



# Marketing effectively to Baby Boomers

## **How can you ensure your marketing resonates with Boomers? An award-winning campaign offers seven lessons you can apply to your efforts**

*by Colin Milner*

Do you really know who your customers are? More importantly, do you know why they buy your programs or services? If you're like many of us, you will instantly respond, "Of course I know who my customers are! They invest their hard-earned money with me, don't they?" But stop and think about these two questions for a moment. To find out if you know your clients as well as you think you do, answer the following questions:

- Who does your brand appeal to?
- Who makes up the majority of your customers? And why?

- What do these customers know, like or dislike about your programs and services?
- What do these customers know, like or dislike about your brand? Is there a difference? How do you know?

The first step towards creating a long-term relationship with your clients is to truly know them. When businesses don't know the answers to the above customer-related questions and others, they end up with multiple advertisements and marketing campaigns that are ineffective. Have you ever seen an advertisement and asked yourself, "What was that ad all about? And who were they trying to reach?" These kinds of questions typically arise when a marketer lacks a clear vision of a business's clients and how to communicate with them.

Marketers constantly complain about the ineffectiveness of marketing, but maybe they should complain about the ineffec-

tiveness of marketers. In *TV Land's New Generation Gap Study*, a 2006 landmark study that included input from more than 4,000 respondents across the United States, researchers Ken Dychtwald, PhD, and Harris Interactive found the following:

- Nearly two-thirds of Baby Boomers are growing increasingly dissatisfied with media that ignores them and are tuning out. For example:
  - Only three percent of Boomers say they are extremely satisfied with the television programming options available to them.
  - Study respondents believe that nearly two-thirds of television programming and advertising is targeted to those under age 40.
  - More than one-third of Boomers are dissatisfied with television programming options.
- Boomers are significantly more likely than young adults to say television does a poor job of:
  - reflecting the values of their life stage
  - providing characters relevant to their life stage
  - providing stories and plots relevant to their life stage
  - reflecting their lifestyle preferences
- Half of Boomers pay minimal attention to ads targeting young adults, and a third are actually less likely to buy the advertised product.

The opportunities are immense for marketers who have done their homework by getting to know their clients, as well as their clients' needs. These marketers create campaigns that people remember. Why? Because they tell a story that people can connect with on an emotional level, producing an experience they want to be part of. So, how do you develop this connection?

Because you can no longer rely on a one-size-fits-all marketing solution, your starting point involves answering the questions posed in the opening paragraphs of this article. You have two ways of getting to the answers: You can crunch the numbers (quantitative research) or listen to consumers (qualitative research). Once you understand your clients better, and why they buy from you, you can begin to craft your marketing campaign.

Can you make this process easier? Yes, you can. Read on to learn from a company whose marketing campaigns resonate with women of all ages, and whose most recent efforts target women over 50.

### **The real beauty of marketing**

The Dove Real Beauty campaign is a true marketing phenomenon. Since its launch several years ago, the Campaign for Real Beauty has captured the attention of the media and women around the world. The campaign increased Dove's sales by 700% in its first four months alone and gained media coverage in more than 800 publications. Then in June 2006, the Ogilvy & Mather creation won the New York Marketing Association's Grand EFFIE Award for the "most effective marketing communications campaign."

Continuing to build on its most successful franchise, Unilever, the company behind Dove, launched the brand's pro•age™ line of personal care products in February 2007. This new Dove campaign focuses on women over 50, challenging the anti-aging spin so many companies use to sell their products.

Being wise marketers, Dove did its homework before launching the pro•age campaign. The brand's 2006 *Beauty Comes of Age* study surveyed almost 1,500 women ages 50–64 in nine countries, and found the following:

### **Advertising preferences of Baby Boomers by sex**

When asked about all-time favorite television commercials, the largest percentage of both male and female Baby Boomers cited the following commercials, respectively.

*Among Boomer men, the favorite commercials were:*

- Wendy's "Where's the Beef?"
- Budweiser Frogs
- Coke with Mean Joe Greene
- Geico ads
- Coke's "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing"

*Among Boomer women, the favorite commercials were:*

- Wendy's "Where's the Beef?"
- Budweiser Frogs
- Geico ads
- Coke's "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing"
- Coke with Mean Joe Greene

**Source:** *TV Land's New Generation Gap Study, 2006*

- Ninety-seven percent of the survey respondents believed society is less accepting of appearance considerations for women over 50 than their younger counterparts, with showcasing one's body the least acceptable.
- Ninety-one percent of the women surveyed believed the media and advertising need to do a better job of representing realistic images of women over 50.

*Continued on page 50*



These findings augmented the results of the 2004 *US Dove Report: Challenging Beauty*, written prior to the North American launch of the Real Beauty campaign. This report revealed that among 1,600 American women ages 20–65:

- Seventy-nine percent of survey respondents said they wished a woman could be considered beautiful even if she is not physically perfect.
- Seventy-five percent of those surveyed agreed that beauty does not come from a woman's looks, but from her spirit and love of life.

Together, these numbers show that in the eyes of survey respondents, especially those ages 50-plus, society and the media seem “anti aging” and one-dimensional in how they define women's beauty. To counter this, Dove has taken a multidimensional, “pro age” approach to its new product line.

With pro•age, “Dove seeks to create an attitudinal change in the anti-aging category—from negative and fear-driven to affirmative and hope-driven,” says Kathy O'Brien, the brand's marketing director.

The pro•age products and campaign mark the first time Unilever “addresses menopausal women, but in a very positive way,” she recently told *Women's Wear Daily*.

### **The campaign, the tools, the debate**

As with the first Real Beauty campaign, the pro•age communications program has created debate in the media. Why? The models in the print advertising are age 50-plus women of different races and sizes who appear *au naturel* in side views. “Too old to be in an anti-aging ad,” proclaims the headline. But where most marketers would go with a negative, anti-aging angle, Dove has gone with the positive, exposing that no matter how old a woman is, she can always be a “Real Beauty.”

With the pro•age campaign, Dove has reached out to women and encouraged them to become involved with the brand. Its website is a key marketing tool in this effort.

The pro•age section of Dove's site introduces the viewer to these products with a headline that reads, “Too many people

think beauty has an age limit. Dove® thinks it's time for a change.” This statement immediately positions Dove as the advocate for helping to change a cultural bias against mature women. From there, the site prompts the viewer to “Watch what we couldn't show you on TV, then tell us what you think.” Video footage follows of a few older women—again shown in the nude. With this message, Dove asks the viewer to get involved.

When people choose to become involved with a brand, they typically support a product that supports them—and Dove quickly affirms that support with the home page headline, “Dove is pro-age.” The copy reinforces this support for the mature woman, stating: “Embrace the best years of your life with Dove pro•age, a new line of products for skin and hair created to let women in their best years realize the beautiful potential that lies within. Because beauty has no age-limit.” For these statements, Dove draws on its finding that three in four women believe beauty comes from a woman's spirit and love of life, rather than her looks.

What Dove does so well with its Real Beauty campaign is to create a debate and involve people. With its pro•age communications, Dove wants people to discuss attitudes towards women and aging. “Can a woman be beautiful at any age?” the campaign asks. The brand's goal is to get women to come together as a community and share their thoughts and passions.

In her book *EVEvolution*, trend expert Faith Popcorn states that to gain the business of women, you need their involvement in your business. Dove has offered its clients multiple ways to get involved—from becoming a future spokesperson for pro•age and Real Beauty, to sharing the word about these products online. Are people seeing, hearing and talking about Dove's campaigns? Absolutely. Moreover, these marketing

efforts offer valuable ideas that can help you reach and engage a Boomer audience.

### Lessons learned

By dissecting Dove's pro•age program, you can discover the DNA of a successful marketing campaign for the age 50-plus market. Here are seven lessons you might apply to your marketing:

1. Do your homework. Get to know your clients and their needs, so you can better understand what to communicate to these adults and how.
2. Realize that your marketing needs to "capture the spirit" of the viewers, readers or users by featuring real people, with real stories. How would your clients react to your offerings if they captured their spirit? Ask your clients to share their successes online and to encourage others to share theirs.
3. Create a community feeling among your clients from the start. For example, host gatherings in your juice bar or dining area after classes. Program support groups, and invite them to get involved with your center or community. You'll know you've achieved that community feeling when your clients express a sense of ownership about your business. Pride is priceless.
4. Demonstrate that you're an advocate for your clients. Engage in community events that support mature women or men—from the Red Hat Society, to raising funds for breast or prostate cancer, to hosting postmenopausal education workshops.
5. Create a debate in your community around your offerings.
6. Use your website as an interactive marketing tool for storytelling, and not just as an online brochure. (Seventy percent of adults ages 50–64 use the Internet, as do 82% of those 30–49, and 33% of those over 65, according to a 2006 Pew Internet and American Life Project study.)

7. Be pro-age! Like Dove, promote "affirmative and hope-driven" attitudes toward aging.

Effective marketing encourages prospective clients to see your offerings, hear your messages, and talk about your programs and services. By learning from Dove's dynamic marketing, you'll improve your chances of creating campaigns that not only catch the attention of Boomer audiences, but also resonate with them. ☺

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## What makes marketing campaigns attractive to Baby Boomers

Meet the new "Power Demographic": Baby Boomers. This group is hungry for media content and products that meet its needs. If you give Boomers what they want and speak to their interests, preferences and aspirations, they will tune in and turn on.

Smart marketers stand to reap the benefits of the Boomer opportunity. So here are some points to keep in mind when you're creating campaigns for this generation:

- Boomers are just as likely as young adults to be open to buying new products and services (71%/71%) and to be influenced by effective advertising (55%/55%).
- Adults in their 50s are more likely than those in their 40s to say they want to see more ads for products and services people their age want to buy.
- Boomers who are most influenced by advertising describe themselves in positive terms such as:
  - looking for ways to have more fun
  - believing it's important to give back to society
  - seeking experiences that give more meaning to life
  - believing this is the time of life when they should accomplish something significant
- The following elements draw Boomers to programming:
  - well-developed plots that tell a great story
  - great writing
  - humor they can relate to
  - satisfying, interesting, and even unpredictable programming

Source: *TV Land's New Generation Gap Study, 2006*