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Home > Article

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Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

Boomers – Rebels With a Cause

LORI TURNER

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Lori Turner

How are you marketing to the generation that represents nearly 30 percent of the U.S. population and a whopping 80 percent of personal financial assets?

In this final column in a three-part series on generational marketing, we look at our nation's largest generation – baby boomers – named for the post-WWII boom in births.

Born from 1946 to 1964, now ages 46 to 64, baby boomers share fundamental experiences such as economic prosperity, postwar optimism, suburban expansion, the sexual revolution, and rock and roll. These experiences shaped their values, how they shop and how they respond to your marketing.

Young boomers saw life as full of possibilities; the economy was solid and jobs were plentiful. There was a radio, and ultimately a TV, in nearly every living room. Able to put a man on the moon, boomers felt entitled to enjoyment and fulfillment.

Individuality, expressionism, adventure, and a “break the rules” philosophy are classic boomer traits. Music was a way to express their unique generational identity, buying Beatles, Hendrix and Motown albums in droves.

Over time, though, the optimism was shaken by the assassinations of JFK and [Martin Luther King Jr.](#), Watergate, the Apollo 13 disaster and the Vietnam War. Boomers began to question authority and conformity.

Opposing discrimination, boomers led the civil rights and women's movements. Many vehemently opposed the Vietnam War. Protesting was commonplace. Even today, given a worthwhile cause, they'll fight for it like no other generation.

They enjoyed big jobs, salaries and houses, only to have them stripped away by corporate failures and downsizing. Now they struggle to stabilize their careers and finances before retiring.

What concerns them most? Aging is of great concern. They also feel guilty for not having spent enough time with their kids. Sandwiched between caring for both their kids and parents, they are stressed out and feel spread very thin. Time is a luxury.

Want to offend them? Make them feel passé or call attention to their age unnecessarily.

How do you engage them? Offer products or services that free up their time, improve their appearance or contribute to greater energy or better health. Offer experiences to enjoy with their children or grandchildren. Half of boomers have grandkids they like spending money on.

Nothing beats face-to-face communication when selling to boomers. This generation also relies heavily on referrals from trusted social and professional advisers. Direct mail, e-mail and the Internet are also very effective.

Ameriprise Financial got it right with TV spots featuring [Dennis Hopper](#) and Steve Winwood's emotionally charged song “Gimme Some Lovin.” Boomers see Hopper as willing to challenge himself, uncompromising and just really cool – a boomer trifecta. Combine this with generationally targeted messages such as, “Your generation is definitely not headed for Bingo night,” and you have a hit. The result – nearly a 30 percent increase in brand awareness and an 11 percent increase in boomer clients.

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MORTGAGES	90	335	14,779
FORECLOSURE NOTICES	0	116	7,556
BUILDING PERMITS	0	585	26,675
BANKRUPTCIES	73	349	12,342
BUSINESS LICENSES	20	102	3,541
UTILITY CONNECTIONS	91	538	18,009
MARRIAGE LICENSES	26	94	3,572

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[Thursday, Aug. 19, 2010](#)

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[Wednesday, Aug. 18, 2010](#)

[Tuesday, Aug. 17, 2010](#)

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[« Back](#) | [Forward »](#)

Go to date:

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[Thursday, Aug. 19, 2010](#)

[Wednesday, Aug. 18, 2010](#)

[Tuesday, Aug. 17, 2010](#)

[Monday, Aug. 16, 2010](#)

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[« Back](#)

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Lori Turner is managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing,
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