

Generational Collecting - continued from page 21

of objects which bring me back to what Millennials perceive as valuable.

If you look at their collecting tendencies, you will find two re-occurring items that Millennials deem valuable: action figures/statues and tabletop games. These types of items qualify as valuable because they are physically real and they offer elements of enjoyment through nostalgia. Action figures/statues are physical reminders of heroes of the past and present. *Funko*, *Disney*, and *Hasbro* make dozens of lines of collectable figures for adults because they know that people love to display their heroes in their dwellings. As an expert on ancient civilizations, particularly Roman and Greek, I find the irony of the value perception of collectible figures absolutely delicious because the basis of early Western cultures is iconism, particularly centered around the Pantheon of Gods on Mt. Olympus. Millennial value perception has ushered in a new age of paying reverence to mythological heroes. Their heroes are not *Zeus*, *Athena*, or *Poseidon*, but *Thor*, *Wonder Woman*, and *Aquaman*. I'd expect nothing less from a generation weened on the teachings of *Joseph Campbell*. Their heroes have a thousand faces and they can collect them all!

Games and game-related items command even higher values. The Millennial Generation entered this world during the advent of the *Nintendo Entertainment System*, *Magic the Gathering*, and the rise of *Dungeons and Dragons*. Games were everywhere growing up, and it stands to reason that as more games were produced, there would be eventually collectors of older games. Vintage *Magic the Gathering* cards are the most valued of possessions of the gaming group. *Magic the Gathering* cards are so valuable that they are turning into investments!

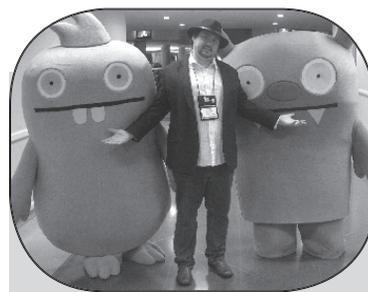
The two largest generations in the world are clearly at odds with one another when it comes to value perception. However, it is ironic that they are both similar because they value the nostalgia of good times. If you are in the business of collectable sales, which most Gaming retailers are, it is important to take note of because these demographics are critical to profit. It is critical to track the collecting habits of the Millennials because they represent the key demographic in all marketing charts ever created since advent of the 20th Century: They are the 35-year old soccer moms with 2.5 children. These are prime retail consumers because they spend the some money on themselves and the most money on their family. Thus, retailers should cater to their needs in order to maximize returns.

Tracking the Baby Boomers collectible habits are important for a similar reason. They have the most money, and they are getting to the age group where they recognize it will be impossible to take it with them. Baby Boomers are spending dump trucks of money on themselves in retirement, but

also, on their grandkids because they want to share the joy of retirement with them. They also want the future to appreciate what they appreciated as kids. Thus, grandmothers and grandfathers are encouraging their value perceptions onto their grandkids.

Eventually, these two pre-dominant viewpoints on value perception will clash, and the Millennials will win out by virtue of attrition. Collectible retailers needs to be aware of this shift in value perception dominance because it is worth money to predict the future. As *Wayne Gretzky* had once said about scoring in hockey, "I skate to where the puck is going to be, not to where it has been." This sound advice for retailers as well, but you should always remember where the puck has been for reference. Right now, the collectibles retail puck is currently in the Baby Boomers end of the ice. The puck is quickly moving away from them, skipping over smaller Gen X, and moving toward the Millennials' end of the ice. There is little doubt that Millennials are gaining wealth as wages finally increase, and many of them are in their prime working years. Over the next five years, they will be prime retail consumers and their collectibles market will be at a peak.

In short, as a retailer, you need to keep your eye on where the puck is and where it will be at the same time. The Baby Boomers are where the puck is. They have retirement money right now, and are spending it on things that bring them joy. These items include paper money, coins, tin toys, old rock memorabilia, war artifacts, and anything that brings a smile to their grand child's face. Gaming retailers can sell to this group by offering selections of K thru 8th Grade learning games, stuffed animals, vintage toys, and historical war-gaming books. The Millennials are where the puck will be. They, similarly to the Boomers, spend money on nostalgia except their nostalgia is modern pantheon-based. Millennials are game buyers and figurine collectors. As they gain more wealth, there will be a greater demand for collectibles in these categories which should propel a game store into a future filled with higher profit margins!



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but most notably in publishing, game design, screenwriting, and retail asset management. Dread owns Industrial Dream Mills, makers of Steamfortress Victory RPG, and is currently serving as Greater Games Industry's Brand Manager. If you have questions, he can be contacted at ggicadsales@gmail.com.