

# Gen X: How to get the generation right (part 3)



By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Based on Viacom's extensive research on Generation X presented by Christian Kurz, senior vice president, global insights for Viacom International Media Networks at the VIMN Africa Thought Leadership Breakfast at The Venue Melrose Arch in Johannesburg on Wednesday, 17 May, one question remains...

How should brands, advertisers, marketers and media companies alike re-evaluate the way they represent this group of consumers?

- *Give Gen X credit for their innovative and creative fix-it solutions:* While they don't like to be labelled, they do like to be given credit where credit is due.
- *Show recognition for their independence and desire for authenticity*

- *Send messages that speak to an outdated traditional approach just won't resonate:* Take the sitcoms, *Everybody Loves Raymond* and *The Middle*. The relationships depicted in each are completely different. Raymond has a better relationship with his mother than with his wife, and in *The Middle*, the mother and father have a better relationship and the way they interact with their kids is very different, "portraying much more a GenXer-way of looking at family, and they're doing that in a traditional household if you will".
- *Send messages that celebrate the diversity of modern adulthood:* Diversity in its various forms is something that is representative of the world today and so it needs to be represented accordingly.

## Ads that are directly speaking to dads

"One of the things we've seen come out of here is **dad-vertising**." Instead of speaking to the housewife or stay-at-home mom, we need to show women in the modern-day home and workplace and do the same for dads. As previously mentioned, dads are now also driving decisions when it comes to products and household spending, and are actively involved in child care and playtime. "As traditional gender roles continue to blur, you need to speak to everyone about everything," he reiterates.



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Kurz gave some examples of ads that are directly speaking to dads. This #ShareTheLoad campaign portrays a father's apology to his daughter for not helping his wife carry the load when it came to household chores and teaching his daughter that they're not her sole responsibility. It highlights the daily challenges faced by many working moms who are either single parents or in marriages where the belief of traditional roles still exist.

"The Cheerios ads that are speaking to the modern family in different ways."

"Campbell's Soup is doing a great job at showing real-life parenting."

“Then you have Barbie. The latest campaign is called *Dads Who Play Barbie*.”

## Realness is becoming increasingly valued

Using the Barbie example, with the dolls now taking on different shapes and sizes, the toy company has completely re-invented what the franchise means, and they’ve done so by simply asking the question, ‘What was Barbie there to do?’ “It was there to empower girls. How do we empower girls today? We need to do that in a different way, and that means we have to mix it up a little bit.”

## Tap into Gen X nostalgia

Nostalgia is another thing. Gen Xers have been around for a while, since the beginning of *Alvin and the Chipmunks* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and now we’re bringing the like to a whole new generation. We should try to empower Gen Xers to share some of that stuff with the next generation, with their kids, concludes Kurz. “Who doesn’t want to sit there and watch *SpongeBob SquarePants*, for those who grew up watching *SpongeBob*?”



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