

*Improving the lives of women and girls
 through programs leading to social
 and economic empowerment.*

## Soroptimist International of the Americas

**Generation X: Communicating and Marketing Soroptimist**

Generation Xers want respect—they are not “slackers” as often noted. They’re self-directed, flexible, adaptable, and technology literate. Because they were bombarded by advertisements in their youth, Gen Xers are savvy about marketing and skeptical about the “hard sell.” They can easily spot a fake message or an over-promise.

Presenting our mission and the facts of what Soroptimist clubs accomplish will be compelling to this audience. Messages should make clear the benefits of joining as well as the expectations of membership. Gen Xers want things mapped out: they like it when they hear, “Do this and you’ll get that.”

To ensure truth in advertising when communicating and marketing Soroptimist to Generation X, follow through on the promise of the Soroptimist brand. A brand is the total sum of what an organization does and what value that brings to the public. For Soroptimist, our brand is what we do for women and girls. Our Dream Awards—the Live Your Dream Award and Dream it Be It—help women and girls in concrete ways. That’s who we are and that’s what we should be known for. All club activities should back up the promise of our brand.

Check out these other tips to communicate and market Soroptimist successfully to Generation X:

Before marketing to new members, it is important for a club to gauge its attractiveness to prospects by performing an assessment, or “health check.” Just as we sometimes take our own health for granted, clubs also tend to take their health for granted. An assessment can provide invaluable insights into a club’s health by identifying strengths and weaknesses —and opportunities for improvement. A sample club assessment is available in the membership section of the members area of www.soroptimist.org.\*

The best way to communicate with Gen Xers is through email. Baby Boomers may not be as comfortable with email and Millennials may see it as antiquated, but for Generation X, it’s the most efficient and preferred way to convey information. Texting is also an option for conveying a short message, as they’ve embraced smartphones as a way to stay connected. When a prospective Generation X member gives you her cell number, ask if you can text her about the next upcoming event.

Because Gen Xers prefers to connect by email, someone should be checking your club’s email address—and doing so frequently. This is another vital link between your club and prospective members. With approximately 1,800 visits to the SIA website every day, it’s important that prospective Generation X members have a way to connect with your club at the local level. Instructions for accessing and using the club email are available at www.soroptimist.org.\*

Gen Xers do well at social events—themed events and wine tastings are popular. But they will not respond as well to something called a “recruitment” event because it doesn’t sound fun—it sounds like a sales pitch. They want to get something back from their investment, be it the actual cost or the value of their time.

This group loves a good time, values humor, and implemented “casual Fridays.” Attempting to “legislate” involvement by imposing rules and regulations will turn Gen Xers off. Make sure your club isn’t stuck on too many outdated traditions. Let prospective Generation X members know the club is open to the skills and talents they can offer. Play up fun club activities to entice them to join.

For Generation X, volunteering should identify what they’ll gain from their experience. They are in the middle of their lives (possibly taking care of both children and their adult parents) and careers, so they are busy. Because of this, committing time to an organization needs to benefit them personally in order to justify their time and energy.

What does Generation X value? What are their needs, interests and expectations? Gen X members have told us their top value when joining an organization is leadership and personal development opportunities. Ask prospects about their areas of strengths in relation to your club or what they want to know more about. Better yet, use the Capacity Inventory resource available at [www.soroptimist.org\*](http://www.soroptimist.org*) to find out what skills potential Generation X members are looking to lead and develop. Then you can direct her to a committee that she can lead or will help her learn something new!

Other top values when joining an organization (in order of importance) for this group were being with other like-minded women, personal connection to the mission, friendship and fellowship, and volunteer opportunities. Show these values by:

* Focusing on having a friendly, warm and welcoming club environment.
* Honoring a woman with a Live Your Dream Award.
* Participating in Dream It Be It.
* Inviting prospects to participate in hands-on projects and events.

Generation Xers have told us the number one reason they are interested in joining Soroptimist is to help improve the lives of women and girls. Again, it’s important to showcase how your club does that—through the Live Your Dream Award, Dream It Be It, and other women- and girl- focused projects your club participates in within the community.

Other top reasons Gen Xers stated for wanting to join (in order of importance): to provide education opportunities for women (Live Your Dream Awards!), to mentor girls (Dream It, Be It!), to meet people in their community, and to participate in trafficking awareness. In your messaging, emphasize how your club addresses these issues.

Potential Gen X members who inquired about joining but did not said the number one reason was because no one from the club ever contacted them after they initially expressed interest. This is an easy fix! Simply follow-up on all leads—send an email to potential Gen X members. Give them a day or two to respond and then follow-up again. Let them know they are important from day one by demonstrating you are interested in telling them more about Soroptimist and having them join! Remember to offer honest and straightforward information because this is very important to Gen X.

Generation X was the first group to grow up with a personal computer and experience the internet as part of daily life. They’ll research Soroptimist online so make sure your club’s website is up-to-date and visually pleasing. Need to modernize your website or create one? Try using the Website Templates for Clubs available at www.soroptimist.org.\*

As early adopters of social media, Generation X is comfortable connecting with friends online. Facebook is their predominate social media site. Post to your club’s Facebook page regularly and share updates from SIA’s Facebook page. Ask friends and followers of the page to share on their personal Facebook “walls” for a greater reach among prospective members.

Pinterest is another social media platform gaining ground with Gen X. Additionally, the majority of users on Pinterest are women—upwards of 80-90%. It’s a great place to connect with our potential market. LiveYourDream.org has a vibrant Pinterest page that speaks to what Soroptimist stands for, so you can “re-pin” their posts on your personal Pinterest page.

Flexibility is key when talking about membership to Generation X. They may not be able to commit to attending every meeting or event because of work and life responsibilities. Use LiveYourDream.org to accommodate Generation X and engage them in Soroptimist—it may be a perfect fit for a Gen Xers’ lifestyle. For example they can help supplement your club’s Live Your Dream Award efforts by using the LYD.org opportunities to gain more public awareness for the program. They can use the “get social” section by posting information on their Facebook, Twitter, or Pinterest pages, or print and post Live Your Dream Award flyers around the local area.

Generation Xers have a love of “experiences”— activities that arouse their sense of adventure and passion (keep in mind they invented “extreme sports”). Our message should emphasize what they will get to *do* as a Soroptimist. Since they don’t like to waste time, invite them to a short-term, hands-on project that allows them to experience the impact of Soroptimist first-hand—such as one of the Soroptimist One-Day Club Projects found on www.soroptimist.org.\* Allowing Gen Xers to participate in club events before joining the organization appeals to their desire for experiences and to their skeptical nature, i.e., they can sample the “product” before making an investment.

Gen Xers appreciate the opportunity for self-development and professional improvement and want to feel like their contribution matters. Most Gen Xers are quite comfortable “learning by doing” so don’t hesitate to let prospects know there are opportunities to take charge of a project within the club or step into a leadership position.

Gen Xers were the first true telecommuters in the workplace and expect that same type of flexibility to translate to their volunteer experiences. Embrace technology by using email and social media to communicate. Be flexible with participating in meetings by using a web-based system like Skype or conference calling.

Despite their skepticism of media and advertising, once Generation Xers finds a brand that meets their needs, they will become loyal customers. They are known for their extreme brand loyalty, so your hard work will pay off.

Watching online videos are very popular with Gen Xers. Share on your club’s social media channels or email to prospects. SIA has numerous videos on its YouTube channel that clubs can post to help with their recruitment efforts. See www.soroptimist org\* for a direct link to SIA’s social media networks including YouTube.

Finally, take note of the following marketing strategies that appeal to the Generation X audience:

* Be very clear about your offer.
* Don’t give them reasons to be skeptical.
* Give lots of details so it doesn’t look like you are trying to hide anything.
* Give suggestions not rules.
* Show them some things they might like and let them figure out which works best for them.

(Ehret, 2011)

**\*Need help finding the resources on www.soroptimist.org? Contact headquarters at siahq@soroptimist.org or call 215-893-9000.**

*Sources and references:*

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