

#HASHTAG2020

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What does 2020 look like in the eyes of those who will shape the future - the Millennials? By Jox Petiza, Strategy and Content, MediaCom Malaysia

For many young professionals, it's easier to talk about how they imagine their 30s will be different than their 20s than it is to consider the Year 2020. It'll be important soon enough: Millennials (Generation Y) will make up the majority of employees at 50 percent of US companies by 2020 and 75 percent of global organizations by 2030. So what are these young people thinking about? Check out their answers to a simple question: "What do you think will happen to you and the world in 2020?"

#2020experience

It's encouraging to note that most of the answers were generally optimistic. "Life 360" was a term used more than once to describe a holistic future where family and career are balanced with the help of technology. Contrary to the selfish stereotype, Gen Y wants to contribute to collective efforts such as sustainable living, organic farming and promoting a better world. "I just want to be a better person than I am today," said a digital media team lead in Jakarta. There are some, though, who foresee nothing short of an apocalypse. These Millennials seek alternative, or underground, news online. "The environment will be much worse than it is today. We will be close to broad scale armed conflict," said a team leader from Japan. They may have faith in technology and humanity, but their hope does not extend to political systems. This group has gone beyond conventional preparations for the future, including learning how to open cans (of food) without a can opener. They're not paranoid; they're just preparing to survive.

#onelifedevide

Our panel expects seamless integration – not just of multiple devices, but of human cognitive and emotive functions. No more multiple transactions, SIM card swaps or currency exchange. A planner from Malaysia foresees a "universal card," which she thinks will merge daunting application and validation transactions by the time she becomes a busy working mom. Surprisingly, Millennials hope technology will help them slow down, not go even faster. They expect devices to simplify life and make people more reflective, especially about privacy. A young manager from New York imagines that "the need for privacy will become a huge issue and will create almost a new industry for people who wish to protect themselves from privacy invasion." "I imagine the world will have become so 'noisy' – with streams of unedited and uncontrolled information from all over the place – that there will be an opportunity to create platforms that help individuals counteract that clamor, speed and invasion of privacy," notes a media planner executive from Indonesia.

#YOLO (You Only Live Once)

Generation Y consumes content to find inspiration and help them figure out what they want to do with their lives... or just where to live next. Online search (particularly Google) helps

them make savvier choices. And they're not settling. Millennials have become career slashers, working at multiple professions that may not necessarily relate to each other. One Filipino expat in Singapore has continued booking casting calls while working as a planner. More people refuse to be referred to by one designation, with the Internet enabling the constant search for the next gig. Content curation and image management via LinkedIn, Tumblr and other sites are just some of the proactive steps taken by young professionals, especially when they have one foot out the door. It's just a matter of being aware of what will appear in Google's search results.

What if you could organize the FUTURE?

Millennials are organized, but depend on automation to pay bills, budget and manage their day-to-day activities. Most Millennials, particularly the youngest of the generation, can theoretically imagine 2020 but are vague on the details (even though it's only six years away). Most talk about wanting to settle down and have a genuine and happy family life.

Imagine a life app that could run for a year before it served up possible mates, based on every transaction, interaction and connection made (or missed) in the prior twelve months? Or one that encourages you to start eating healthier (or invest in insurance for a probable bypass surgery)? Millennials assume that technology will lead to better decision making... and more free time to think about global issues. Gen Y's heightened interest in politics, the environment and humanity may be an opportunity for brands to reshape their identities. Social causes could become brand definers or fuel product innovation.

Bottom line: Millennials have expectations of themselves and of the world, and plan to be active participants in that future.

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