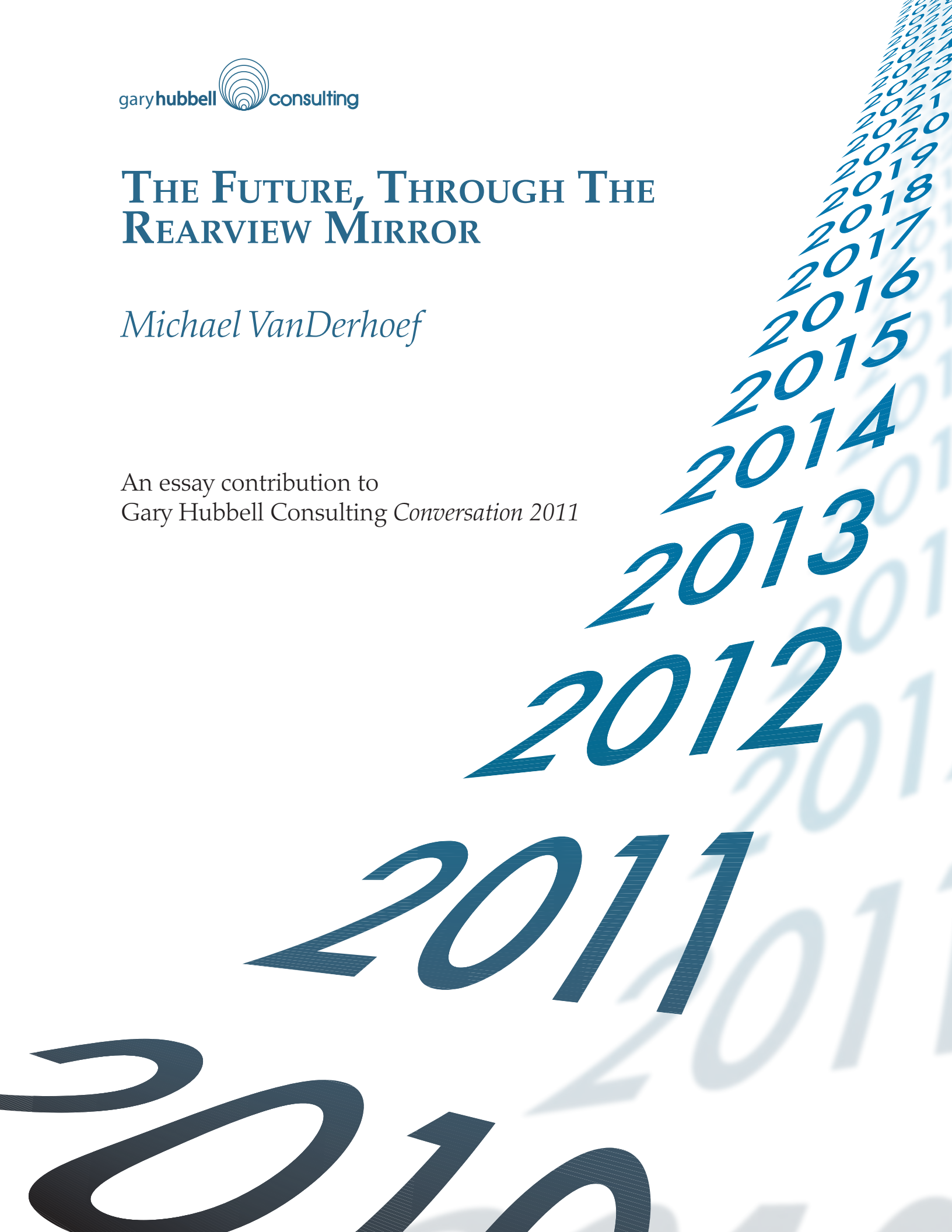


THE FUTURE, THROUGH THE REARVIEW MIRROR

Michael VanDerhoef

An essay contribution to
Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversation 2011*



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P.O. Box 510257 ▲ Milwaukee WI 53203 ▲ 414-962-6696 ▲ www.garyhubbellconsulting.com

ABOUT GARY HUBBELL CONSULTING CONVERSATION

Annually, Gary Hubbell Consulting convenes and hosts a small hand-picked group of social sector professionals from throughout North America for three days of intense dialogue and critical thinking. We strive to create a thought-provoking, mind-opening, and stimulating conversation about philanthropy, organizational leadership, and social sector change. This deep exploration of the nature and challenges of the philanthropic environment is intended to engage, inform, and inspire senior leaders to be catalysts for change in their own organizations and communities of influence. With each *GHC Conversation*, we seek to establish the seeds of a continuing and enriching network that nourishes us as individuals and helps each of us change how we converse, inspire, and seek new dimensions of philanthropy.

Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversation 2011*



PARTICIPANT BIO

Michael K. VanDerhoef

President, Virginia Mason Foundation
Seattle, Washington

(206) 583-6083 // michael.vanderhoef@vmmc.org

<https://www.virginiamason.org/home/dept.cfm?id=741>

Michael VanDerhoef currently serves as President of the Virginia Mason Foundation in Seattle, Washington. The Foundation supports the Virginia Mason Health System which is an integrated health care delivery system comprised of a 336-bed teaching hospital, seven primary and specialty care clinics throughout the Puget Sound region, a skilled nursing facility serving individuals with HIV/AIDS, and an independent research institute focused on autoimmune translational research. Michael is also Vice President for Patient Service at Virginia Mason Medical Center with responsibility for the organization's customer service program, as well as responsibility for Bailey Boushay House, Virginia Mason's skilled nursing facility.

Michael has been a fund raising professional for more than 25 years, and his experience includes both staff fund raising positions at a variety of organizations, as well as 11 years as a consultant to a variety of not-for-profit clients. His experience includes working for and with leading healthcare, arts, cultural, environmental, religious, educational, and social service organizations in the U.S. and Canada. Michael has been President of the VM Foundation since 2002.

During Michael's tenure as President, the Foundation has begun to implement the principles of the Toyota Production System as part of Virginia Mason Medical Center's development of the Virginia Mason Production System. Both Virginia Mason Medical Center and the Virginia Mason Foundation have received national recognition for innovations in process improvements and outcomes, and Michael is a frequent presenter at development conferences in the areas of development operations and strategy, benchmarking and performance.

Michael is married to his wife of 25 years, Patricia, and they enjoy traveling the world together in their free-time.

This is Michael's first *GHC Conversation*.

THE FUTURE, THROUGH THE REARVIEW MIRROR

By Michael VanDerhoef

INTRODUCTION

If we are to learn from and operate from the future as it emerges, we are challenged to recognize the future in the present. And therefore the greatest challenge is to thoughtfully separate the future from the present in the current moment so as to build the future without the encumbrances that are the present and soon will be the past.

Ironically, learning from the future may actually involve looking behind us...at the generations who will become our colleagues and eventually our successors.

I believe the children are our future...

This well-worn line from a song made popular in the 1980's expresses a simple truth – that the generations who follow us represent the future. And while this has always been so, it is hard to believe that any previous generation has had the transformational impact on society and philanthropy that the generation born in the 1980's and 1990's will have on our future. This is likely to be true because few, if any, generations have experienced greater change in terms of the magnitude and breadth of change – societal, cultural, technological and global – during their formative years than this generation. This generation has been shaped by such monumental events in all facets of life – from multiple stock market rises and crashes, to the accelerating advance of technology into our daily lives, to political unrest and wars around the world, to 9/11. In the year 2030, this cohort will be in the middle of their lives and careers. Their personality and behaviors have been fashioned as a response to the world around them, and their unique perspective and behaviors will dramatically affect

many of the core principles and societal norms that have defined and supported philanthropy for decades.

Hello My Name Is:

Generation Next

Having been born at the turn of the millennium, this group is commonly referred to as Millennials, or Generation Next. So what makes the members of the Generation Next so distinct? For starters, they have been born into families with the lowest parent-to-child ratio in U.S. history. They have been referred to as the “Look at Me” generation due to the high level of attention given them by their parents. Complicating this generation’s family dynamic is the fact that nearly 40% of this generation has been raised by divorced or separated parents.¹ It is not hard to understand, therefore, that this group has also expressed at an early age their desire to stand out as individuals as evidenced by their markedly higher likelihood to get tattoos and body piercings,² as well as the significant percentage (20%) who have posted a video of themselves online.³

Gen Next is highly educated, and have grown up in a more diverse population than previous generations.⁴ They are therefore more tolerant of differences, more likely to have diverse networks of friends and acquaintances, and more liberal in their beliefs and values than previous generations. This generation also says they respect their elders, and believe that their own generation is less conscientious than the previous generation.⁵ Gen Next also feels that older generations have stronger morals and values as well as a better work ethic.⁶

¹ The Pew Research Center, *A Portrait of “Generation Next”*, 9 Jan. 2007. The Pew Research Center For The People & The Press: Washington, D.C., p. 19, retrieved from <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/300.pdf>.

² Ibid, p. 23.

³ The Pew Research Center, *Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change*. 24 Feb. 2010. The Pew Research Center For The People & The Press: Washington, D.C., p. 8, retrieved from <http://pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf>.

⁴ Ibid, p. 16.

⁵ The Pew Research Center, *A Portrait of “Generation Next”*, 9 Jan. 2007. The Pew Research Center For The People & The Press: Washington, D.C., p. 13, retrieved from <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/300.pdf>.

⁶ The Pew Research Center, *Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change.*, p. 3.

In attitude, this generation is generally happy and optimistic, with 84% saying that their life is “excellent” or “good”,⁷ and over 90% saying they are “pretty happy” or “very happy”.⁸ They are satisfied with their current state, and are more satisfied with the current state of the US than the rest of the population. While they are optimistic about their incomes in the future, they believe that they will have a more difficult time achieving financial security than young people did 20 years ago.⁹ At present approximately half of this group is employed, and nearly half is still in school. The portion of Gen Next who are employed are less likely to choose jobs with a traditional 9-5 schedule.

As this generation looks to the future, their list of life goals is topped by “Getting Rich” and “Becoming Famous.”¹⁰ These two priorities outstripped by a significant margin, priorities such as “Helping people who need help” and “Being Leaders in their Community”.

Perhaps of greater importance in terms of learning from the future are the behaviors that Gen Next has developed which define how they interact with their external environment. This generation demonstrates more focus on their own problems than the problems facing their country or the world.¹¹ They have demonstrated a significantly lower level of awareness of major global leaders,¹² events and issues than previous generations due mostly to their limited consumption of mainstream media. Gen Next seeks news and information from online sources, similar to Gen X, their predecessors, but far less often. Gen Next reports that they turn to mainstream media only when something important is happening.¹³

While much was made of the impact of the younger vote in the 2008 presidential election, the mid-term elections in 2010 call into question the permanence of the increased civic engagement among Gen Next shown in 2008. Less than half of the 18-25 year-old population is sure of whether or not they are registered to vote, and only 4 in 10 believe that voting in every election is their civic duty. Only one third of this generation report that they

⁷ The Pew Research Center, *A Portrait of “Generation Next”*, 9 Jan. 2007, p.5.

⁸ Ibid, p. 45.

⁹ Ibid, p. 7.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 12.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 8.

¹² Ibid, p.10.

¹³ Ibid, p. 27.

follow government or public affairs, and nearly 40% believe that what happens in Washington, D.C., does not impact them personally.¹⁴

In addition to their diminished engagement in civic affairs, Gen Next is also showing lower rates of religious affiliation than earlier generations at the same point in their life cycle.¹⁵ Due to their current position in their life cycle, they are less likely to be engaged in issues such as health care.¹⁶

Perhaps the most widely recognized trait of Gen Next, both by outside observers as well as members of Gen Next themselves, is their adoption and use of technology. Gen Next is the first “always connected” generation, “Steeped in digital technology and social media, they treat their multi-tasking hand-held gadgets almost like a body part – for better and worse. More than eight-in-ten say they sleep with a cell phone glowing by the bed, poised to disgorge texts, phone calls, emails, songs, news, videos, games and wake-up jingles.”¹⁷ Nearly two-thirds of this group regularly use wireless internet when they are away from their home, and 41% do not have a landline telephone.¹⁸

Gen Next feels most positively about the benefits of technology, believing that technology has made life easier and people more efficient. In addition, this generation believes that technology makes it easier to meet new friends and brings family and friends closer together.¹⁹ One interesting finding, however, is that 84% of Gen Next respondents to the Pew Survey in 2007 believe that technology has made people lazier.²⁰

While their usage of technology and the Internet is roughly equivalent to Gen X in many respects, their usage patterns are what truly distinguishes Gen Next. Their use of texting and instant messaging outpaces all other generations, and more recently their adoption and usage of social networking has created the most striking distinction between Gen Next and other generations.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 26.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 5.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 8.

¹⁷ The Pew Research Center, *Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change.*, p. 1.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 25.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 26.

²⁰ The Pew Research Center, *A Portrait of “Generation Next”*, 9 Jan. 2007, p.15.

Social networking has only emerged in the last five years, and the rate of usage among the American population has risen from 5% in 2005 to 27% in 2008.²¹ This rate has continued to climb among Gen X and Boomers, but the greatest adoption rate has been among Gen Next, with approximately 75% of this cohort indicating that they have at least one social networking profile.²² Of this 75%, over half report that they visit their social networking site at least once a day.²³ Millennials are also twice as likely to meet someone new face-to-face as a result of a preceding online introduction and interaction than Gen X.²⁴ Usage patterns for Twitter mirror the pattern seen in social networking sites like Facebook, though the usage rates are much lower at present.

Characteristics that will shape the face of philanthropy in 2030

In 2030, Gen Next will be a cohort of adults and will represent a significant portion of the constituency that makes up the workforce, volunteer force and donor base for not-for-profits in the U.S. Undoubtedly, Gen Next will change somewhat in its collective view of the world as its membership ages. They will have experienced critical life stages such as marriage, family, divorce, caring for aging parents. They will inherit longstanding local, national and international issues, and face new issues that they as a generation are the first to encounter. All of these changes will impact their perceptions and behaviors as employees, community members, parents, and citizens. However, as has been the case with every preceding generations, early behaviors and habits developed by Millennials will likely continue to be defining characteristics of this group as they mature.

Within the distinct traits and behaviors that are currently defining the Gen Next generation, several are most likely to have a significant and direct impact on philanthropy. A common thread in the creation of these traits and behaviors, and a likely mechanism for the continued development of these traits, is clearly technology. The evolution and escalation of technology among a young and developing generation has embedded technology as an implied mechanism in a host of activities and behaviors that previously were manual, time and location dependent, and relationship-based.

²¹ Pew Research Center, *Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change*, p. 28.

²² Ibid, p. 25.

²³ Ibid, p. 28.

²⁴ The Pew Research Center, *A Portrait of "Generation Next"*, 9 Jan. 2007, p.15.

Over the past 20 years, there has been speculation regarding the impact of technology, initially cell phone technology, on society, specifically the likelihood that new technologies might create greater social isolation. A 1985 study drew the conclusion that Americans were becoming more isolated, having smaller discussion networks and fewer close ties to neighbors and voluntary associations. The study also hypothesized that cell phones, and the Internet as it emerged, would disperse networks and thereby make social ties weaker.²⁵

However, a Pew study in 2009 reexamined this issue and found that isolation was no greater than it had been in 1985, and noted dramatic changes in the size and diversity of core networks.²⁶ It is important to highlight the fact that the 2009 Pew study took place at a time when social networking was reaching its full momentum in terms of adoption and usage, and the results of the study reflect the significance of social networking as a distinct and powerful technology.

An additional finding of the more recent study was that while the level of awareness of one's neighbors names was not significantly lower, the number of people who had relied on neighbors for assistance or support of some kind was reduced.²⁷ One benefit to technology found in the Pew study was the increased interaction with neighbors among those who participated in online neighborhood blogs or forums.

Perhaps the most significant impact of Gen Next on philanthropy in 2030 will be their very different definitions of various levels of relationship. Gen Next is, at a young age, more family focused than previous generations and this connection to parents and perhaps one sibling is likely to be paramount in their relationship hierarchy. This will become the most influential connection to others for this generation and therefore the issues and challenges faced by family, parents and children in particular, are likely to be the most compelling and therefore the most likely to receive time, attention and philanthropic support from this group.

²⁵ McPherson, J. Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and Matthew E. Brashears. 2006. "Social Isolation in America: Changes in Core Discussion Networks over Two Decades." *American Sociological Review*. 71(3): 353-375.

²⁶ Keith N. Hampton, et al., *Social Isolation and New Technology*, 4 Nov. 2009. Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project: Washington, D.C., p. 3, retrieved from http://pewinternet.org/~media/Files/Reports/2009/PIP_Tech_and_Social_Isolation.pdf.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 9.

The definition of community will also undergo a dramatic change driven by greater cultural, ethnic and geographic diversity. Gen Next has not grown up limited, as previous generations were, by geography due to the global reach of the technology that has shaped this generation. Therefore, their understanding of community is no longer defined by the homogeneity of local neighborhoods. Nor is it limited to a group of people with whom they interact in-person and regularly, but includes a wider network of individuals with whom they have exchanged ideas and interests remotely or at a great distance, likely never meeting face-to-face. This represents a tectonic shift in the definition of community and will force not-for-profits and fund raising professionals to dramatically change their approaches so as to unlock the potential of this new definition of community.

The 2009 Pew study found that social networking, used most highly among Gen Next, had changed the definition of core social network, and that what has emerged are more diverse networks. A core network is comprised of individuals who are influential in a person's decision making. The Pew study found that users of social networking sites and instant messaging generally have larger and more diverse networks.²⁸

Finally, Gen next has grown up during a period in which the definition of "friend" has changed dramatically, and this definition will remain their understanding of friendship as they age into mid-life and beyond. With the advent of email and the explosion of social networking, the definition of "friend," arguably the most essential building block of personal networks, took on a very different meaning. Facebook has had an undeniable impact on Gen Next's perception of friendship by calling all connections on Facebook "friends." Gen Next has grown up believing that even the most occasional of direct interactions, and actually just the acceptance of an offer of connectedness, creates friends. It is not at all uncommon for members of Gen Next to have hundreds or even thousands of "friends" which according to the definition of previous generations would be no more than entries in an address book classified as acquaintances. The 2009 study by Pew found that Gen next reported a greater percentage of social networking "friends" were included in their self-identified core network of influentials.²⁹

An important characteristic of social networking and Gen Next's usage of social networking is the frequency of communication and content shared with "friends." As young users of

²⁸ Ibid, p. 32.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 38.

social networking (and instant messaging), Gen Next shares a great deal of minutia and does so almost constantly. It is predicted that the level and manner of information sharing demonstrated as young adults is most likely to remain ingrained, though it will undoubtedly be impacted by changes in technology and demands of adult life. We may see a shift from instantaneous and trivial information sharing to a more store-and-share approach and more serious content.³⁰

The other major characteristic of Gen Next that will impact philanthropy significantly in 2030 is the weak societal bond and sense of duty to society that has developed already. Given this generation's focus on their own small family unit, and their very different definition of community, Gen next will represent a challenge to those trying to organize and activate this cohort to address significant local, state and national societal issues. As this generation ages, it may become more connected to others through childrens' schools and activities, professional networks, etc., but the interest will be more self-interested rather than motivated out of a sense of duty or obligation as a member of society.

The early indications among Gen Next are that they are not "joiners", they are interested in individual attention and independence from established social structures like organized religion. This will likely diminish one of the great constants in philanthropy which is organized religion as a vehicle through which network relationships are established, as well as the programs and opportunities through which individuals join together with others philanthropically to address local needs as volunteers and donors. Religious affiliation will mean far less among Gen Next in 2030 than it has meant for previous generations, and that will have a dramatic impact not only on philanthropy expressed directly within religious organizations, but also on the local community services and programs supported through the volunteer and financial resources provided by churches, synagogues, congregations and the like.

THE IMPACT OF GEN NEXT ON PHILANTHROPY IN 2030

As with any generation, the arrival of Gen Next into the workforce, and into the fabric of adult society, will impact the world of philanthropy. Gen Next, however, will have a greater impact than previous generations due to the significantly different framework they

³⁰ Janna Anderson, Lee Rainie, *Millennials will make online sharing in networks a lifelong habit*, 9 July 2010. Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project: Washington, D.C., p. 10, retrieved from http://pewinternet.org/~media//Files/Reports/2010/PIP_Future_Of_Millennials.pdf.

have developed that expresses their place in the world and the nature of their connections to that world. In the past, generational change was more incremental; in the case of Gen Next it will be more transformational.

GEN NEXT AS NOT-FOR-PROFIT LEADERS

The integration of Gen Next into the fabric of staff and leaders in the nonprofits will be challenging, but by 2030 the group will be mid-career. They will have grown up with technology and be facile in the identification, adoption and application of new technology as tools. They will impact the culture of organizations with their expectation that technology can help to solve almost any problem, or at least make their efforts more efficient. Given that this group is not drawn to traditional organizations such as religion or civic groups, Millennials in 2030 are more likely to be working in non-traditional nonprofits, or they may be hard at work transforming their traditional nonprofits into more dynamic and contemporary organizations.

For Gen Next, creating social benefit is both a professional and personal goal,³¹ and they will be ready, willing and able to create new organizational structures to achieve this goal. Gen Next will be most interested in what they can do to create impact and benefit, and less interested in the identity of the organization through which they create this impact. This will initially pose a threat to larger, more staid not-for-profits and will require a shift in thinking and structures away from the notion of nonprofits as organizations or institutions. Effective nonprofits will need to take on more of an activist personality to attract this generation and to be able to speak effectively to them. Nonprofits will feel the emphasis this generation places on outcomes and end results, and will be challenged to think and act more flexibly in terms of the means toward these ends.

Perhaps the greatest point of departure by Gen Next from past generations in the workplace will be *how they expect to do their work*. Their integration of technological facility and social activism will lead Gen Next to create their own structures and networks to advance their social values. Successful nonprofits in 2030 will function with less hierarchy and more highly collaborative cultures and structures. The Monitor Institute refers to this new approach to networking and applying technology as “working wikily” which

³¹ Heather Gowdy, Alex Hildebrand, David La Piana and Melissa Mendes Campos. “Convergence: How Five Trends Will Reshape the Social Sector,” p. 5, November 2009, retrieved from <http://www.irvine.org/publications/publications-by-topic/philanthropyandthenonprofitsector#phi20>

represents collaboration taken to a new level.³² In 2009, NonprofitNext published a report which also described this trend as going beyond the traditional concept of networks: “Working with and through networks is not new — the traditional concept of networks includes coalitions, alliances, partnerships, learning communities and various other collections of individuals and organizations working toward a common goal. However, with the advent of new technologies and new norms for working collaboratively, the potential impact of networks is increasing exponentially.”³³ Gen Next will be the first generation that will understand the possibilities of this approach because they have experienced this natural integration in so many facets of their lives.

Gen Next will also expect that work can and should be done through a group of committed individuals who come together to accomplish something specific over a certain period of time, at the end of which the group will disband, reform and restructure to tackle the next challenge. Such an approach presents several challenges to not-for-profits, not the least of which is the definition, or mission, which justifies its existence. In a world of Millennials, it will be the most important current cause (which will likely involve more than one “sector” of not-for-profits) which is of greatest importance, not long term vision or immutable mission.

This flexible and dynamic notion of an organization or network will also involve the application of technology that will enable individuals to create quickly, interact instantaneously and constantly, and work together from great distances. This will move the idea of an organization away from a geographic place to an information and technology infrastructure that connects people to focus their individual talents on a specific task. The notion of telecommuting will be replaced by virtual offices – no longer will staffers seek to connect to their office to accomplish work from home, they will see the Internet as their office space and their real-time online collaborations as their meetings.

Managing such an enterprise will require a different shape and role for leadership. No longer will leadership be centralized, but methods for distributed leadership will define the most effective not-for-profits. For such distributed leadership to be effective, not-for-profits

³² Diana Scarce, Gabriel Kasper and Heather McLeod Grant. “Working Wikily,” Stanford Social Innovation Review, Summer 2010, p. 32, retrieved from http://www.monitorinstitute.com/expertise_publications.html#networks2

³³ Gowdy, et al. “Convergence: How Five Trends Will Reshape the Social Sector,” November 2009, p. 12.

will need to acknowledge and support new approaches to work that are brought into organizations by Gen Next. Not only will this generation need such an approach to be attracted to an organization, but conversely they will bring this method of work with them and organizations need to allow them to influence the evolution of the organization in this way.

Given the greater diversity among Gen Next and their experience growing up in the most diverse generation ever, the not-for-profit world will need to come to grips with diversity, not solely as a response and mechanism for attracting the best and the brightest, but also as a strategy for staying relevant and compelling. Just as Gen Next brings a diverse mix of cultures to the workplace that will impact the culture and work of the team, so too will this diverse workforce bring an understanding of how to craft compelling messages integrating a multitude of cultural sensitivities. Successful not-for-profits will learn how to be relevant and compelling among this more diverse population from the diverse Gen Next members in their midst.

Gen Next's use of technology in their personal lives will enable not-for-profits to tap into team members' behaviors as the means through which the organization decides how to communicate with and engage volunteers and donors. Simply put, nonprofits will need to watch and learn from their own team members. In the past, nonprofit organizations typically formed a monolithic message with limited variations, and disseminated the message in a very one-way manner through limited and mostly traditional channels. The life experience of Gen Next has been built on sharing of information, greater transparency (both personal and organizational), instantaneous communication and interaction, shorter and more frequent messages, two-way messaging, and on-demand access to information. Understanding these expectations, behaviors and communications patterns will make not-for-profits successful in 2030 because it will enable them to spread their messages quickly, efficiently, across new networks, offering more timely interaction and opportunities to engage interested and supportive individuals.

One additional consideration is that Gen Nexters in not-for-profit roles may tend to think of "crowd source" solutions to problems rather than the traditional supporter pyramid. In the "Wiki world" in which Millennials came of age, work was accomplished, and success created, through the relatively small contributions made by a large number of people at a moment in time. This represents a radical departure from the traditional donor pyramid and lengthy cultivation and stewardship approach that has defined not-for-profit fund raising for decades and is still seen as the formula for tackling large projects.

The very challenging corollary is that this same “crowd source” thinking will change the way that supporters view their relationship with and long term connection to an organization, and will therefore change the way organizations think about cultivating and maintaining relationships with supporters. The successful nonprofits of 2030 will master the instant-message relationship – messaging for a population that is constantly browsing, taking advantage of momentary interest through the effective application of technology and short message dialogue, and creating success through the modest involvement and investment of many rather than the significant and long-term investment of a few.

GEN NEXT AS DONORS

As Gen Next matures and they enter the realm of philanthropy, we will see an expression of their personality as a generation of donors. As we know, key to engaging prospective donors and converting them into active donors is the story we tell that brings our organizations’ missions to life in real, human terms. Again, this generation will change *how we communicate our mission* to a greater extent than previous generations. For a generation that grew up with instant messaging and chat, and led the world in the development of social networking, the old patterns of communication will not prove effective. Gen Next will look to technology to provide them instant access to information on their “interest du jour.” Perhaps even more likely, they will expect technology to deliver the “interest du jour” itself. To meet this expectation, and thereby gain the interest of this new generation of donors, successful nonprofits will hone their skills in crafting authentic, crystallized messages and deliver them via the latest technology and through multiple sources or voices. And this technology will need to allow for dialogue and co-creating social impact, not address Gen Next as a passive audience. This generation’s expectation is that communication will be personalized and continuous. And only then will you gain their interest. Once you do gain their interest, you will need to provide far more transparency and make it possible for prospective supporters to look into your organization on their own, not through a guide or spokesperson.

Given that Gen Next is the first generation that has grown into adulthood with the ability to complete most of life’s transactions through their connected, handheld device – purchases, sales, banking, donating, etc – it is unlikely that they will be satisfied with a business reply envelope or even a “Donate Now” button on a web site. Not-for-profits will be challenged to push messages and solicitations directly into the handheld of this generation, with a quick, transparent and seamless mechanism for responding, whether the request is for a donation, or signing a petition, or agreeing to be a part of a special event. It will be critically

important to give Gen Next the opportunity to express their social activism in ways other than writing a check. Twitter and cell phone text gifts are only beginning to show what is possible, and by 2030 not-for-profits need to make this approach to cultivation, solicitation and stewardship part of their relationship with Gen Next.

The psychology of the Gen Next donor may also be fundamentally different from previous generations in a way that will influence not-for-profits and their ability to raise philanthropic support in 2030. Millennials may be more likely to think about their role in providing funding to accomplish a goal or address a need in a “flashmob” context. That is, Gen Next donors may expect that their role as a supporter is to jump in to a current and urgent need with a relatively modest donation assuming that a large number of additional supporters will do the same. As a result, they may not naturally think about their capacity to have an impact as a major donor. Such a shift in psychology, even among a significant subset of an organization’s supporter base, will dramatically increase not-for-profits’ need to grow substantial constituencies.

Another aspect to Gen Next’s personality that may express itself as this group becomes donors is their early desire for money and fame. If this trait continues, even if it is diluted by life experiences and the realities of adulthood, it may result in a generation of donors who are both less generous and more driven by recognition. The “look at me” trait will therefore challenge nonprofits to do a better job of providing ongoing recognition provided in a broader network context as a way to engage this generation of donors.

Finally, political consumerism is also a form of deliberate action adopted at a young age by Gen Next, so the potential exists for sales- or purchase-based philanthropy among this group. This methodology for engaging supporters has been tried with limited success over the past decade, and it may be that it is ahead of its time. The movement of transactions to the palm of Gen Next may make this approach more powerful by 2030.

GEN NEXT AS VOLUNTEERS

Because the psychology of volunteering is similar in nature to the psychology of donating money, some of the same trends that will affect not-for-profits’ fund raising strategies will also affect not-for-profits’ strategies for engaging Gen Nexters as volunteers. Perhaps most critical, not-for-profits in 2030 will need to be able to engage this generation in dynamic and meaningful ways that meet their expectations of social activism and networking. This generation’s ideas about membership, volunteering and social engagement will be different than that of generations before, and is likely to prove to be a moving target.

In addition, Gen Nexters will seek the opportunity to be engaged in a meaningful yet limited way, what some have begun to refer to as “micro-volunteering.” In micro-volunteering, individuals help out in small, convenient ways that do not require a long-term commitment to an organization or cause. With the continued evolution of technology, the “working wikily” concept will likely impact volunteering as well, providing the platform through which volunteers can provide expertise, knowledge or other inputs in a virtual and remote fashion. Virtual volunteering, where individuals contribute their energies at least partly online, are beginning to show up with the emergence of online services like Sparked (www.sparked.com). Gen Next will look for opportunities that align with their interests and skills, as well as their activist interests, and are not geography-dependent.

Finally, a significant challenge nonprofits may face as a direct result of Gen Next’s aversion to traditional organizational structures is the recruitment of volunteers to serve in the traditional roles of board members or trustees. This challenge may be exacerbated by this generation’s tendency toward more instantaneous and briefer interactions, making the construct of a long term and more routinized commitment like the traditional board role unappealing. Some solution must be crafted that allows very-committed Gen Next volunteers to engage in more intensive roles through which they can feel they are helping to guide the organization in the creation of social impact without monthly meetings around a board room table. Field-based experiences as an expression of the organization’s impact, and as an opportunity to gain Board member reaction, support, insight and guidance may become an effective alternative to traditional board meetings.

CONCLUSION

The future is emerging. We need only look at that generation of young people who are beginning to show up at our offices, our volunteer events and in front of us in line at our coffee houses to get a glimpse of what the future of our society, and more specifically the future of philanthropy, is likely to be.

It will be about a cause and a call to action, not about an organization and a long term mission. It will be about community defined as shared interests across a diverse and dispersed group of individuals, not community defined as local, homogenous groups. It will be about instant access, instant action, instant impact and instant messages; it will not be about traditional channels, long processes and formal organizational messaging. It will be about “working wikily,” tapping into specific talents of individuals to create a greater

whole, without commitment beyond the current cause or task. It will be, as it always has been, about relationships, though the definition will require us to reach individuals differently, through conversations that are structured differently, using technology that connects us differently, and finding new and innovative ways for people to contribute to creating change for the better.

We would be wise to learn from the future and recruit members of Gen Next into our teams if for no other reason than to observe their behaviors, understand their world view, and most important to learn more about the future. It will not be easy, this generation will ask us to speak and act in ways that challenge our well-developed patterns and long held beliefs about how to be effective in philanthropy. But if we are open to the challenge, Generation Next will help us to begin to incorporate their very different understanding of how people work effectively together to create change, and that is how we will shape the practice and realize the promise of philanthropy in 2030.