

Generation Einstein: smart, social and superfast

Communicating with Young People in the 21st Century

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Summary

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Summary

This book is about a new generation: Generation Einstein. The first generation of young people since the Second World War to be characterised by positive qualities, they are – amongst other things – socially minded, co-operative, bright, and involved. Part I of this book discusses the characteristics of this new generation, while part II explains how to reach these young people.

Part I: Meet Generation Einstein: smart, social and superfast

Generation Einstein is a new generation. Certain big historical events make an enormous mark on people in their formative years of adolescence. For instance, the silent generation was heavily shaped by the Second World War, the baby boom generation by the social revolution of the '60s, Generation X by the economic crisis in the '80s.

Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Einstein
1945 – 1955	1960 – 1985	1988 – present
Protest	Negative	Positive
Post-war reconstruction	Economic depression	Growth, advancement and prosperity
Brimming with ideals	Ideological vacuum	Traditional ideals
No brands	Emergence of brands	Brands everywhere
Enthusiastic	Puts things into perspective	Serious
A different future	No future	Good future
Search for personality	Personality is design	Personality is genuine
Identity free from parents and authority	Identity is belonging	Identity is genuinely from yourself

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Generation Einstein

Generation Einstein, the young people of today, is growing up in and being shaped by the 24/7 commercialised information society.

The world of Generation Einstein

Society has changed beyond all recognition and exerts substantial influence on Generation Einstein in the following ways:

24/7 information society

Young people growing up in the internet age have access to information anywhere, anytime, anyplace. This has a number of important consequences:

1. The end of knowledge monopolies – there is so much information that no one can claim to have a monopoly on the truth, as was the case previously. This is changing the role of the media (things printed in a book or newspaper used to be true, but not any more) and authorities (government, businesses, teachers, church). No longer authorities on knowledge, they are just one of the sources.
2. The different way of processing information – young people now process information differently: Non-linearly, just like the internet. They have no trouble with information overload; instead, they know that there is more information than they can learn, so they pick out what is most relevant to them. As a result of image culture (TV), the word is no longer central.
3. The change in the role of the computer – the computer has changed from a glorified typewriter to a social machine, a means of contacting others and profiling yourself, either via chat, MSN, weblogs or profile sites.
4. The corresponding unique power given to young people – they can criticise companies on weblogs, tease one another via chat, join forces to make businesses/brands fail or become popular.

Internet use by the different generations

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Einstein
<i>Introduction</i>	Late in life	As (young) adults	Grown up with it
<i>Function</i>	Library	Library	Social machine
<i>Activities</i>	Surfing and information	Surfing and information	Chatting, self-publishing, sharing
	No MSN	More and more MSN	Continuous MSN

Prosperity

Young people are growing up with a high level of prosperity (there are, of course, exceptions) and have seen it rise higher and higher. This means that they:

1. Have a great deal of confidence, because things are always getting better.
2. Have become functional and very critical consumers due to so much material wealth and so many choices.

Commerce

Young people are growing up in a commercialised society that is not just geared towards adults, but that has discovered them as a target group too. Commerce and advertising is everywhere, including places where it was previously not seen (school).

1. This has made young people media smart. They understand advertising and they understand the intentions of the marketers and communication experts.
2. As a result, young people are more cynical; they are no longer willing to be told what to do and they no longer believe you unless you can provide proof.

Multicultural society

Young people are growing up in a multicultural society, particularly in large cities. Foreign youths have an impact on our society in terms of language use, values and standards, musical preferences, and clothing styles – to name but a few aspects. Young foreigners have different values than Dutch youths: The most important value for a young Dutch person is self-fulfilment, while for a foreign youth it is honour.

Challenges and risks for young people

Our society has changed irreversibly, and this has had an enormous impact on all areas of our lives and of the lives of our offspring. This causes us to worry (rightly or wrongly) about their physical and mental welfare.

Young people and their health

As adults, we have this idea that young people live from one day to the next, experimenting with drink, drugs and sex. Campaigns are frequently devised to warn young people about (the unhealthy effects of) these things. Young people are adolescents and so they experiment with things that belong to the adult world. After all, how can you know what something is if you have never experienced it?

However, you cannot lump all health issues together. Each issue merits its own approach, whether it is safe sex, responsible alcohol use or drugs. As regards to alcohol, it is important to realise that alcohol use is a socially accepted phenomenon. Many young people, with the best intentions of their parents, are given their first drink at home. In their eyes alcohol is part of adulthood, so you cannot prohibit it indiscriminately. With drugs, on the other hand, the situation is different. Drug use is not normal, even in the eyes of young people. Because a very small but strident group of cannabis users acts as if it is normal, however, the opinion of the other young people is influenced. It is helpful to arm young people who do not smoke cannabis with knowledge that enables them to defend themselves against the cannabis users and make their own conscious choice about whether or not to smoke it. When it comes to safe sex, it is important to realise that adolescents feel the influence of their hormones; nonetheless, although sex is a strong drive for them, it is also a great source of uncertainty. Images that are too crude will put them off; it is better to keep it low key and take advantage of the strong sense of responsibility that young people have for one another.

Young people and political and social issues

Adults think that the youth of today are less interested in politics. This is a widespread misconception. Young people are very interested in politics and social issues, just not in the political structure or parties. Youth participation projects are often organised in the same way as adult projects, and so young people drop out, making the officials involved feel disillusioned. A young person expects action and results. They can be extremely enthusiastic if this is the case. Young people will not accept any system unless it is intended to get to the truth and leads to prompt, result-oriented action. But they do want to exchange their views on the various subjects with us... as long as they are listened to and taken seriously. Young people appreciate credible politicians who do what they say and are what they claim to be. They prefer the tried and tested Lubbers, who is simply himself, to a politician who tries to rap and act young (and is therefore a fake).

At home, friendship and family: From the individual to the collective

The family is back, so much so that it seems like the 1950s, when the family was still the time-honoured cornerstone of society. However, the family of today differs in some important ways from the family of the '50s. In the '50s, people gathered together socially out of necessity, as in those days houses had only one heated room. Nowadays, family members gather together by choice. In the 1950s, there was a great deal of poverty; these were the years of reconstruction following the Second World War and there was no freedom of choice. Now there is a great deal of prosperity, people have sufficient freedom of choice and individualism is of paramount importance. The structure of the family is also vastly different. In the 1950s, there was a father, a mother and lots of children; now, you see a lot of combined families, homosexual couples and single-parent families. In the 1950s, it was taken for granted that couples would have children; now it is a conscious choice. Children were brought up to obey, whereas nowadays we consult our children about things. The society of the '50s was a closed society with little room for frankness and emotions; nowadays, we tell one another everything and our society has become very open.

The family is now a very important place for young people, not because things are the same as in the 1950s, but for other reasons.

The family is small, cosy and intimate, and offers a sheltered, safe and familiar place in a world that is getting bigger and bigger. Young people enjoy getting together, like having harmonious relationships and genuinely need a home where real relationships are felt to be important, where friendship and family play an enormously important role. A family in which you can take an interest in one another, share time together, spend lots of time playing games together, cosy, safe and stable. Where you can forget about all those choices and where you can simply choose one another. The family of today – unlike the stifling family of the 1950s, which was dictated by circumstances – is real, authentic, sincere.

Baby Boomers	Gen X	Generation Einstein
Breaking loose from the family	Uprooted family	Want a family
Large families with one or two parents	Families becoming smaller	Various types of family (single-parent, combined)
Hardly any divorces	First divorces	Divorces more the rule than the exception
As children, were expected	As children, were unwanted	Love children who were wanted
Rigid authoritarian upbringing	Reins getting looser	Consultation and rapport

School and learning: From linear to lateral

Education has been put under pressure by a number of processes currently taking place:

1. Education has changed.
2. Pupils have changed.

1. Education has changed

Traditional classical education has been under pressure for years. Schools are being confronted more and more often with motivational problems and pupils who drop out early, as well as increasing discipline problems and pupils who no longer listen to their teachers. Furthermore, schools have become “catchall” institutions, taking in all types of pupil of all abilities. All these individual differences require separate approaches. The solution to this situation lies in “new learning”. This is an umbrella term for a wide variety of teaching methods which reverse the roles of classical supply-oriented education. The basic idea is that you learn better if you need to find out something. Children are inquisitive by nature and always learn automatically in everything they do (natural learning).

According to the theory of Alex van Emst as described in *Koop een auto op de sloop: Paradigmashift in het onderwijs (Buy a car at the scrap yard: Paradigm shift in education)*, the old way of teaching created a whole host of problems, such as dropping out, lack of motivation, truancy, pupils failing to do homework, calculating behaviour and a low learning success rate. A new type of education is needed: New learning.

New learning is built upon a number of basic principles: Learning is always subjective, not objective. Depending on the knowledge someone already has, the new knowledge is stored or linked to the existing knowledge. Objectively testing knowledge against a national average, for instance, makes little sense. It is better to test the pupil’s progress against the pupil’s own previous progress and performance. The learning success rate is an important concept – it does not deal with how much material is taught, but how

much is actually learnt. To ensure that pupils can directly apply the knowledge that they acquire, the knowledge is imparted in the environment and context where they will ultimately need it. In addition, the “bigger picture” is now the starting point for conveying knowledge. You start with the whole and then look at the parts, not the other way round. Van Emst calls this learning in a brain-friendly way, because our entire thinking process is set up to work on the basis of a whole (we want to become something, make something, do something). Only at the next stage are we concerned with how to attain that whole.

In practice, this means conducting various experiments at all types of schools, under various labels – such as project-oriented, problem-oriented, competence-based education – which all rest, more or less, on the theory of natural learning. A mass of knowledge is acquired by trial and error, and success is varied. For this reason, there is a lot of criticism from all sides. The main criticism relates to the abandonment of classical subject-based education: Knowledge transfer is still necessary, even in new forms of education.

Van Emst’s new learning	
Logical positivism <i>(“old” learning)</i>	Social constructivism <i>(new learning)</i>
Objective knowledge	Subjective knowledge
Knowledge transfer	Knowledge construction
Teaching	Learning
Useful	Meaningful
From the parts to the whole (fragmentation)	From the whole (overall) to the parts
Appeal to two types of intelligence	Appeal to several (max. nine) types of intelligence
Geared towards reading and listening	Geared towards gaining and expanding experience
Compare performance with average	Compare performance with previous performance
Look for what you cannot do	Look for what you are good at
Working together is copying	You learn more together than by yourself
Education geared towards knowledge and (sub)skills	Competence-based education
Knowledge is stored independently of context	All knowledge has a context
The teacher (expert) determines the content of the lesson and is primarily an instructor	Teacher stimulates learning process and is an expert, instructor, coach, trainer, guide, advisor
Learning for later	Learning for now

The teacher also has to assume a new role, one in which the subject content is no longer the main focus and they act more as a coach.

2. Pupils have changed

Pupils are influenced by three social trends:

At home, there is increased pressure to succeed

Parents are proud of their children, but they do expect the child to perform. This pressure is becoming more and more intense. Parents would rather not send their children to VMBO (lower secondary professional education) and, instead, push them to go to HAVO (higher general secondary education). They are trained very early with educational material to stimulate their intellectual capacities. However, this is not especially worthwhile, as these children produce inferior results overall.

All kinds of new teaching methods are being tested at schools

With varying success, as mentioned previously. Even the pupils are criticising some measures: They have a lot of freedom, are given fewer lessons, have to go to school less often. They feel that competence-based learning is another term for cost cutting. Young people know that school is very important for their future; they take their education very seriously. They need attention and personal guidance. Sometimes, however, they doubt whether school is right for them or they are right for school (as a source of income).

Today's young generation learns differently

If our generation learned linearly, this generation – having grown up with the internet – learns in a completely different way. Our (limited quantity of) educational resources – books, TV programmes, etc – were constructed linearly; today's youth have access to all possible forms of information and an enormous number of channels, which teaches them to deal with discontinuous information. There is too much information to be able to take it all in – and they know that. So they choose their own authorities and learn in networks: Via friends, acquaintances, wherever the knowledge is. They learn in images and can channel-hop meaningfully – they understand how films are put together and see exactly which parts are important. They do not need to see the whole picture in order to “get” an image. They use their brains in a more creative way than we ever did.

Generation X	Generation Einstein
Cito test (placement exam) indicates direction	Cito test is authoritative with no consequences criterion
No homework at primary school	Homework at primary school
Not much pressure to perform	A great deal of pressure to perform
Learn linearly	Learn laterally
Learn verbally on the basis of text	Learn in images
Find it difficult to draw on creativity	Are creative

Generation Einstein: Their identity

This new generation is characterised by the following qualities:

A young person is an adolescent

Physically and mentally it is a difficult period because a tremendous amount is happening. Physically, they are becoming adults, with all the uncertainties, awkwardness and hormonal imbalance that this entails. Cognitively, there is also a great deal of change. Their thinking changes: They can cope with more and they learn propositional thinking (thinking about what could be). Thus, they become fixed solely on themselves, their position in the world, and their opinion about the world. The result is insecure adolescents who are constantly getting into discussions and arguments. As boys and girls develop at different rates, enormous differences can be seen within a class.

It seems that boys are becoming adults much earlier nowadays, a phenomenon also known as Kids Getting Older Younger (KGOY). Physically, we do in fact become adults earlier, as a result of better nutrition and other factors. Mentally, however, they remain adolescents who, despite a big mouth and a grown-up appearance, still need guidance from adults.

The activities of young people

Young people are making the transition from the child's world to the adult world. They flick back and forth between the two worlds: At home on the sofa on their mother's lap, at school talking about friends. The older they get, the more they react against everything from that childhood. They want to belong to the adult world and so they look up to older youths and at what they do (and look at, listen to, read). The stormiest period is that between the ages of 13 and 15, when the quest for their own identity is in full swing. Even though everything in the adult world already has an enormous allure, there is less talk of rebellion than in the past. As of the age of 16, young people enter somewhat smoother waters. The 16-18 age group is still searching for their own identity, but is not inclined to want to (deliberately) deviate from the prevailing morals (anymore). They value harmony, cohesion, tradition, family and oneness. Young people everywhere like watching TV (soaps), films, cinema, doing sport, going out, watching a DVD with friends on the sofa, games (particularly the boys) and reading magazines (particularly the girls). Contact with friends is extremely important, large friendship networks are maintained and there is constant contact with them via telephone, SMS or MSN.

It is often said that young people are busy. However, young people themselves are very happy with their activities. Sport is still very popular, but not in an organised way. Staying fit and having fun are the most important motives for doing sport. You do not necessarily have to be a member of a sports club or take part in competitions. As regards going out, a marked trend can be seen: A change from regular patterns of going out towards more one-off events and parties. As a result of higher prices and various other factors, young people are becoming increasingly selective in their choice of opportunities for

going out, and they go out less often. The alternative to going out – staying at home – is also becoming less of a taboo for young people. The big loser in young people's leisure activities is culture. Young people spend hardly any free time focusing on culture with a capital C, which they are quick to label heavy-going, pretentious or boring.

Many young people have a job outside school. As well as being an aspect of their strive for independence, a job enables them to go out and also means they are able to have a mobile phone and buy (designer) clothes.

Games occupy a special place in the activities of young people. They are very popular among both boys and girls. The latter prefer to play a different type of game than that played by boys, with more emphasis on a realistic game context in which communication plays an important role. Board games are also popular. The debate concerning the influence of games on young people continues to rage fiercely, but primarily in relation to the alleged negative effects of playing violent games. However, this link can only be made in extreme cases. There is a greater body of evidence demonstrating the positive effects of playing games: Better concentration, hand-eye co-ordination and strategic perception.

Generation Einstein today

- **Social:** Value family ties and consider friendships very important.
- **Socially involved:** Are concerned about the suffering in the world and have heated discussions about it.
- **Functional:** Have grown up with quality and therefore expect nothing less; they compare products and services with one another and want the best.
- **Loyal:** In the huge commercial world young people look for real friends, connections and contacts. Family is very important.
- **Look for intimacy:** Another consequence of the world getting bigger is that they look for intimacy. Staying at home with friends or family, regional events or newspapers are popular.
- **Practical:** Are used to being able to find everything quickly and easily, so they expect everything to be handy, functional and fast.
- **Media smart:** They understand advertising, marketing and communication. Advertising is not rejected, but they do know exactly what the underlying strategies are.

The central values of Generation Einstein

Authenticity

Authenticity means being yourself, standing for something and clearly having your own opinion. Today, a young person only truly belongs if he is genuine. Young people also expect this authenticity from others, both from the people around them and from

brands. A teacher standing in front of the class must be able to teach well and be good at the subject. A trendy, funny teacher who does not understand the subject being taught will not command any respect from young people. A company that tries to be trendy, but isn't, will fail immediately and lose respect, even though the company might normally have good products.

Respect

Respect is especially important to young people. Respect does not mean the automatic respect that (older) people expect on the basis of age or position in society, but refers to respect for your own knowledge and authenticity.

Self-fulfilment

Self-fulfilment is the highest good for Dutch youths. The most important thing in life is being happy and having fun. Developing yourself as a person plays an important role in this.

Honour

For foreign youths (particularly of Turkish and Moroccan origin), honour is regarded as the highest good. You attain honour through activities and products that increase your status. A good job, a good education with high marks, expensive designer clothing to show that you earn a lot of money, a nice car: All these things relate to "honour".

Part II: Communication becomes contact: The new way of communicating

In the previous part we looked in detail at Generation Einstein, their unique characteristics and the world in which they are growing up. In this part we will examine communication with young people.

Why do we communicate with young people?

We want to sell young people something

Young people have more and more money to spend and they do so on fun things such as going out, moped/car, clothes, mobile phones, games, presents, sweets/snacks. Young people do not just buy a lot of things themselves, they also influence the choices of their parents. For this reason many companies target young people even though their products or services are not always relevant to them.

We want to shape their opinions

Young people are the future and are right in the middle of their impressionable years. They are seen as a difficult target group by organisations which deal in ideas – such as schools and/or nature and environmental organisations – because while young people

are forming their own identity, they consider a large number of ideas. It is therefore best to get their attention as early as possible. Adults also want to address young people about their (maladjusted) behaviour.

We want to alert young people to the dangers

Big campaigns are launched to warn young people of the dangers of drugs, unsafe sex and running up debts. Teaching packages, websites, leaflets and other materials containing information about the advantages and disadvantages of these things are also produced.

Young people as a target group

For the purposes of communication, young people as a target group are harder to describe than adults, precisely because they are not yet adults (i.e., they are still in their development stage). They are therefore described in a variety of ways:

1. On the basis of age

Age is the most distinctive characteristic of young people, and various age groups have been given their own label: *Tweens* (ages 10-12), *teens* (ages 12-14) and *youngsters* (ages 14-16). This approach is based on the fact that because the people in these groups are of the same age, they share the same characteristics, qualities, hobbies and preferences. This is correct to some extent, because young people of the same age are adolescents with all the characteristics that apply to this group. However, in some respects this idea is flawed, because these terms can easily take on a life of their own and thus prevent us from actually understanding the target group.

2. On the basis of research

A great deal of research is carried out into young people, both quantitative and qualitative. However, despite all this research, we are not getting a great deal closer to understanding this target group. Research gives us a picture of the here and now, but the data does not provide an answer to the question of how you can reach them.

3. On the basis of trends

In this quest to discover what is “in” and “cool”, companies are increasingly calling on young people, the idea being that young people are trendsetters by nature; this is called “coolhunting”. This type of research has two limitations: On one hand, it is aimed primarily at the trendiest young people and, on the other, young people expect original ideas rather than a product that capitalises on the latest trend.

4. On the basis of values and motives

A new type of research is Sanoma’s YoungMentality study, in which quantitative data are enriched with values. It is a long-term study in which young people are divided into six types with differing values and motives: The stay-at-home comfort-seekers, the en-

thusiastic explorers, the social conformists, the recognition seekers, the extrovert status seekers and the self-willed idealists. It explains the inner motives of the young person and the influence of family standards and values, with some movement expected within the groups.

5. On the basis of subcultures

Youth cultures and subcultures, such as existed from the 1960s to the 1990s, are gone for good. The identity of young people is not determined, as it was previously, by the group to which they belong, but is made up of their own choices and decisions. Creating and designing your own style is the highest good. For this reason, subcultures are increasingly fading into the background. Nowadays, we see young and old, children and adults, being able to communicate with one another on an equal footing, provided it is about an interest or hobby that they share. We call this vertical segmentation, as opposed to horizontal segmentation. The latter system segments groups on the basis of age, whereas vertical segmentation crosses age boundaries and looks purely at shared hobbies and preferences.

The field of communication and young people

The existing rules of the field are no longer adequate for communicating with young people. The field was developed with an adult consumer in mind, one who behaves according to specific patterns. Because of the characteristics of the time in which they grew up, the new generation breaks with all those patterns. This has serious consequences for the field of communication. It means that you can no longer communicate on automatic pilot; you have to think again, each time, about what you want to say and why. The current thinking on communication does not offer adequate tools for effective communication with this target group. The field has a number of pitfalls and limitations that make communicating difficult.

Pitfall 1: One-way traffic

Current forms of communication consist largely of one-way traffic: TV and radio adverts, advertisements in newspapers and magazines, billboards – all these are “senders” that do not initiate any interaction with the “receivers”.

Young people want two-way traffic

Generation Einstein has grown up in a world with the internet, the greatest interactive medium of all. For young people, it is completely logical to be able to respond on companies’ websites, give your opinion and make suggestions. Young people therefore expect that you will then do something with their input.

Pitfall 2: Communication as a stopgap

Marketing communication and advertising are often used as a means of creating apparent added value for products/services that do not have any actual innovation.

Young people want to see proof

This should not be a problem in itself, as long as you are not trying to sell a bad product. If the product is no good, if the education is bad, if there is no real innovation, you can throw as much communication expenditure at it as you want – Generation Einstein will not be taken in.

Pitfall 3: Arrogance

Communication and advertising assume that the senders are clever and the receivers are stupid. Campaigns base their thinking on the fact that the receiver is not a communication specialist and therefore will not see through the manipulation very quickly.

Young people are clever receivers

The young people of Generation Einstein are in fact professional receivers who get exactly how advertising works, how communication works. They see through all our manipulation mechanisms. For the field of communication, this means that they are on an equal level; we are no longer dealing with clever senders and stupid receivers.

Pitfall 4: Conflict of interest

There are quite a few parties dealing with the subject of communication; each party has its own interests and tries to appropriate a portion of the communication budget. In practice, the choice of media/vehicles is often determined by all sorts of other factors that have nothing to do with the original issue. In the eyes of young people, this leads to completely illogical campaigns in some cases.

Young people want logic

Young people have a very strong sense of the time, place and function of the vehicles used. All these things should form a coherent and explainable whole, based on the essence of the message.

How can you mess things up with this generation?

This generation mercilessly judges products, businesses or services that do not strike the right tone or are simply dishonest. Below is a list of “don’ts”, things you should not do or think when dealing with this generation.

Do not think: I was young once though, right?

Because every adult was once a child, it is all too tempting to set yourself up as a “hands-on” expert. But the children and young people of today are growing up in a different time. Moreover, nothing is more unreliable than one’s own memory.

Do not think: All young people are just like my own children/nephews/nieces/neighbour's children

The children and young people in your own environment are individuals. What they are like does not say much about children and young people as a whole.

Do not think: "The youth of today" and "things aren't what they used to be"

Superficially observing young people and their behaviour without gaining a deeper understanding leads to this kind of acerbic opinion, which prevents any real understanding.

Do not: Act young and trendy in order to be accepted by young people

We are not young or cool and we do not need to be like young people in order to be accepted. Young people will see straight through it. You will be accepted by simply being yourself, as an individual or as a company.

Do not: Lie in the communication about your products/services

Do not make the world out to be any rosier than it is, always remain honest. Young people get their information from so many different sides that it will only be a matter of time before your cover is blown.

Do not: Use "youth" media and channels indiscriminately

Young people use all sorts of media, and so adults use these in order to reach them. If, however, you have no grasp of the functions that specific types of media and channels have for young people, then avoid getting your fingers burnt.

Youth channels and media?

Just like adults, young people make extensive use of various media and channels. They simply attach a different function and meaning to them. As adults, we put the technical function first (look at a type of vehicle/medium on the basis of the technical possibilities), whereas for young people the technical function is subordinate to the emotional meaning of a type of vehicle or medium (what you can do with it).

Context plays an important role in this: The time, the place, the medium, the emotion determine what kind of role the chosen vehicle plays, and that is unrelated to the technical possibilities. Playing a game on the sofa with your friends is something very different from playing a quick game on your mobile while you are waiting for the tram.

Functions of a number of vehicles		
	Technical	Emotional
<i>SMS</i>	A way of sending commercial messages that always get to the receiver because the receiver always carries his mobile with him.	Fast, short messages for keeping in contact with friends and acquaintances.
<i>MSN</i>	A way of sending commercial messages that are always seen by the receiver because he uses MSN every day.	Keeping in daily contact with friends and acquaintances. Chitchat, but also to share and exchange knowledge.
<i>Internet</i>	A way of profiling your own company, products, views, enormous library.	Social machine, staying in contact, profiling yourself, flirting and dating, games, background info.
<i>TV</i>	Mass communication vehicle, advertising and sponsoring of TV programmes.	Either it is simply on in the background, so you can do homework and go on the internet at the same time, or it is a social medium that lets you enjoy watching live competitions (or Idols) in a group, for instance.
<i>Game</i>	New way of preserving advertising (or teaching) because gaming is a long-term activity.	Entertainment, having a laugh, social event, prevents boredom, interaction and control over a virtual world.
<i>CD-ROM</i>	A way of profiling company/product/service/ideas with image and sound.	Outmoded, too much effort needed to put it in the PC, redundant.
<i>E-mail</i>	A cheaper way of reaching receivers than via paper DM.	Feels like normal post, intended for delayed contact (no direct response is necessary or expected, just like with letters) and has a more official status than SMS or MSN.

Media strategy based on essence

A good media strategy, therefore, takes into account the specific meaning that the media and vehicles have for young people and, at the same time, the meaning of the context in which they are being used.

Focus on the essence of the message

A really good media strategy focuses on the essence of the message rather than the type of channel or medium. This is the point of departure: It is important to consider to what extent each type of channel or medium fits in with the essence (i.e. do we want to use this type of channel or medium or not) on the basis of the emotional function that this

type has for young people. Then you look at how the essence takes shape within that specific type of channel or medium.

Intended effect

Then examine how the essence can take shape – through which vehicles, which media formats and depending on the intended effect. Consider TV for brand awareness, consider the internet for interaction.

Choosing carefully

The chosen vehicles must be logical. They must fit in with the content and essence of the message.

Group or individual

Think about whether you want to address young people as a group or as individuals and choose the vehicles accordingly.

On the basis of the function of the medium

Each medium has its own function for young people. Take this into account when deciding on a media strategy.

Take multitasking into account

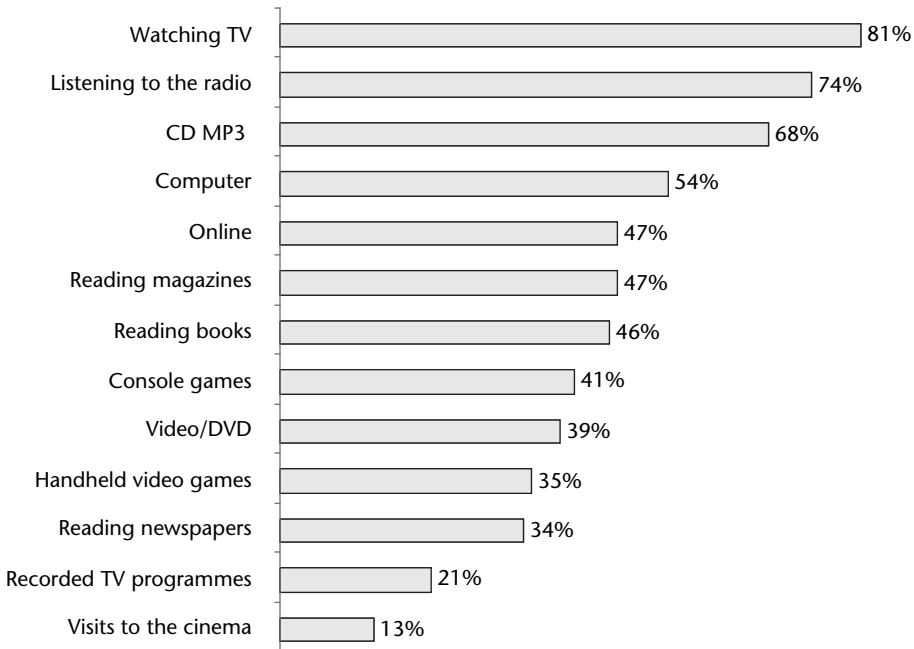
Young people are fanatical media consumers. Television, magazines, radio, websites and weblogs – young people use all these media intensively and often at the same time.

Integrated media strategy

Young people see a TV advert, a leaflet and a website produced by one and the same company as a coherent whole and, in their eyes, these must be consistent with one another.

Use of media and channels at a glance

Which media do European children and young people use in an average day? (in % of total media use)



Source: Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds

Media and channels

Radio and television

Young people still watch a lot of TV, but this is declining. On one hand, young people have the TV on in the background while they do all sorts of other things; on the other hand, TV is a social medium – they can enjoy watching *Idols* with the whole family. Radio is very important: $\frac{3}{4}$ of young people between the ages of 15 and 18 listen to the radio (almost) every day, often in combination with other activities. Young people take it for granted that businesses will bring their attention to their products and services via radio and TV adverts. Adverts are often seen as too one-dimensional, because too little is left to their own imagination.

Posters in schools

These are advertising posters run commercially within the school environment. It is an accepted and frequently used vehicle for attracting the attention of young people at school.

Newspapers

Have minimal circulation among ten- to twelve-year-olds; the figure increases as young people get older, but then drops again among fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds. Young people see newspapers primarily as an incoherent information source with which they have little or no involvement. They do read regional newspapers, however.

Magazines

Young people feel highly involved with magazines, particularly girls. The majority of children read one or two magazines that correspond to their needs. In the 15-19 age group, however, there is a heavy decline in magazine reading. It is striking that *Donald Duck* is still the most read magazine.

Websites

Young people between the ages of ten and eighteen spend more time in front of the PC than in front of the television. The internet is a prominent medium that is combined with other activities such as watching television, listening to the radio, and phoning or texting people. Young people have a few favourite sites; they hardly ever surf to any great extent. Websites must be coherent and offer relevant information. If young people think commercial websites provide too little relevant information about the product, brand or the organisation that produced the website, this should be regarded as a missed opportunity. Young people are very interested in the history of the brand, product applications and the organisation's vision.

Weblogs

Young people are fanatical bloggers and also read a lot of blogs. There are two ways of using weblogs as an advertising medium: Advertising on popular blogs or starting/taking part in a weblog yourself. However, it is not possible to control the content of the weblog. In both cases, absolute honesty about your own intentions is recommended.

Communities

Another way of using the internet as a marketing tool is to advertise on or set up a community. However, communities that are created top-down rather than by young people themselves are often less popular. It may be worthwhile trying to join existing youth communities and finding a logical place for the marketing material within them, without altering the character or running of the community.

SMS and mobile phones

The mobile phone is a social instrument that allows friends to stay constantly connected with one another. They text one another a lot. However, SMS is heavily overrated as a commercial instrument. An SMS with a marketing message, however nicely packaged, is usually regarded as an invasion of their privacy.

Games

Games are hugely popular. Advertising in games is on the rise and, for the time being, does not seem to be encountering resistance from young people. Making a game yourself is not advisable; today's games cost millions to produce and you would soon look rather ridiculous.

Events

Young people attend fewer events than you might think. Even when it comes to events, however, young people still demand authenticity. An event is not an easy communication vehicle. Broadly speaking, there are two possibilities: Organising an event yourself or sponsoring an existing event. There is enormous competition, so opportunities are primarily limited to small-scale, intimate events. In terms of sponsoring, it is better to bring something to an event from the values of the organisation or functionality of the product than to simply put up a banner.

Starting points for communicating with young people

Communicating with Generation Einstein: A brief summary

To be able to communicate effectively with Generation Einstein, you should take into account these qualities and characteristics:

1. Generation Einstein is media smart. They have grown up in a 24/7 information world where information on every conceivable subject is travelling around at lightning speed and information monopolies no longer exist, so they demand honesty and openness.
2. They are professional receivers who understand how communication and marketing work. If a product/campaign/idea/service is not relevant to them or does not concern them for whatever reason, then they will not see or hear you. This makes you effectively invisible.
3. They are in constant contact with one another, so information spreads at lightning speed. This can be positive (buzz surrounding a product that leads to sales) or negative (buzz around a film that makes it flop).
4. Generation Einstein attaches emotional value to vehicles and media. For instance, they see computers and mobile phones as social machines, as part of the way in which they are in constant contact with their social network of friends and acquaintances. They do not find the technical functions of vehicles and media interesting. These are subordinate to the emotional function.
5. Generation Einstein forms part of vertical segments, i.e., segments based on a hobby or interest which extend worldwide across all ages and nationalities.
6. Generation Einstein is used to reading and then responding immediately. They are used to listening as well as speaking. They expect two-way communication, whereas we are used to one-way traffic. They have also become senders themselves. They profile themselves on the internet via weblogs and profile sites.

7. Generation Einstein respects people who are themselves, authentic and sincere with a real identity of their own, not copied but completely themselves. You do not need to agree with such a person, you do not even need to like that person at all; the most important thing is that someone is genuine. Companies should therefore stay true to themselves and not act young or trendy.

If you do something well, the buzz is created automatically

The speed of information: Because young people are in constant contact with one another and are continually talking to one another, information spreads extremely quickly. If something is highly talked-about among young people and they keep on talking about it with one another, we call this a *buzz*. In some ways it is very easy to create a buzz yourself, in other ways it is very difficult. If a product is very good, nice, cool or appealing, a buzz is created automatically. A buzz can also be created from a negative message, however – for example, if people discover that a company has done something unethical.

And if you don't do something well, you won't be heard or seen

Generation Einstein is totally selective in what they do and don't see or hear. They have no trouble with information overload and excessive media violence; they simply ignore the things they are not interested in. Young people are prepared to listen to you, as long as you know how to get through to them. You can get through to someone if you are able to grasp the essence of a specific subject or issue. If you show that you understand what something means in their experience, you are automatically invited into their life as a brand or product.

Defining the essence

Good communication therefore requires a focus on the essence of the message you want to convey to young people as a target group. However, you should not confuse the message with the *essence* of the message. The essence is the meaning of the message in the eyes of young people. Each subject has a variety of meanings. The trick is to choose one that stands for the message you want to convey and that gets through to the young people on an emotional level. It is important to realise that there are opinions associated with every issue.

Proceeding: The campaign

Once you have determined the essence of the message, your task is to find a form that expresses the essence and which can be used as a basis for the media strategy. One of those choices may be to allow the interest in your product/service to grow from the bottom up via the *reconnection model*.

The reconnection model

The word “reconnection” says it all: It is about establishing contact with one another. The reconnection model centres on the essence of a message or issue. However, the next step is not to directly translate the essence into various forms of communication, but to allow that essence itself to spread by gathering together all the right people who can spread it for you.

The communication model is made up of a number of layers. Each layer consists of a stage with a specific duration that depends on results; depending on the results of the previous layer, the activities belonging to the next layer are started. In that sense, the layers are constructed hierarchically: It begins in the centre and subsequent stages are only started if the predefined result is obtained from the previous layer.

Stage 1: Seed – Non-branded

The model centres on the essence of the message or issue. Look for the people or projects that epitomise this essence most strongly. These people or project teams are allowed to do what they do best, sponsored by the company/brand, without having to give anything in return. Alternatively, anonymously sponsor initiatives and people that completely epitomise the chosen essence of your product or message, without demanding anything in return. Then sit back and watch what happens with the people/initiatives. Some initiatives die a quiet death, you never hear anything more about them, whereas you will come across others because people talk about them on weblogs, for example.

Stage 2: Feed – Hidden branded

With the surviving initiatives and people, you continue developing the projects. In this stage, you give more publicity to your company or brand by offering additional possibilities or financial resources in exchange for mentioning your name. The projects have now become well-known, have risen above the anonymity and have already gained a certain degree of acceptance among the small group surrounding the original initiators of stage 1.

Stage 3: Breed – Visible branded

In this stage, the initiatives have automatically become well-known even among a group outside the initial set of people involved. The buzz has done its work: People have become aware of what projects and initiatives are in progress and who originally sponsored the idea.

Stage 4: Eat - Branded

In this final stage, you turn things round: You can now start a mass media campaign enlisting the help of the people involved in the beginning, those who devised the project in the first stage. Because they are the ultimate embodiment of the essence of the product or project and all projects are already accepted by the people around them, they have themselves become the ambassadors for the product or brand.

Characteristics of this model

This is a viral communication model, intended for gaining acceptance from those people who completely embody the essence of your product/brand/service. As soon as that acceptance is there, the others (and the rest of the world) will follow automatically, and a moment arrives when your product and that essence totally belong together and can no longer be separated. Then, you're like Nike – the fashion in sport shoes, you're like Jolt Cola – the brand for nerds, you're like Snickers – the brand of skaters. Brand and essence have then become synonymous.

General observations on communicating with young people

From research to dialogue

Quantitative and qualitative research is only of limited use for devising solutions. Organisations that want to reach young people are increasingly being required to gain a deeper structural understanding of the experience of young people by initiating a continuous dialogue with them. This goes further than research. It calls for the setting up of an environment in which the organisation is in continuous contact with the target group; for the creation of a setting in which young people feel free and encouraged – just like in a real relationship – to put their perceptions into words.

From persuading to informing

Young people are bombarded with advertising. Young people must be allowed – by means of communication – to go through the same process as the sender. And the organisation must trust that if they give young people the best possible opportunity to do this, they will come to the same conclusion as the sender. Informing means you must have trust. Adults must learn to trust young people as fully fledged citizens and consumers and not see them as unreachable layabouts (any more).

From purchased communication to free media

Take advantage of the natural inquisitiveness of young people. If we stimulate young people's inquisitiveness, the message will sink in. If communication managers or marketers took this as the starting point for communication, the world would immediately be turned upside down. The advertising space of media buyers would then be no match for the independent editorial space of the journalists.

From the individual to the group

Young people have a collective mindset and attach a high value to the social context in which they live. This social context consists of three different groups: The family that the young person belongs to, his/her friends, and the wider network of acquaintances and peers. All these social circles are relevant for communicating with today's young generation. It is (and will continue to be) increasingly important for marketers to become part of this social universe to which young people are exposed.

From commercial to social

One recent development is that social communication is done in a more commercial way and commercial communication in a more social way. Non-profit organisations make use of the same communication techniques as commercial companies, whether it relates to membership recruitment for a club or money for a good cause. The use of social vehicles purely to achieve commercial objectives is increasingly common. Providing a platform with objective information for girls, where they can resolve insecurities about their body, menstruation and sexuality, as Procter & Gamble has done with Aboutyou.nl, is a form of this. Provided that the information provided remains objective, this is not a problem.

