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Introduction

Four years ago, we came across the astounding statistic that every seven seconds, a Baby Boomer was turning 50 years old somewhere in America. This meant that approximately 10,000 Boomers turn 50 every day, 365 days a year.

After spending over two decades in the advertising business, focusing our clients' money and attention on young adults ages 18-49, we realized this was a seismic shift, a veritable demographic earthquake. Since Boomers were departing the "coveted" 18-49 segment in droves, marketers were perhaps now ignoring them. For the last 40 years, marketing had been focused almost exclusively on the 18-49 year old group. If you were over 50, marketers either pretended you were dead or lumped you into a group called "seniors."

If they were anything like us or our Boomer colleagues and friends, it was a pretty safe bet that Boomer Consumers were neither dead nor "seniors." While it was true that Boomers over 50 were no longer young adults, all indications were they hardly seemed willing to accept the "senior" label anytime soon. Boomer Consumers over 50 are a new demographic segment, with vast reserves of disposable income and anxious to spend it on new products and services. And many marketers had no idea how to relate to this audience.

We saw the passage of Boomers through the mid-century mark as an opportunity to help marketers everywhere. We analyzed, researched and studied the demographic to learn how Boomers today, especially those over 50, think, feel and respond to selling, advertising and marketing messages. The Boomer Project was formed and quickly joined forces with SIR Research, a national consumer marketing research firm in Richmond, Virginia with 43 years of experience, and with Survey Sampling International, a Fairfield, Connecticut-based firm specializing in providing survey participants from around the U.S.

Our first research study in late 2003 was small, with 400 participants, but it proved that Boomers over 50 already felt ignored by marketers and advertising. In fact, some 66% expressed the opinion that marketers were targeting either someone younger or older. This Boomer Consumer group felt like they were being overlooked.

Three years and several national studies later, the Boomer Project continues to work towards understanding the current mindset of today's older Boomer Consumer in terms of selling, advertising and marketing messages. We now travel the country speaking at conferences, trade shows, company events and training sessions. We work with companies and organizations of all shapes and sizes to

educate and enlighten sales, marketing and customer service personnel about today's older Boomer Consumer. We do product development projects and we track the latest and most important trends in Boomer marketing and report on it in a monthly newsletter, the *Boomer Marketing News*. Details on subscribing to the newsletter, along with additional information and resources are available on our Web site, www.boomerproject.com.

The purpose of this book is to spread the word on Boomer Consumers to smart marketers and business people everywhere. To that end, it is organized into two main sections: **Understanding the Boomer Consumer Today** and the **New Rules for Selling & Marketing to Today's Boomer Consumer**. The first section provides an overview on Boomers – who and where they are, what they buy and the Boomer culture in general. We'll explore this and apply it to selling and marketing to Boomers today.

It delves into three areas of study: Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology. The chapter on Boomer Psychology is designed to help you understand where Boomers are now in their cognitive and psychological development. Knowing what's going on in their heads and in their lives, including the underlying motivations behind their behavior, is the first step in determining how to more effectively reach them with sales and marketing messages.

The chapter on Boomer Sociology will provide insight into the various life stages and lifestyles of Boomer Consumer today. Obviously Boomers have a completely different way of doing things from previous generations. Understanding the why and how of these differences will help you connect with Boomers more than, for example, knowing how old they are.

The Anthropology chapter offers a closer look at the shared culture and history of Boomers and the events that shaped their generation. Ultimately, what binds one generation and makes it different from another is its place in time and history. The experiences shared by 78 million American Baby Boomers during their "Wonder Bread Years" of the 1950s, '60s and '70s have had a tremendous impact on who they are and how they think. We'll explore this and apply it to marketing and selling to Boomer Consumers today.

The second section of the book, the **New Rules for Selling & Marketing to Today's Boomer Consumer**, consists of ten "rules" uncovered in our work with and research of this demographic. Rather than being hard and fast, they are more of a checklist, designed to help you better design sales, marketing and advertising materials to appeal to the over-50 Boomer Consumer. These rules include things like why it is important to use emotionally-compelling concepts, words and images in your marketing efforts, and why your message has to be couched in the positive, not the negative, in order to get the attention of today's Boomer. Along with offering insight, they will give you practical tools and techniques that can be put to immediate use when marketing to Boomers.

The book concludes with a look at what we've come to define as the **"Golden" Rule** of selling, marketing and advertising to today's Boomer Consumer. It's our prediction of the underlying motivation and driver for all Boomer behavior in the next 20-40 years. We won't give it away here, but feel free to jump ahead to take a peek.

Each chapter begins with a short story or anecdote about a typical Baby Boomer, someone born between 1946 and 1964. These are real people we know, but we have changed the names and modified a few details to keep their identities private.

We've also created a companion Web site, www.boomerconsumer.com, which has more information and tools to help reinforce many of the concepts we discuss. The site can be accessed by the user name "boomer" and the password "c0nsum3r" using the number "0" and "3" where underlined.

Although this book provides a basic primer and starting point, Boomers, being what they are, will remain a moving target. More will reach 50, 60, and then 70 with each passing year. How they react to sales, marketing and advertising messages today will change as they grow older and, dare we say, mature.

Rest assured that we'll stay on the case, and in the marketplace talking to Boomer Consumers. We will report what we learn, online and with updates to this book.

Welcome to the dawn of the Middle Age of Aquarius. What a long, strange trip it will continue to be.