

The Generational Shift

in Your Wine Club

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 • 9:00 AM PT



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The Wine Lass / Wine Club
Professional Network

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

- No need to scribble!
- Resources from this session, including this slide deck and the accompanying **step-by-step walkthrough**, are available on my website:

<https://thewinclass.com/vinsuite-symposium-2026>

or scan the QR code at right.

- You can also use this to register to join WCPN!



THE PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION

“The next phase of this correction will reward wineries that *plan with clarity*, engage with purpose and *adapt with discipline* [...] those who recognize the *reasons behind the changing demand* and then fundamentally *change their businesses* to accommodate it.”

-Source: Rob McMillan for SVB (2026), “[State of the U.S. Wine Industry 2026](#)”.

AGENDA

1. **Generational Trends**

What experts are saying about **generational variation in buying habits**

2. **Implications for Club Design**

How these generalizations can help **guide our club design** (and how they can't)

3. **General Approaches**

How to **approach the generational shift** in your club offering (and what to avoid)

4. **Applications**

How to turn your approach into an **actionable strategy**, including examples

5. **Conclusion and Q&A**

WHAT I WON'T DO

- Go into detail on generational profiles.
 - I *will* **summarize** what others have found in their research, and **provide further reading**.
- Go beyond **wine club structural** strategies to address the generational shift.
 - Marketing and hospitality can only do so much if the **club** fails to **convert/retain** the demographic.
- Address **period effects** like the alcohol-free movement and GLP-1s
 - Not an *entirely* unrelated phenomenon, but the **cause-effect** logic isn't generational or very relevant.
- Recommend specific, one-size-fits-all solutions. Goals and approaches will vary widely!



1. GENERATIONAL TRENDS

WHAT EXPERTS ARE SAYING ABOUT GENERATIONAL VARIATION IN BUYING HABITS



1. GENERATIONAL TRENDS: AGE ≠ COHORT

Age effects take effect at predictable points *within* the lifespan, regardless of generational experience.

-Source: Blanchard, Bunker, and Wachs (1977). “Distinguishing aging, period and cohort effects in longitudinal studies of elderly populations”. Socio-Economic Planning Sciences 11(3). [Available here](#).

- **Health:** older generations ‘ageing out’, reducing consumption
- **Wealth:** younger generations (often) have lower earnings, less disposable income.
- **The social relevance of wine:** 21-year-olds aren’t bringing wine to keggers. 40-year-olds aren’t bringing White Claw to dinner parties.

1. GENERATIONAL TRENDS: AGE $\neq$ COHORT

Cohort effects persist *throughout* individuals' lifespans, but vary between generations based on *shared formative experience*.

-Source: Blanchard, Bunker, and Wachs (1977). "Distinguishing aging, period and cohort effects in longitudinal studies of elderly populations". Socio-Economic Planning Sciences 11(3). [Available here](#).

- **Values:** sustainability, integrity, working conditions
- **Identity:** how people like to think of themselves
- **Conception of luxury:** what will make them feel looked after?

1. GENERATIONAL TRENDS

Baby Boomers

- Born 1946-1964
- Current age: 62-80
- *Experience-Driven Collectors*. The architects of DTC wine sales as we know it.
- **Age Effects:** Stable **social relevance** of wine; **health** and **earnings** (wealth?) may be declining.
- **Cohort Effects:** **Value** experience, education, scores, status. **Identify** as successful, generous, 'in the know' collectors. **Luxury**= access, exclusivity, status, reward for hard work and loyalty.
- **Features:** Structure, first access, member-only wines/events/tasting spaces, milestone gifts, 'unlocking' higher discounts, allocation lists, corporate gifting, email + print comms (but SMS ok too). Increasingly: lower-commitment options, smaller formats, less 'ageworthy' wines.

-Source: Susan DeMatei for Wine Glass Marketing (no date), '[Generations](#)'.

1. GENERATIONAL TRENDS

Generation X

- Born 1965-1980
- Current age: 46-61
- *'Forgotten Powerhouses'*
- **Age Effects:** Stable **social relevance** of wine; peak **earnings** (*wealth?*); likely stable **health**
- **Cohort Effects:** **Value** quality, service... value! **Identify** as pragmatic, independent, immune to gimmicks/trends/manipulation. **Luxury**= quality, service, transparency, **convenience**, status.
- **Features:** Member-only wines/events/tasting spaces, special deals, digital comms with 'throwback' analog moments, **transparency**, **convenience**, seamless shipping, corporate gifting?

-Source: Susan DeMatei for Wine Glass Marketing (no date), 'Generations'.

1. GENERATIONAL TRENDS

Millennials (aka Generation Y)

- Born 1981-1996
- Current age: 30-45
- *'Values-Driven Explorers'*
- **Age Effects:** Increasing **earnings** (*wealth?*) and **social relevance** of wine; stable **health**.
- **Cohort Effects:** **Value** sustainability, transparency, visual storytelling. **Identify** as popular, adventurous, sophisticated. **Luxury**= 'grammability', approachability, **control/flexibility**.
- **Features:** Member-only tasting spaces, unique/themed events, photo ops, **ease and convenience** of managing club options (upgrade/customize/skip/cancel), digital channels including SMS, personalization, lifestyle content.

-Source: Susan DeMatei for Wine Glass Marketing (no date), '[Generations](#)'.

1. GENERATIONAL TRENDS

Generation Z

- Born 1997-2012
- Current age: 14-29
- *'Unfiltered Futurists'*
- **Age Effects:** Stable health; variable **social relevance** of wine; less likely to be **wealthy**.
- **Cohort Effects:** Value trends, vibes, new things (short attention span!). **Identify** as here for a good time, not a long time. **Luxury**= quality, relevance, convenience, fresh drops.
- **Features:** *Flexibility, convenience*, control, *low commitment*, new and interesting releases (wines, labels, events, content, partnerships, merch?), mostly **digital comms** (mobile site, SMS).

-Source: Susan DeMatei for Wine Glass Marketing (no date), '[Generations](#)'.

1. BROAD GENERALIZATIONS: WINE CLUB APPROVAL

“...it came down to variety and control.

“***Baby Boomers*** approved of Wine Clubs because they are attracted by the practical nature of a discount and enjoy the confidence of vetting the winery, which reassures them that they will like the wines. However, flexibility and variety are more important to ***Millennials*** and ***Gen X***, which is why the model isn’t resonating with them.”

-Source: Wine Glass Marketing, ‘[2024 Wine Consumer Usage and Attitudes Survey](#)’. Section 5 is on clubs.

This is where we get the increasingly ‘industry-standard’ notion: **Boomers** prefer the **Traditional** model; **Gen X** and **younger** prefer the **Subscription** model.

1. TRADITIONAL VS SUBSCRIPTION CLUBS

TRADITIONAL

- Shipments scheduled by winery, all members processed at once
- Typically pre-selected wines, less or no control for the member
- Skipping, customizing or cancelling typically by request only
- Winery has the control→ revenue, SKU depletion
- Typically Boomer-oriented→ higher price, more benefits to counteract lack of flexibility

SUBSCRIPTION

- Shipment timing depends on signup date, all members on their own schedule
- Wines ***can*** be pre-selected, but member has full control
- Member can typically skip or customize (sometimes cancel) themselves online
- Consumer has the control→ winery has less influence on SKU depletion, still predictable
- Typically aimed at newer consumers→ lower price, fewer benefits, higher signups + ***churn***



2. IMPLICATIONS FOR CLUB DESIGN

HOW THESE GENERALIZATIONS CAN HELP GUIDE OUR CLUB DESIGN (AND HOW THEY CAN'T)



AGENDA PROGRESS

1. ~~Generational Trends~~

2. **Implications for Club Design**

How these generalizations can help **guide our club design** (and how they can't)

3. ~~General Approaches~~

4. ~~Applications~~

5. ~~Conclusion and Q&A~~

2. GENERATIONAL LEVERS IN CLUB DESIGN

Type of Club Feature	Older-skewed	Younger-skewed
Club structure	More rigid (Traditional Club)	More flexible (Subscription Club)
Club benefits	Access, exclusivity, some discounting	Service, convenience, best prices
Shipment price	\$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$	\$-\$
Commitment level	Medium (~1 year of shipments)	Very low (cancel any time)
Member content	Typically less; winemaker letters etc.	Ideally more; lifestyle-focused (pairings etc.)
Member pricing	Constant, higher %, across all wines	Lower %, with more limited-time specials
Shipping prices	More tolerant of full-price or flat-rate	Ideally shipping-included or low flat rate
Member-only wines	Small-production, higher price point	Less important; lower price point if so
Communication channel	Email, print, SMS for some messaging	Email, careful use of SMS, less print
Events	Large, traditional, \$\$\$\$; e.g. harvest dinner	Small, unique, \$\$; e.g. local pop-ups
Visitation	X number of comps/year at winery	Less important; fewer or lower-tier ok
Roadshow events	Less important??	More important??

2. WHAT GENERALIZATIONS CAN DO FOR US

- **Understand why** one demographic is overrepresented while another underrepresented in our club, by understanding which **club design features** do and don't appeal to each
- Provide insights into what we **could do to appeal** to the missing demographic
- Identify the most impactful ways to **expand** our club offering
- ...BUT they should *always* be expansive, *never* limiting
- ...and they can't account for different personality types within a generation
- ...and they are no replacement for **gathering actual feedback** from real, live members.

That's why a **generational shift** should begin with:

- A) a **generation-sensitive audit** of the existing base and KPIs;
- B) a **generation-sensitive survey** of existing members.



3. GENERAL APPROACHES

HOW TO APPROACH THE GENERATIONAL SHIFT IN YOUR CLUB OFFERING (AND WHAT TO AVOID)



AGENDA PROGRESS

~~1. Generational Trends~~

~~2. Implications for Club Design~~

3. **General Approaches**

How to **approach the generational shift** in your club offering (and what to avoid)

4. Applications

5. Conclusion and Q&A

3. **DOS** AND **DON'TS** OF ADAPTING YOUR CLUB STRATEGY

DO...

- ...take a scientific approach: test and evaluate the riskier changes with **pilot studies**, and gather feedback.
- ...give members plenty of chances to **self-segment** and **re-segment** through your engagement with them.
- ...monitor club demographics regularly to track progress.

DON'T...

- **...overcomplicate your club offering.** This is *guaranteed* to negate (or worse) any gains you make!
- ...expect the KPIs of your **old and new clubs** to look the same, or compare performance based on them.
- ...alienate your existing members. (**Do** assume they will find out about your new tiers, and respect their loyalty.)

3. APPROACHES: QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF FIRST

- **How much change** are you comfortable with?
 - Club adaptation strategies **don't work overnight**: you need a plan that **you** will **personally** be capable of sticking to for months/years, through uncertainty.
- What aspects of club strategy do you **directly** control? And **indirectly**? (Aka, what levers do you realistically have to pull?)
- How will you communicate your plan, its risks and short-term impacts, to your boss/peers? How much of it will **they** be comfortable with?

To help with these last two, don't miss Liz Mercer's session on **Managing Up** for **WCMs** at 11am!

3. APPROACHES: STEP-BY-STEP STRATEGY BUILDING

1. Take a 'before' picture

- Examine all KPIs **by generation**. Diagnose the issue→ prescribe the cure.
- Launch survey→ understand sources of loyalty→ preserve it despite change.

2. Set your goals

- Visualize your desired demographic club makeup.
- Calculate the necessary KPI changes to realize it and set them as targets.

3. Go from 'what' to 'how'

- What approach is best adapted to the goals you've identified?
- **Now** you can bring in your generalizations to identify relevant club features.

4. Identify tradeoffs & tolerances

- Anticipate impact on existing KPIs→ minimize them → prepare your peers.
- e.g. How much cannibalization from high-value club tiers is acceptable?

5. Take 'during'/'after' pictures

- **Is it working?** Specify how you will monitor KPIs (including member feedback) by generation, and how you will adjust accordingly as you execute.



4. APPLICATIONS

HOW TO TURN YOUR APPROACH INTO AN ACTIONABLE STRATEGY, INCLUDING EXAMPLES



AGENDA PROGRESS

~~1. Generational Trends~~

~~2. Implications for Club Design~~

~~3. General Approaches~~

4. Applications

How to turn your approach into an **actionable strategy**, including examples

5. Conclusion and Q&A

4. APPLICATION OF STEP 1

1. Take a 'before' picture

- Examine all KPIs **by generation**. Diagnose the issue, prescribe the cure.
- Launch survey→ understand sources of loyalty→ preserve it despite change

2. Set your goals

- Visualize your desired demographic club makeup
- Calculate the necessary KPI changes to realize it. Use SMART goals.

3. Go from 'what' to 'how'

- What approach is best adapted to the goals you've identified?
- **Now** you can bring in your generalizations to identify relevant club features.

4. Identify risks, tradeoffs & tolerances

- Anticipate impact on existing KPIs, and prepare your peers for them.
 - e.g. How much transfer away from high-value club tiers is acceptable?

5. Take 'during'/'after' pictures

- **Is it working?** Specify how you will monitor KPIs (including member feedback) by generation, and how you will adjust accordingly as you execute.

4. EXAMPLE OF STEP 1: GENERATIONAL AUDIT

1. Take a 'before' picture

- Examine all KPIs **by generation**. Diagnose the issue, prescribe the cure.
- Launch survey → understand sources of loyalty → preserve it despite change

Current Members By
Club Model

Baby Boomer

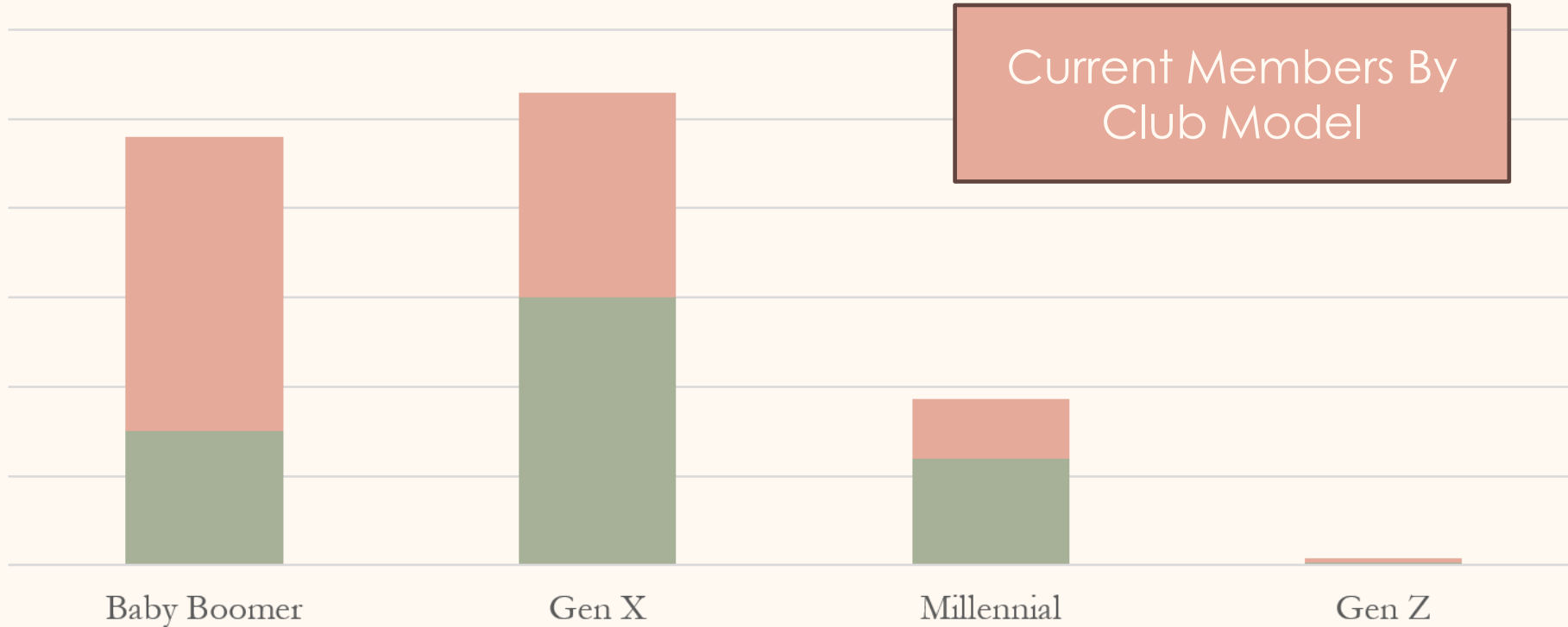
Gen X

Millennial

Gen Z

Traditional

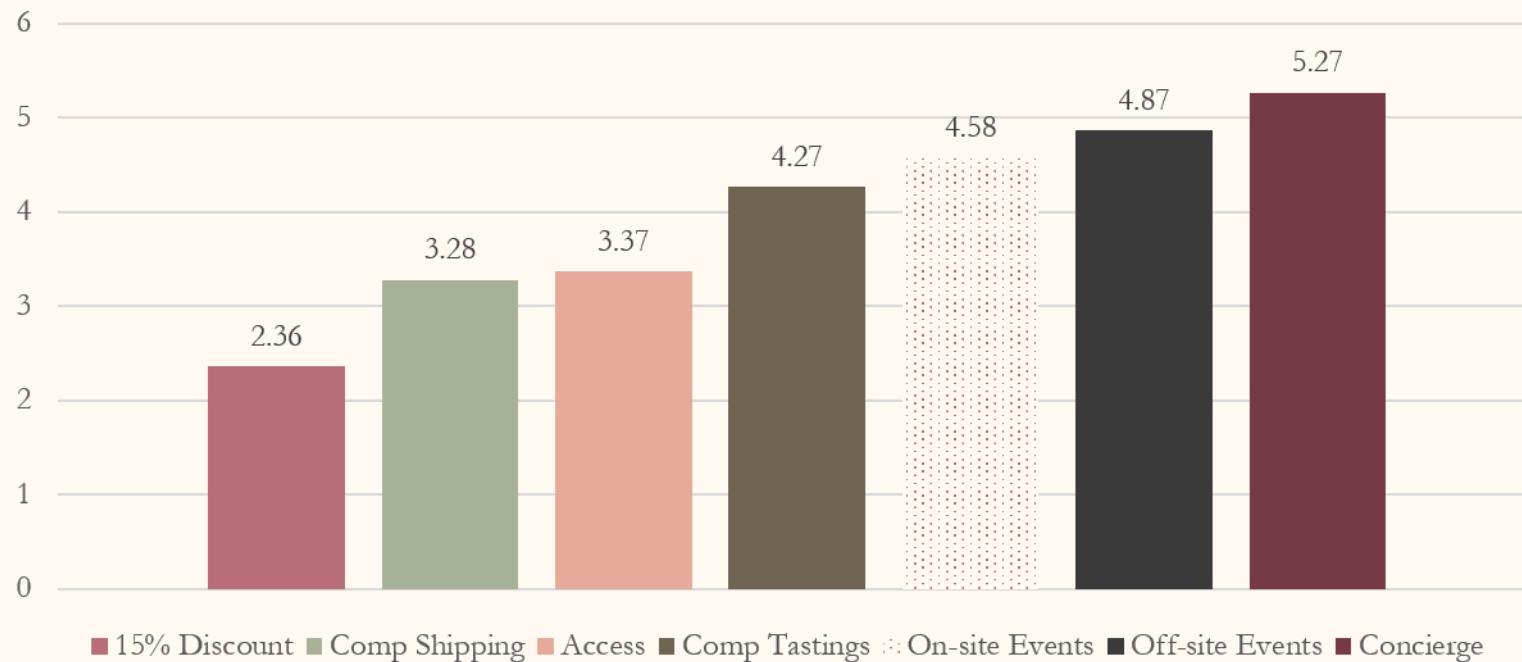
Subscription



4. EXAMPLE OF STEP 1: MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

1. Take a 'before' picture

- Examine all KPIs by **generation**. Diagnose the issue, prescribe the cure.
- Launch survey → understand sources of loyalty → preserve it despite change



4. APPLICATION OF STEP 2

1. Take a 'before' picture

- Examine all KPIs **by generation**. Diagnose the issue, prescribe the cure.
- Launch survey→ understand sources of loyalty→ preserve it despite change

2. Set your goals

- Visualize your desired demographic club makeup
- Calculate the necessary KPI changes to realize it. Use SMART goals.

3. Go from 'what' to 'how'

- What approach is best adapted to the goals you've identified?
- **Now** you can bring in your generalizations to identify relevant club features.

4. Identify risks, tradeoffs & tolerances

- Anticipate impact on existing KPIs, and prepare your peers for them.
 - e.g. How much transfer away from high-value club tiers is acceptable?

5. Take 'during'/'after' pictures

- **Is it working?** Specify how you will monitor KPIs (including member feedback) by generation, and how you will adjust accordingly as you execute.

4. APPLICATION OF STEP 3

1. Take a 'before' picture

- Examine all KPIs **by generation**. Diagnose the issue, prescribe the cure.
- Launch survey→ understand sources of loyalty→ preserve it despite change

2. Set your goals

- Visualize your desired demographic club makeup
- Calculate the necessary KPI changes to realize it. Use SMART goals.

3. Go from 'what' to 'how'

- What approach is best adapted to the goals you've identified?
- **Now** you can bring in your generalizations to identify relevant club features.

4. Identify risks, tradeoffs & tolerances

- Anticipate impact on existing KPIs, and prepare your peers for them.
 - e.g. How much transfer away from high-value club tiers is acceptable?

5. Take 'during'/'after' pictures

- **Is it working?** Specify how you will monitor KPIs (including member feedback) by generation, and how you will adjust accordingly as you execute.

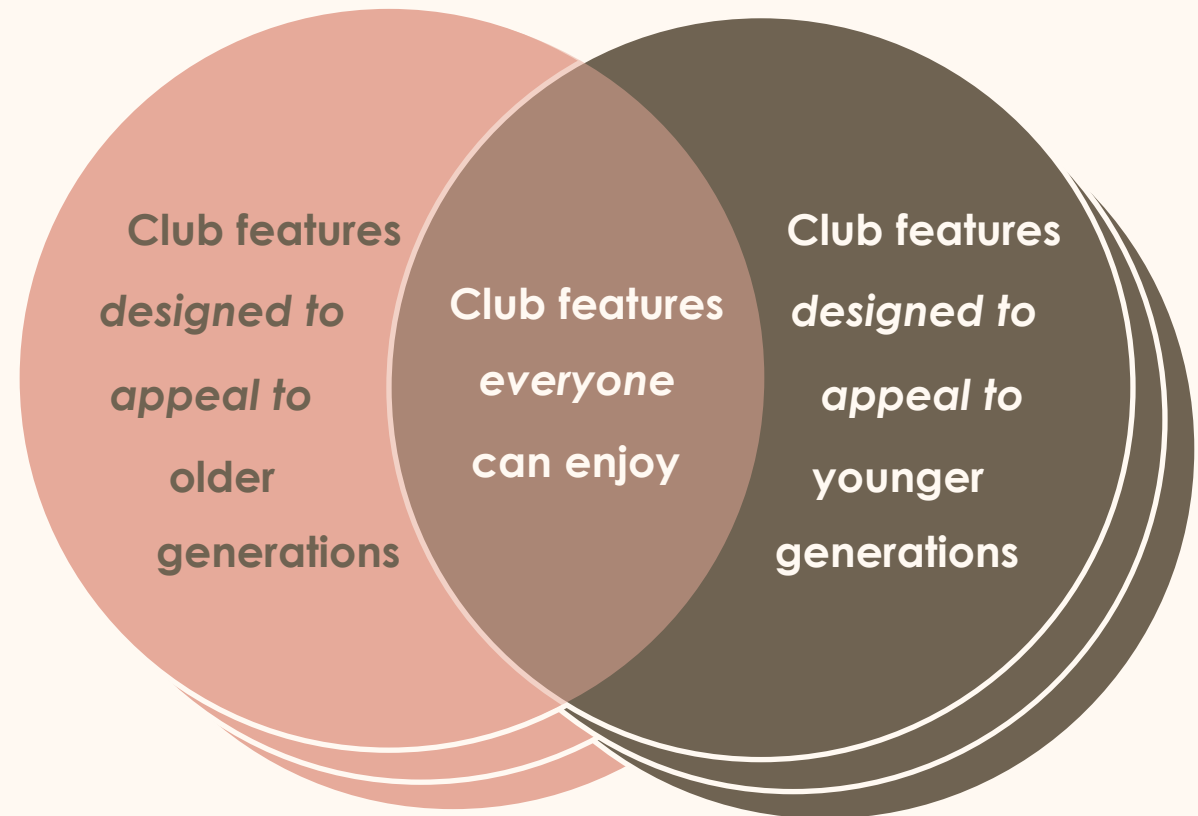
EXAMPLES OF STEP 3 IN ACTION

- I will now provide some examples of what *kind* of strategy you might produce.
- These are *not* the only options!
- It's helpful to have some cookie cutters you can adapt as necessary, vs a blank page.

4. EXAMPLE OF STEP 3: APPROACH A

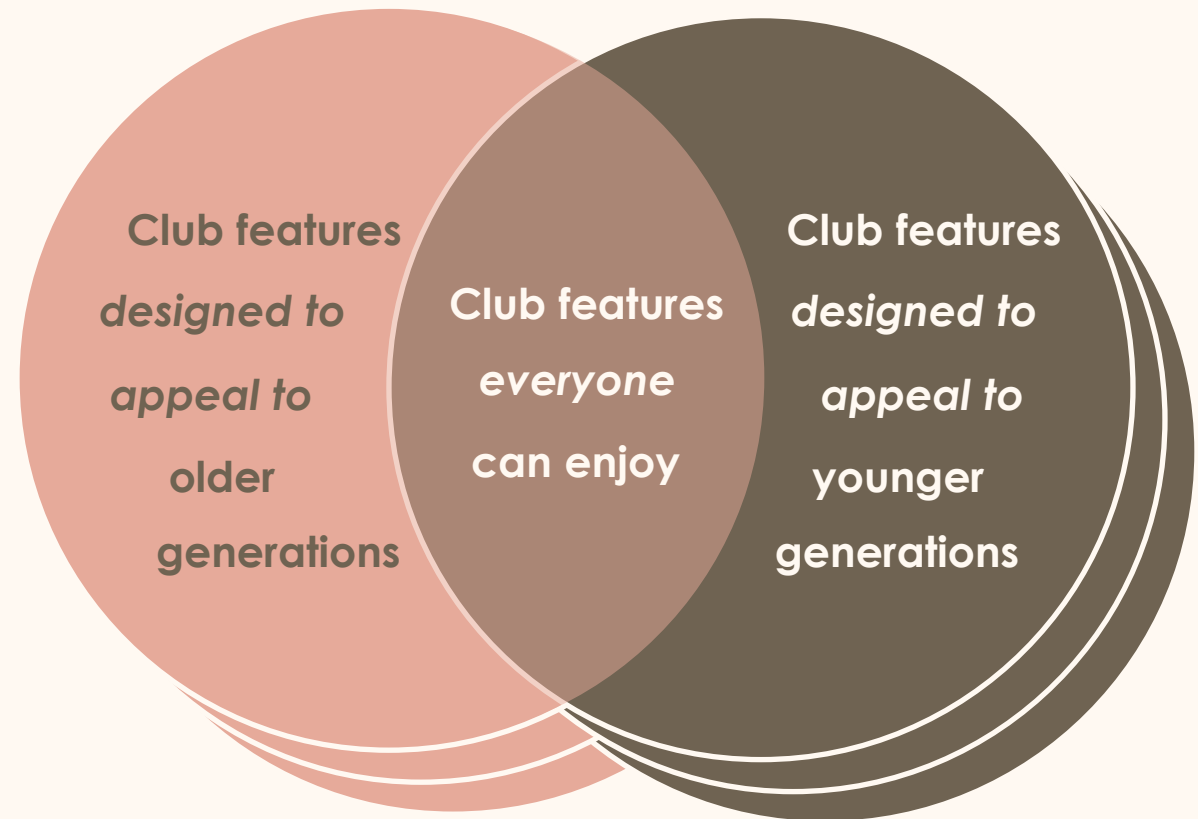
A) Redesign the architecture: 2+ tiered but intersecting options

- High potential for long-term growth, but disruptive.
- Define the split: 80/20, 70/30?
- One set of core benefits with broad appeal: discounts, shipping breaks, special content (~70%).
- Differentiated tiers with ~30% unique features: flexibility to skip, member-only wines, events.



4. EXAMPLE OF STEP 3: APPROACH A

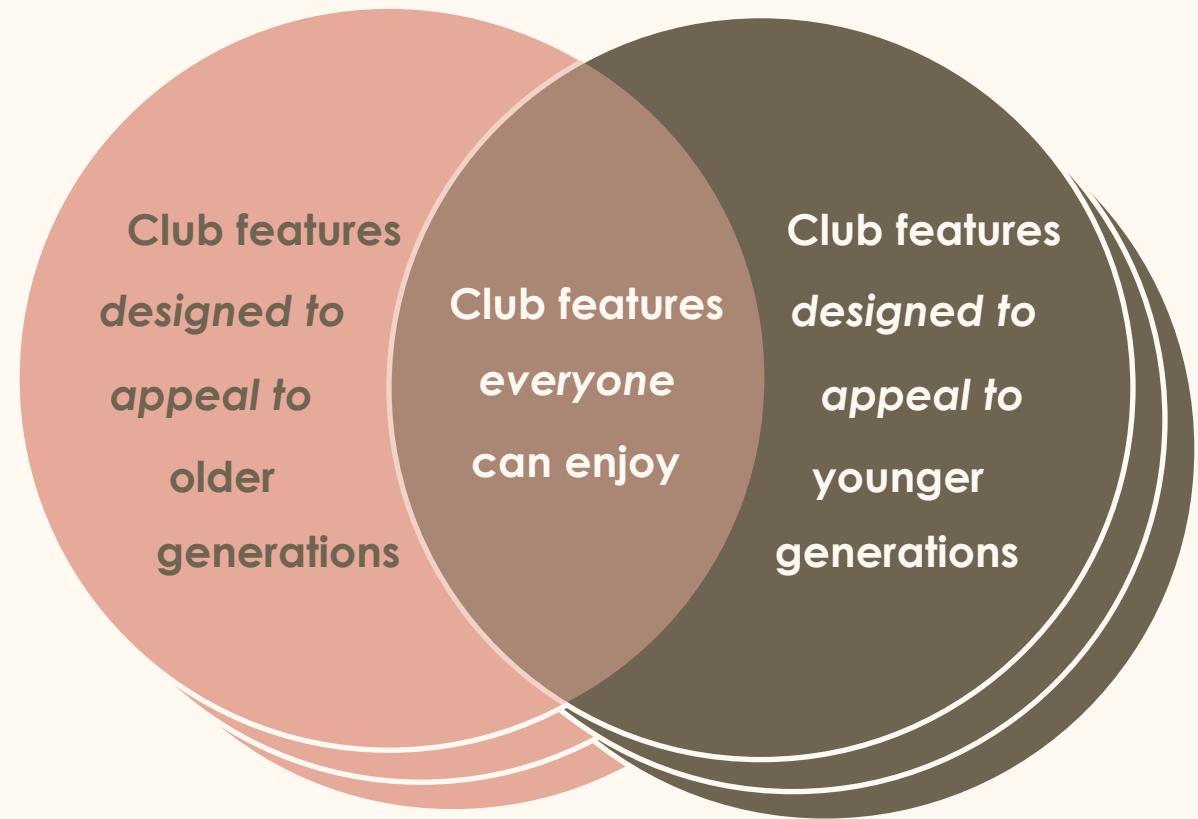
- ***Reduces*** (but does not eliminate) risk of alienating existing members
- Allows people to self-segment according to actual preferences...
- ...and to **re-select** as their life course/relationship with you progresses.



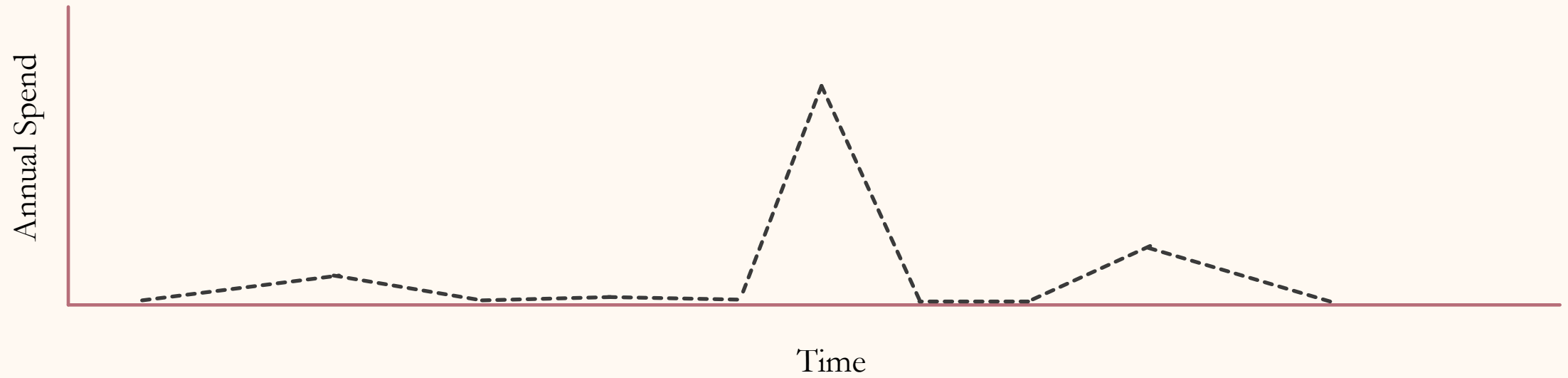
4. EXAMPLE OF STEP 3: APPROACH B

B) One 'main' club, one supplementary 'on/off ramp'

- Good middle ground, laying a foundation for later options, but adds complexity in the interim.
- Structurally identical to A): difference is philosophical.
- Leverages 'younger'-focused features to court **remote signups** and **retain cancel requests**.
- Mitigates cannibalization risk by preserving the goal of later upgrade to the 'higher tier'.
- Can also limit acquisition channels to further reduce this risk (Web only, segmented invites).

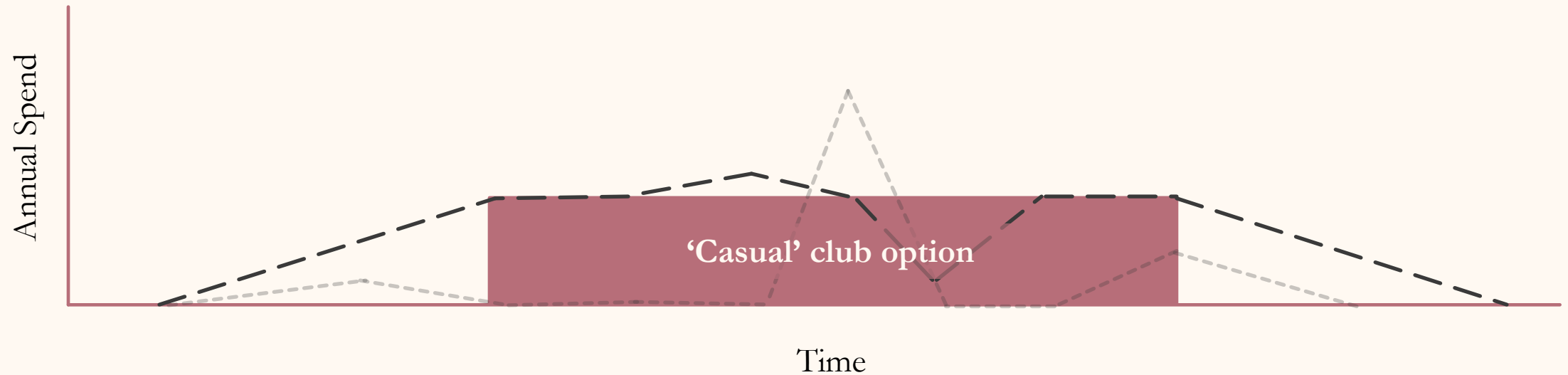


4. EXAMPLE OF STEP 3: APPROACH B



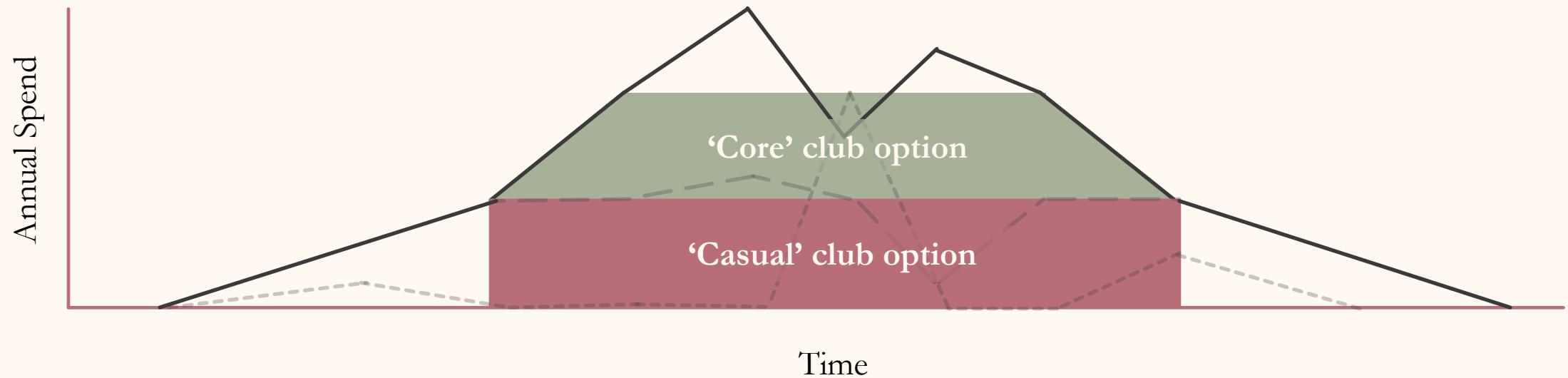
Non-member customers have no commitment, so they spend sporadically over time.

4. EXAMPLE OF STEP 3: APPROACH B



- The 'casual' club (***Subscription?***) is low-commitment, flexible, usually at a lower price point.
- It's therefore well suited to younger generations: consider this when designing its features.
- 'Casual' club members can skip and customize shipments, so they may still spend little or nothing one year, but flexibility reduces the incentive to **end the membership** to do this.

4. EXAMPLE OF STEP 3: APPROACH B

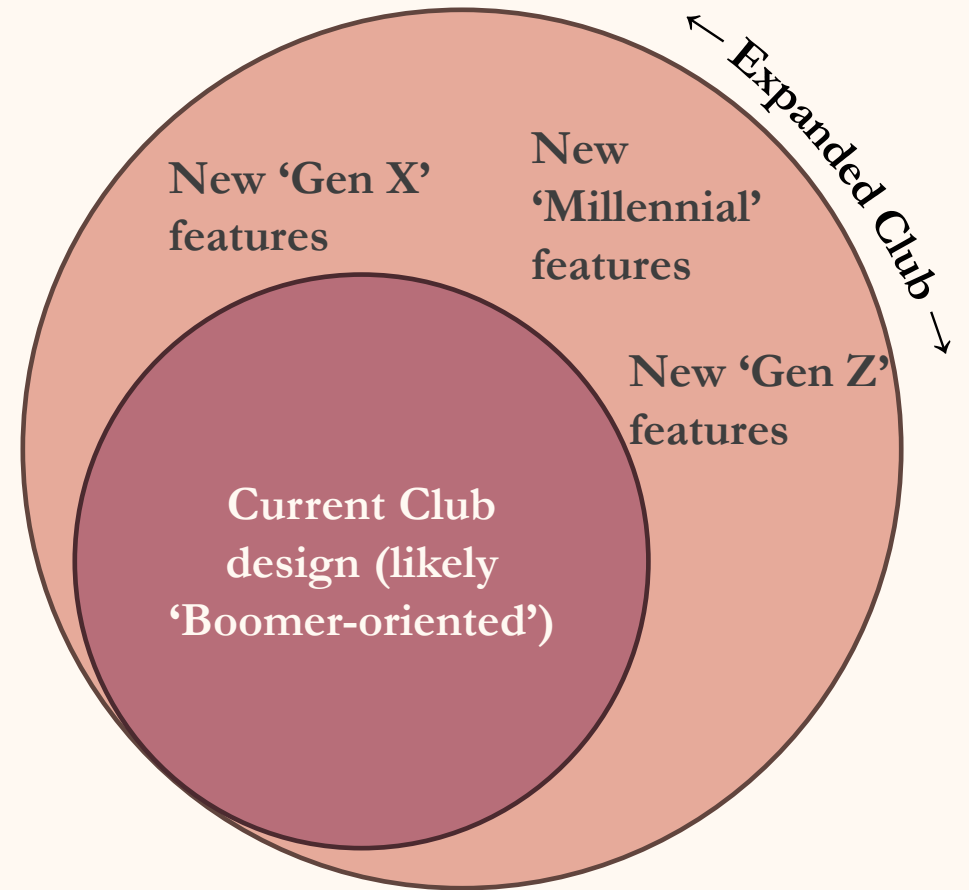


- As a marketing segment, your 'casual' members become **candidates** for the higher-commitment 'core' club (***Traditional?***). The 'casual' club functions as an **on-ramp**.
- The 'core' club *might* feature more expensive wines and/or higher commitment, making it currently more suited to older (read: wealthier) members; but this, too, may need to adapt.
- The 'casual' club is also an **off-ramp** for 'core' members who need to reduce commitment.

4. EXAMPLE OF STEP 3: APPROACH C

C) Keep current Club architecture, *expand* its features

- The least disruptive and lowest-effort option. Recommended for ultra-luxury, small production, or mostly stable clubs/brands.
- Audit your existing Club features (including member-exclusive content!), spot any gaps in where those features map onto the generational/affective distinctions discussed, and expand to include those audiences.
- You can DIY this one, based on your generational research and your own data!



4. APPLICATION OF STEP 4

1. Take a 'before' picture

- Examine all KPIs **by generation**. Diagnose the issue, prescribe the cure.
- Launch survey → understand sources of loyalty → preserve it despite change

2. Set your goals

- Visualize your desired demographic club makeup
- Calculate the necessary KPI changes to realize it. Use SMART goals.

3. Go from 'what' to 'how'

- What approach is best adapted to the goals you've identified?
- **Now** you can bring in your generalizations to identify relevant club features.

4. Identify risks, tradeoffs & tolerances

- Anticipate impact on existing KPIs, and prepare your peers for them.
 - e.g. How much transfer away from high-value club tiers is acceptable?

5. Take 'during'/'after' pictures

- **Is it working?** Specify how you will monitor KPIs (including member feedback) by generation, and how you will adjust accordingly as you execute.

4. EXAMPLE OF STEP 4

New Feature Idea

- Personalized club content
- Offsite member events
- Member gifts at interval
- New Subscription club
- ...
- ...

Cost/Risk/Reward

- Low cost/risk, med reward
- High cost, ? reward
- High cost, high reward
- Risk of cannibalization
- ...
- ...

Implementation Strategy

- No-brainer: implement first
- Survey to gauge interest
- Pilot test different gifts
- Member survey; protect highly valued features
- ...

4. APPLICATION OF STEP 5

1. Take a 'before' picture

- Examine all KPIs **by generation**. Diagnose the issue, prescribe the cure.
- Launch survey→ understand sources of loyalty→ preserve it despite change

2. Set your goals

- Visualize your desired demographic club makeup
- Calculate the necessary KPI changes to realize it. Use SMART goals.

3. Go from 'what' to 'how'

- What approach is best adapted to the goals you've identified?
- **Now** you can bring in your generalizations to identify relevant club features.

4. Identify risks, tradeoffs & tolerances

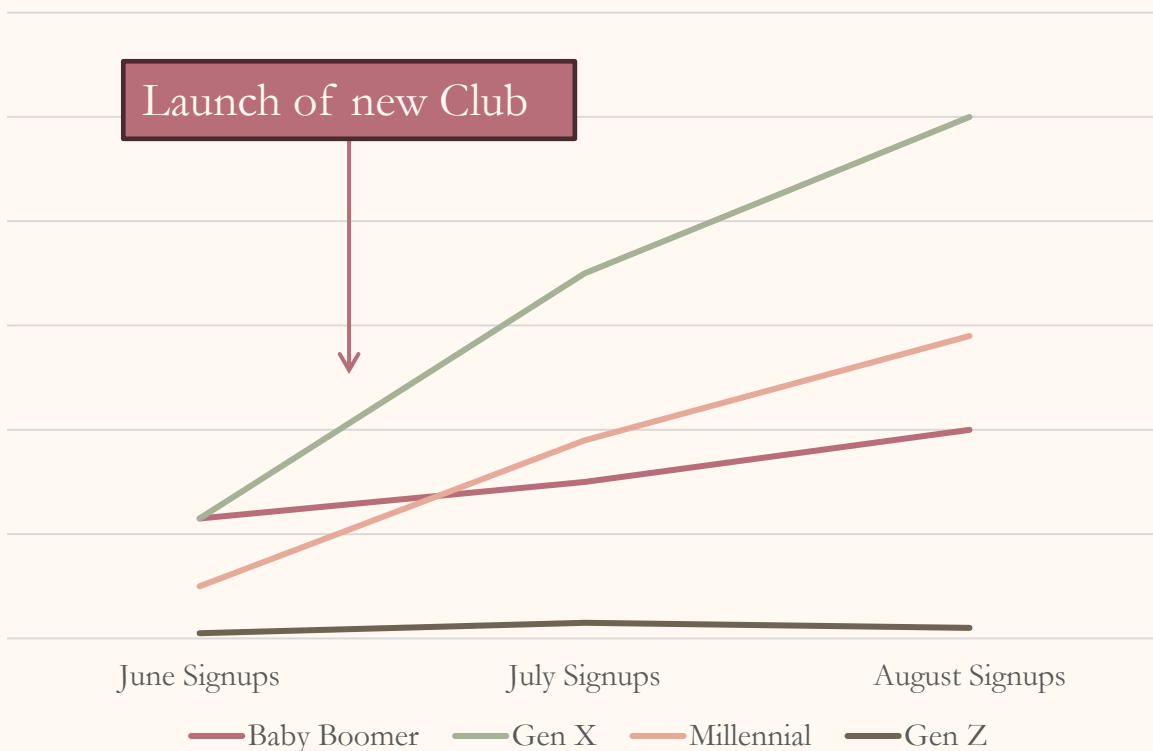
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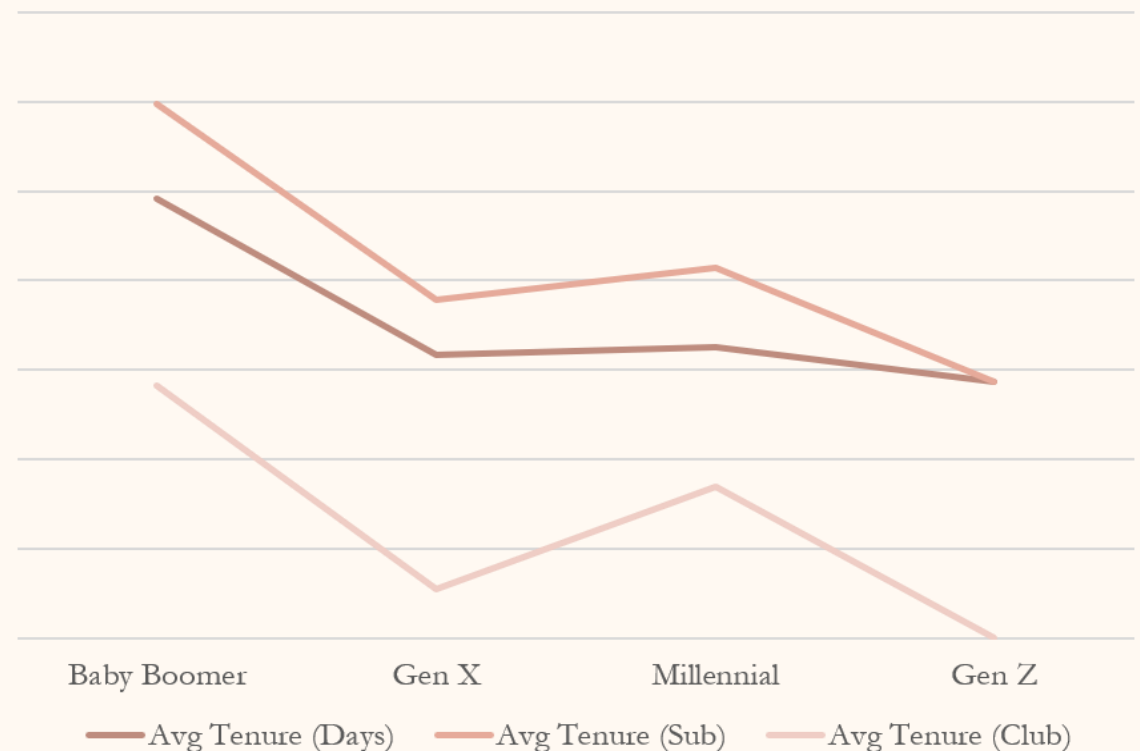
- **Is it working?** Specify how you will monitor KPIs (including member feedback) by generation, and how you will adjust accordingly as you execute.

EXAMPLE OF STEP 5: CONTINUOUS MEASURING

Signups By Month and Generation



Avg Tenure By Generation and Club Model



AGENDA PROGRESS

1. ~~Generational Trends~~
2. ~~Implications for Club Design~~
3. ~~General Approaches~~
4. ~~Applications~~
5. Conclusion and Q&A

5. CONCLUSION: WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO

- Understand the reasons behind the changing market demand
 - Age vs Cohort effects
 - Generational differences in values and buying habits
- Identify how our wine clubs can become more responsive to these changes
 - How to approach the generational shift: first questions to ask
 - The types of club feature and how they map onto older/younger-skewed generalizations
 - Step-by-step plan to develop an actionable generational shift plan
- Equip you to ***plan with clarity*** and ***adapt with discipline*** to survive the market shift
 - Out-of-the-box Approaches A, B and C, with suggestions of how to begin with each
 - See the **PDF walkthrough** linked on my end slide to develop your plan.

5. CONCLUSION: FURTHER READING

- Key voices/brands to follow:
 - Rob McMillan, Silicon Valley Bank. Notably: “[State of the U.S. Wine Industry 2026](#)”.
 - Susan DeMatei, Wine Glass Marketing. Notably: “[2024 Wine Consumer Usage and Attitudes Survey](#)”, “[Generations](#)” and “[How Generations Shop](#)”.
 - Jason Haas, Tablas Creek
 - Gamling & McDuck
 - Meininger’s International, focused on Germany but interesting, applicable insights. [Start here](#).
 - [The Wine Lass](#)! I’ve guided many luxury wineries through thoughtful and informed club reboots, and I write about wine club topics on my blog and mailing list.

5. CONCLUSION: NEXT STEPS

- Download the **walkthrough guide** from my website
- **Audit your existing club** if you haven't already (the demographic 'before picture')
- Consider a **membership survey**, especially if your generational shift is ambitious
- Attend my **drop-in session** next Tuesday to progress your shift plan
- Register your interest for a more in-depth **Generational Shift Boot Camp** in early 2027
- Join the Wine Club Professional Network if you're not already a member!

THANK YOU! WHILE WE Q&A...



The Wine Lass



For the session resources, scan the QR code or visit:

<https://thewinlass.com/vinsuite-symposium-2026>

- Download the **printable PDF** walkthrough
- RSVP to the **virtual drop-in** (next Tuesday, 10:30 PST).
- Register your interest in the **Boot Camp**
- Join the **WCPN**
- (Also find resources for surviving S.O.N.D. 2026!)

Email any questions to: info@thewinlass.com.