



Thoughts from the Frontline of Innovation: Part 2

In case you missed the first part of this 2 part series go back and check it out [here](#).

Throughout the two days I kept feeling something was amiss, but no matter how much it rattled me I couldn't concretize what it was. That is, until I listened long and deeply enough to discern what wasn't being said beyond the stated successes.

Although the shared intention of all conference attendees is to engage with the whole range of alumnae as they move from graduation to their first job, then as they raise families and rise to new career heights, the reality is their alumnae outreach efforts appear to fall off the cliff after age 30.

In perfect alignment with the normative adult development trajectory, the largest cohort of Baby Boomers is the perfect demographic group to bring back into the alumni fold. Even more impactful today than monetary donations by this cohort group, by mentoring younger generations, collaborating on future-focused projects, and providing access to opportunities in the job market.

These days, monetary donations are harder to find as the Great Recession has brought many of us to our knees making financial giving out of the question. Adding to this new landscape of giving, most alumnae between the ages of 30 and 50 (aka Generation X'ers) are still in their accumulation and childrearing phase with limited discretionary income available for annual donations. Albeit as yet untapped, these same three generations will eagerly give back to their alma mater, but in intrinsic ways providing a direct positive and lasting impact on younger generations as confirmed by the recent as a recent Merrill Lynch & Age Wave study on giving in Retirement confirms. <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20151022005223/en/Merrill-Lynch-Study-Giving-Retirement-Reveals-8>

Those of us tracking and studying the over 40 market already know what Lorna Sabbia, head of Retirement and Personal Wealth Solutions for Bank of America Merrill Lynch, recently asserted, “Retiring boomers are a new and growing force in the giving space that can’t be ignored.” We’re referring here to giving time, money and skills.

To my surprise no one seems to be delving deeper to leverage what I’ve long been speaking and writing about as the Longevity Factor and it’s impact across generations.

Drawing on my many years as a leader in affinity group marketing, I’m already percolating with ideas.

This looming question forced me to think about my own non-existent relationship with my alma mater. Determined to uncover the missing cause, I took a random straw poll only to find the same disconnect is true for everyone I asked. Clearly not a defining statistical sample, yet a possible indicator that this is a bigger issue than I first imagined.

Can you relate? Most likely you have an alma mater even if you graduated 40 or 50 or even 60+ yrs. ago. Are you now actively involved with your alumnae association or do you get turned off every time you get a call asking for your annual donation?

If you are a parent, grandparent or close relation of a soon-to-be or already matriculating college age student, then this disconnect trend is a double whammy. We all know the cost of a college education is crushing our youth leaving them with enormous student debt. None of us wants this for our kids and grandkids. Yet we also know it’s absurd for us to ask our youth to continue pursuing their education without any real prospects of meaningful jobs commensurate with their high-cost education. At the same time, those of us post age 40 are heading into our give back years soon enough. Sounds like a perfect opportunity for intergenerational collaboration and innovation on the front lines.

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