

The Gen Z Reckoning

Brand Relevance, Respect
and the Rise of a New Generation



May 17, 2019

A Generation at the Tipping Point

Gen Z is coming of age in a radically new world. Born into a digital era defined by instant and ubiquitous access to information, divided and demeaning politics and a social media-powered desire for validation, identity and belonging, **Gen Z is experiencing both boundless creative possibilities as well as near epidemic levels of anxiety and stress.**

Like in other disruptive moments in history, Gen Z is navigating profound social, political and environmental transformations. Over the past decade, the wealth of billionaires has risen six times faster than the wages of ordinary workers. More than 44 million **Americans owe a collective \$1.5 trillion in student loan debt**, and 2014 marked the first time in 2.5 million years that CO2 concentrations in the atmosphere moved beyond safe levels for humanity.

At the same time, nationwide protest movements are spotlighting systemic violence against African Americans and women. And since the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School, there have been more than **434 incidents of gunfire on school grounds**, resulting in 174 deaths.

If this is the vision of the future they will inherit, Gen Z has seen and experienced enough. In the face of income inequality, school violence, racial injustice and climate change, our youngest generation has reached its tipping point.



In the context of so much change, Gen Z is standing up, speaking out and harnessing their courage and creativity to claim the future they want - and they aren't waiting.

A young woman with braids, wearing a yellow raincoat and a grey knit hat, stands outdoors holding a large white sign with black text. The background shows a cloudy sky, a street lamp, and a building. The sign reads 'SKOLSTREJK FÖR KLIMATET'.

Greta Thunberg, 16

The Swedish Climate Activist helped inspire the Sunrise movement of young people united to stop climate change and create green jobs

#StudentsOfColorMatter

Staged a four-day sit in at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School Riverdale, NY, to raise awareness of racial injustice in the school's curriculum and hiring practices

NBC



EMMY



Marsai Martin, 14

The youngest executive producer in Hollywood is on a mission to create more authentic depictions of black girlhood in media



The Students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, helped launch the March For Our Lives movement in protest of America's epidemic of gun violence

Gen Z won't wait for the powers that be to create the change they seek.

They are calling for new leaders to take action now across every part of our society, and they are ready to help lead the way.

A Moment of Truth for Brands

5 to 1

Gen Z does not trust business
to act in the best interests of
society by a 5-to-1 margin

24%

Nearly one-in-four Gen Zers
cannot name a single brand
they consider to be purposeful

Purpose is Service

Gen Z is **3X** more likely to say that **the purpose of business is to “serve communities and society”** rather than to simply “make good products and services,” and they are more likely than all others to call on brands to make a difference by “using their voice to advocate or speak out” on the most pressing issues of our times.

Five Strategies

To Win the Trust, Loyalty
and Participation of Gen Z

1 Be Brave

Silence is complacency



Gen Z wants brands to harness the power of their voice and influence to stand up and speak out ...

1. "Because it's the right thing to do" (47%)
2. "When there is a public outcry or public demand for change" (19%)
3. "When it goes against the company's purpose or values" (18%)

Ben & Jerry's is taking on social justice, immigration and prison reform in partnership with **Color of Change** and **Black Lives Matter**



TOMS made a **\$5 million investment in organizations fighting gun violence** to “take a stand” and **create “a new platform for social change.”**



More than
**90% of
Americans
support
universal
background
checks.**

TAKE ACTION INSIDE.



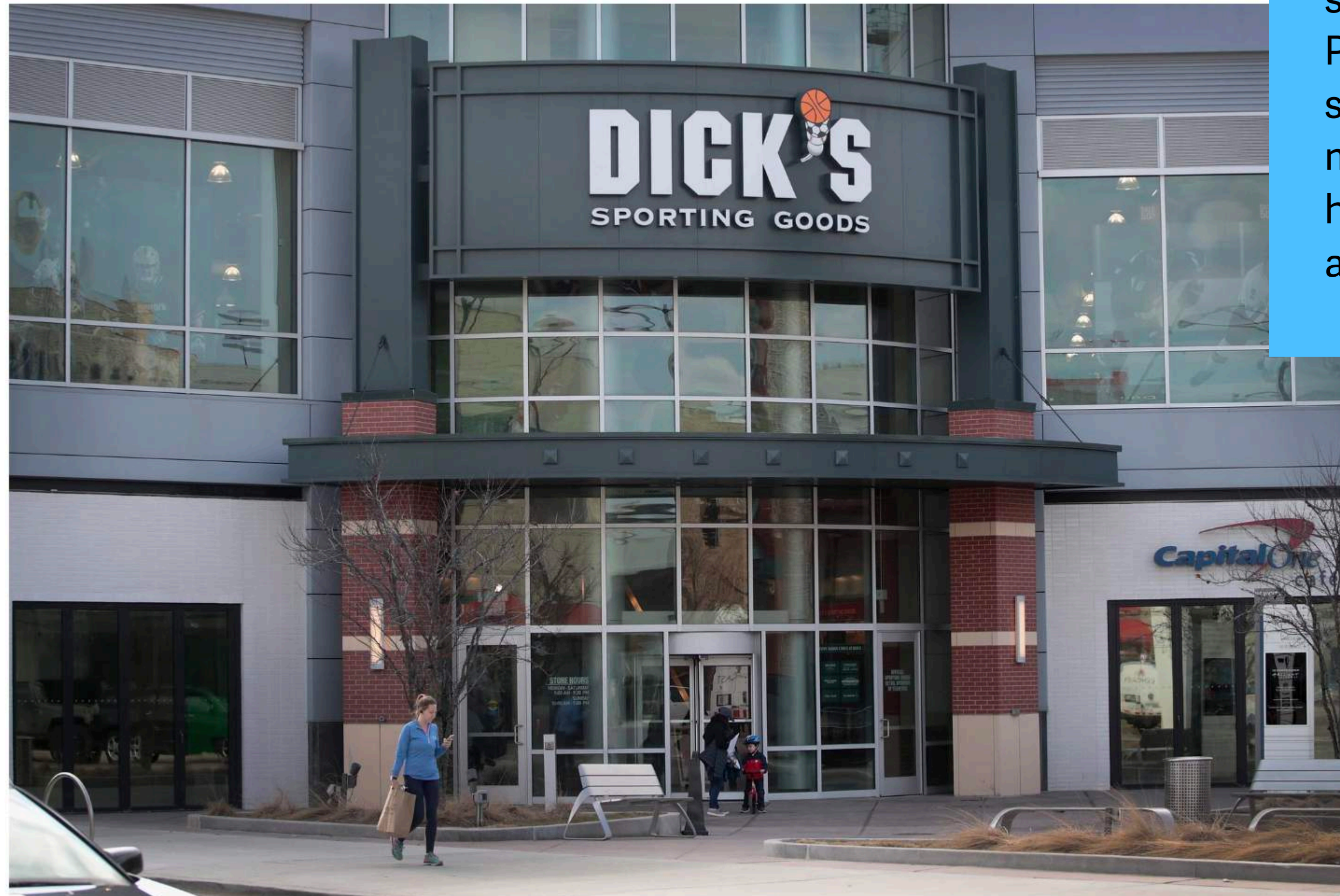
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Dick's Sporting Goods Shifts From Guns Even as Sales Suffer

Or take **DICK'S Sporting Goods**, who soon after the Parkland high school shooting introduced measures that make it harder to buy firearms at their stores.



Dick's Sporting Goods removed assault-style rifles from its Field & Stream stores after the deadly mass shooting in Parkland, Fla., last year. The company's adjusted same-store sales fell in the 12 months that ended Feb. 2. Scott Olson/Getty Images

“

Ben & Jerry's isn't just talking the talk, they are investing and working to create meaningful change. I feel like they care. They aren't just doing it for publicity because the founders are unafraid to say what they believe in.

– Colin, 21, Boston, MA

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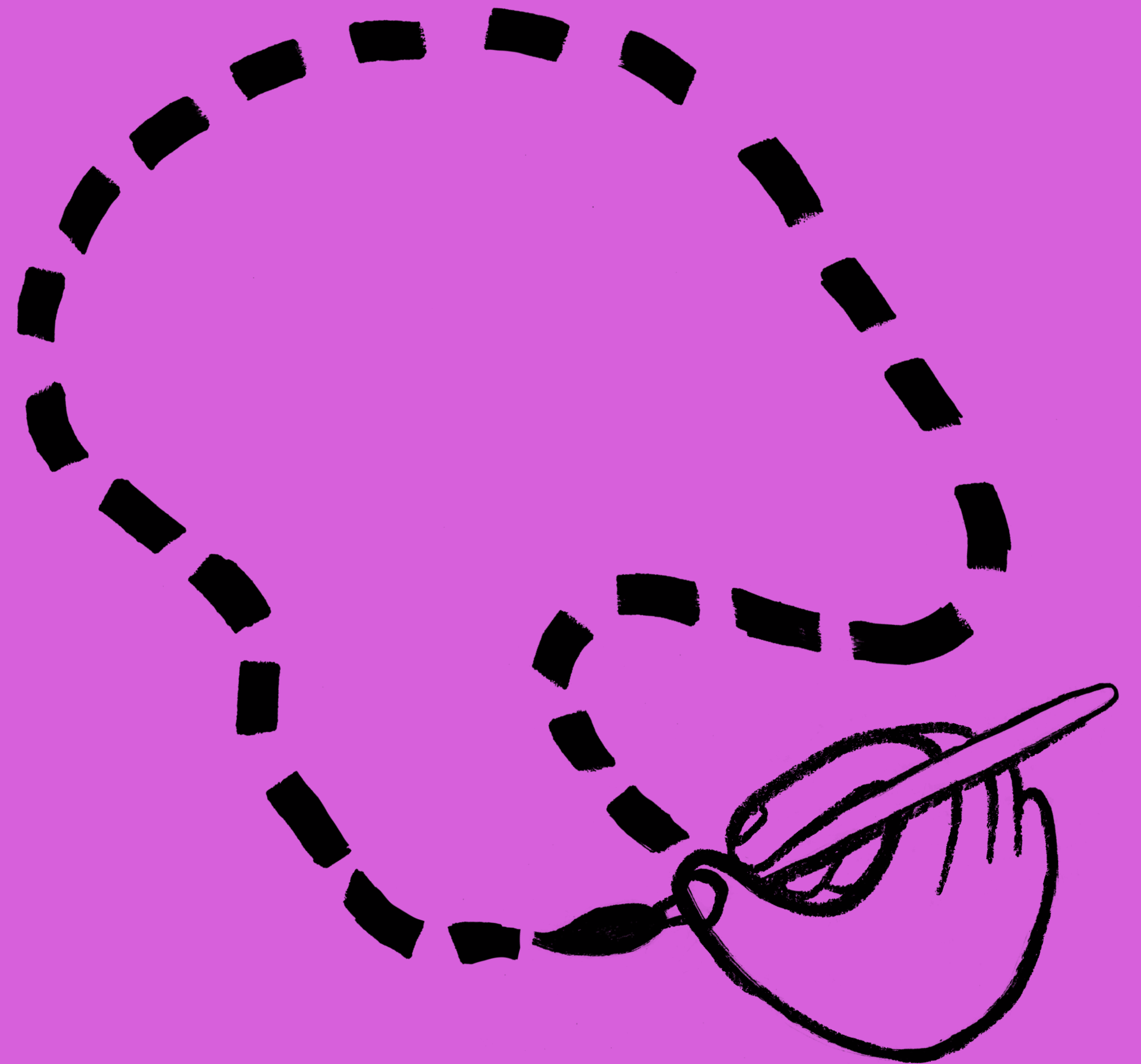
Be Brave

The Upshot

Stand up for your authentic values and beliefs – and not just chase what's easy or popular – and use your influence to transform the issues of our day.

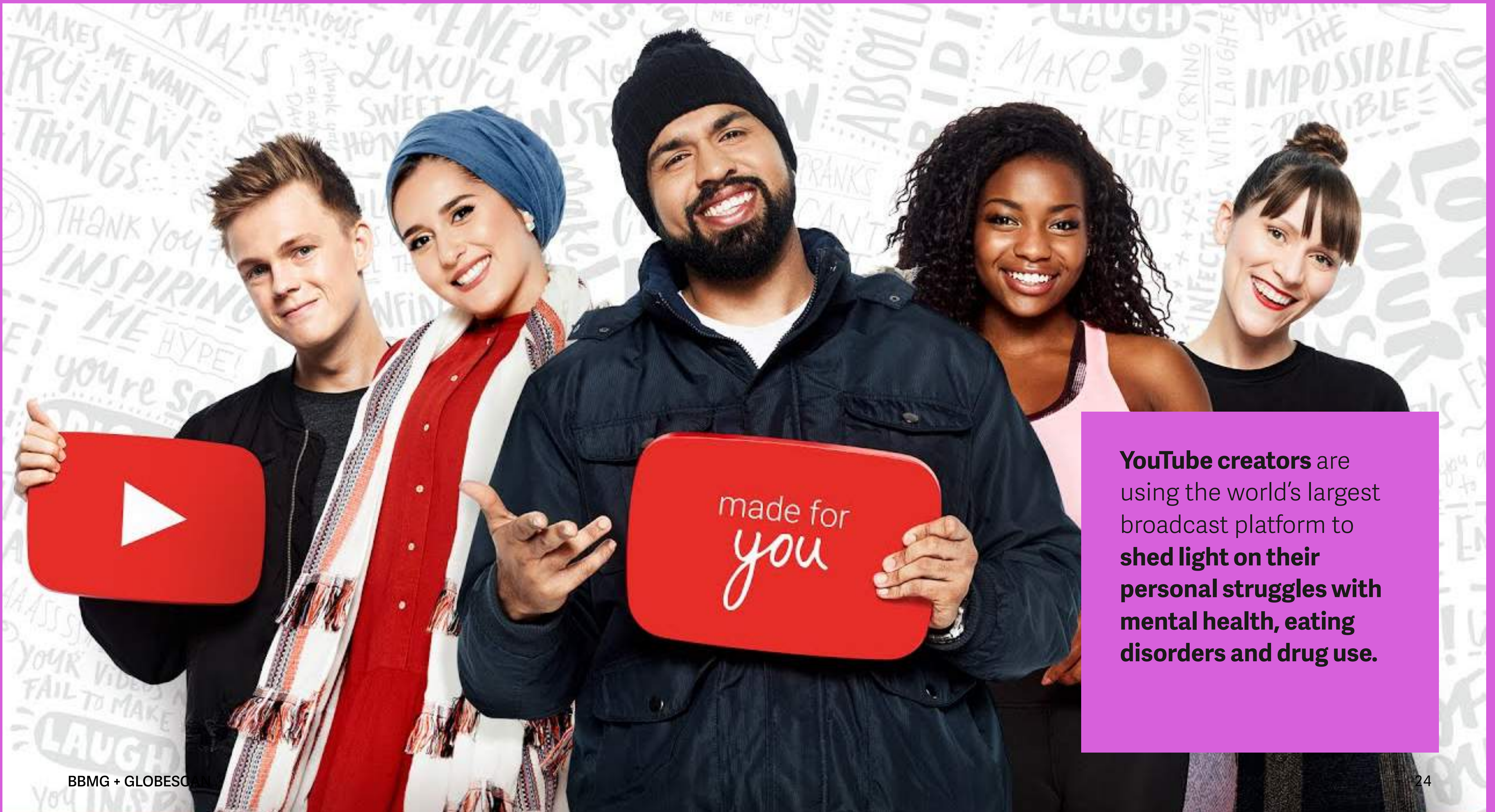
2 Hold Space

Amplify their voices



Gen Z is more likely than all other generations to say they can make a difference through “their voice online and in social media”

**43% Gen Z vs.
30% all others**



YouTube creators are using the world's largest broadcast platform to **shed light on their personal struggles with mental health, eating disorders and drug use.**



COLLUSION, a new brand from ASOS, was created in collaboration with young stylists, activists, students and authors to produce a groundbreaking collection of "experimental clothing line that's helping to shape the future of fashion."



Spotify's "Sound Up Bootcamp" gave ten aspiring female podcasters of color the space, platform and resources to hone their craft.



“

To make space for other voices, what matters to me is commitment, transparency, follow through and action.

– Harrison, 22, New York, NY

”

Hold Space

The Upshot

Reimagine the role of Gen Z from passive consumers to active co-creators who help shape conversations, shift culture and fuel more authentic connection.

3

Welcome

All

Show up for the marginalized



Gen Z is 2X more likely than all others (28% to 11%) to care most about issues of equality, including social equality, women's rights, LGBTQ rights and racial equality.

Rihanna's "Fenty" makeup line is designed with the promise of inclusion for all women, reportedly earning \$100 million in sales in just its first 40 days on the market.

LIGHT

100

105

110

120

MEDIUM

200

210

220

TAN

300

310

320

DEEP

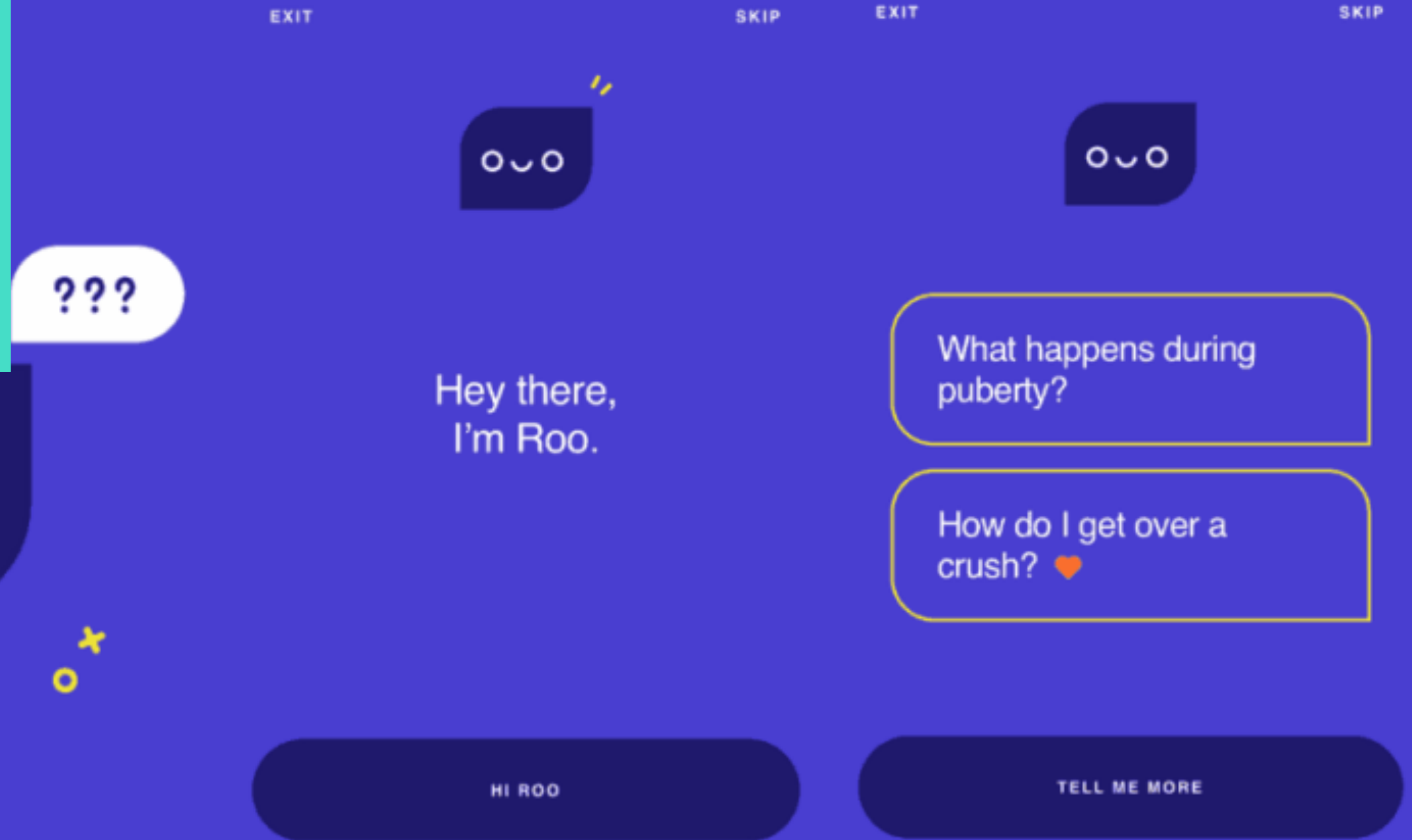
400

410

420

430

Planned Parenthood launched **Roo**, a chatbot that answers awkward questions about sexual health while making no assumptions or judgments about users' gender, sexual orientation or lifestyle.





TOMBOY X

Brands like **TomboyX**, **Reformation** and **Tommy Hilfiger** are leveraging **equity and inclusion** to inspire Gen Z love and break through in culture.

“

I think it's important to include everyone, I don't want to have a society that has only one ideal.

– Aliesha, Age 20, Long Island, NY

”

Welcome All

The Upshot

Understand, design for and celebrate those in our society who have previously been overlooked, marginalized or left out.

4 Fuel Passion

Freedom to define their destiny



**Gen Z is most likely to say
they can make a difference
by “doing meaningful work
through their career”**

**32% Gen Z vs.
17% All Others**



THE EXPERIENCE

DESTINATIONS

SUCCESS STORIES

ADMISSIONS

ABOUT US

APPLY NOW

A WORLD AHEAD

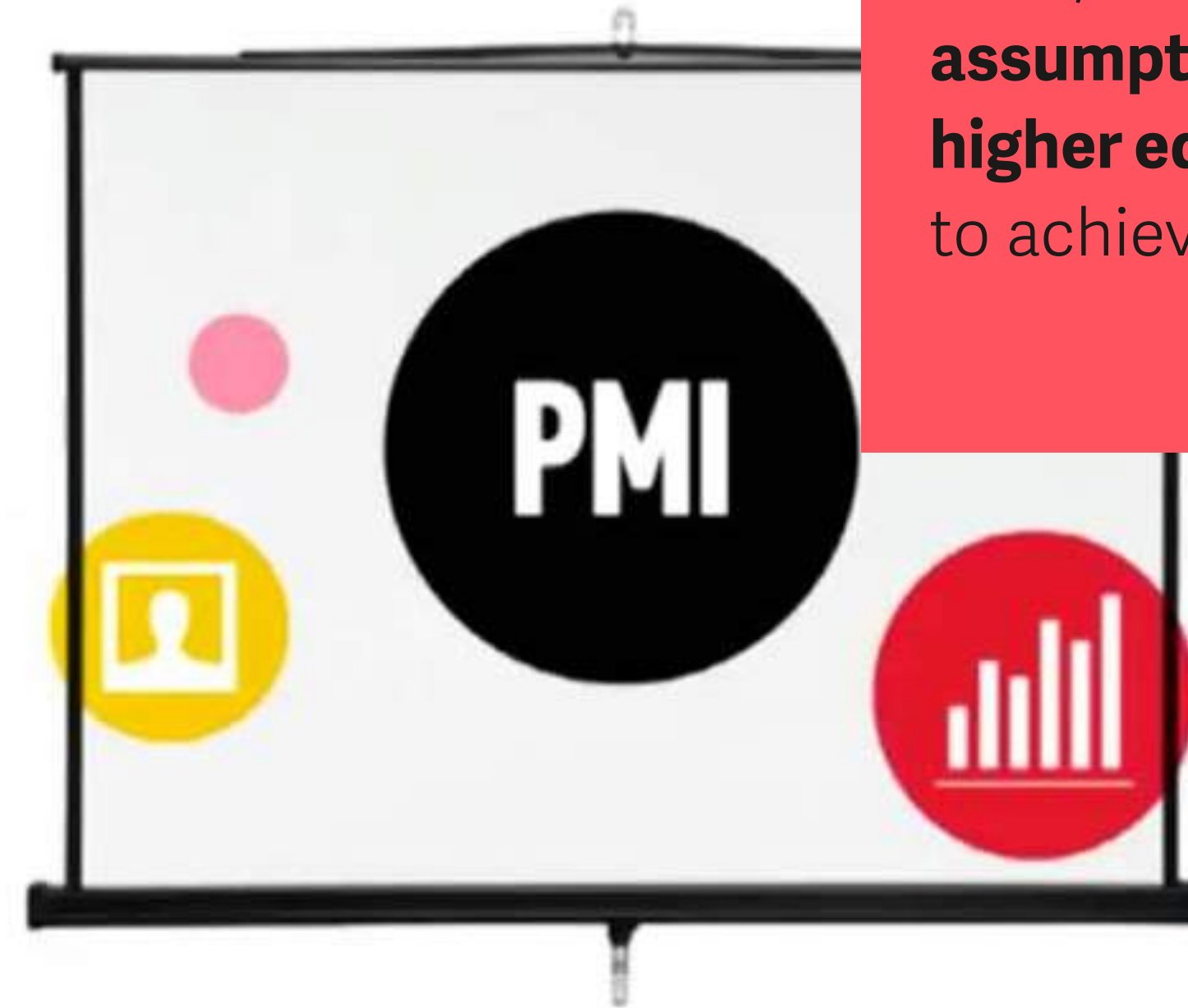
The gap year that gives you the experience, skills, and network you need to be a changemaker.

APPLY NOW →

Global Citizen Year is a gap year program that places students in community service experiences around the world

PMI

BECOME A PRODUCT MANAGER IN 10-WEEKS



General Assembly, a global community of experiential education for today's most in-demand skills, **is challenging the assumption that high-cost higher ed is the only way** to achieve your dreams.



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Outside offers resources and community for freelancers looking to travel the world, fund their passions and make a difference along the way.



“

I think the first thing companies should focus on are the individuals that work there. I want to work somewhere where they help me reach my goals and give me room to create impact.

– Kyle, Age 23, Austin, TX

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Fuel Passion

The Upshot

Act as platforms for individual growth, passionate pursuits and networks of support as Gen Z defines their own unique journeys.

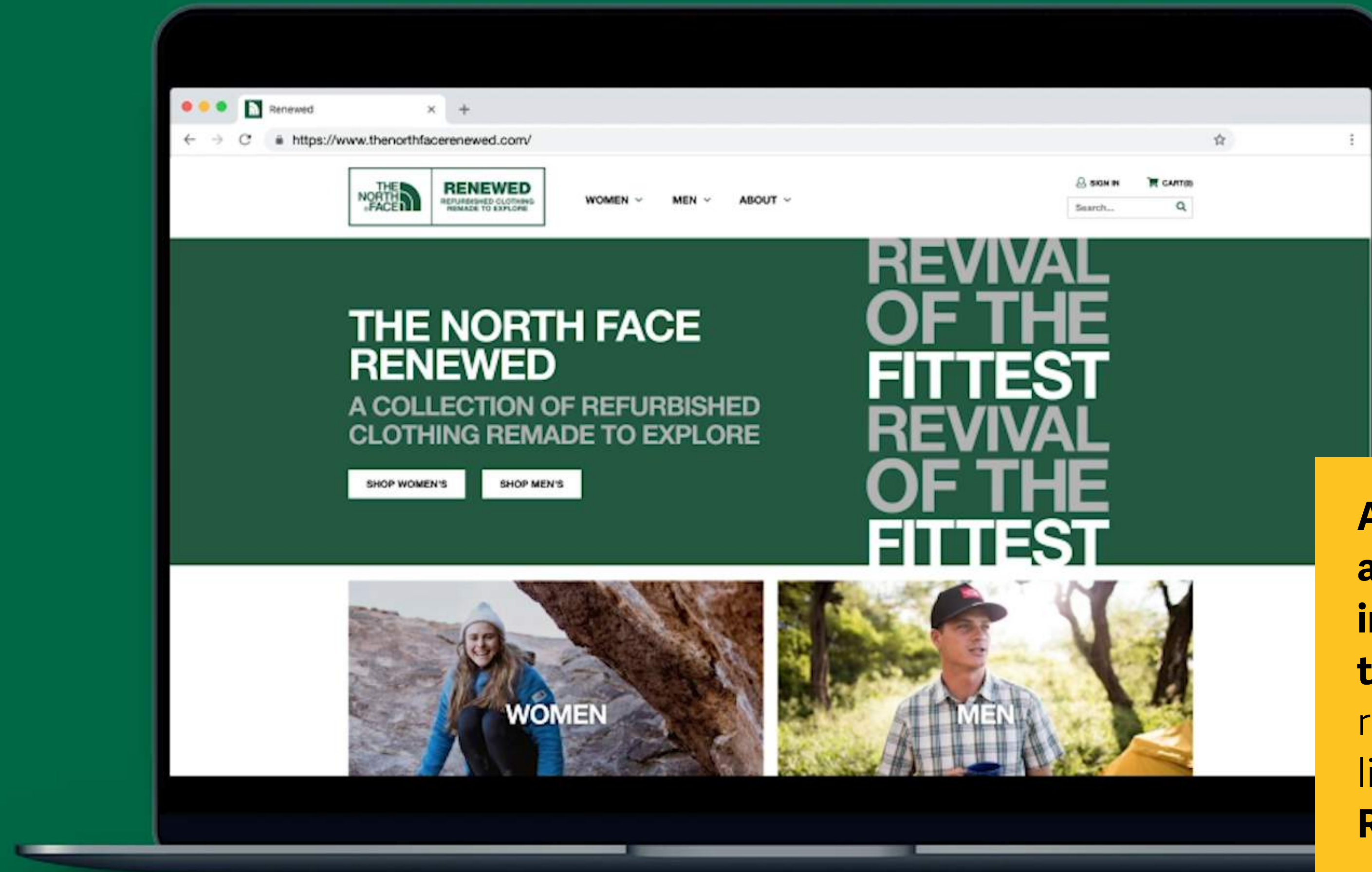
5 Own It

Impact, not perfection



Gen Z is most likely to trust that large companies are operating in the best interests of society when they “prove it by action” and demonstrate “clear intentions through business strategies and goals.”

**Gen Z is the least likely
to associate trust
with “not having made
mistakes in the past.”**



Apparel brands are also owning up to the industry's massive **textile waste** with refurbished collections like **The North Face Renewed**.



Cengage Unlimited, dubbed the Netflix for college textbooks, acknowledged the high cost of course materials and instead offers a digital solution that can help make higher education more accessible to all.



#ShowUs

more women
who look like me

Beatriz, Brazil

Getty Images is taking accountability for the limited vision of female beauty, confidence and success in stock photography by launching the #ShowUs initiative.

Project #ShowUs

72% of women in the UK still don't feel represented in media & advertising. That's why Dove is taking action with Girlgaze, Getty Images, and women everywhere to create Project #ShowUs – the world's largest photo library created by women and non-binary individuals to shatter beauty stereotypes. With over 5000 images, we can offer a more inclusive vision of beauty to all media & advertisers.

“

Brands need to understand the problem they are causing and that their company will not exist if they don't fix the system. Their priority should be the same as the people's priority.

– Lauren, Age 18, Richmond, VA

”

Own It

The Upshot

It's not about being perfect, but speaking openly and honestly about the challenges you face and declaring clear strategies for action, improvement and impact.

1 Be Brave

2 Hold Space

3 Welcome All

4 Fuel Passion

5 Own It

The Future We Want

From their personal passions to their career aspirations to their preferences for brands, **Gen Z is proving that they give a damn**, and they are ready to join with peers, brands and community members to create change together.

To win their trust, loyalty and evangelism, brands must prove their purpose by speaking out on society's most pressing issues, standing up for those previously ignored by our society and take more accountability for the real challenges we all face.

**Now is the time
to join forces with
Gen Z and design the
future we all want.**



Taking Action: How to Meet the Moment

1 Start With Empathy

Reveal the human truth that unites your brand's reason for being with Gen Z's authentic needs, hopes and aspirations.

2 Live Your Purpose

Define your brand's north star purpose and the values and ideals you'll fight for no matter what.

3 Rally The People

Design brand experiences that invite and inspire all of us to join forces and shape a future we can believe in.

About Us



BBMG is a brand and social innovation consultancy dedicated to driving business growth and positive impact in the world. We unite deep human insight with breakthrough strategy and fearless creative to help organizations re-invent their categories, mobilize movements on issues that matter and commercialize brand purpose to fuel business success with humanity at the center. To learn more about our research, request a presentation of these insights for your team, or just chat, visit bbmg.com

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GlobeScan is an insights and strategy firm that helps companies, NGOs and governmental organizations build the trust they need to create enduring value for themselves and for society. GlobeScan.com

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