

Top of Mind

Perspectives and Commentary

It's Time to Connect With Baby Boomers

UNILEVER's Dove is doing it. So are Revlon, Gap, Audi and Cadillac. Along with Pillsbury's Oven Baked Biscuits, Kellogg's Corn Flakes, Fidelity Investments and Morgan Stanley. And this list doesn't include healthcare companies, the first

marketers to recognize the potential of baby boomers, who command \$2 trillion in spending power and number 77 million. As boomers born at the beginning of the 1946-1964 birth cycle are turning 60 this year, the segment is attracting more marketing attention than ever.

We've spent countless hours reading about and researching this market—surfing Web sites, conducting focus groups and creating boomer advertising—enough to develop a healthy knowledge of what works and what doesn't. With a nod to the classic boomer movie, *This is Spinal Tap*, here are our top eleven principles for developing creative that will resonate with this generation.

1. *Connect with boomers' sense of themselves as trailblazers.* At every stage of their lives, boomers have challenged the status quo. Brands that convey a totally new benefit will appeal to boomers' inherent desire to break from the norm. American Express' Ameriprise financial services division expresses it well: "You changed everything that came before you. That was you then . . . that's still you now."

2. *Focus on their lives, not their ages.* Boomers don't need to be reminded how old they are getting. Rather than stress their age, Centrum Silver (full disclosure: they're a client) uses advertising to reflect older consumers' passion to continue doing the things they love.

3. *Link your brand with a major life event.* Bayer Aspirin's "Do More" effort builds an emotional bond by telling the story of someone who "had a heart attack and lived;" that's why the person is committed to Bayer.

4. *Relate to the generation's penchant for self-improvement through self-exploration.* Fidelity's use of Paul McCartney in advertising has been a puzzle to some, yet it shows how this boomer icon has played different roles and speaks to boomers' inclination to take on new challenges and identities.

5. *Fulfill boomers' constant need for more.* Blame it on Dr. Spock's directive for parental indulgence, but boomers never seem to be satisfied with what they have and how they live. That's one reason why Audi has used David Bowie's "Rebel Rebel" and "Never Get Old" with the copy, "Where would we be if we always did things the way they were done before?"

6. *Realize that well-being has many meanings.* For boomers, well-being is holistic; it's about connecting physical, emotional, social, and financial concerns. It's exercising regularly, but also having the best financial planner, the ultimate vacation and leaving a personal legacy. Morgan Stanley understands this via ads that note one of the best things about reaching 50 is not worrying as much about money.

7. *Think solutions, not problems.* Boomers are far more interested in hearing ideas for healthy living than dwelling on the problems they must surmount. It's not surprising that erectile dysfunction ads feature romance rather than frustration.

8. *Don't assume that all boomers are the same.* Aside from geographical and ethnic distinctions, a 60-year-old has very different life experiences (not to mention aches and pains) than his 42-year-old generational cohort. Revlon appeals to both the older and younger edges of the boomer divide in its ads by using Susan Sarandon and Julianne Moore, actresses that represent front- and back-end boomers.

9. *Recognize their need for indulgence.* When Michelob Ultra shows a boomer kayaking and the line, "If this is your idea of a pleasure cruise, this is your beer," it is tapping directly into the cohort's belief that advancing years won't slow them down.

10. *Know that boomers are jaded students of ads.* Boomers are idealists, but they grew up with TV ads, and are skeptical of empty promises. The Dove campaign that shows real-looking women instead of models is not just relatable; it preempts boomers' suspicions about exaggerated beauty claims.

11. *Use historical images to get their attention, but also show boomers as they are today.* Boomers

may recall their hippie years with bemused nostalgia but they moved on from counter-culture fashions decades ago. Quaker Oats mixes snapshots of style changes over the years with a contemporary photo that says, "Keep the Quaker Rice Snacks." Their boomer targets are likely to buy the connection—and the brand equity.

Advertising to boomers is no different than advertising to any other target. Speak to them in a way they can relate to and they'll want to buy your brand. And, if you get boomers to love you, chances are they won't leave you.

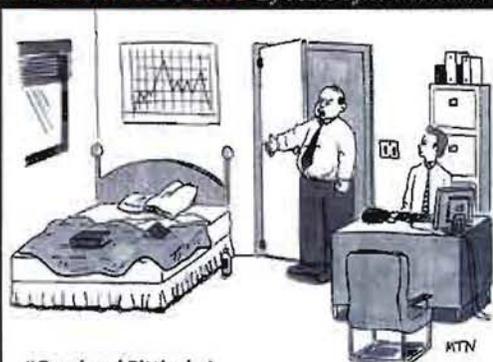
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By Robert J. Morais

Fidelity's use of Paul McCartney speaks to boomers' inclination to take on new challenges.

RANDOM THOUGHTS By Marc Tyler Nobleman



"Good god Pittinsky!
How do you expect me to bring clients in here
when your bed's not even made?"