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
- Current Year: 2000
- Current Age relative to current year: 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.
Births (in thousands)

Birth Year


Baby Boomers
Gen X
Gen Y

OnOrbit.com - Source: NASA Generation Y
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?
Demands instant gratification

Impatient if delayed... but highly adaptable.

Instant information

Wired

Attracted to Large Social Movements

multi-tasking

Global

Expecting (NOW! Not 5 minutes from now)

empowered

Interdependent

Mobile

Likes mentors

Quickly bored
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
- The “Big Three” TV networks
- The Kennedy and King Assassinations
- Civil Rights
- The Feminist Movement
- Rock Music
- Gay Rights

And,
Generation Y has been shaped by:

- The 2000 Election Crisis
- The Iraq War
- Reality TV
- Starsbucks
- Gaming
- 9-11
- Terrorism
- Internet
- Cable
- Cell Phones
- Columbia Accident
- Columbine
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
02 Perspectives
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.

Gen Y starts entering work force
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”
Spark conversations
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”
“2 million Digg votes for latest NASA press release”

“NASA flattens organization structure and improves innovation”

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

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
- Open
- Bold
- Participatory
- Timely
- Innovative
- 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