

# message-resistant kids

**They've been called Millennials, Gen Next, Gen Y, New Boomers, and even the Thumb Generation. But maybe the best label for today's teenagers is the Been-There-Done-That Generation. They've seen it all, heard it all, done it all, and traveled to it all, often leaving parents choking in their dust. And that makes it hard to snag their attention about anything they haven't already chosen to embrace.**

That's why marketers interested in tapping teenagers' enormous buying power (more than \$30 billion a year) are working overtime on strategies that will get past their fortress-like defenses. For example, marketers working on campaigns for the Partnership for a Drug-Free America have been experimenting with strategies featuring messages that appeal to many different learning styles. Premise Marketing's Gregg Witt says "message" promoters who are targeting young people can hurdle their been-there-done-that attitudes by:

- Creating an environment where kids feel listened to
- Involving them as "owners" in the program
- Rewarding their participation
- Acting as facilitators rather than dictators
- Engaging them through multiple learning styles
- Developing strategic connections to messages they already embrace

Witt says most adults wrongly believe that the best way to reach teenagers with an "outsider" message is to deliver it visually. Instead, he says, his research reveals that kids respond better to multiple learning styles than any previous generation—more than half of them learn primarily by moving and touching, for example

Witt attacked his drug-free-message challenge by recruiting more than 600 teenagers to help him develop the campaign's name and its marketing concepts, design elements, and logo. Then he partnered with the producers of A&E's *Intervention* TV series to shoot intimate videos of teenagers discussing their battles with drug abuse. Kids said the relational videos were far more effective than the preachy messages they're used to. Witt's agency even developed an interactive card game that has kids act out real-life drug-prevention scenarios.