, gender, education and race; data were weighted slightly to match U.S. Millennial population distributions. Margin of error is +/- 3.1%.

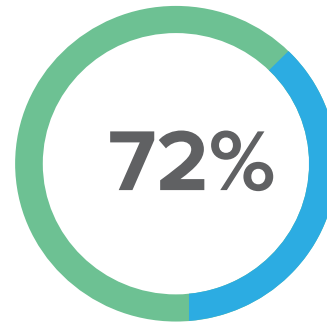


You know Millennials may not trust you ...

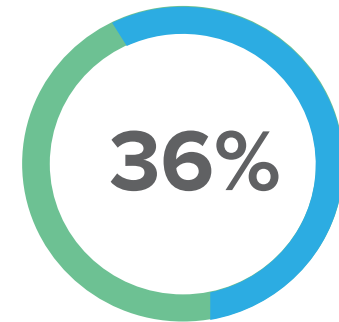
You've been told Millennials aren't loyal to brands. That they don't trust what you tell them.

And that's true ...

When asked, "How would you characterize your feelings about information provided by companies regarding their environmental or social/business practices?"



72% are neutral/
skeptical



Only 36% place their
trust in companies

But that's not the end of the story.

It turns out that, despite their skepticism, **YOU are Millennials' best source for making sustainability happen in their lives.** And sustainability is something that really matters to them.



...but are all Big Guys
bad guys?



Are you thinking, “**But my brand isn’t one of those crunchy, all-about-the-green brands**”? The good news is, that matters less than you might think.

43% of our Millennials could name a brand they trust when it comes to their environmental and social/business practices.

And some of them might surprise you.

Among their top mentions were the brands you already know have this halo:

patagonia



But we saw some brands that you might not expect.



Walmart ✨

Wait, aren’t some of these companies the “bad guys”? Perhaps ... but they’re also Big Guys. **And Millennials see Big Guys as a potential source for good in the world.**

Millennials believe their future (and the future of their children) is in trouble.



Climate change is an especially scary issue for Millennials.

I'm concerned about how climate change will impact ...

76%

My quality of life

82%*

My children's quality of life

*of those who have children

How significant is that?



Well, by comparison, only 52% of Millennials believe in God.¹

For a slightly less controversial comparison:

In 2016,

63% of Millennials

46% of all other age cohorts

claimed to be anxious about climate change.²

¹<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/23/millennials-are-less-religious-than-older-americans-but-just-as-spiritual/>
²Shelton Energy Pulse 2016. Percentages include U.S. and Canada respondents.

They know they can't fix this problem alone.

Our previous studies have shown that Millennials are significantly less likely to be engaged in *easy* sustainable behaviors than all other age cohorts.

Recycle newspapers, cardboard, aluminum cans, plastic bottles, etc.

Millennials
34%

Overall
52%

Bring own bag(s) when shopping

Millennials
37%

Overall
50%

Adjust thermostat settings to save energy

Millennials
33%

Overall
54%

They're even **7% less likely** to drink water from reusable containers instead of disposable plastic bottles!

But why is that?

To be fair, many Millennials may not be as concerned about personal actions because they feel the problems are too big to solve this way.

59%

of Millennials look to companies to solve problems they feel they can't address (or would rather not have to).



"Environmentally/socially responsible companies take care of these things for me (which frees me up to focus on other things)."

"I prefer to purchase from companies addressing problems I feel that I can do little to address on my own."

"Why do a company's environmental or social/business practices impact your purchase decisions?"



And that's where the
crowdsourcing comes in.

Millennials have decided to harness the
power of big companies to maximize
their own positive impact on the world.

They need **you** to be their partner in sustainability.



A company's approach to sustainability has a big impact on whether Millennials choose to purchase from that company.

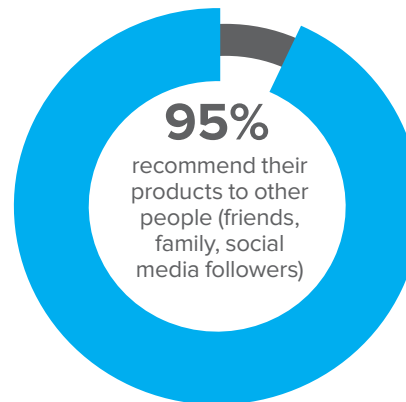
What impacts your purchase decisions?

77%
say a company's social and/or business practices

70%
say a company's environmental practices

The money they spend with your company represents their personal form of activism. That decision translates to **increased profits** for companies that earn their trust and become part of their "crowd."

When Millennials trust a brand's environmental and social/business practices ...



Every brand has a chance to build trust when it comes to sustainability.



So how can **YOU** be part of **Millennials' sustainability crowdsourcing?**

Make sure you're taking care of your people.

In the people-planet-profit triad of sustainability, the people factor really matters to Millennials. As they evaluate companies and make purchase decisions, **their most important sustainability criteria is employee treatment.**

It's the top thing they want to know about, and the last thing they want you to get wrong.

What are the two **worst things they could learn about you?**

Imagine you've recently purchased a new phone that you've been telling your friends about, and you learned the next week that the manufacturer was guilty of some of the following. Which would be the worst things to learn?

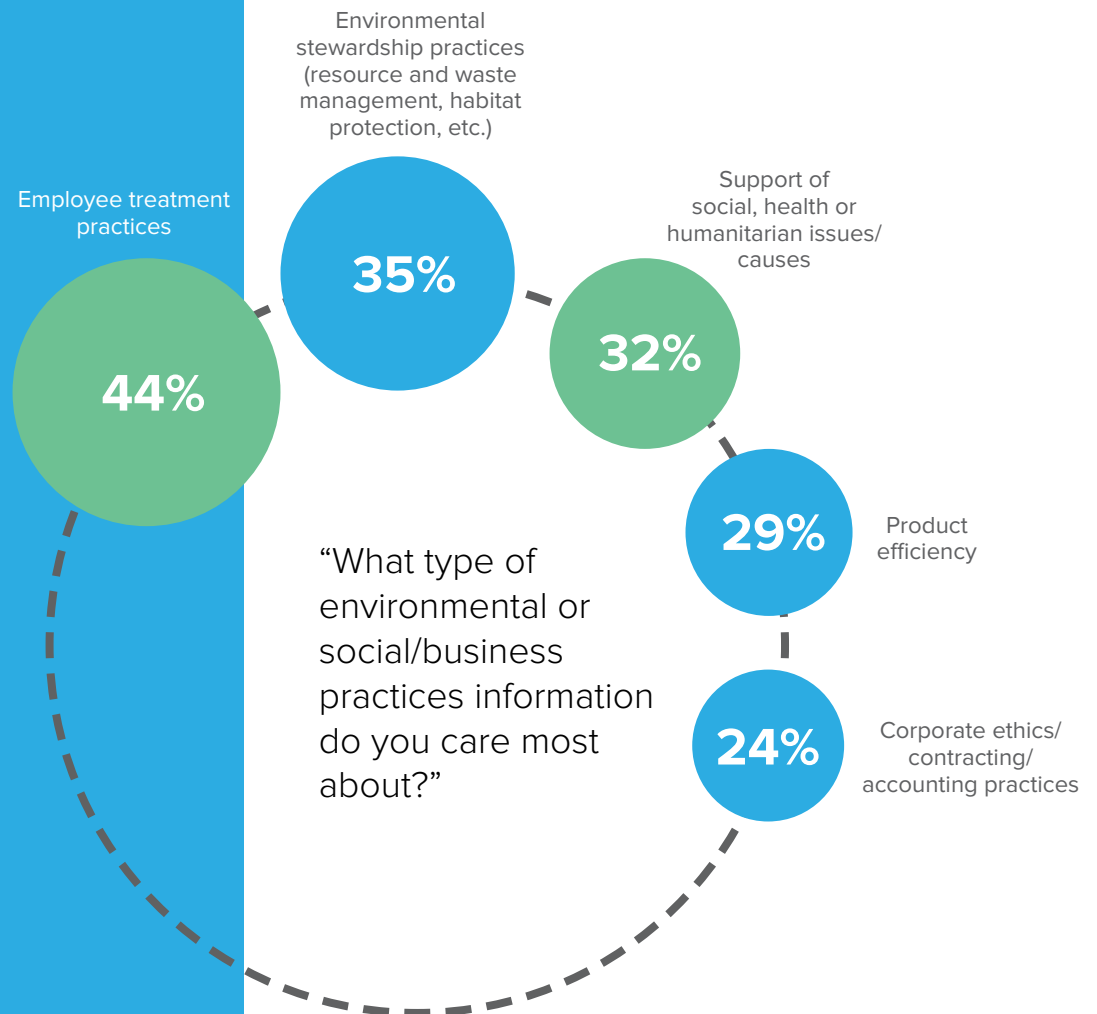
The top two answers:

Treating employees poorly (low wages, benefits, etc.)

20%

Using child labor in developing countries

32%



Consider your product: *how personal is it?*

Sustainability issues are the most important for products that are “in me” and second-most important for products that are “on me.”



We asked:

For what kinds of products or services do you research a company's environmental or social/business practices?



THE TOP 3 ANSWERS:

Food or beverage (“in me”)

40%

Clothing, shoes or fashion accessories (“on me”)

34%

Personal care/cosmetic/toiletry items (“on me”)

32%

Take ownership of how your company impacts the world around it.

This is one of the most meaningful areas in which you can practice transparency and overcome Millennial skepticism about your company.

81%

seek information about a company's environmental or social/business practices at least occasionally.



We live in a digital world where everyone can easily research and discover almost anything, and Millennials are quick to research you, anytime, anywhere.

What are they looking for when they do that research?

What are the top 3 things a company could do to overcome skepticism regarding its environmental or social/business practices?

Address the environmental problems inherent in the manufacture of the products they make

32%

Pay their workers a living wage/offer benefits

32%

Correct and admit past wrongdoing and apologize for it

27%

You have to practice what you preach. *Just saying it isn't enough.*

We wanted to know WHY Millennials trust the brands they trust when it comes to sustainability.

The top 3 reasons:

1. The company's environmental practices (actions)
2. They perceive the company as honest/trustworthy/genuine/ethical
3. The company's engagement (actions) in social issues

So actions really do speak louder than words.

NAME IT, ←
→ CLAIM IT
and detail your
efforts to fix it.

If done well, this process overcomes Millennial skepticism, creates trust and nurtures brand preference.

DOES THAT APPROACH WORK?

It absolutely can.

Remember: 43% of Millennials could name a company they trust when it comes to their environmental or social/business practices.

They're listening. Carefully.

So talk to them about what you're doing for sustainability ... and do it on *their* turf.



Keep in mind there's a difference between what Millennials consider to be sources they *could believe* and their *actual* sources of information.

Believability

When asked, "Choose and rank the top three ways that you *could hear about and believe* a company's environmental or social/business practices," the **top 3 answers were:**

40%

Through TV or print news coverage

33%

Word of mouth – from my friends/family/work colleagues

32%

Through a joint announcement with an independent non-profit group

Actuality

But when we asked how they had *received* information about a company's environmental and social/business practices, the **top 3 answers were:**

37%

Social media post

36%

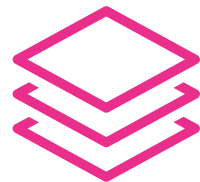
Facebook ad

33%

YouTube ad

"Public Social Media Sites" doesn't make the top 3; it clocks in at

27%



Social media and YouTube?

These are NOT the sources they said they could believe! Only 26% actually received info via network news.

Even though they didn't choose social media as a top choice for information they could believe about company sustainability information, it's still where they go most often. And let's be honest. Millennials don't spend hours each day in front of a TV or newspaper, they spend hours on their smartphones. That means **you have to be there too.**



Now you're ready to be part of the crowd.

So many aspects of Millennial behavior are misunderstood. **We should no longer claim that “Millennials are too lazy to do it themselves.”** Now we know the truth.

They are firmly committed to sustainability, and their global perspective has given them a new tool to make it happen: companies, big and small, have more power than they do as individuals. They're ready to put their money where their goals are, and you can help them meet those goals.



No matter your industry, if

YOU

PRACTICE SUSTAINABILITY

in ways Millennials can see, they'll include you in their crowdsourcing.

AND TOGETHER,
YOU CAN USE YOUR

POWERS FOR GOOD.

About

Shelton Group is the nation's leading marketing communications firm focused exclusively on energy and the environment. If you're trying to build a brand around energy responsibility and sustainability – or sell products that minimize environmental impact – we understand your marketing challenges like no one else. www.sheltongrp.com

What We Know

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Efficiency & Conservation
Corporate Sustainability
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What We Do

Strategy
Creative
Custom Research
Pulse Studies
Inner Circle Consulting

Want to know more?

Custom branded content is a powerful sales tool, by the way. If you'd love to put a custom report like this in the hands of your marketing or sales staff, [contact us](#) to see what we can do for you, from strategy and research to writing and design.

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