

You Think Too Young

You're in marketing or advertising. That means you're probably too young to fully understand how to talk to Baby Boomers. No aspect of business is more ageist than marketing, and advertising is the worst offender of all. In fact, much of today's advertising suggests that the industry is run by sophisticated adolescents with little understanding of and no respect for effective strategy.

Instead, too much advertising goes for easy laughs and easier pop references that play right to the heart of America's youth-oriented world. It's the worst kind of style-over-substance marketing communication, and it's going to fall from grace rather rapidly in the coming years, because the Boomers have finally arrived with a resounding roar!

Like it or not, as always, the Boomers will have their way. Just based on sheer numbers, they've repeatedly transformed existing markets and created new ones. Some savvy businesses have already jumped on the Boomer bandwagon. If you haven't yet, it may be because you're blinded by youth.

It's not really your fault, though. We live in a youth-worshipping culture that harbors fearful prejudices about older adults, as well as the aging process in general. But the Boomers are a totally different breed than your granddaddy, because they think and

act much differently than earlier generations of older adults. They also have lots of money, as well as the time and inclination to spend it freely.

Getting a share of that spending, however can be very challenging, because Boomers have unique mindsets that will influence when, where, why and how they spend all that money. Understanding how to relate to those mindsets is the key to unlocking new sources of profitability you probably haven't even dreamt of yet.

Be skeptical at your own peril, because the numbers don't lie. Over the next generation, the median age of consumers will continue to increase, and this lucrative cohort of big spenders will also grow. But to profit from this demographic shift, you have to understand how to talk to these highly individualistic people, and that's going to take a radical paradigm shift away from pandering to the cult of youth toward the reality of genuinely relating to older adults. It's going to be the biggest change in marketing history, and those who master communicating with and motivating Boomers will profit from it the most.

To get started, you need to see your products and services in a new light, and you need to devise marketing strategies that cater to the heart of the Boomers. Perhaps, the most vexing problem is that although it's easy to quantify the Boomers, it's not easy to accurately define the group as a whole. Unlike impulsive pre-pubescent teens

and trendy post-adolescents, Boomers are individualists. That means you can't succeed by bombarding them with mass media communications. Instead, you have to actually communicate person-to-person with them as if they were thinking, feeling individuals, not just buying machines who will salivate over the latest fad or fashion.

Learning to understand, appreciate and communicate person-to-person with each individual Boomer is what this book is all about. It will give you many insights, big and small, that will help you come to understand Boomers as complex, multifaceted human beings. Once you really understand what's between these covers, you'll be equipped to devise strategies and communicate with Boomers in ways that motivate them to act. And if you do it skillfully and artfully, you'll surely profit.

In case you're wondering what makes me an expert in the area of communicating with Boomers. Well, I've been an advertising and marketing communications creative director and copywriter for over forty years. And I'm the father of GeroMarketing™, a term that I coined in 1994. I also have a formal education and professional training in clinical gerontology, so I know how to talk to Boomers. (You can find a citation for my 1995 master's thesis on spiritual well-being among older adults @ http://de.scientificcommons.org/vincent_m_vassolo.) Finally, born in 1947, I'm a Leading-Edge Boomer, so I've actually lived through the developmental stages and

issues that I'll be discussing. However, this isn't an academic treatise; it's a practical guide that can help you unlock the hidden profits in your business no matter what it is.