

How to Design a Next Generation Program

Meeting the Needs of Today's Families

Today's digital-native families have different interests than Generation X or the Baby Boomers, especially when it comes to programming for camps and after-school programs. Is your program still offering what it did in decades past?

Traditional programs and schedules were effective in their time—but now, times are changing. Especially during and post-pandemic, it's important to tailor your content to the generation you are targeting.

The Millennial generation has grown up into adults and many are parents whose kids make up a portion of Generation Z. Born from the mid-1990s through 2010, the younger members of Gen Z are moving into their tween and teen years. Children in Generation Alpha, the generation following Gen Z, is the first generation entirely born in the 21st century and are attending elementary schools across the globe.

Millennials, more than any generation before, are being asked to work full-time jobs, side hustles, and raise their children into mindful, educated and prepared adults. As a result, Millennial parents are in need of programs and classes that are flexible, educational and have the option to attend virtually.

If you want to successfully design a next generation program, make sure you are listening to what parents want and pair your conversation-driven intel with the following information to create a customized next generation program.





Flexibility is Key

Right now, many parents are keeping their children at home while they are also working from home. They are in need of a program that can engage, entertain and educate their children so that they can get work done. With keeping safety in mind, many parents are looking for virtual programming to supplement their virtual education and free time.

Parents are also looking for programs that fit into their unique family dynamic and align with their children's interests. According to our research, 60% of parents say that "fits within schedule" is their biggest concern when choosing a program, followed by budget, and location.

Here are a few ways to add flexibility to your programming:

- + Offer virtual programs and sessions
- + Shift to shorter sessions, especially for younger children if you are offering virtual sessions
- + Offer a variety of session options lengths
- + Expand to more sites and locations if hosting in-person programs and sessions
- + Offer classes that make up a pod (a close-knit group that adheres to pandemic protocols both at home and in public)
- + Offer make-up sessions

In addition to flexibility in the program schedule and format itself, payment flexibility gives parents more choices. Consider offering payment plans or a "pay per class" option. That way families don't feel locked into a long program, and kids can sample various classes, if desired. Another great idea is to build connections with scholarship sponsors or establish financial assistance programs to help parents foot the bill.

Always get feedback from participants and parents on the options you've offered, and adapt your program based on how they respond. We have found that very few program directors are polling their customers or collecting testimonials, and even fewer are conducting focus group research. Be sure to add a quantitative component to your consumer research, and use tools like surveys to ask about interests and challenges in addition to program feedback. An overall attitude of flexibility is the best way to ensure your program is agile enough to keep up with the modern family.

51%

of parents enroll their kids in 3+ extra-curricular activities per year

84%

of parents want programs on a weekly schedule



Deliver Tangible Results

Another must-have component of a next generation program is the ability to deliver measurable, actionable results that are offered both in-person and virtually. While fun is still a big part of the picture, forward-thinking camps and after-school programs offer a whole lot more.

Parents today take a far more professional approach to their children’s free time, thanks to the ever-looming college application process. This means turning downtime into uptime. The activities within camps and classes gives kids the opportunity to feel accomplishment and proud of their achievements.

Families are also looking for programs that continue to build skills outside of school that will benefit them well into adulthood. Both hard and soft skills are necessary to catapult kids’ to the next level as they prepare to enter an ever-evolving job market. Top areas of interest include coding, financial literacy, shop skills, college planning and community service—all of which can be done online.

Furthermore, parents recognize that excessive screen time that is unproductive can have a negative effect on their children’s lives. They want to make sure kids are engaging in activities both online and offline that stimulate their minds. Make sure to design programs that take kids out of the superficial, pop culture-filled world of their screens and into something with more depth.

It’s always a good idea to communicate the benefits and life skills your programs provide with statistics from recognized sources. If you can provide any sort of national or organizational accreditation upon completion, your community will be more likely to view your program as a good investment. And once again, listen to feedback and adapt to the evolving interests of your enrollees.



Popular Skill-Building Program Topics



Home Economics



Technology



Shop



Art



Coding



Tinkering



STEM



Health & Wellness



Community Service



College Planning



Nature/Environment



Financial Literacy



In Summary

The most important part of creating a next generation program is listening to the desires of the modern family and adapting your programs to match. Design formats that provide parents with options, versatility and measurable results. Also, focus on helping build valuable life skills while offering enriching alternatives to excessive screen time.

ACTIVE's Camp & Class Manager makes it easier than ever to keep up with the wants and needs of modern families, from flexible program booking for customized session options to integrated email marketing tools, text messaging and social media tools to help you keep in touch with your customers.

It's time for a next generation solution with
ACTIVEWorks Camp & Class Manager.

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