

# Want A Millennial Doing Your Cardiac Catheterization?



Cam Marston

Zero in on Alabama's changing demographics.

By Cam Marston / Photo by Catherine Dorough

the PC in front of you likely has an Intel chip inside, the AC unit humming outside your home likely houses a Copeland Scroll compressor.

The folks at Emerson like to think their workforce is as unique as the Copeland Scroll compressor. Management told me in our pre-planning call, “Be aware that here, in Sidney, we have a very traditional, mid-western work ethic. We’re not sure

values still exist. Every now and then I even go as far as to encourage people to not visit, knowing that once they see our state and experience our people they’ll likely change their plans and stay. They’ll end up retiring here, buying property at Orange Beach or Fairhope—Baldwin County has Alabama’s oldest people—and wearing their black socks and sandals while shopping the galleries and boutique stores. They’ll carry their purse under one arm and their micro-pet under the other. And that’s the men. We have something good going on here, we know it: We think we’re different, and we want to preserve it.

With the exception of some extremes and anomalies, our state is undergoing the same changes that are impacting Sidney, Ohio. These changes are as predictable as weather patterns, when they are studied through the lens of demographics and value shifts. Some of these changes foretell challenging times. Others predict great opportunity.

Beginning on January 1, 2011, in the U.S., 10,000 people a day began turning 65 years old—each day. And they will continue to do so for the next 20 years. This group is collectively known as the Baby Boom generation. In Alabama, we have 1.2 million of them, about 26 percent of our population. That’s in keeping with the overall trend. But, then, you have to add into the equation one of those regional extremes: 31 percent of Alabama’s population is clinically obese—the most obese state in the nation, according to the Center for Disease Control. Our citizens’ exceptional girth leads to an even greater demand for healthcare.

You can add to the looming health cri-

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In the western part of Ohio is the town of Sidney, population just over 20,000. Located in Sidney is Emerson Climate Technologies, which I visited not long ago, to address a management forum on workplace changes that stem from demographics.

Emerson Climate Technologies makes many things that you and I pass without noticing. The one nearest and dearest to my heart, and likely yours, too, is the Copeland Scroll compressor. This unique item is the heart and soul of most air conditioners made in the past 10 years or so. There’s a very good chance that if you’re in a climate-controlled location as you read this, their compressor is doing the heavy lifting to keep you comfortable. Much like

that much of what you’ll have to say about the workforce will be relevant here.”

I smiled on my end and assured them that as unique as Sidney probably is, they would be able to relate to my comments. The reason for my confidence? I’ve heard the same comments all over our nation: Fargo, Boston, Augusta, Tucson, etc. I’ve even had folks in southern California assure me that “the southern California work ethic” makes them different. To me, the phrase “southern California work ethic” is an oxymoron.

Alabama is much the same. We think we’re different here. We tell people that our state is one of the few remaining places where the best of our nation’s traditional

sis the growing national nursing shortage, but adjust here for a little numeric edge in Alabama—where the nurse shortage is much less severe than in some other states.

Then, adding in a more subjective factor, you should take a look at the differences in attitude between generations.

Attitude could be the real topper in this slow moving train wreck. The Millennial generation, born between the years 1980 and 2000, has been proven to lack empathy, which is a key component in delivering good healthcare service. This exceptionally tech-savvy generation has been short changed of normal human interaction due to staring into the abyss of the screens they surround themselves with, such as computers, smart phones, TVs, hand-held games, etcetera. For you Boomers, it's likely some empathy-less technoid is going to be your health care provider. How does that make you feel? You might want to rethink getting that flu shot, huh? You might back away from that box of Krispy Kremes. Otherwise, you might find yourself on an emergency room gurney with a Millennial ER technician standing there texting you to see if your chest still hurts.

But, as I said, generational demographic trends do not always end grim. Take a look, for example, at pet care services.

Question: Who owns pets? Answer: Mostly young parents. So, what's the opportunity? 80 million of these Millennials nationwide are entering their parenting years. Our state has about 1.3 million of them, 28 percent of our population, and Mobile County has Alabama's youngest population. Some of these new parents have already arrived. The demand for veterinarians and other pet-care items is going to explode as this generation gets their baby (probably named Tyler) a puppy. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the nationwide demand for vets will grow by 33 percent in the next seven years.

Corresponding to this increase will be demands for puppies, dog food, the poultry and livestock that go into dog food and the pet stores that sell it.

"We know this," says Josh Burmeister of SRS Real Estate Partners, which can help a prospective pet storeowner identify a prime location. "In our research mapping, we track household income, projected population growth patterns, current pet supply stores and their sales volumes and share with our clients. We can even pinpoint pets per household. This helps identify underserved markets."

And if a savvy vet knows the messages that resonate with the Millennials, he or she can mail some postcards and create a website that touches the issues important

to this massive generation and have a full appointment calendar for a long time to come. It's all in the numbers.

As I completed my comments to the management forum in Sidney, Ohio, I asked the audience, like I always do, to raise their hands if they recognized anyone they knew based on the descriptions I gave. Every hand went up. Then I

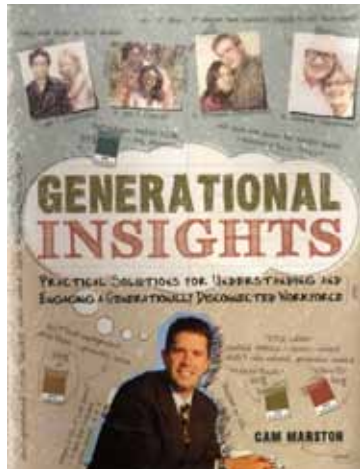
asked if they saw themselves in any of my content. Again, every hand was up.

"So," I said, "How unique are you?"

"Not as unique as we had thought," they said.

With the exception of numeric extremes such as obesity, neither is Alabama. But applying the average to ourselves, and our special exceptions, is a crucial exercise for all business planning, and that's what we will be doing monthly in this column. I'll show you the numbers that will point the way.

*Cam Marston lives in Mobile and studies the changing demographics of our nation and what this means for management, sales and marketing. His newest book, *Generational Insights*, is available at [www.generationalin-sights.com](http://www.generationalin-sights.com) or contact him at (251) 479-1990.*



## APRIL

**FOCUS:** Construction/Green/Forestry & Agriculture

**SPOTLIGHT:** Covington, Butler, & Crenshaw

**LISTING:** Commercial Interior Design

**SUPPLEMENT:** Cool Office Spaces/Alabama Bar Association

## MAY

**FOCUS:** Meetings & Conventions/ Tourism & Travel

**SPOTLIGHT:** Baldwin  
**LISTING:** Hotels, Meeting Facilities

**SUPPLEMENT:** League of Municipalities

## MAY

**FOCUS:** Banking and Finance, Private Companies

**SPOTLIGHT:** The Shoals  
**LISTING:** Banks, Commercial Insurance Companies, Private Companies

**SUPPLEMENT:** Alabama Commercial Insurance

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