



LIVEWIRE THE NEWSLETTER
Resources for Reaching Mature Consumers

ISSUE 16 ■ FALL 2006

THE TRICKS AND TREATS OF MATURE MARKETING

Guest Thinker

Elder-Blogging

On Your Bookshelf

Life After 60

Research Briefs

Mid-Decade Census

Ageless Marketing

It's All About Perceptions

Universal Design

Form Follows Function

Healthy Aging

Muscle-Mania



JWT Mature Market Group



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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

Lori K. Bitter

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT:

Amy Ruff

GUEST THINKER:

Ronnie Bennett

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:

Vicki Thomas
Jeff Rosenfeld
Wid Chapman
Evan McCullough
David Wolfe
Mark H. Beers, MD
Sharon Whiteley
Chuck Hurst
Elizabeth Hines
John Erickson

CREATIVE DIRECTORS:

Dale Baron and Monty Wyne

ART DIRECTOR:

Jim Wood

PRODUCTION MANAGER:

Karen Williamson

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To contact JWT Mature Market Group:
info@jwmtmmg.com
or
JWT Mature Group
466 Lexington Ave., 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10017

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Letter from the editor



What a difference a year makes. Each issue as I prepare this welcome, I look back to what were talking about last year, and the changes that have occurred in marketing to people over the age of 40. Most of my marketing career has been focused on this segment both on the client and agency side of the business. I have to say, I've found 2006 to be revolutionary.

As the ball dropped in Times Square, the media and many corporations seemed to have discovered the Baby Boomer. The soft news reported on the "first" Boomers turning 60 that day. Advertisers spent dollars to sing "Happy Birthday." Suddenly firms need a Boomer strategy. To all of them, we say, "Welcome!" Forward-thinking companies in every product category have long considered consumers over the age of 40 an integral part of their strategy all along. Many companies have focused on consumers 50, 60, even 70-plus, with strong financial results. We have been pleased to call many of these companies our client partners.

Forward-thinking companies in every product category have long considered consumers over the age of 40 an integral part of their strategy.

Consider the titans who have joined the mature market movement this year: AARP joined forces with our WPP sister organization, Kantar Group, to form Focalyst, a Boomer research and advice consultancy for consumers age 50-plus; Jeff Taylor, of Monster.com fame, introduced Eons.com, a social networking platform for people over the age of 50; and John Erickson, a recognized leader in the retirement housing industry, is launching a television channel focused on retirees

called Retirement Living – with four hours of original programming – to join the already popular national newspaper he publishes for this segment, *The Erickson Tribune*. In a consumer segment that has received only the most cursory glance on Madison Avenue, this is nothing short of revolutionary!

As 2006 winds down and we begin to plan for 2007, the progress of these companies will be closely observed. What's next? Are we moving toward a "gerontocracy" as some pundits have predicted, where the "old" rule? Or could it be that the generation that created our country's obsession with youth – the Baby Boom – will have to reap what it sowed? Consider it.

Lori Bitter
lori.bitter@jwmtmmg.com

We want to hear from you! info@jwmtmmg.com or
466 Lexington Ave., 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10017

LiveWire Book Feature

By Elizabeth Hines

After Sixty: Marketing to Baby Boomers As They Reach Their Big Transition Years

Edited by Leslie M. Harris and Michelle Edelman

As Baby Boomers enter their 60s, they are truly facing the biggest transitions of their lives—from work to retirement, from health to issues of aging, from long marriages to the death of a spouse, and from feeling immortal to beginning to face their own mortality and that of their friends.

In *After Sixty: Marketing to Baby Boomers As They Reach Their Big Transition Years*, co-editors Leslie M. Harris, Ph.D. and Michelle Edelman call on 14 experts representing many different industries for their best thoughts on how to deal with a more mature Baby Boomer segment.

The book begins with an introduction by Lori Bitter, JWT Mature Market Group partner and editor of this newsletter, who provides the context of the transition. It ends with Dick Stroud of 20plus30, a British firm specializing in marketing to Baby Boomers, who provides an international perspective and explains why British companies are missing the mark when it comes to the Baby Boom generation.

Matt Thornhill and John Martin of The Boomer Project offer their thoughts on ten industries that will be the most affected by the maturing of the Baby Boomers. They suggest, for example, that elder co-housing will take off in the next decade and that fitness centers will have to be careful to offer Boomers the opportunity to work out with their own age group, rather than in rooms full of younger men and women. They note that by 2020, there will be more than 40 million licensed drivers over the age of 65 and the automobile industry must respond to adults who suffer from some difficulty in physical functioning.

Retirement and investment are huge issues for Baby Boomers, some of whom did not save enough for retirement during their most productive years and others who have lost company pensions because of mergers, bankruptcies, and downsizing. Authors C. Troy Shaver, Jr. of Dividend Growth Advisors, Pat Conroy and Ajit Kambil of Deloitte and Touche USA, and qualitative researcher Sheila Reilly of The Reilly Group offer perspectives on the impact of the Baby

Boom on the economy, as well as on how this group will deal with investing, spending, and managing its money in the next decade.

Co-editor Michelle Edelman offers her suggestions on the ways advertising agencies have to change to do a better job appealing to Baby Boomers. In her chapter entitled, “The Marketing Generation Gap: Why Leading-Edge Baby Boomers Are Starting to Hate Your Advertising,” she makes the point that the 30-somethings who are responsible for most of today’s advertising have an outdated image of soft and innocent grandparents that they developed as toddlers. Most do not have a good understanding of how

grandparents have changed into the vibrant, fun-loving Boomers who are becoming grandparents each day.

Grandparents get their own chapter in this book, authored by Richard J. Anthony Jr. and Christine Crosby of *GRAND* magazine, who say that the only way Baby Boomer grandparents

and those of prior generations are alike is that Baby Boomers still spoil their beloved grandchildren.

Although the Boomers are touted by many as being uniformly wealthy and healthy, Theodore L. Reed of Reed Group discusses the effect of the disappearing middle class on the Baby Boomers, especially those who are in their 50s and 60s. And in their chapter, “Boomer Women: Putting the ‘Care’ in Healthcare,” Anne Devereux and Jennifer Chanowitz reveal how Boomers are redefining our very definition of “health” and methods that healthcare marketers can use to reach the powerful female Boomer segment successfully.

This wide-ranging volume, which presents a variety of perspectives, should be on the shelf of every marketer who hopes to continue to appeal to Baby Boomers as they make the transition into their 60s and beyond.

“Boomers are truly facing the biggest transitions of their lives—from work to retirement, from health to issues of aging, from long marriages to the death of a spouse, and from feeling immortal to beginning to face their own mortality and that of their friends.”

“On your bookshelf” is a regular LiveWire column featuring books that provide additional insight into communicating effectively with consumers 45+. To order the books featured here, visit www.paramountbooks.com or call Paramount Market Publishing, Inc. toll-free at 888-787-8100.

A VAST BLUE OCEAN

By John Erickson, Chairman and CEO of Erickson Retirement Communities, Founder of Retirement Living

Which demographic group currently numbers 70 million people, but is going to swell to 120 million? What affluent age group has a median net worth that's twice the national average and spends \$1.5 trillion annually? Who watches more television than any other demographic? The answer to all of these is the same, the 55+ cohort. Despite these overwhelming numbers, there is no single television network that airs original programming specifically targeted to this demographic. I intend to change this through *Retirement Living*, a new television and multimedia programming provider that will serve the 55+ audience.

For the past 25 years, my company has developed and managed large-scale retirement communities. Each Erickson campus is a \$400 million development project that sits on 100 acres and is home to 3,000 people. We currently have 18 communities in various stages of development across the country. You can read more about a few of our ventures at www.Erickson.com and about our core business at www.EricksonCommunities.com. I have decades of experience with this group and I know that I can predict trends and reach them like nobody else.

When I started our first community, I asked myself, "What can I do to change the way society views the aging process?" This isn't just a casual goal, or even a personal life mission, it is truly a public health initiative. American mass media too often portrays aging in a negative light, which has a real and deleterious impact on how our society ages. Through our communities, we've touched tens of thousands of lives by embracing the positive and active side of aging. Several years ago, I started to think about ways to touch tens of millions of lives and to really change the negative perception of aging that dominates American Pop Culture. To that end, I created *The Erickson Tribune*, a monthly newspaper that reaches over eight million seniors. Following the great success

of *The Erickson Tribune*, I decided that the best way to connect with this group was through television, the most powerful medium of our day. After years of networking and exploration, I launched a new company in early 2006 and *Retirement Living* was born.

Retirement Living went on-air September 5th, 2006. Through a partnership with CN8 The Comcast Network, we now reach over nine million Comcast homes in the Mid-Atlantic and New England. With our distribution at launch, we can be seen in 12 states and 20 television markets, stretching from Maine to Virginia, and Washington, D.C. We are in several of the largest media markets in America. *Retirement Living* is seen from 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM, Monday - Friday, and our content can be viewed over the Internet through a streaming feed on www.cn8.tv. We also have a growing website of our own, www.RL.tv, which will become a cornerstone of our offering, to include blogs, podcasts, and other means of creating an online community.

Our aggressive television distribution campaign will give us a national footprint by the end of 2006. By the end of 2007, I intend to make *Retirement Living* the premier portal for information affecting the 55+ demographic.

Media, as many of you know, is the ultimate "red ocean" industry. More and more providers compete for less and less advertising dollars and the waters are bloody from competition. However, out of the hundreds of television and information networks competing for eyes, nobody effectively targets and attracts the fastest growing demographic in our country, the 55+ age group. I believe that we've identified a "blue ocean" harbor in this "red ocean" industry and I invite you all to dive in.

For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Patrick Baldwin, who runs Business Development for *Retirement Living*. Pat can be reached on PBaldwin@RL.TV



"I intend to make Retirement Living the premier portal for information affecting the 55+ demographic."

CHANGES IN SELF-PERCEPTIONS ACROSS THE LIFE SPAN

By David Wolfe



In doing some office cleaning, I came across a study, “Representations of Self Across the Life Span,” which was reported out 11 years ago in *Psychology and Aging*. The study examined differences in how people of varying ages perceive the self.

But it has great salience today when people designing marketing campaigns and messages are often decades younger than a core market they have in their sights.

The study’s authors wrote, “... in contrast to development in childhood and adolescence, which is characterized by an outward orientation and the acquisition of cultural norms and standards, maturation during adulthood may be more adequately characterized by an inward orientation. In that inward turn, the adult may become more self-reflective and more attuned to historical and emotional processes.”

So what does that say? It says that the young see themselves (the self) as a part of and an extension of specific social contexts. This particularly holds true among age peers. While it is common for the young to speak of themselves as individuals, they in fact are typically more group-minded than self-minded.

I’ve raised six teenagers. At one time or another I’ve said to each of them something like, “You’re not going out looking like that, are you?” The usual response is, “Dad, I’m an individual.” Then they would leave the house to join up with a gaggle of other individuals their own age, all looking more or less alike.

In contrast to how the young see the self, the self-perceptions of older adults tend to reflect a substantially more independent light.

Moving these thoughts into the realm of cognition – where we process information – the authors wrote, “The thinking of

youths remains relatively static and is based on dualistic, either-or thinking in which reality is predicated into such categories as self versus other, right versus wrong, reason versus emotions, and so forth. In contrast, adults are better able to integrate such oppositions and to think in terms of dynamic contrasts, contextual differentiation, emotional and contextual embeddedness and patterned change rather than static categories.”

Sorry. That’s the way most mind researchers write. But what the authors mean can be quite simply stated:

Perceptions of self and the world about them tend to be independent of context, while older people’s perceptions of self and the world about them tend to be strongly influenced by contextual circumstances.

The static perceptions of the young impart to them a sense of power, a confidence that they can control and bend circumstances in their favor. In contrast, older people tend to hold a more realistic view of the limits of their personal powers. They understand the wisdom of Reinhold Neibuhr’s “Serenity Prayer”:

GOD, grant me the serenity
to accept the things
I cannot change,
Courage to change the
things I can, and the
wisdom to know the difference.

Given the common belief that we become more rigid with age, it is hugely ironic that the young self is less adaptive than the older self. This has been borne out by studies showing that children and older people tend to survive major natural disasters with less adverse emotional impact than adolescents and young adults suffer.

Every marketer knows that he or she must connect with people’s minds to be successful. Knowing how the mind manages self-perceptions at various junctures along the life span is a critical piece of consumer intelligence the marketer should understand.

“In that inward turn, the adult may become more self-reflective and more attuned to historical and emotional processes.”

JANSKA CLOTHING THAT COMFORTS BRINGS UNIVERSAL DESIGN TO APPAREL

By Vicki Thomas, President, Thomas & Partners Co., Inc.

If you have visited an elderly relative residing in an assisted living or nursing home lately, you probably paid little attention to the fashion or clothing being worn. Usually it is a comfortable pair of worn-out, baggy sweats and a zip-front jacket.

We are generally unaware of clothing for elderly loved ones because we take getting dressed each morning for granted.

According to Caring in the United States, a 2005 study conducted by the National Alliance for Caregivers (NAC) in collaboration with AARP, it is estimated that there are 44.4 million caregivers age 18 and over in the United States who provide care to an adult family member. The typical caregiver is a 46-year-old female who spends more than 20 hours a week providing care to her mother. About 65% of care recipients are female and 42% are widowed.

Caregivers provide care for chronically ill, disabled and aged family members. For these hardworking caregivers, helping those with limited mobility get dressed each day can be a monumental and stressful task.

Jan Erickson was no stranger to this dilemma. Through her work, she saw firsthand how difficult dressing can be when someone has been affected by a stroke, arthritis, MS or other illness or accident that effects mobility. She felt burdened by the struggle caregivers endured and wished she could do something to help. But she didn't just wish – she did something about it.

Erickson founded Janska™ Clothing That Comforts — thoughtfully and uniquely designed clothing for the wheelchair-dependent, bedridden and others living with limited mobility. Through many sketches of jacket ideas, tweaking sessions with a talented designer, late-night brainstorming moments with her husband Jon, and hours of research – a prototype jacket was born.

“We tested the jacket with friends who struggle with limited mobility. Once I saw the joy in these people’s faces after they tried it on, I knew we had a winning design,” reflects Erickson. “The caregivers and the individuals who tested each of the prototype jackets all loved the colors, the warmth, the softness and most important – the ease of getting it on and off without incurring pain.”

NOTHING COMPARES TO JANSKA'S QUALITY, COMFORT, EASE, WARMTH AND STYLE



Janska™ Clothing that Comforts – thoughtfully and uniquely designed clothing for the wheelchair-dependent, bedridden and others living with limited mobility.

Erickson and her husband researched extensively what competitors were offering and compiled a notebook and samples from companies that provided similar products. They found that nothing could compare to Janska garments. “Most clothing offered by competitors is functional but lacks the upscale style and quality you can see and feel in our garments. No matter what age or condition in life, we all want to look good. Our garments provide the color and style that sets us apart from competitors,” says Erickson.

Traditional jackets are extremely impractical for people with limited mobility to get on. Erickson notes, “Caregivers have told us that in the nursing home, they often have to put a jacket around a resident’s shoulders and then rig a blanket to cover the front of the individual’s body. Janska EasyWear Jackets are the perfect solution and can be worn indoors or out. They are uniquely designed with an open back for the wearer’s convenience, a roomy raglan cut sleeve, fleece fabric that overlaps for maximum coverage and warmth.”

Spurred on by the reception to the EasyWear Jacket, Janska has created several other garments, including leggings, MocSocks™, and a specially designed LapWrap™ that doubles as a shawl.

“Baby boomers are not going to settle for adaptive clothing that is frumpy or stodgy,” says Erickson. “Yes, our bodies are maturing and changing, but we still want clothing that is colorful, trendy, lightweight, easy to care for, stylish and above all comfortable.”

Janska (see www.janska.com) clothing uses only Malden Mills Polartec® fleece — the original synthetic fabric that has forever changed the way the world dresses for cold weather. This fabric is soft, lightweight, comfortable, warm, quick-drying and durable for long-lasting good looks.

“I decided to use high-quality fabric because it helps those who wear it feel better. I wanted a fabric that would hold up under abuse,” Erickson says. “Polartec® is the best fleece available and holds up beautifully compared to less expensive fleece that looks horrible after one or two washings.”

UNIVERSAL DESIGN: CHANGING SHAPE OF BOOMERS...CHANGING SHAPE OF FASHION

In April 2005, Janska went to market, hoping to attract hospital gift shops as resellers. To her surprise, Jan found upscale boutiques that sell to the baby boomer children of her target market love the style and color of Janska Clothing — as well as the ease of dress and care. Upon reflection, it all makes sense.

Baby boomers have placed new demands for comfortable, stylish, carefree clothing. Combined with their own aging process, many boomers have started to experience the results of their active lifestyle — wear and tear on the body that often results in joint discomfort, stiffness and minor aches and pains. As baby boomers age, it is no wonder there is a growing demand for easy-on, easy-off clothing.

“Baby boomers are not going to settle for adaptive clothing that is frumpy or stodgy,” says Erickson. “Yes, our bodies are maturing and changing, but we still want clothing that is colorful, trendy, lightweight, easy to care for, stylish and, above all, comfortable.”

As Jan Erickson and her husband Jon exhibited their garments at fairs, clothing expos, boutique stores and their online store, they were struck by how popular Janska garments are with the younger crowd. “We were stunned when we started getting orders from college-age girls for the Moc/socks and leggings,” reflected Erickson. “We realized that the desire for quality, warmth and comfort transcends age groups and offers a universal appeal when it comes to stylish clothing.”

Attentive to its customers’ input, Janska added additional garments to their easy-wear clothing line. Available in trendy colors, the stylish Uptown Jacket offers a fashionable, colorful and tailored look for women on the go — whether at work, the gym, yoga class or running errands around town.

The inclusive design of the Uptown Jacket includes the benefits of roominess from a raglan sleeve, so that putting the jacket on or taking it off is a breeze.

To capitalize on a designer fashion comeback of ponchos, Janska manufactures the Pocket Cape. It has a carefree attitude that looks great whether you’re sitting at work in a cold air-conditioned building, on a jet plane when you want to grab something warm or on cool evenings. The versatile cape also can be used as a lap wrap while scrapbooking, quilting, surfing the Net or watching TV.

“Our Lap Wrap™/Shawl has become very popular with young mothers who use the garment as an attractive coverup when nursing as well as a perfectly shaped garment to cover the baby in a car seat,” says Erickson. “That is the beauty of universal design.”

THOUGHTFULLY MARKETED, STAYING TRUE TO OUR VALUES

Janska markets its garments as carefully and thoughtfully as it manufactures them. “We want to remain true to our core values because when we do that, our customers and clients feel the experience with our hands-on service, our quality and our commitment to them,” says Erickson.

Janska’s expanding product line can be found in small specialty boutique stores, in catalogs such as Solutions, in display ads found in magazines such as Yankee, in specialty adaptive clothing catalogs and online (www.janska.com)

New products making their debut this year will include specially designed yoga pants, a bed jacket and a flowered pin accessory to dress up the popular hats, jackets and capes.

“Ultimately, my hope is that the garments will find the people who will indeed be comforted,” she says.

BLOGGING GROWS UP

By Ronnie Bennett



It is conventional wisdom that blogging is a youth phenomenon, believed to be mostly teenage angst diaries chronicling adolescent sex, drugs and rock-and-roll replete, these days, with cell phone photos and video.

It is true that young people do most of the blogging, but their majority becomes slimmer every day. According to a July 2006 survey conducted by the Pew Internet American Life Project titled, “Bloggers – A portrait of the internet’s new storytellers,” 54 percent of U.S. bloggers are between 18 and 29. But that is far from the whole blog story.

The same study reports that 14 percent of bloggers are age 50 to 64 and another two percent are 65 and older for a total of about two million elderbloggers. Throw in an estimated 10 million elders who regularly read and comment on blogs and you’re talking about real numbers – 12 million and growing so quickly I can no longer keep up with new elderbloggers who send emails requesting to be included on my blogroll.

So what are all these elders doing with their blogs? They write about movies, books, music, health, travel, gardening, work, getting older, their children and grandchildren, births and deaths and illnesses, pets, history and whatever their interests and passions are. They write poetry, tell jokes, discuss the state of the nation and advocate for political and social change. They compare experiences, tell stories about their lives and try to make sense of life.

In short, elderbloggers are a microcosm of all elders. They do what adult bloggers of every other age do, although it’s hard to know that from the media.

From the day I looked around the cbsnews.com production office in early 1996, and was shocked to notice for the first time that I was the oldest kid in the crowd by decades, I spent a lot of free time researching aging. What I found over the next several years was discouraging.

In the majority of books, magazines, newspapers, medical and psychology studies and even memoirs by elders themselves, the focus was entirely on what I’ve come to label The Dread 3-Ds: decline, disease and debility. Nowhere did anyone discuss any pleasure in getting older. There was no advice on accommodating the body’s changes while getting on with living. Of finding new motivations when careers come to a close. Or making peace with the inevitability of death.

According to the literature, aging is a one-way trip to oblivion with no stops in between except misery and “please, while you’re doing it, don’t inflict it on the rest of us. We don’t want to know.”

If aging was going to be this bad, I thought, I might as well shoot myself now. Or, because no one else was writing about age in any real-world way, I could do it myself.

I didn’t expect a little blog about getting older – hardly the sexiest topic in town – to get much notice. But gradually an audience of regular readers showed up. It grew and a real sense of community took hold.

Some readers left their own thoughts and stories of getting older in the comments section of my blog. Others expanded my topics on their blogs and I discovered more elderbloggers out there. Some emailed me with private stories or asked for information on how to start a blog. They emailed one another, too, and telephoned, and friendships grew – across town and across international borders – flourishing as more and more elders started their own blogs and the conversations expanded.

Since then, it has become evident that blogging is a godsend for elders. It easily connects them with faraway families, creates social networks that can otherwise shrink due to retirement and mobility issues, and it maintains, even increases, cognitive agility. In fact, people 65 and older are the fastest-growing cohort of Internet adopters.

When I started blogging, I hadn’t counted on becoming an advocate of it for elders. I also hadn’t counted on the extent of cultural ageism that elders are up against. The more I researched, thought and wrote about getting older, the more evident ageism and its consequences became.

Media and American culture are synonymous. Newspapers, magazines, movies, television programs, commercials, advertisements and the celebrities who are featured show us how to dress, what to eat, where to vacation, what hairstyles to wear, which music is cool and what kind of behavior is acceptable. What it also teaches us every day is that it is acceptable to marginalize, ignore, demean, debase and belittle elders.

With too few exceptions, the media typically portray elders (when they are portrayed at all) as frail, crazy or none-too-bright. Comedians’ repertoires about elders consist entirely of embarrassing jokes about memory loss and incontinence. Every night, television commercials for hair color point up the products’ ability to hide gray, making sure everyone knows

from the cradle that gray – ergo, old – is bad. Meanwhile, every commercial starring elders touts remedies for acid reflux, arthritis and constipation.

I never noticed this stuff until I started writing every day about getting older. You probably haven't noticed it either. In magazines and on Web sites, advertisements address elders as though they are all defined only by disability – promoting electric scooters, hospital-style beds, denture adhesive, long-term care, cholesterol drugs, lost libido and cheap life insurance. There's nothing wrong with any of this except that it's ALL there is, as though elders have no interests beyond their health and eventual death, and the terrible consequence is that it becomes what everyone else believes is true about ALL elders.

No wonder age discrimination in the workplace is commonplace. Who wants to be around such people as this stuff describes.

But it's all myth and stereotyping, which if applied to women or blacks would lead to firings and lawsuits. Eighty percent of elders live independently until they die and they are living a lot longer than they once did – 20 to 25 years, on average, beyond traditional retirement age. We are a giant market that is served poorly or not at all.

Where are the car commercials that show how easy it is to stow the groceries, get in and out and with some individual style to it? I could write and produce that one in my sleep – and it would sell a lot of cars.

Elders like music, too, and like to take it with them just as younger folks do. So why aren't there iPod ads in *AARP* magazine? And won't anyone ever manufacture attractive, sophisticated clothing that fits elder women's bodies? If it is true, as someone once told me, that ad agencies employ creatives who are mostly younger than 40, no wonder elders are so underserved. What do 30-somethings know about being old except the false stereotypes no one bothers to question until they get old.

Revlon appears to be the only major corporation that understands elders are too experienced to respond to the flashy graphics and empty hype of the hard sell. Their Vital Radiance cosmetic campaign uses models who are obviously older than 50. They don't insult women with false promises of erasing wrinkles and eternal youth. It's a respectful pitch for age-relevant

cosmetics with the information needed to make an informed purchasing decision.

Elderblogger are even less susceptible to superficial advertising glitz than their as-yet-unconnected counterparts. They are a tight-knit group that depends on word of mouth in a medium where opinion travels at the speed of light and personal influence is strong. If you misunderstand that, you miss a fast-growing, online market eager to spend its money, but only if it is pitched intelligently and transparently.

Language matters in other ways, too. It can be harmful to elders even when people believe they are being complimentary. Whenever someone says "You're only as old as you feel" or "You don't look 65," an elder is being pandered to. Such statements

assume that youth is the norm and to participate in the culture, elders must look and behave as young people do, which is and has always been an absurd requirement.

You've undoubtedly noticed by now that the words "senior" and "senior citizen" have not appeared in this story. That's because they are institutional terms that have become pejorative with overuse, nearly as demeaning now as geezer, foggy, biddy and coot. Third-ager, golden-ager, oldster, etc. are equally offensive in their belittling cutesiness.

It took some experimenting to find the right reference, but I now identify old people on my blog, in general

conversation and in speeches about aging as "elders." It's a fine old word that needs resurrecting, although it must not be confused with "elderly," which means frail.

At the end of July, former South Dakota Senator George McGovern took up the word when he announced the formation of a bipartisan "Council of Elders" to offer advice on important issues facing the United States. And earlier this year, after I badgered the reporter about it, *The New York Times* used "elderblogger" in the headline of a story about blogs kept by old people. So there is progress.

All of the people on my blog's ever-growing ElderBloggers list will tell you that blogging has enriched their lives, expanded their interests and created new friendships that are no less close for being physically distant. As a relatively new elderblogger – an 83-year-old – told me, "...this blogging thing has opened a world that has already taken me places I've never imagined. I doubt anything more exciting to do will come up before I die."



USE IT OR LOSE IT – MUSCLES AND STRENGTH IN OLDER ADULTS

By Mark H. Beers, MD, President, American Federation for Aging Research



Every athlete and every would-be athlete knows that at some point as they get older they can't run as fast, lift as much weight, or hit the ball as far. Even ordinary folk can't deny their loss of strength and the shrinking of their muscles as they age. Of course, older people can and do often remain fit and strong, but even the healthiest 70-year-old can't compete against a well-conditioned 20-year-old. Why should that be? And what do these normal changes of aging mean for the world of business – the people who provide services to, and make products for, an aging market?

Many organs in the body change with aging, and some of the loss of athletic abilities has to do with changes in the lungs, heart and circulation. The lungs cannot deliver as much oxygen to the blood, the heart cannot pump as much blood, and the blood vessels cannot deliver as much blood to the muscles of the arms and legs. But a great deal of the change in athletic prowess is related to the normal loss of the mass and strength of the muscles themselves. This change is called sarcopenia (“sarco” means muscle and “penia” means loss). Sarcopenia occurs in large part because of changes in the levels of certain hormones, notably growth hormone and anabolic steroids, such as testosterone. The female hormone, estrogen, plays a role, also. Research conducted by Dawn A. Lowe, PhD, assistant professor at the University of Minnesota and a 2001 recipient of an American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR) Grant, found that in female mice, loss of estrogen, either by surgical removal of the ovaries or aging, causes a decline in muscle strength. The underlying molecular cause of this muscle weakness is dysfunction of the molecular motor in muscle within a protein called myosin. There is less myosin in the muscles of older adults and what is there does not work effectively to maintain muscle strength.

Although normal changes of aging affect all people, older adults who do not use their muscles are the ones who suffer most. Older adults lose muscle and strength at a faster rate if they don't use its muscles. The current generation of American seniors is not inclined to exercising in the gym or even using their muscles vigorously in daily activities. Cars have replaced walking, people use carts to carry their groceries, and household appliances are lightweight and require little physical effort to use. That ten pound iron that your mother used to iron your shirts has been redesigned at just a few pounds, making it easy to use but doing nothing to keep the user's arms strong. Young and old alike sit in front of the television; but in the elderly, the lack of physical activity leads to muscle wasting and a dramatic and rapid loss of strength. Take a worst-case scenario: While a 30-year-old adult loses less than 1 percent of muscle mass each day of complete bed rest, an 80-year-old will lose up to 5 percent each day. Just five days of hospitalization with bed rest,

“It is time to think about how the business you do could be modified to help maintain strength in the elderly and also support those who can no longer do what they once could. The opportunities are enormous.”

and of an older person’s strength evaporates. That is why nurses and doctors urge older patients to get out of bed as soon as they can: The recovery is also much slower in older adults. “The ability of the elderly to gain muscle mass with resistance training is still present, but is more variable and less effective than with younger adults,” said Dr. Esther Dupont-Versteegden, assistant professor of geriatrics, physiology and biophysics at the University of Arkansas, whose research is also supported by AFAR. Use it or lose it.

The net result is that even well older adults have smaller muscles and those muscles can’t contract as forcefully as those in younger adults. The less a person does, the more likely he or she will have small muscles and reduced strength. Older adults who have illness or who have been restricted in activity anytime within the past several months are likely to be even weaker.

Yet, while young people have constant pressures to stay active, the world tries to exempt older people from physical activity, which is the worst thing the world can do. The business world – especially those involved in providing services and products for the elderly, compound the problem, making everything easier and less demanding yet then too often failing to accommodate the needs of a weakened group of buyers. That combination fails to help prevent or then accommodate the normal, prevalent loss in the strength of the senior community.

We encourage older people to drive rather than walk, use motorized wheelchairs rather than hand-pushed ones, and take the elevator rather than walking stairs. Our gyms are not elderly-friendly and are rarely marketed to a senior population, and many travel companies make it unnecessary for travelers to walk more than a few feet from site to site. Then when the elderly become weak and slow, we don’t give them enough time to cross at the cross-walk, design luggage that can easily be pulled and carried, or provide carts in the grocery store that can be easily pushed. We don’t design houses to be safe for weaker older people and rarely instruct people how to make their homes appropriate to their new needs.

The current generation of elders and the baby boomers that are just now experiencing the functional changes of sarcopenia are ready for your attention. It is time to think about how the business you do could be modified to help maintain strength in the elderly and also support those who can no longer do what they once could. The opportunities are enormous.

For more information about healthy aging, please visit the American Federation for Aging Research at www.afar.org.

The **American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR)** is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to support biomedical research on aging. It is devoted to creating the knowledge that all of us need to live healthy, productive and independent lives. Since 1981, AFAR has awarded nearly \$93 million to more than 2,200 talented scientists as part of its broad-based series of grant programs. Its work has led to significant advances in our understanding of the aging process, age-related diseases and healthy aging practices. AFAR communicates news of these innovations through its organizational Web site www.afar.org and educational web sites Infoaging (www.infoaging.org) and Health Compass (www.healthcompass.org).



GOING GLOBAL: SENIOR HOUSING IN THREE AGING NATIONS

PART I: Sweden, Israel and Japan

By Jeff Rosenfeld, Wid Chapman, with Evan McCullough

In 2006, the “typical” older person was a 75-year-old widowed woman. Imagine, for a moment, that she needs a place to live. What follows is a quick look at housing options she might have if she were living in Sweden, Israel or Japan.

If that 75-year-old widow were Swedish, she would probably be living on her own, as 70% of Sweden’s widows over the age of 70 will do. Or she might be living in one of Sweden’s “Adult Communities” for people age 40 or older. Architecturally and gerontologically, there is nothing “geriatric” about these adult communities. Residents live in apartments or studios but socialize and dine together in common areas. Most of these adult communities are designed in ways that facilitate age-mixed activity.

If that very same woman were living on Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan, or one of the 75 others like it in Israel, she would have a very different residential experience. Twenty-eight percent of Israel’s 267 kibbutzim have been retrofitted to make them safer and more navigable for older people. Some have even added nursing homes and – in some cases – Alzheimers’ units. That same widow would be spending her days in the company of people she had known for years: friends and neighbors on the kibbutz who had aged along with her.

And if she were Japanese, she might be living in a “Collaborative House.” Instead of being cared for by a dutiful *yoma*, or daughter-in-law, her caregivers might include a home-health worker, a system of networked appliances, and maybe even a robot or two. The Japanese, more than any other culture, are reinventing the relationship between older people and their homes; and our 75-year-old widow could find herself “collaborating” with communication technologies, caregivers and robotic helpers all day long.

All three of these cases are reminders that the world of senior housing is changing as rapidly as the world’s populations are aging. And senior housing arrangements that we take for granted in the United States are not necessarily seen as housing solutions elsewhere in the world. Sweden, Israel and Japan are exploring different residential and gerontological paths.

SWEDEN: AGING IN THE COMPANY OF ADULTS

Older people are valued members of society in Sweden. They are welcomed in a variety of residential settings. Sweden, more than most other nations, encourages older and younger people to live and interact with one another. And regardless of where they are living, Sweden’s elders are content with their care and housing. In 2006, only 1 percent of Sweden’s elders complained of having unmet housing needs, compared with 30 percent of older people in the United States (Peck, 2006).

The newest trend in Sweden is “Adult Communities,” which neither isolate older people, nor segregate them in nursing homes (Gullbring, 2002: 62). Russinet Houses, built in 2002, are an excellent example of a Swedish adult community. Russinet consists of 27 apartments surrounding a central courtyard in the historic district of Lund, a Swedish university town. Architecturally, Russinet echoes the quadrangles of the nearby university. The 27 apartments overlook a central, enclosed yard, and architecturally, the quadrangle creates an intimate, self-contained community. Inside, there are multipurpose rooms and a commons area where residents can prepare meals and dine together. People of all ages cooperate to do the shopping, gardening and household chores. Those who are older are contributing in their way, as are those who are younger. There is a powerful message

coming from Russinet: It is possible to build housing that also becomes a close-knit community where people age 40+ can enjoy life together.

Research from Sweden has shown that the majority of Swedes manage to live independently until about age 75 or 80 (Hellner, 2005: 7). The Swedish government has instituted a policy of comprehensive home-based care including home helpers, meals on wheels, physical therapy and transportation services (Hellner, 2005: 8). As a result, older people are able to age in place instead of moving to nursing homes. In fact, some Swedish housing complexes offer different levels of technological “help.” Vallgossen House in Stockholm, for example, offers apartments with three different IT packages, so that residents can relocate within the apartment building as they become more frail. In the end, they live in a level-III flat with a great deal of technological support, but they are able to remain in the same building and enjoy the community around them.

If and when they can no longer live on their own, the Swedish government will pay for an efficiency apartment in a *servicehus*, where residents enjoy efficiency apartments and take their meals in a common dining room.

ISRAEL: THE ARRIVAL OF NORCs

Today’s *kibbutzim* are responding to Israel’s “Age Wave” in important architectural ways. At least 75 of them are now “Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, or NORCs (Miles, 2005: 3; Sykes, JT and Hunt, M. 1997: 17). The original settlers are well into their 70s or 80s and require a variety of medical, social and psychological services. This “Age Wave” has generated at least two architectural responses.

The first of these is *architectural specialization*. Communities such as Beth Protea have added subdivisions for

independent living (Protea Village), subdivisions for assisted living (Keren Beth Protea), and for long-term nursing care (Protea Plus), which includes a mentally Frail Unit. In similar fashion, Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan added Hemdat Avot, an Alzheimer's unit, for residents who had become cognitively impaired.

The other response is *architectural adaptation*. Instead of developing new subdivisions or tracts, adaptation involves retrofitting an existing town or community to make it more appropriate for elderly people. At Kibbutz Heftziba, for example, this has involved adding ramps for wheelchairs, installing grab-bars in showers, and color-coding sidewalks to make wayfinding easier. Israel's NORCs are an example of community-building *par excellence*. Architecturally and gerontologically, the community has adapted to its aging population(s) in terms of housing and social supports.

JAPAN: THE FUTURE IS COLLABORATIVE

The Japanese are now exploring a mix of technologies and human services to make "home" safer and more comfortable for older people.

The goal, for a growing number of Japanese architects and designers, is to create houses that "collaborate" by providing care and companionship — and become more than just "Housing" for the people who live there.

Residents in a collaborative house can "talk" to the house as when, for example, they say out loud, "I am going to the kitchen," and lights automatically go on to light the way there. And appliances collaborate by "talking" to one another. The corporate giant Samsung has invented a stove that "talks" to a computer, which tells it how hot the oven should be for cooking a variety of dishes; and that very same computer will automatically contact a repair company if the stove malfunctions.

In this sense, the Japanese are reinventing how older people relate to their homes.

They are doing this by linking information communication technologies ICTs, caregivers and, in some cases, the very rooms of the house — and making them into collaborative environments. This combination of technologies and personalized care has been called "High Tech-High Touch" (Almekinders, 2005). At the crux of High Tech-High Touch housing is the idea that home healthcare can and should be delivered in new and efficient ways. These include robotics, networked appliances and telecommunications systems.

1. Robotics: Early in 2005, a Japanese company began marketing a robotic Yori-soi ifbot which performs 15 functions, including "conversation, calculator, advice, and medical check." In addition, the Yori-soi ifbot has "108 LED lights built into its head so that it can express emotion" (Akibalive, 2004:1). There are also robotic wheelchairs; and robotic seeing-eye dogs move easily through the barrier-free environment of "Collaborative Homes."

2. Networked Appliances: Networked appliances create an interactive environment where it is possible for people to regulate their appliances, and also for appliances to regulate one another. For example, Toshiba now markets a line of appliances with self-monitoring capabilities. Such appliances can automatically notify a repair company when problems arise. JEITA (Japan Electronics & Information Technology Industries Association) predicts that voice-operated systems will soon allow older people to open doors, turn lighting on or off, and operate appliances from a bed or a lounge-chair ("The House Of The Future," 2002).

3. Telecommunications Systems: The television is more than a source of entertainment in the "Collaborative Home." It is the telecommunications hub. It can display a menu of domestic activities when activated by remote control. Somebody sitting in the living room can monitor the progress of the laundry, the cooking of a meal, temperature and light in the home, and so forth. The

very same system allows for home-based teleconferencing. An older person can use this technology to schedule conferences with two or three doctors in different locations; or to schedule conversations with grandchildren in various places.

The "Collaborative Home," with its robots and information technologies, can help older people to maintain their homes — and themselves for much longer.

CONCLUSION

Years ago, Winston Churchill wrote, "We shape our buildings, and then our buildings shape us." Senior home design is already shaping the lifestyles and communities of older people in Sweden, Israel and Japan — and the experience of older people in other nations, too.

Sweden builds **adult communities and age-integrated housing** which give everybody — regardless of age — the opportunity to become active members of the community. Israel's NORCs — **Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities** — now offer a full range of medical and social services. But more important, they are a source of nurturing peer supports. Far from aging alone, the residents of Israel's NORCs enjoy friends, neighbors whom they have known for years.

And Japan's **Collaborative Homes** build on robotics and information technologies in a barrier-free environment. Far from dehumanizing the older people who live there, the robotics and the information technology are becoming the link to caregivers, family members and health-care providers. Part II of this article, which appears in the next issue of *LiveWire* will explain how senior housing in the United States is paralleling these global changes. AARP President William D. Novelli says that the future of senior housing must include "Nurturing Communities" where older people can age in place and enjoy life to the fullest (Novelli, 2005: 3).

The lesson to be learned from Japan, Israel and Sweden is that nurturing communities can take many forms.

About the Authors: Jeff Rosenfeld took his doctorate at SUNY Stony Brook, and is Director of the Gerontology Program at Hofstra University. Along with Wid Chapman, he is the author of *Home Design In An Aging World* (Fairchild Books, Inc.), which will be published in 2007. He is interested in making cross-cultural comparisons of senior housing.

Wid Chapman, AIA/IIIDA, is founder and principal of Wid Chapman Architects, 20 West 22nd Street, Suite 1412. New York, NY 10010. Evan McCullough moved to New York City in 2006, after receiving his master's of architecture from the University of Utah. He is working for Ronnette Riley, Architect.

A MID-DECADE SNAPSHOT OF THE 50+ MARKET

By Chuck Hurst



In August of this year, the U.S. Census Bureau issued some key data releases from several ongoing collection efforts. Up until this decade, we have had to wait up to ten years to get updated findings from each Decennial Census. Now the bureau has a methodology in place, the American Community Survey (ACS), which will provide an ongoing look at

how the population is changing from year to year. This is the major component of the bureau's reengineering plan to collect information from three million households every year.

In addition to the ACS data, the annual Current Population Survey (CPS) for 2006 is now available. The availability of this "hot-off-the-press" information from both of these databases is a good opportunity to take a new look at the 50+ market mid-decade in the 21st millennium. Moreover, 2006 marks another milestone for the 50+ market: The oldest Baby Boomers, born in 1946, are turning 60, and the average age of all Baby Boomers is now 50.

OLDER AMERICANS WORKING MORE

Much attention has been paid lately to Boomers not wanting to retire. Although it's still too early to tell exactly what they will do as they enter their retirement years, there are some fascinating data about older workers from the just-released 2006 CPS that provides a glimpse into the likely future. In the period from 2000 to 2006, the percentage of persons employed full-time declined overall as the economy

slowed from the late 90s boom. But there is a sharp contrast in the numbers between workers under age 55 and those 55+. The percentage of persons age 55+ in the workforce actually increased while the percentage declined for every age group under 55. The pattern was virtually the same for both men and women. In fact, the highest rate of increase in the percentage of the population employed full-time was among women age 60-64, followed by men age 65-69.

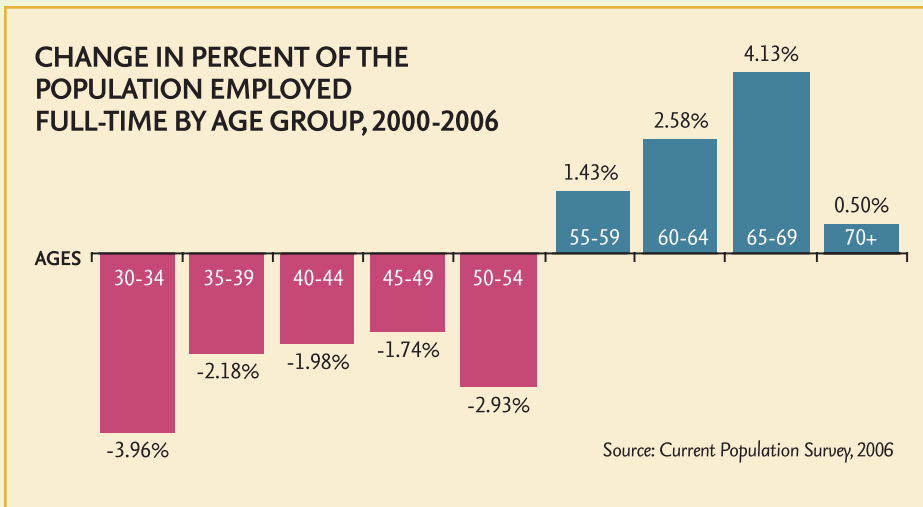
Although these percentages are not large, the pattern is unmistakable. It is also a distinct reversal of previous trends and is likely just the tip of the iceberg. As Boomers transition into their 60s, they are likely to continue working in much greater numbers than the preceding generation. This will result in an enormous increase in the number of workers age 60+

in the coming decades. The reverberations from this will be profound and will

impact virtually all sectors – from senior housing to financial services to technology.

DECLINING HEALTH

Not surprisingly, Boomers overall have perceived that their health is somewhat worse in 2006 than it was in 2000. In 2000, 30% of Boomers reported that they were in excellent health compared with only 24% in 2006. Conversely, 15% of Boomers indicated that their health was fair or poor in 2006 vs. only 10% in 2000. This perceived decline in health undoubtedly can be attributed, at least in part, to aging. But when Boomers today are compared to their same-age



The percentage of persons aged 55+ in the workforce actually increased while the percentage declined for every age group under 55.

counterparts from the year 2000, the results are more disconcerting. A lower percentage of persons age 50-59 reported excellent health in 2006 than in 2000 (21.1% and 23.8%, respectively), while a greater proportion said they were in fair or poor health. This pattern also holds true for respondents age 60-69, too, but the differences are less pronounced. It also holds up when differences in income and education are accounted for. Interestingly, there are no measurable differences in the self-reported health status of 70+ persons in 2006 compared to those 70+ in 2000.

That Boomers view themselves as less healthy than their older counterparts when they were the same age is a somewhat unexpected finding. After all, today's 50- to 60-year-olds have access to more health information than any previous generation. Perhaps in their self-reporting they are overanalyzing as a result of information overload. But perhaps they really are less healthy. If that is the case, then the consequences for the health care and financial services institutions may be even more ominous than some forecasters have been predicting.

GEOGRAPHIC REDISTRIBUTION OF THE 50+ POPULATION

Although the aging of the population is a national phenomenon, it is occurring more rapidly in some regions and areas than in others. There are basically two ways in which a population can get older. One is aging in place. This takes place in a population that is experiencing out-migration of younger residents while older residents are generally more likely to stay put. States such as West Virginia exemplify this scenario. A population can also become older when it experiences a large influx of new residents who are older than most of the existing population. Florida is the best example of this situation. The most recent data show that most of the states with the oldest populations are not in the Sun Belt but are small Northern states with low levels of in-migration.

STATES WITH THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF 50+ RESIDENTS: 2000 & 2005			
2000		2005	
STATE	% 50+	STATE	% 50+
Florida	33.48%	West Virginia	35.69%
West Virginia	32.68%	Maine	34.79%
Pennsylvania	31.33%	Florida	34.39%
Maine	31.16%	Vermont	33.94%
Arkansas	29.86%	Montana	33.91%
Iowa	29.86%	Pennsylvania	33.48%
Montana	29.68%	Hawaii	32.89%
Connecticut	29.56%	North Dakota	32.82%
Rhode Island	29.36%	Wyoming	32.57%
Vermont	29.26%	Iowa	32.45%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000, 2006

According to data from the ACS collected in 2005, for the first time in many decades Florida is no longer the state with the greatest percentage of persons age 50+. This honor now goes to West Virginia. What's interesting about this list of states is that, with the exception of Florida, they are all states with aging-in-place, stable populations. The three states with the highest rate of growth in the 50+ population are Nevada, Florida and Arizona. Yet these states are not aging as rapidly as the U.S. overall because the number of 50+ residents as a proportion of the total population has really increased. The reason for that is that even though these three states have received a massive influx of new 50+ residents, the very high rate of in-migration among younger residents is keeping the overall population from aging. One implication of this may be that the top destination states for 50+ movers will be better prepared to support an aging population base because they also have a growing population of younger workers who are still economically active. Alternatively, aging-in-place states may be more challenged to come up with the resources to provide the services needed for their older residents.

Chuck Hurst is the Director of Research for JWT Specialized Communications. Formerly Vice President/Director of Research and Database Marketing for Age Wave Impact's Research Group. Chuck holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology, a Master's degree in Economic Geography from the University of Utah, and a PhD in Regional Analysis and Planning from Indiana University.



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