Generation Y Perspectives
Meet Garret, Kristen, Aaron and Nick
Our friends think that we are rocket scientists and astronauts.
Because we work here
But truthfully, we tend to work just as much here.
Last week, we interacted with people from here …

… friends, family, classmates, colleagues, even strangers.
They all wanted to know more about what we do at NASA.
So we got to thinking...

Why aren’t they connected to NASA?
Why isn’t a whole generation connecting to NASA?
We are part of Generation Y.

This presentation is our perspective.
(But keep in mind that our generation will be asked to pay the majority of the tax bill for the vision for space exploration)

That’s $124B through the first lunar landing (FY06–FY18).
NASA has a brand and a message.
We don’t want to talk about that.
We want to talk about why our generation isn’t connecting to it.
Because we *aren’t* connecting to it...
...young people, both inside and outside of NASA.
And we think they **SHOULD** connect to it.
Because what NASA does is **important**.

...to everyone.
The world is connected today in ways that are shattering traditional communications concepts.
And NASA is in a position to lead the world in exploring new frontiers.
Engaging people in this exploration is not just an opportunity.

It is a responsibility.
01 Connected Generation
The traditional concept of top-down, one-way communications strategy is dead.
(It is **NOT** dying. It is *dead*.)
Generation Y is a completely new generation.
Roughly speaking, Generation Y is defined as -

Birth Date: 1977
Current Age: 31

2000
8
There are over 70 million people in the U.S. belonging to our generation.
And just like the Baby Boomers, we are a large group of people that is IMPACTING society
Generation Y is currently 25% of the workforce and is projected to be 47% of the workforce by 2014. Is NASA ready?
But what defines Generation Y?
Likes mentors

Global

Demands instant gratification

Instant information

Expecting (NOW! Not 5 minutes from now)

Wired

empowered

Attracted to Large Social Movements

Interdependent

Mobile

Quickly bored

multi-tasking

Impatient if delayed… but highly adaptable.
And there are a lot of things that made us the way we are.
We were the first generation to grow up with cable in our homes.

...Studies say this leads to shorter attention spans.

...And chronic boredom.
We are used to **DIVERSITY**

...after all, we grew up in diverse environments.
We grew up with

**TALK SHOWS**

And **REALITY TV**.
For our generation, TV is not passive entertainment

it is an *interactive experience*!

And our *lives* and *outlooks* have been shaped by this.
“Anyone can be a star …”

“Everyone deserves to have their say.”

“Getting heard and having a say are not only easy, they seem natural.”
Wait! You just described my generation.
Maybe there are some similarities. But there are very important differences.
Such as different formative experiences.
Baby Boomers were shaped by:

- Vietnam
- The Cold War
- Handicapped Rights
- The Right to Privacy
- Rock Music

And,

- The “Big Three” TV networks
- The Kennedy and King Assassinations
- Civil Rights
- The Feminist Movement
- Gay Rights
Generation Y has been shaped by:

- Columbia Accident
- Columbine
- 9-11
- The 2000 Election Crisis
- Internet
- The Iraq War
- Terrorism
- Cell Phones
- Starbucks
- Cable
- Reality TV
- Gaming
And those life experiences made us:

- Lack trust in corporations and government
- Focus on personal success
- Have a short-term career perspective
- Gets easily bored
- Extremely independent
- See no clear boundary between work and life
- Empowered and optimistic
- Sacrifice economic rewards for work-life balance
- Expect to work anytime, anyplace
- Connect with people in new and distinctive ways
- Comfortable with globalization
- Racially and culturally diverse
As a whole, people of Generation Y are not interested in space exploration.

This is a FACT.
A majority of Gen Y between 18 and 24 are not aware or not engaged in NASA’s mission.
Support is higher among Asian-Americans.

Forty percent oppose NASA’s mission.

Opposition among Gen Y Hispanics is higher.
39% believe that nothing worthwhile has come out of NASA
And maybe that’s because NASA is not engaging Generation Y
For example, here’s the profile at NASA Johnson Space Center for the workforce ages 45-64...
... compare that with the profile of the younger workforce ages <34.
If our generation is asked to pay the majority of the tax bill for the vision for space exploration, we need to be engaged in NASA’s mission.
03 Rules of Engagement
So how do you reach an entire generation with a brand and message?
First, **better understand the audience**
Then focus on getting us interested again
Our generation is not interested because:

We don’t see the point.

We don’t understand the facts.

We can’t participate.
Instead of *telling* us what you want us to hear …
Facilitate a discussion with Gen Y and allow us to participate in the NASA mission.
Share a compelling story
Touch our lives in ways familiar to us.
Utilize “social media”
But *please be* timely
Reclaim an image as a leader of innovation.
What would an innovative, collaborative, participatory NASA look like to us?

*Here’s a few possible future headlines.*
“Explorers Hired: NASA's recruiting advantage”

“What My Teenager Taught NASA About Marketing”

“NASA uses social media to improve public image and reach target audiences”

“Open innovation leads to budget savings and improved reliability of Constellation spacecraft”
NASA employs the smartest engineers in the world to solve its toughest problems using collaborative innovation.

“Astronaut twitters from Space during EVA"

“NASA flattens organization structure and improves innovation”

“NASA openness spins off into the first private spacecraft to land on the moon”

“2 million Digg votes for latest NASA press release”

NASA employs the smartest engineers in the world to solve its toughest problems using collaborative innovation.

“Astronaut twitters from Space during EVA”
“NASA enjoys increases visibility, credibility, and audience exposure”

“NASA uses persona based approach to tell its story”

“NASA switches back to Macs”

“Employees awarded with new incentives to innovate at NASA”

“Students from elementary school in Nebraska control Mars Rover from classroom”
What does your local Gen-Y’er think about NASA’s future?
When we asked a local Gen-Y’er what she thought about this image:

she commented:

“Hey, that’d make a great T-shirt!”
We couldn’t agree more!
There are a number of things that NASA is doing that are on the right track!
04 The Challenge
By no means is this “the answer”
...after all, who are we anyway?
Just some Gen Y-er’s who got hooked by the NASA bug and want to help.
But we’ve done a lot in 4 months…

Co-op Alumni Mentoring
Spoke to several management teams about Gen Y (10+)
Created the Flat NASA Experiment Blog
Created the leadership forum
Inspired public regarding NASA careers using Facebook
Established connections at Rice University
Developed this presentation

Outreach. Lots of outreach
Developed Co-op Advanced Planning Team (CAPT)
Collaborated with Wired Magazine on Article Concept
Connected NASA to Twitter
Facilitated the JSC PAO New Media Project with CAPT
Led the planning of Yuri’s Night Houston 08
With only 4 people.
There isn’t one ultimate communications strategy to solve NASA’s problems once and for all.  

…it’d be a lot easier if there was.
So the challenge is to take this and create new ideas.

Because the NASA we want to work for and connect to is like us:

*Collaborative*

*Creative*

*Bold*

*Participatory*

*Open*

*Innovative*

*Timely*

*Connected*

*Exciting*

*Purposeful*
But we – our generation – want to be a part of the solution.
Because space exploration is the future.
And it is OUR future.
Everyone’s future.
References