



Marketing to Baby Boomers

Marketing to Baby Boomers:

Dispelling myths and identifying strategies to reach the largest and most profitable market

You might have missed an important birthday party. Did you know that on January 1, 2011, the first Baby Boomer turned 65? That's right, the largest generation across America, representing a quarter of the nation's population, is entering a new phase of life. Combine this with the fact that this age group controls half of the nation's consumer spending (an impressive \$2 trillion per year) and you may start to grasp the importance of this celebration.¹

What do Civil Rights, the Women's Movement, Vietnam and the first steps on the moon have in common? Baby Boomers—it's the same generation that drove the growth of hula hoops, bell bottoms and personal computers. It's the generation that witnessed and participated in some of the greatest social changes in the country's history. Born during the Post-World War II period between 1946 and 1964, they're the folks that lived through unprecedented social and technological advances. Boomers also witnessed the dawn of space exploration, accessibility to long-distance travel and unprecedented prosperity. Don't forget that the progress they've seen in technology is mind blowing. They witnessed the age of the computer, mobile communications and the World Wide Web, and they've seen the explosion of communication in radio, television and telephone. Not only are they one of the most interesting demographics, but they are also the largest group in history, comprising a total of 76 million. Research predicts that by 2015, Boomers will represent 35 percent of the total U.S. population.

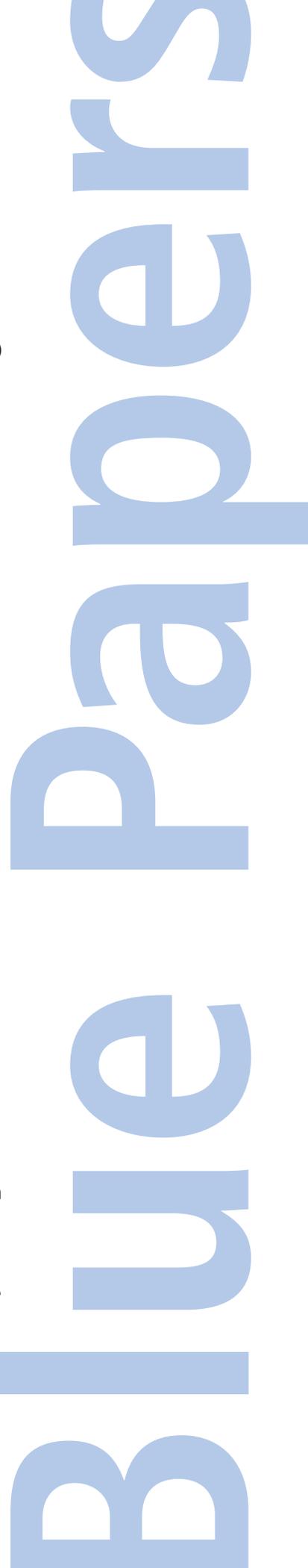
Now that Boomers are entering retirement age, the face of the American population is set to change dramatically. Did you know that in 2012, 10,000 people turned age 65 every day?² By 2015, those aged 50 and older will represent 45 percent of the U.S. population.³ If you look ahead to 2030, a projected 71 million Americans will be age 65 or older, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.⁴ If you provide consumer goods and services, it's time to pay attention to the Boomer demographic. Traditional thinking among marketers is that Boomers spend less, have little interest in new products and technology, and have stubborn brand preferences. In reality, this couldn't be farther from the truth. As Baby Boomers age and accumulate wealth, their spending is growing at a pace that leaves younger generations far behind. In fact, the 116 million U.S. consumers age

¹ "The Art of Ageless Marketing." *Chief Marketer*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.chiefmarketer.com/special-reports-chief-marketer/the-art-of-ageless-marketing-19122005>>.

² *Medical Never-Never-Land: 10 Reasons Why America Is Not Ready for the Coming Age Boom*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Aging Research; 2002.

³ "50 Facts & Fiction." *Facts and Fiction*. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.immersionactive.com/resources/50-plus-facts-and-fiction/>>.

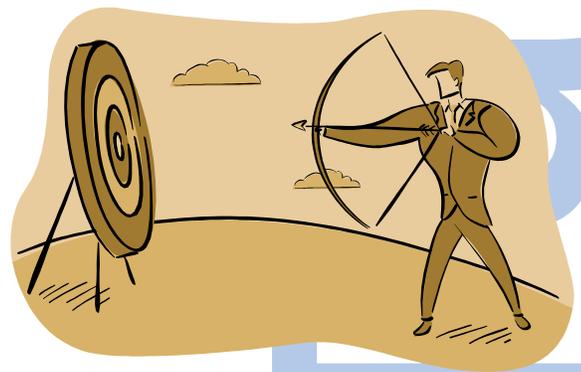
⁴ *U.S. Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau; 2004. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/usinterimproj>. Accessed July 13, 2006.



50 and older spent \$2.9 trillion in 2012 and that's a 45 percent increase over the past 10 years.⁵ Guess what else? Boomers are among the biggest buyers of new technology and new cars.

Not only is the Baby Boomer population huge, but they're wealthy, too. The 55 and over age group controls more than three-fourths of America's wealth, and has median household incomes that are 55 percent greater than post-Boomers and 61 percent more than pre-Boomers.⁶ And, they are about to get richer—Boomers are set to inherit an estimated \$14-20 trillion in the next 20 years.⁷ Also, if you think that Boomers aren't major consumers, think again. According to research from the US Government Consumer Expenditure Survey, Baby Boomers outspend other generations by an estimated \$400 billion each year on consumer goods and services.⁸

In case it isn't obvious, the Baby Boomer market is one that demands your attention. However, research shows that less than five percent of advertising targets this most valuable generation.⁹ According to Forbes®, Boomers are the most neglected wealthy people in the history of marketing, and most companies fail to effectively market to them.¹⁰ Boomers notice the lack of advertising, too. According to a 2009 survey conducted by Google® and Nielsen®, 8 in 10 baby boomers felt the advertising they see is targeted to younger consumers.¹¹ Clearly, there is untapped opportunity to reach a valuable and profitable market, but how?



People are living longer, and turning 65 no longer means you sit in a rocker to read books all day. This market is active and engaged. Forget sending large font flyers through snail mail, Baby Boomers are tech savvy, and require new and innovative marketing strategies. This Blue Paper® looks at some of the new marketing techniques that can be applied to the Baby Boomer generation. Specifically, what is the best way to market to this group? And how can you make sure your message resonates in order to improve sales?

⁵ Horovitz, Bruce. "Big-spending Baby Boomers Bend the Rules of Marketing - USATODAY.com." *Big-spending Baby Boomers Bend the Rules of Marketing - USATODAY.com*. N.p., 16 Nov. 2010. Web. 23 Sept. 2013.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Horovitz, Bruce. "Big-spending Baby Boomers Bend the Rules of Marketing - USATODAY.com." *Big-spending Baby Boomers Bend the Rules of Marketing - USATODAY.com*. N.p., 16 Nov. 2010. Web. 23 Sept. 2013. <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/money/advertising/2010-11-16-1Aboomerbuyers16_CV_N.htm>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Marketing to Baby Boomers Online: Where and How to Reach Them." *Vocus Blog*. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.vocus.com/blog/marketing-to-baby-boomers-online/>>.

¹⁰ Lewis, Kern. "Pick Baby Boomers as Your Target Market for the Holidays." *Forbes*. *Forbes Magazine*, 09 Nov. 2012. Web. 25 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kernlewis/2012/11/09/pick-baby-boomers-as-your-target-market-for-the-holidays/>>.

¹¹ "Marketing to Women Baby Boomers." *Marketing to Women*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.web-design-for-women.com/marketing-to-women-baby-boomers.html>>.

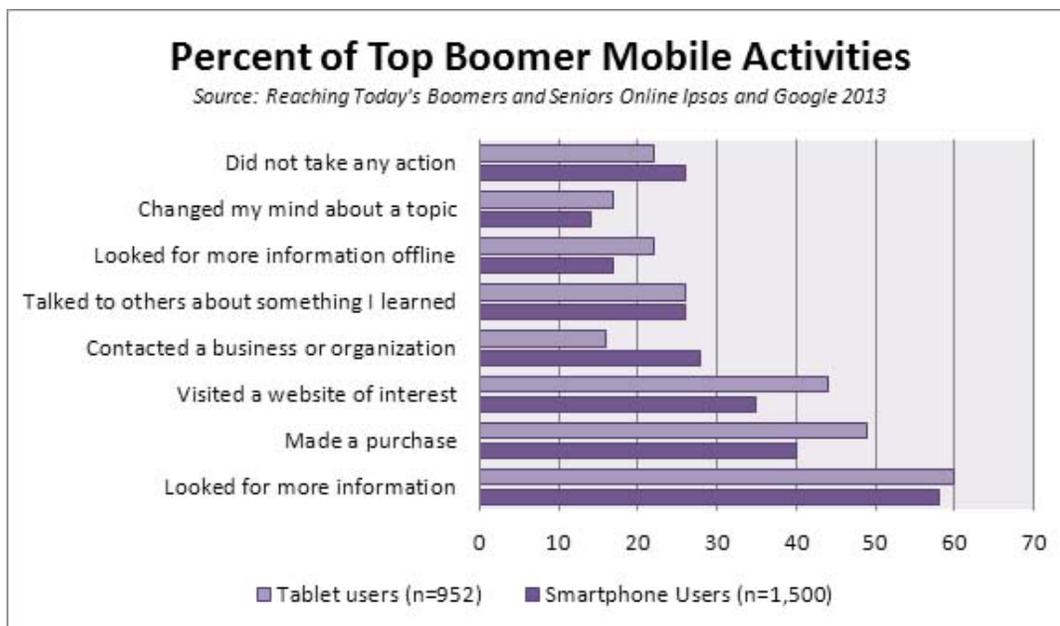
But before we get started, let's dispel some of the most common myths about Boomers that prevent organizations from effectively tapping into this market. For example, you'd be incorrect to assume that Boomers aren't actively online making significant purchases. Also, if you think that developing text-heavy, detailed marketing collateral is desirable, think again. Although this generation might have time, it doesn't mean they want to spend it reading lengthy marketing material.

Myth #1: Baby Boomers aren't online

Some marketers make the mistake of assuming Baby Boomers aren't online. Boomers actually represent one third of the 195.3 million Internet users in the U.S. and represent the Web's largest constituency.¹² In 2012, Baby Boomers age 47-65 spent 27 hours online per week, which is two hours more than the Millennial demographic.

In fact, the Internet is the top source for gathering information on topics of interest, outpacing television and print media significantly. Boomers also use the Internet to access weather and news, shopping, coupons and discounts, food information and gaming. Boomers also have a large presence in online dating services, and enjoy watching videos for entertainment and relaxation. Moreover, it's not just limited to computer access. As Figure 1. illustrates, Boomers engage in a number of activities with both mobile devices and tablets.

Figure 1. Top Boomer activities online¹³



¹² "50 Facts & Fiction." *Facts and Fiction*. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.immersionactive.com/resources/50-plus-facts-and-fiction/>>.

¹³ <http://www.marketingprofs.com/charts/2013/11209/how-baby-boomers-use-the-web-social-networks-and-mobile>

Boomers are paper

Boomer Statistics at a Glance

- When it comes to smartphones, 44 percent of users over the age of 50 access the Internet or check email daily from their device.
- In 2011, Baby Boomers increased their usage of social media by 60 percent.
- There are 27.4 million people over the age of 55 engaged in social networking, and 19 million of those use Facebook®.
- Watching videos online is common in this age group; 41 percent of Internet users age 50-64 and 27 percent age 65 and older report watching videos online.

According to AARP, Boomers over the age of 60 most frequently visit Google®, Facebook, Yahoo® and YouTube®. In addition, 82 percent of adults over the age of 50 use the Internet to research health and wellness information online. When asked in a survey, a third of Baby Boomers described themselves as “heavy Internet users.”¹⁴

Myth #2: Baby Boomers don't make purchases online

Companies often assume that the Boomer generation is hesitant to click the “send” button on an order, or avoid sharing credit cards online. The truth is that adults over the age of 50 spend an average of \$7 billion online each year.¹⁵ According to Forrester Research®, the average boomer spends \$650 online over a three month period, which is significantly more than Generation X (individuals born between 1966 and 1976), which spends only \$581, and Generation Y (individuals born between 1977 and 1994), which spends a mere \$429.¹⁶ A whopping 42 percent of all travel industry purchases happen online, and that's significant, considering adults 50 and older account for 80 percent of all luxury travel spending.

Not only that, but when it comes to technology, Boomers spend more than any other group. According to Forrester Research®, they spend an average \$850 for their latest home computer, which is \$50 more than any other group. Jacqueline Anderson, a consumer insights analyst concurs: “People presume that Generation Y is the most eager to adopt technology, but they don't have the spending power of Boomers.”¹⁷



14 “How to Market to Baby Boomers: 3 Tips.” Yahoo Small Business Advisor. N.p., 21 Feb. 2013. Web. 23 Sept. 2013. <<http://smallbusiness.yahoo.com/advisor/market-baby-boomers-3-tips-021501562.html>>.

15 Horovitz, Bruce. “Big-spending Baby Boomers Bend the Rules of Marketing - USATODAY.com.” Big-spending Baby Boomers Bend the Rules of Marketing - USATODAY.com. N.p., 16 Nov. 2010. Web. 23 Sept. 2013. <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/money/advertising/2010-11-16-1Aboomerbuyers16_CV_N.htm>.

16 Akitunde, Anthonia. “Amazon Targets Seniors, Baby Boomers With New Store.” The Huffington Post. N.p., 17 Apr. 2013. Web. 25 Sept. 2013. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/17/amazons-seniors-new-store_n_3102030.html>.

17 Horovitz, Bruce. “Big-spending Baby Boomers Bend the Rules of Marketing - USATODAY.com.” Big-spending

Myth #3: Boomers have plenty of time to read marketing information

While it's true that Baby Boomers, especially those that are retired, have more time than younger generations, it doesn't mean they want to spend that time reading marketing information. Bombarding this generation with marketing material is a mistake. According to AdWeek®, the perception of Boomers as avid readers does more harm than good, especially when it leads advertisers to include too many features in one ad.¹⁸ According to Jim Gilmartin, president of the marketing firm Coming of Age®, "including 10 pounds of copy in a five-pound ad will not attract readers."¹⁹

Myth #4: Boomers can't wait to retire

For some, there is the perception that the Boomers are biding their time to retirement. This is inaccurate. Many continue to work until their 70s, and not because they have to, but because they want to. In 2012, 18.5 percent of Americans age 65 and older were in the labor force. In fact, those aged 65 to 69 are the most likely to be working.²⁰ Accordingly, marketing material that narrowly applies to retirees may not be effective.

Myth #5: Marketing materials should be big, bold and static

G. Richard Ambrosius, founder of Positive Aging®, a strategic marketing consulting and training firm, compiled a list of marketing missteps after serving on the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA) as a marketing materials reviewer. Among the missteps, Ambrosius says the tendency to use sans serif fonts (Arial, Calibri) is a mistake. These fonts are harder to read, and result in slower processing speeds on computers.

Another mistake is to use sedentary stock photo images rather than showing mature consumers engaged in meaningful activities. Pictures that tell a story will have a greater appeal than posed stock shots. Think of using pictures that show people being active outdoors or playing with children; this will appeal to emotions and peak interest.

Baby Boomers Bend the Rules of Marketing - USATODAY.com. N.p., 16 Nov. 2010. Web. 23 Sept. 2013. <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/money/advertising/2010-11-16-1Aboomerbuyers16_CV_N.htm>.

¹⁸ Dolliver, Mark. "Marketing to Today's 65-plus Consumers." AdWeek. N.p., 27 July 2009. Web. 25 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/marketing-todays-65-plus-consumers-99953?page=3>>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Read, Erin. "Links of the Week: 65 plus Retirement; Social Media Myths; and More Mature Marketing Matters." Mature Marketing Matters RSS. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Sept. 2013. <<http://knowledge.creatingresults.com/2013/05/20/typical-retirement-65-plus-social-media-myths-52013/>>.



In addition, using stereotypical, exclusionary terms such as senior, elderly, boomer, or zoomer, tend to segment consumers. Consumers are not always conscious of their age category and are quick to disregard information that does not fit their self-perceptions. Before publishing marketing material, remove terms that conjure negative images of aging.

Now that some of the myths regarding this demographic are dispelled, how can you most effectively market to this demographic? How can you successfully reach Boomers? Naturally, what works best will vary depending on your product and services, but experts agree that effective marketing strategies must get the message right and be authentic. It's also important to leverage social media, as well as to apply "ageless marketing" techniques. This next section explores these strategies in greater detail.

Get the message right and be authentic

According to author Rieva Lesonsky from GrowSmartBiz® when marketing to Boomers you need to include one of the following three messages:

1. We understand you.
2. We make your life easier.
3. We make your life better.²¹

To explain, most Baby Boomers are likely to be experiencing huge life transitions as they enter their 50s and 60s. They may be transitioning from doting parent to empty nester, considering retirement, or taking care of aging parents. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Boomers are even taking care of grandchildren. Research shows that over the past decade the number of children living in grandparent-headed households increased seven percent.²² Regardless of the situation, it's important to note that during this time there is a marked shift of focus to quality of life rather than achievement. Simply put, by addressing the needs of this demographic as a top marketing objective, you will not only sell more products and services, but you'll also build a loyal customer base.

Karla Freeman, a leading voice for the Boomer generation and author of the book "Creating Magic in Midlife," agrees that identifying with Baby Boomers requires an emphasis on how your product or service meets their needs. To



²¹ Lesonsky, Rieva. "What You Must Know About Marketing to Baby Boomers." *Network Solutions Small Business Resources RSS*. N.p., 13 Mar. 2013. Web. 23 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.networksolutions.com/smallbusiness/2013/03/what-you-must-know-about-marketing-to-baby-boomers/>>.

²² Dowd, Casey. "The Effects of Baby Boomers Raising Grandchildren." *Fox Business*. N.p., 11 July 2011. Web. 24 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.foxbusiness.com/personal-finance/2011/07/21/effects-baby-boomers-raising-grandchildren/>>.

accomplish this, Freeman suggests that marketers tap into the four C's: **community, connections, contribution** and **creativity**.²³

First, Freeman notes that creating a sense of **community** is important for marketing efforts to reach Boomers. Since mature adults are often experiencing major life changes, belonging to a definable group is important. When marketing efforts (including social media) create a community that enables users to connect with others who share their values and beliefs, they are one step closer to reaching this demographic. Preferred shopper or savings clubs are two of the many methods that can join people together. The more you are able to link people together with similar interests and goals, the more consumers of this demographic will take note of what you are offering.

Making **connections** is the second element of a successful Boomer marketing strategy. Marketers need to understand the audience and speak their words. Using words and phrases that resonate with Boomers will increase the efficacy of marketing efforts. For example, words like active, balanced life, choices, mature, health and wise are some of the key words that might help connect with this demographic.

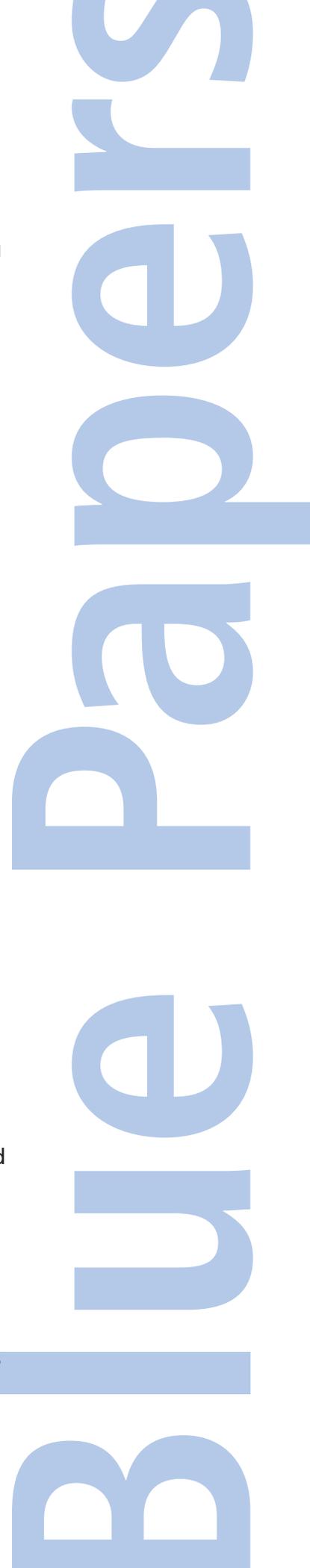
Making sure marketing efforts address the idea of **contribution** is critical, too. Boomers like to feel they are contributing to a greater cause, and that their life matters to someone or to a group. Whenever possible, show Boomers how a product or service will make a difference to the world around them. Freeman suggests that corporations think of the big picture, and how the business, products or services enable customers to feel like they're making a difference.

Providing a certain level of **creativity** is also critical when marketing to this demographic. Remember that the older generation grew up in an era dominated by free thinking and choice (think Woodstock and Vietnam). As a result, this demographic often wants flexibility and freedom to create customized packages that meet their needs. Experts suggest that providing flexibility with product warranty and package options is desirable. Likewise, when it comes to pick up and delivery, it's wise to provide users with multiple choices that fit their preference.

In addition to adhering to the four C's, when marketing to the Boomer demographic, it's important to think young. In a Pew Research Center® Social & Demographic Trends survey from 2009, 60 percent of respondent's age 65-plus said they feel younger than their actual age.²⁴ In fact, among respondents ages 65 to 74, a third say they feel 10 to 19 years younger than their age, and one in six

²³ Freeman, Karla. "Attract the Baby Boomer Market." *Green Industry Pros*. N.p., 13 Mar. 2013. Web. 25 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.greenindustrypros.com/article/10893841/attract-the-baby-boomer-market?page=2>>.

²⁴ "Recession Turns a Graying Office Grayer." *Pew Social Demographic Trends RSS*. N.p., 3 Sept. 2009. Web. 23 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2009/09/03/recession-turns-a-graying-office-grayer/3/>>.



say they feel at least 20 years younger than their actual age. Even more revealing, when asked whether they “feel old,” 78 percent of respondents age 65-74 and 61 percent of those over age 75 said “no.”²⁵

According to some experts, the solution is to promote images that reflect the target age market minus 10 to 12 years.²⁶ While this is one approach, others suggest it be combined with an emphasis on vibrancy and activity when marketing to the 65 and older market. Kurt Medina, president of [Medina Associates](#), a firm that specializes in 50 and over marketing, says marketing efforts should show Boomers being active and involved. Specifically, he says that: “Vibrancy is the key. Don’t worry about graying hair or a wrinkle line if it’s on a truly involved individual.”²⁷ At the same time, however, he cautions that ads should maintain a realistic portrayal and be authentic. Ads that depict Boomers waterskiing or mountain climbing, for example, run the risk of being viewed as silly and demeaning.

Tapping into what Boomers find relevant is also critical to marketing efforts. For example, research shows that the 65 and over market values being a grandparent more than anything else. The Pew Research Center® found that 25 percent of respondents over the age of 65 valued “spending time with grandchildren.” In addition, Boomers are more actively engaged in grand parenting than ever before. Research from the Census Bureau showed that in 2007, 2.5 million grandparents were responsible for most of the basic needs of one or more of the grandchildren that lived with them.²⁸ Even when grandparents aren’t providing parental support, they often provide financial assistance. The MetLife Mature Market Institute reports that 63 percent of grandparents provide financial assistance or monetary gifts to grandchildren in order to help with college education, school expenses and other assistance.

According to Medina, “grand parenting is an almost universally accepted, and even enthusiastically accepted theme for everyone from age 50 on.”²⁹ Marketers who ignore the opportunity to integrate these types of themes in marketing are missing out. The idea of “grand-travel” for example, is an entirely new category



25 “Marketing to Today’s 65-plus Consumers.” AdWeek. N.p., 27 July 2009. Web. 23 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/marketing-todays-65-plus-consumers-99953>>.

26 Hartigan, Austin. “How to Market to the New 65 Plus Consumer.” Roxburgh. N.p., 28 July 2009. Web. 24 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.roxburgh.com/how-to-market-to-the-new-65-plus-consumer/>>.

27 “Marketing to Today’s 65-plus Consumers.” AdWeek. N.p., 27 July 2009. Web. 24 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/marketing-todays-65-plus-consumers-99953>>.

28 “Marketing to Today’s 65-plus Consumers.” AdWeek. N.p., 27 July 2009. Web. 24 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/marketing-todays-65-plus-consumers-99953>>.

29 Ibid.

of products and services created to serve the growing tendency for grandparents to take grandchildren on vacations, without their parents. Finding niche opportunities to relate to Boomers is critical, and ultimately, beneficial to any marketing campaign.

Go social and increase your online presence

If you want to reach Baby Boomers, you need a robust and defined social media strategy. As previously mentioned, one of the biggest misconceptions about marketing and advertising to Boomers is that social media, online marketing and advertising only appeal to a much younger crowd. Baby Boomers make up one-third of all online and social media users, and there are more than eight million that spend more than 20 hours a week online.³⁰ And, social media usage is growing rapidly in this demographic.

According to a report from 2010, 19 million people over the age of 55 use Facebook, and that represents a 1,448 percent yearly growth in this demographic. Similarly, Pew Research® found that 13 percent of adults 50 years and older are already using Twitter®, and this figure is expected to rise.³¹

Why do Boomers use social media? Data shows that 40 percent use it to connect with family and old friends, 30 percent use it to share photos, 20 percent use it for social gaming, and 10 percent use social outlets for contests and games.³² While it's true that the demographic uses social media much the same way as other generations, research shows that the Boomers prefer images and stories rather than promoting services.

When developing a social media strategy aimed at Boomers, much of the basic social media principles apply. You need to identify a focused target, promote engagement and commit to frequent use. Experts suggest narrowing your focused target by creating separate accounts for a specific audience. According to Ad Age, a leading global source of news for marketing and media communities: "At the very least, brands need to start understanding social media marketing towards [Boomers], before [they] retire—a demographic that will be more computer literate than any senior generation before."³³

Amazon® took this advice to heart last year. In 2013, Amazon launched the online store [50+ Active and Healthy Living](#) that is designed to be a one-stop shop for

30 "Baby Boomers & Seniors: The Most Valuable Generations in the History of Marketing." *Coming of Age*. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.comingofage.com/>>.

31 Wilms, Todd. "The Overlooked: Social Media Marketing For Senior Citizens." *Forbes Magazine*, 20 May 2013. Web. 24 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/sap/2013/05/20/the-overlooked-social-media-marketing-for-senior-citizens/>>.

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*



items that appeal to Amazon customers over the age of 50. The store offers items across health-and beauty-focused categories, including nutrition and wellness, exercise and fitness, health care, incontinence, medical supplies, personal care, beauty, and travel and leisure. The site lets customers shop coupons to get discounted prices on products and links to resources from Grandparents.com. In a press release announcing the site, Chance Wales, Amazon's director of beauty, health and personal care said, "We're excited to offer customers in the 50+ age range a place to easily discover hundreds of thousands of items that promote active and healthy living."³⁴ As this example illustrates, providing targeted ways for Boomers to access products and services can be a valuable strategy.

To be effective, a social media strategy should also take into account certain standards that are expected from Boomers. For example, the Baby Boomer generation expects high quality customer service. Therefore, it's preferable to offer consumers the ability to ask questions online and provide immediate, real-time responses. Using things like live chat on your website or encouraging customers to get in touch with you on Facebook with questions and concerns is the right approach. If you're looking for more ideas, the marketing firm Evins® provides [tips for marketing to baby boomers on social media](#) online, and highlights the importance of providing two-way communication.

When developing a social media strategy to attract Boomers, you need to share on multiple platforms. For example, Baby Boomers are unlikely to access less known social media tools like Instagram®. Therefore, it's wise to link up your social media tools and ensure that everything can be found in one place. For instance, if there is a photo from Instagram that you want to highlight, consider sharing it on your corporate Facebook page, too. Experts suggest this approach because it allows consumers to be able to see the content without having to download another complicated app.³⁵

Some brands are already doing a good job connecting to Boomers online. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP®), for example, tailored its social media strategy around the top four online activities of people over 60. Since research shows that Google, Facebook, Yahoo and YouTube are the most popular mediums, the content AARP provides on these platforms is directly targeted to mature members. For example,



³⁴ Akitunde, Anthonia. "Amazon Targets Seniors, Baby Boomers With New Store." *The Huffington Post*. [TheHuffingtonPost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/17/amazons-seniors-new-store_n_3102030.html), 17 Apr. 2013. Web. 25 Sept. 2013. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/17/amazons-seniors-new-store_n_3102030.html>.

³⁵ Fishaw, Justin. "Blog." *DigitalSherpa*. N.p., 29 Jan. 2013. Web. 23 Sept. 2013. <<http://digitalsherpa.com/developing-a-successful-social-media-marketing-strategy-for-baby-boomers/>>.

content is designed to connect with the over 60 age group, and focuses on things like grandchildren or tips for staying healthy. With over 1 million likes on Facebook, AARP connects more with customers than other brands with younger demographics.³⁶ According to Tammy Gordon, director of social communications and strategy for AARP, Boomers use the Web a bit differently than younger consumers: “I don’t think a lot of Boomers type in ‘AARP Facebook,’” she says, “but if three of their friends ‘like’ it, they’ll check it out.”³⁷

Merrill Gardens[®] is another company that’s using social media to connect with customers and their families. As one of the top assisted living homes in America with over 7,000 residents across more than 50 communities, Merrill Gardens uses social media to connect with residents and children of residents. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts are used so that residents can stay involved with community events, and adult children can follow the events and news of from their parents. The company even created a Pinterest[®] account with creative boards designed for its demographic audience. Residents can pin things like memories at Merrill Gardens, Top 10 Merrill Gardens Moments, or Knitting Inspirations, to name a few.³⁸

Practice ageless marketing

To effectively market to Boomers, some advocate the concept of ageless marketing. The concept was developed by David B. Wolfe, a marketing expert who worked extensively with clients such as American Express[®], AT&T[®], Coca-Cola[®], Marriot[®] and others. Published in 2003, his book “[Ageless Marketing: Strategies for Reaching the Hearts & Minds of the New Customer Majority](#),” suggests that marketers should focus on core values, buying behaviors and emotional factors to obtain increased sales from multiple age groups. According to Wolfe, companies that master this technique realize significant profits and payback. The key is to tap into values and insights that relate to life experiences to make meaningful marketing connections.

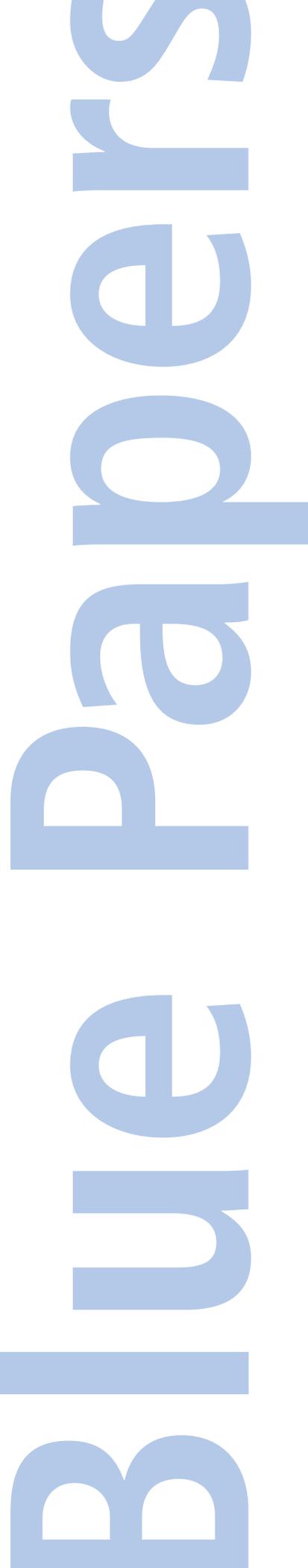
New Balance[®], for example, is a company that is well known for adopting ageless marketing techniques successfully. For instance, its “Achieve new balance” campaign not only resonated with those that wanted to achieve a midlife balance, but it also appealed to a younger demographic that felt the need to connect to the world with renewed spirit.³⁹ Another New Balance ad made the

³⁶ Wilms, Todd. “The Overlooked: Social Media Marketing For Senior Citizens.” *Forbes Magazine*, 20 May 2013. Web. 24 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/sap/2013/05/20/the-overlooked-social-media-marketing-for-senior-citizens/>>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Wilms, Todd. “The Overlooked: Social Media Marketing For Senior Citizens.” *Forbes Magazine*, 20 May 2013. Web. 24 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/sap/2013/05/20/the-overlooked-social-media-marketing-for-senior-citizens/>>.

³⁹ “Excerpt: Ageless Marketing” *Fast Company*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.fastcompany.com/bookclub/excerpts/0793177553.html>>.



case that “the shortest distance between two points is not the point,” which spoke to values, rather than age. These type of ageless campaigns are profitable, too. Thanks to ageless marketing, New Balance realized growth increases of 25 percent annually, even when the athletic shoe industry had relatively no growth whatsoever.⁴⁰

So how can you adopt ageless marketing? Again, the key is to focus on values and life experiences, rather than a specific age group or demographic. Generally, successful ageless marketing campaigns focus on areas such as health and well-being, productive living, the importance of autonomy and empowerment, and the value of relationships. The goal is to develop a message that resonates with multiple generations.

Also, a successful ageless marketing campaign should present a positive, mindful image of aging that is consistently applied to all marketing materials. Remember, mature adults feel anywhere from 15-25 years younger than their biological age, and they don't want to be presented with images and tones that suggest aging is undesirable. Ageless marketing is careful to avoid stereotypes, buzzwords and negative connotations associated with aging. Specifically, ageless marketing avoids words like elderly, retirement, senior citizens, seniors, nursing home or assisted living.⁴¹ Again, the goal is to find the right balance between portraying active yet realistic images.

If you'd like to learn more about ageless marketing, there are a number of marketing firms that provide free tips and advice. For example, [Coming of Age](#)[®] is a firm that provides ageless marketing services. They also provide free resources and advice on their website, as well as the opportunity to sign up for a for a newsletter on marketing trends and advice. Another firm to consider exploring is [Immersion Active](#)[®], which provides a number of free resources to help organizations that are unsure of how to market to mature audiences.

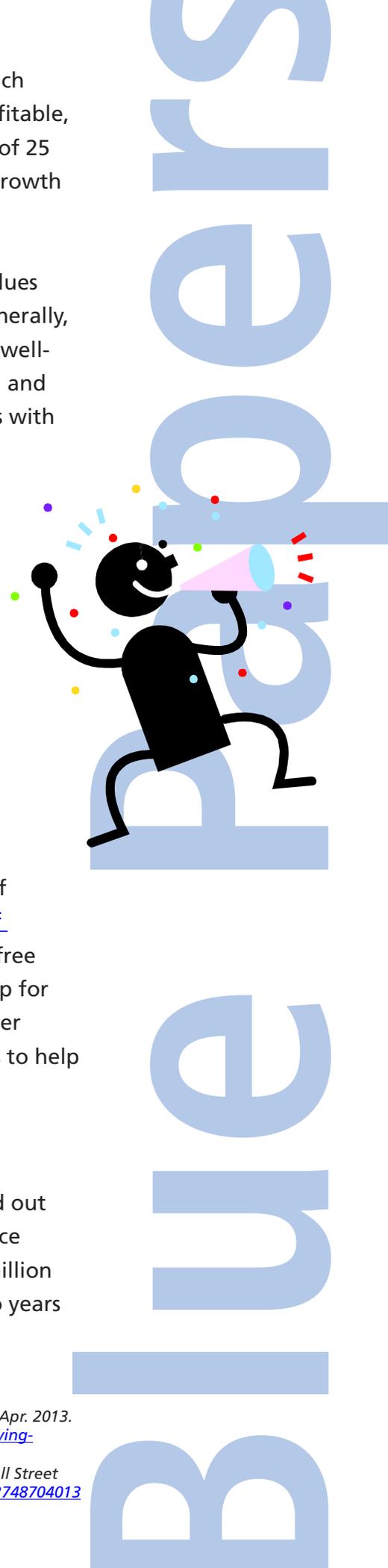
Best practice example: Depend[®]

Kimberly-Clark[®], the corporation that markets the Depend[®] brand, figured out how to effectively market a somewhat sensitive product (adult incontinence protection) to Boomers. Armed with the knowledge that a projected 45 million Boomers will need incontinence products by 2020, the company spent two years overhauling the Depend brand and associated marketing materials.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ “Understanding and applying ageless marketing principles.” ‘The Power of Positive Aging’ N.p., 9 Apr. 2013. Web. 25 Sept. 2013. <http://mrpositive.typepad.com/my_weblog/2013/04/understanding-and-applying-ageless-marketing-principles.html>.

⁴² Byron, Ellen. “From Diapers to ‘Depends’: Marketers Discreetly Retool for Aging Boomers.” The Wall Street Journal Online. N.p., 5 Feb. 2011. Web. 30 Sept. 2013. <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704013604576104394209062996.html>>.



First, the company overhauled its Depend brand, anticipating that boomers would be more resistant than previous generations to the idea of an adult diaper, because they view themselves much younger and healthier than previous generations. As noted by Mark Cammarota, Depend's brand director: "Past generations were more accepting that they had a condition, and this was the product that they have to wear. Boomers don't have that attitude."⁴³

Accordingly, the company modernized its designs and introduced gender-specific versions along with briefs that have fashionable prints and look like regular underwear. Even the packaging is designed to look like underwear, so that purchasing these items is no longer an embarrassing event.

When it came time to develop a marketing campaign, Kimberly-Clark focused on activities and values rather than the product itself. It developed two gender-focused ads to appeal directly to the Boomer market. In the male version, a man is seen camping with his son and grandson, and the implied message is that Depend makes it possible for him to partake in family bonding adventures, without ever really communicating it. In the female version, a 50-something woman is serving as an orchestra conductor and the ad highlights her professional and personal accomplishments. The message, quite simply, is that Depend lets her do her job. In both ads, the actors are in their 50s, without a grey hair in sight. They show real people living real lives, and approach the issue of incontinence in a transparent and sensitive way. According to Cammarota, the ads were intentionally subtle: "We're very subtle in that we don't have to explain the problem and solution... Boomers like seeing the confidence part of it."⁴⁴

Research shows that Boomers respond well to this approach. For example, 63-year-old Lynn Donadio, a retired real estate agent from New Jersey said, "Companies don't have to go to the highest mountain to shout out that something is made for a Baby Boomer. They can go to the top of a hill and maybe whisper it."⁴⁵

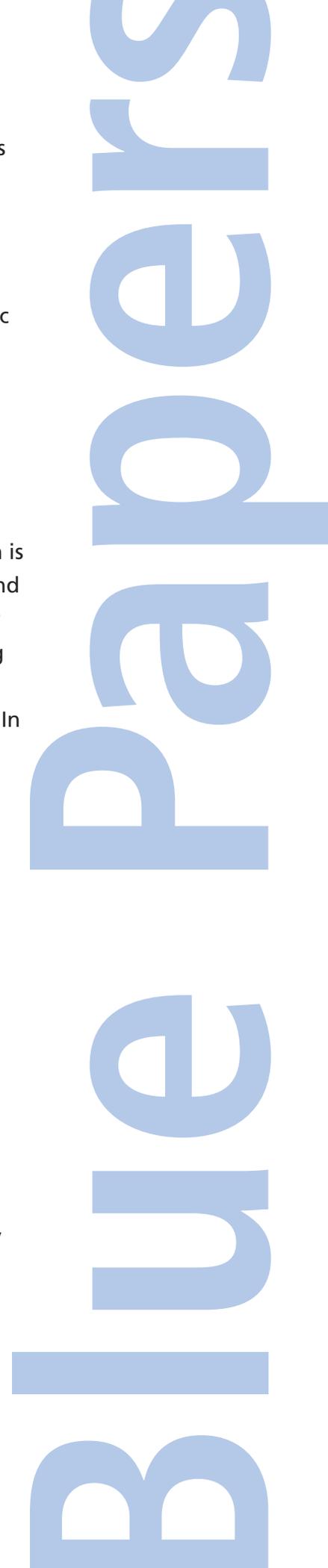
The booming generation

However you choose to attract Baby Boomers, it's important to figure out a strategy that works now, since thousands of people will turn 65 today and every day until 2020. It's pretty clear that Boomers are well-positioned to dominate the consumer landscape, and the sooner you modify your marketing approach, the more effective you'll be. Forget old-school thinking, marketing to this demographic requires a fresh approach. But if you can do it correctly, you'll be

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*



tapping into roughly 77 million consumers that control almost 70 percent of the country's wealth. So, if you haven't already, it's a good time to huddle with your marketing team to start recognizing some important birthdays. Get it right, and your company will be celebrating for years to come.

Paper Birthdays

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