GENERATION Z ENGAGEMENT GUIDE
EMBRACE THE FUTURE OF THE GAME
1. What We Believe
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At the USTA, we celebrate an open format – the idea that anyone from anywhere should be able to play and compete equally and fairly in a sport that is inclusive and welcoming to everyone. This is the principle behind the US Open. It is also the driving force behind our Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, which is designed to grow and promote tennis to the next generation of fans, players and volunteers and to make sure that the face of tennis reflects the face of our country. To do that, we are removing barriers and creating opportunities wherever we can so that tennis becomes a true reflection of all people in America.

Our mission is to position the USTA and the sport of tennis as the global model for diversity and inclusion in sports. The first step in this mission starts right here.

This guide is designed to help you connect with a key segment vital to the growth of tennis: Generation Z. You will learn about Generation Z’s demographics and history with tennis, as well as steps for engagement and coaching success stories. With your help, we can make sure the game of tennis remains relevant and is passed on to the next generation of players. This is only the beginning, a way to get the conversation started. Our hope is that with this information, you will be able to better engage with the Generation Z community in a meaningful and productive way.
SUMMARY OF GENERATION Z

Following in the footsteps of the millennial generation, the so-called Generation Z is loosely defined as those that were born between the years of 1994-2010. Generation Z makes up 25% of the U.S. population, and by 2020 will account for 40% of all consumers in the U.S. Also known as iGens, Generation Z is the first generation to grow up and spend their entire adolescence in the age of the smartphone. Technology is not the only thing that separates Gen Z from previous generations; they are unique in the way they choose to spend their own time, how they behave and in their attitudes towards social norms. They interact in completely new ways and want different things from their leisure time, careers and lives in general. With this in mind, it is crucial to understand the differences in characteristics and behaviours of each generation in order to successfully engage and market to them.

As may be predicted, Generation Z would rather have a digital conversation than a real-life discussion in many instances. In the same light, iGens prefer to consume their information in the same way, thus the reliance on social apps. Gen Z possesses a multifaceted approach to social media. They are particularly skilful at fragmenting their social media time; they share certain types of content on certain social channels. For example, they often save their more aspirational content for Instagram, while using Twitter solely for news. However, this time spent on social media and technology has resulted in less time spent with their friends in person. This may explain why as a generation, they are experiencing unprecedented levels of anxiety, loneliness or depression. In fact, 69% of Generation Z would rather have their own workspace than share it with someone else. Such characteristics must be appreciated and seized upon by a marketer looking to target Generation Z.

KEYWORDS ASSOCIATED WITH GENERATION Z

Tech-Innate
Realists
Private
Future-Focused
Digital Natives
Independent / Self-Reliant
Opportunities for Generation Z to Play Tennis

Using Tennis to Tackle Childhood / Teenage Obesity

In the United States, the percentage of children and adolescents affected by obesity has more than tripled since the 1970s; nearly one in five young people aged 6 to 19 years is considered obese. This is a large percentage of Generation Z. Despite this, it is important to note that due to the internet boom, Gen Z-ers have had full exposure to the benefits of keeping fit and healthy. This provides a great opportunity for tennis as a sport to target Generation Z by providing a means for keeping active while positively impacting the high levels of childhood and teenage obesity across the U.S.

“Generation Z will know much more about healthy lifestyles, from a very young age, than any previous generation. Having a health-aware generation means a great future for the fitness and wellness industries.”

– Denise Villa, CEO, Center for Generational Kinetics

INDIVIDUALISTIC TRAITS OF GEN Z

One of the strong outlined characteristics of Generation Z-ers is their comfort with keeping themselves to themselves. This individualistic trait ties in perfectly with the sport of tennis. Generation Z was scored lowest for being described as a team player when compared to both previous and future generations. By targeting those with such individualistic attributes, there is a great opportunity to welcome newcomers of this age to the sport. Generation Z is constantly looking for individuality, which can be achieved and provided through playing tennis.

Alternatively, this point can be flipped on its head by promoting the benefits of being part of a social tennis club or after-school tennis group. The sport can be an attractive proposition for someone looking to strengthen his or her teamwork and social skills. The opportunity lies in using tennis to create higher levels of self-esteem and inclusion within schools for those certain Generation Z age groups.

Using tennis as a means to generate real-world skills such as being a team player will be of great interest to many young people soon to be finishing school and starting their careers.
PROMOTING LIFE SKILLS
Point three ties in well with the previous information. There lies great opportunity to use the sport of tennis as a beacon for positive skills and mindsets that can be championed later in life. By instilling certain skills obtained from tennis, such as hard work, persistence and discipline, as a sport we are able to engage further with Generation Z, thus positively impacting participation.

ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS THROUGH TENNIS
It is widely documented that Generation Z is the smartphone generation; today's teenagers are more sheltered than previous generations. The shift corresponds with the mainstreaming of smartphones around 2012. Studies have found that spending more time on social media correlates strongly with lower levels of happiness and higher feelings of loneliness, levels of depression and risk of suicide. This provides tennis with a unique opportunity to change the lives of these teenagers and young adults. Participating in tennis offers a great opportunity for Gen Zs to get away from their smartphones and make meaningful, healthy relationships face to face.

THE TENNIS INFRASTRUCTURE IS THERE
The United States has an estimated 250,000 courts to accommodate over 30 million Americans who either play or have expressed interest in tennis. One limitation within the sport is having the appropriate courts to enable people to play. That said, it is evident there is impressive infrastructure that is ready and waiting to be taken advantage of. These courts across America are available to the up and coming Generation Z to use and benefit from. By promoting the availability of these facilities, not only does it express an opportunity for new players, but it also improves upon regular participation within the sport.
For example, sharing a series of 30-second tennis educational videos on Instagram can engage and teach this generation. This will create not only interest, but also useful knowledge that will attract new participants to the sport.

TARGETING THOSE IN SCHOOL / COLLEGE

Gen Z consumers are aged between 2 – 19; this covers the full spectrum on the schooling system. With this in mind, there lies a huge opportunity to create meaningful partnerships with various schools to generate and create interest within the sport. If we are able to secure their interest in tennis in the early stages of their lives, they will be far more likely to remain in tennis later in life. By holding after-school tennis lessons, parents of younger children will benefit from the activities as well as the children themselves channeling their extra energy into tennis.

SUBSIDIZED LESSONS / EQUIPMENT / SCHOLARSHIPS

One particular reason why widespread participation in tennis is difficult to achieve is the need for equipment. In comparison to football, where you need just one ball and a few objects for end zones, tennis requires a degree of financial commitment for courts, racquets and further equipment. By funding subsidized lessons and equipment across America, this will decrease the financial barriers that some young people may have, thus allowing them to experience the sport.

IDENTIFYING THE CORRECT SOCIAL PLATFORMS TO TARGET GEN Z ON

In order to encourage and maximise tennis participation within Generation Z, it is imperative that we understand exactly where it is they consume their information and where they spend their screen time. It is widely accepted that in comparison to Millennials, Gen Z communicates more in images and video, rather than text. This is a key understanding, as they must be targeted in places like Snapchat and Instagram, as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are less important in their lives. Once the correct platforms are identified, content can be curated to match.
LOYALTY SCHEMES / REWARDS / INVITE A FRIEND

Tennis Industry Association (TIA) President Greg Mason, previously stated that the key to sustained growth in this sport is to keep creating ‘core’ players, who will be on the court more frequently, take lessons and buy equipment and apparel. Core tennis players, defined as those who play 10 or more times a year, account for an estimated 90% of total expenditures in the sport. With this in mind, it is pivotal that we are able to encourage and entice players to return. By using loyalty schemes, such as offering free lessons or discounted equipment as a reward for repeat business, we can begin to turn average tennis players into ‘core’ players for life.

YOUTUBE TENNIS TUTORIALS

As in any industry, education is key and having free access to that education is even more vital. This could range from warm-up drills to trick shots and even key stretches tennis players should adopt. As previously discussed, it is important to understand where this content will be consumed. 70% of Gen Z watches two hours of YouTube per day, watching twice as many videos any other demographic. This is an opportunity to grab the attention of Gen Z in an effort to inspire new tennis players.

BITE-SIZE EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

When it comes to Gen Z, seconds count. As Dan Schawbel of Millennial Branding described this in a New York Times piece: “We tell our advertising partners that if they don’t communicate in five words and a big picture, they will not reach this generation.” This expertly summarizes the way in which content should be distributed in order to boost tennis participation. The average Gen Z has an eight-second attention span, which is ironically the same amount of time that Snapchat videos run. By creating fun, engaging and, most importantly, short educational videos, we are able to obtain maximum attention from Gen Z on the message we are trying to relay.
You can learn a lot from watching what others have done. The following stories highlight the great work and best practices from a few different organizations.
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CHALLENGE
Reaching and staying connected with Gen Z youth is the greatest challenge. Emails and Facebook are no longer effective. Finding and encouraging them to try your program or even participate in a fun and social tennis event is not easy. Traditional methods of engagement are not effective.

APPROACH
Incorporating tennis into the mass events that have significant numbers of Gen Z youth proved to be a very effective strategy – we chose music festivals. If it’s there and easily accessible (short courts, low-compression balls, racquets of all sizes, fast-paced and upbeat music, friendly instructors), Gen Zers will be more likely to try tennis or watch their friends. There is a good chance they will film each other and share their fun experience with others, thus creating buzz and interest for doing it again.

Considering the short attention span of Gen Z youth, the activity they engage in has to be unique and memorable. Once the connection is established, you have a chance for longer engagement.

“TO GET THE SHARE OF MIND OF THE GEN Z YOUTH, YOU HAVE TO BE UNIQUE AND MEMORABLE!”

HOW IT WORKS
Stage of Aces is free for all festival-goers on a first-come, first-served basis. Guests have the option to play with a friend, an instructor or another festival-goer, with play capped at a few minutes to maximize participation. Since there is nothing more fun than games, we run our popular Ace of the Stage games at set times throughout the day, with guests competing against each other to win prizes and be crowned the Ace of the Stage!

RESULTS
This new approach was tested in 2017 during two different events. The first one was Northside Music Festival in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, attended by 120,000 people. Having a tennis court at the event was a hit! Over 1,000 people stopped by and gave it a go. 50-60% of the first-time players were Gen Z youth. On average, they played for five minutes before passing the baton to the next eager visitor.

The second event was the Governor’s Island Family Festival, which attracted 10,000 people. The model was similar – offer low-dosage instruction, make it a fun and compelling experience and have materials about other events and programs in the area for those interested in playing again.

This quote from one of the first-time players summarizes sentiments of many Gen Z youth: “Wow, I didn’t know tennis was that much fun!”

KEY LESSONS LEARNED
• Bring tennis to the events that have high percentages of Gen Z youth
• Consider similar activations at high schools and on college campuses
• Make playing easy and enjoyable for guests of all skill levels
• Make the experience unique and memorable
• Encourage knowledge sharing
• Have information about follow-up play opportunities
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TASK:
Attracting Generation Z to the sport of tennis and keeping them interested. How do we motivate Generation Z? How do we get through to them?

CHALLENGE:
This group has a short attention span which translates to difficulty listening and difficulty focusing. Another challenge of this group is that they want instant results and are extrinsically motivated with the concept of, “If I do this, what will you give me?”

TEACHING THE TEACHERS

APPROACH TO GETTING GENERATION Z INVOLVED:
Have a very positive coaching style by reinforcing the good things students are doing and then making any adjustments. This generation likes to feel appreciated, so give out rewards for good play and effort (even something as simple as stickers) and create situations for success. For example, the red-orange-green progression fits this generation well. Having a game-based approach to teaching keeps the kids of the generation more engaged while they learn. It allows them more success on the court from an earlier age and is good for their short attention spans.

LESSONS LEARNED:
There are many ways to attract this generation to tennis by supplementing off-court events creating ways that pair tennis and fun.

- Use social events as a hook; kick-off and wrap-up events work well to create excitement
- Use rewards to incentivize players
- Focus on rewarding good behavior
- Cultivate team environments
- Partner tennis with brand activations
PUTTING YOUR PLAN IN PLACE

Here are five simple steps to follow as you kick off your plan.

**Step 1: Find an idea you are passionate about**

Now that you are inspired and motivated to reach out to Gen Z, find an idea that you and your CTA, local organization and sponsors can get excited about and commit to.

*For example, there might be a community-based organization that has a program that Gen Z might be interested in volunteering for. Eventually, because of that experience, they may want to start up a program themselves.*

**Step 2: Find a local partner**

- Start with your USTA contacts. Share your plan and have them connect you with other USTA people and resources
- Reach out to Gen Z-focused organizations and offer tennis as another activity
- Partner up with an organization or facility where you would want to run your program
- Bring tennis to events that Gen Z youth are already attending (music festivals, concerts, street fairs, etc.)

**Step 3: Formalize your plan and develop activation elements for your launch**

Now that you have your plan and your partner, it’s time to formalize everything.

- Create a budget
- Define your milestone
- Determine ways to track your success
- Design and distribute your activation elements

*Knowing how Gen Z youth like to communicate, talk with your partners about how to best get the word out. The right target technology is critical. For example, Facebook may not be as effective with Gen Z as Instagram and Snapchat.*

**Step 4: Execute and have fun!**

Now that you have everything in place, it’s time to make it happen. Remember there is trial and error. Have fun and play some tennis.

**Step 5: Track, monitor, course correct and share**

As you build your program, keep track of your successes and share your learnings. Sharing your experiences with other CTA’s and partnerships will help grow the game of tennis with Gen Z youth.
PARTNER UP

Having a partner in the community in order to get started is an important first step. Start internally and work your way out and you’ll be well on your way to becoming an important part of the community yourself.

Use social media to connect to Gen Z youth and share your events. Use multiple digital platforms with the heaviest focus on Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube to spread your message and share videos, photos and announcements.

Find non-celebrity influencers who connect with Gen Z-ers and can help spread the word about tennis in general and your program in particular. YouTube is the best platform for tennis tutorials from drills to trick shots.

Post fliers on Bulletin Boards.

Engage Gen Z youth on college campuses through events, message boards and play days. Consider setting up an outdoor viewing of the Battle of the Sexes movie and then have a tennis play day right after.

Connect with your local chamber; many may have begun outreach efforts to reach a younger audience and offer events focused on Gen Z youth.

Start up “Sets In the City” chapter, set up local tennis meet ups

Setup mini nets inside shopping malls and encourage Gen Z youth to try.

Join forces with established meetup events that attract Gen Z youth to offer tennis as a trial. Offer loyalty programs/rewards to encourage continued participation.

Partner with organizers of various events that attract a lot of Gen Z youth (music festivals, street fairs, etc.).
The following information shows current demographics for Gen Z youth, including population trends, geographic locations, age, income and education. While the Gen Z community has grown significantly, it’s important to understand the different influences in your community. (For sources: See page 15)

**IMPORTANT GROWTH ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

**2012**
- **U.S. POPULATION**: 325,719,000
- **GEN Z POPULATION**: 69,000,000

**PROJECTED 2020**
- **GEN Z POPULATION**: 2,600,000,000

**ORIGIN**
- 56% Non-Hispanic White
- 15% Non-Hispanic Black
- 22% Hispanic
- 5% Asian American
- 2% Other

**GEN Z LIKES SCREENS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Streaming Device</th>
<th>MP3 Player</th>
<th>Desktop</th>
<th>Tablet</th>
<th>Gaming Console</th>
<th>TV</th>
<th>Laptop</th>
<th>Smartphone</th>
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<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOCIAL MEDIA USERS**

- 95% YouTube
- 69% Instagram
- 67% Facebook
- 67% Snapchat
- 52% Twitter
- 37% Google+
- 33% Pinterest
- 29% Tumblr

**BUYING POWER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$44 BILLION BUYING POWER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71% spend 3+ hours/day on their smartphones using online video (tv, movies, videos online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52% spend 3+ hours/day on messaging apps</td>
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<tr>
<td>51% spend 3+ hours/day on social networking sites</td>
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</table>

**2020**
- **US POPULATION**: 325,719,000
- **GEN Z POPULATION**: 69,000,000

5.7% say there are other ways of getting a good education than going to college

75% more likely than the general population to connect with brands through social networking sites

59% influenced by celebrity endorsements when considering whether to buy a product
Gen Z is the biggest and most culturally and socially diverse generation.
Keep this in mind when planning programming.

Gen Z gender differences:
Males are more likely to be persuaded something is cool by friends, while females are more likely to determine something is cool based on how it makes them feel. ¹

Gen Z is connected.
Use social media to spread the word and offer prizes if people invite others to your event, share on social media or tweet about your event or programming.

Gen Z is largely still living with their parental units.
Find ways to attract parents and Gen Z students to your programming. Families may prefer lunchtime or after-work events and shorter spans of time or flowing schedules that they can adapt to their lifestyles.
Reflect the community. Have Gen Z engaged in your events, ask them to spread the word and ask for their advice on how to get others in their demographic engaged.

Gen Z likes to multitask.
Keep them engaged by offering multiple activities alongside programming, and include music and rewards.

“Team sports are the coolest and most common way for Gen Z to connect IRL, and serve as the antidote to tech-overkill. Teens love sports for their teamwork, competitiveness and the relaxing outlet they provide.” ¹

¹ References: https://storage.googleapis.com/think/docs/its-lit.pdf
Looking for more ways to connect with the Gen Z segment? There are probably many organizations and groups you can reach out to right in your own community. The following are just a few outlets worth considering.

**ORGANIZATIONS & SOCIAL MEDIA**

- Local youth groups and after-school programs
- **youtube** www.youtube.com
- **twitter** www.twitter.com
- **instagram** www.instagram.com
- **snapchat** www.snapchat.com
- **facebook** www.facebook.com
- **pinterest** www.pinterest.com

Sources for information on page 13

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