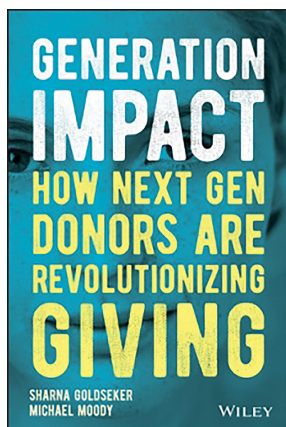


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Book Review: Generation Impact—How Next Gen Donors Are Revolutionizing Giving

Written by Sharna Goldseker and Michael Moody. Reviewed by Stephanie Cory, CAP, CFRE

First Edition, Published by Wiley (September 2017)



When a book wins an award for research, the reader expects it to be informative. What is not expected, however, is an easy read with real-world applicability. *Generation Impact: How Next Gen Donors Are Revolutionizing Giving* by Sharna Goldseker and Michael Moody, is both informative and readable. The book's tone is casual and conversational, as evidenced by the frequent use of contractions. Vocabulary is kept simple and any technical terms or fundraising jargon are defined.

For anyone hoping to learn more about younger donors' interests and priorities, this book is worth the investment. As the authors explain in the first chapter, the book serves to give voice to next gen donors themselves versus relying on broad generational trends. Goldseker and Moody go on to establish their expertise. Moody offers his academic background and strong research skills while Goldseker is a next gen donor, even sharing her own story in the book.

Research for the book began in 2011 and was more about asking exploratory and open-ended questions, versus testing hypotheses. Data geeks may want to begin with the appendix to learn more about the demographics of those included in the research. Helpful tables break down a variety of demographics. Starting with the appendix could also be helpful by giving the reader a better perspective of who the sampled next gen donors are. It was interesting, for example, to note how much the sample skewed toward donors with liberal political views. The authors attribute this to demographics of the next gen cohorts, but one could also attribute it to sampling bias.

The appendix also explains the methodology for those curious about how the data were obtained and discusses potential limitations of the study. The donors studied were a sample of convenience and not a statistically valid random sample representative of next gen donors across the United States. In terms of other limitations, the authors acknowledge that not everything the research subjects say may be reflected in what they do. They also admit that the research is not clear how much influence cohort effects and life cycle effects have on the differences between next gen donors and older donors.

Key Data from Generation Impact

- **67.1%** of next gen donors support similar causes to their extended families and previous generations
- **77.7%** of next gen donors gave online in the past 12 months
- **78%** of next gen donors volunteered before age 15
- **72.3%** of next gen donors rated personal experience as a donor, volunteer or board member as a very important influence on their philanthropic learning and development
- **51%** of next gen donors began making charitable donations before the age of 20

Most chapters feature a helpful “What Does This Mean” conclusion with practical applications of the research for advisors and nonprofit professionals.

The text flows easily through the use of endnotes, versus a more formal APA or MLA style with citations throughout the text. Upcoming highlights of future chapters are featured throughout to give those who may be skimming the book a valuable roadmap. Most chapters feature a helpful “What Does This Mean” conclusion with practical applications of the research for advisors and nonprofit professionals. This helpful feature answered the question this reviewer had time and time again at the end of a chapter: So what? At the end of the book, the authors summarize the advice given throughout. This can serve as a handy future reference when the reader inevitably pulls the book off the shelf to refer to it again.

In addition to direct quotes from the donors included in the research, every chapter features a donor vignette. The vignettes are written in the first person from a donor’s perspective. They serve to illustrate the points made in each chapter. Some vignettes

run a little long, but on the whole they are a helpful addition to the book. However, anyone older than a millennial may need to pull out reading glasses for the vignettes; the font is quite small, especially compared to the main text.

What is missing from the book is a discussion of the giving habits and preferences of lower-level next gen donors. More local, grassroots nonprofit organizations without connections to next gen donors who have significant inherited wealth or millions through tech startups may question how applicable the book is to the behaviors and preferences of their next gen donors and prospective donors. This is a weakness because it is not clear if the research findings shared in the book can be generalized to lower-level next gen donors.

For readers who hunger for more after finishing the book, Goldseker and Moody supply an additional resource entitled “*Engaging Generation Impact: Best Practices for Nonprofits & Fundraisers*” at www.2164.net (<https://2164.net/>). This guide builds on the book’s research. It is helpful as an addendum to the book or as a standalone resource.

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