Lowe's Fix in Six: Using "The New" to Create "Know-How"



Summary

As the second-largest home improvement retailer in the world, Lowe's has spent years developing its reputation as a trusted resource for project know-how and inspiration. However, to replace the aging Baby Boomer population, we needed to find a way to bring Millennials into the fold — on their own terms.

Soon after Twitter released the Vine app in 2013, Lowe's launched the #LowesFixinSix campaign. We knew that the looping, six-second social videos would be an ideal way for us to help Millennials enter the world of home improvement with more confidence and pluck. We created quick hits to help them solve many of the relatable inconveniences they have around the home — in a fun and entertaining way.

The campaign was immediately a success for the brand and it remains very popular with consumers—especially Millennials. In the last two years, over 100 executions have been created, and #LowesFixinSix has become a model of how to win in social media.

Two giants, a leader and a challenger, each fighting for preference

Coke's got Pepsi. McDonald's has Burger King. And Lowe's has Home Depot. For as long as anyone can remember, Lowe's and Home Depot have been archrivals, battling over the hearts and minds of Do-It-Yourself homeowners across the United States. Both have thousands of stores across the country and both stock millions of items, from tiny nails to full kitchens.

Their respective shares in the category don't move that much, and while each has its own set of customer loyalists, the majority of shoppers switch between the two retailers. Differentiation is difficult to come by.

Add to this problem the changing landscape of American homeowners. As Boomers are aging out of home improvement, we need Millennials to fall in love with the Lowe's brand.

This is the challenge we faced: How do we present Lowe's in a unique way that will grab the attention and interest of a new wave of consumers in a largely undifferentiated market?





THE FUTURE OF THE BRAND: Millennials

Enter the Millennials. Having spent their last few years paying off their student loans, obsessing over their careers, worrying about their futures and delaying marriage and kids, they are finally beginning to settle down. While becoming a family is no longer necessitated by either marriage or a baby, it still mostly results in redecoration, renovation and home improvement projects that need to get done.

It's a Big Opportunity.

There are currently 82 million of these Millennials who, in the next 5 years, will form 8.3 million new Millennial households. Building relationships with them is therefore not just the next step for Lowe's, but is also absolutely critical for its future. As Boomers age out of their home improvement years, Lowe's will need Millennials to take up the hammer.







¹The Demand Institute Housing and Community Survey, 2014.

RESEARCH UNCOVERS AN OBSTACLE: Depot Is the Default

While survey data showed us that more Millennials fall back on Home Depot,² we needed to undercover the reasons why. We invited a panel of new Millennial homeowners to record personal videos about their experiences with home improvement and DIY.

Through this research, we discovered that even before Millennials have their own homes, Home Depot already has a foothold with them. When we uncovered the reasons why, we were surprised. It turns out that this store preference doesn't just happen by accident. It's not just a function of store numbers or proximity — it turns out that early experiences with home improvement stores created lasting imprints on these Millennials as they grew up.³ Almost like generational heirloom, store preference is passed down from parents to children. The result is that making one's own trips to the home improvement store becomes its own rite of passage into adulthood. With over 400 more stores than Lowe's, Home Depot is, for many, the default choice.

We needed to upend this automatic preference for Home Depot and help Millennials forge a relationship with Lowe's on their own terms — a relationship built especially to meet the needs of their unique generation.

²Lowe's Brand Tracker, 2013.

³ Lowe's Millennial Video Panel, Mindswarm 11, 2014.

UNDERSTANDING MILLENNIALS The Entitled Generation?

These Millennials have gotten a bad rap. They have been called "entitled", "impatient," and "obsessed with The New." However, after speaking to these Millennials one-on-one via our video panel, we discover that these labels were all wrong.

Millennials may be resistant to authority and old rules, but this resistance doesn't come from a place of pure rebellion. Instead, it comes from the fact that, as the original Digital Natives, they didn't always have a manual; they had to learn to forge their own digital paths — and they learned to enjoy this experience. As the latest startups took on the roles of rock stars, Millennials cultivated an admiration for innovation and entrepreneurism. The result is that they are a generation that's simply unafraid of doing things for themselves. In fact, the characteristic that best embodies them is not "entitlement" but "audacity." In some ways, this audacity to do things for themselves makes them the ideal home improvement DIY-ers.







THE NEW NEWBIES: Teaching them to DIY

While these Digital Natives grew up with the entire world at their fingertips, many have actually done very little with their hands. They may be experts in the digital world, but they are still amateurs in the land of home improvement. They are a generation accustomed to having all the answers, but, when it comes to home improvement, they all too often don't know where to start. As they settle down into their adult lives and become first-time homeowners, they are woefully unprepared.

Insight: Audacious Amateurs

When it comes to DIY, Millennials are Audacious Amateurs. To upend their default to Home Depot and win them over to Lowe's, we needed to find a way to make Lowe's the brand that could help them overcome their amateurism and become home improvement experts.



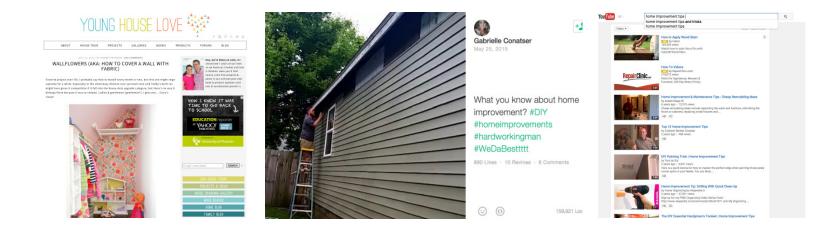




LEARNING TO ENGAGE MILLENNIALS: Embracing a New Approach

When we asked Millennials where they went for information, we discovered that they had thrown out the manual — literally. Their learning media of choice were YouTube videos and illustrated blog posts. They were visual learners — they were most inspired by seeing someone do something, rather than by reading text.

Moreover, they had grown up in a connected world with clever solutions for every problem under the sun. They had particular preference for smart shortcuts and unexpected solutions, such as can be found on sites like Lifehacker. They loved the idea of repurposing simple, everyday items for unexpected uses, and finding crafty shortcuts for problems.





CREATIVE IDEA:

A Visual Wikipedia of Home Improvement

Use Vine to create snackable video "lifehacks" that provide smart, simple solutions to turn these Audacious Amateurs into home experts.





A SENSATION IN SIX SECONDS: #FixinSix

If we provided useful solutions to common issues around the home in a creative and entertaining way, we believed we would find an audience with them. After reviewing all other options, we felt that Vine was the best medium to get through to them. It was a trending app that allows users to make looping six-second videos. Vines are short enough to not tax their attention span — they're highly shareable and able to be promoted in many media touchpoints, enabling us to reach a large audience.

Through Vine, we created a series of over 100 six-second Lowe's "FixinSix" videos that provided smart solutions to common household problems — everything from salvaging worn out screws and removing pet hair to preventing encrusted paint and dealing with mosquitos.

This was a new use of Vine, which was mostly being used by brands to create one-off curiosities as these brands experimented on the platform. We demonstrated that Vine could take on the role of much-longer instructional videos: it could feed our audience clever and useful home improvement content in appetizer-size portions, catering to even the shortest of attention spans.





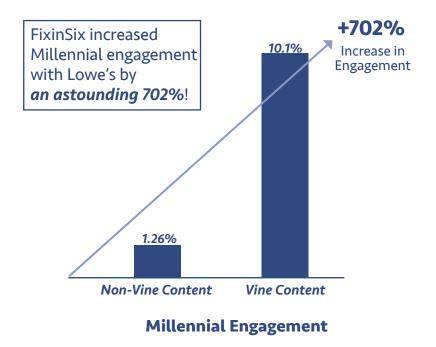


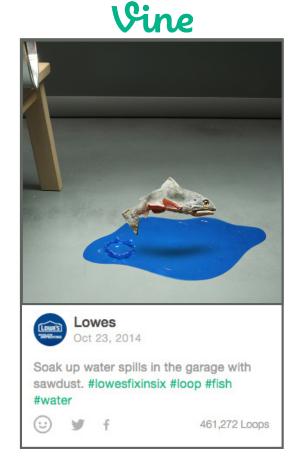
The Results:

The Lowe's "FixinSix" Vine campaign is one of the most efficient and effective branded content campaigns ever created. In fact, it was shot on a smartphone, ran mostly on free media, and cost very little to produce: the first ten Vines were executed for just \$5,000. And yet it was revolutionary in that it used an emerging short-form medium to deliver useful content to a fickle and hard-to-reach audience.

Could a novel and somewhat risky campaign like this ever hope to earn Lowe's the attention of Millennials? As it turns out, the answer is a resounding yes.

So far the Vines have achieved over 50 million impressions⁴ and engagement with them has been more than twice as high, compared with other social media content types:







Lowe's had tailored its approach to reflect a generation of kids who didn't grow up holding their dad's hammer.

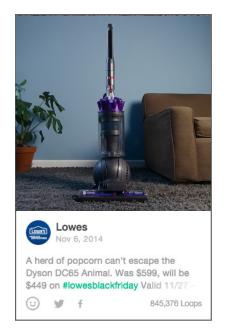
- Fast Company

The FixinSix campaign was named one of AdAge's best campaigns of the 21st century. - AdAge

This little campaign — no celebrities, no special effects, with ads lasting barely longer than the blink of an eye — achieved what traditional media often doesn't. By engaging with Millennials on their own terms, and by offering them just the kind of content they crave and share, we made Lowe's a new Millennial favorite and made the behemoth Home Depot seem a step behind. And best of all, we were able to leapfrog over Home Depot to become a brand that's considered innovative and respected by Millennials.⁵







⁵ "How Do You Market To Millennials?" NPR, 24 February 2014.