



Selling to Seniors

The Monthly Report on the Mature Market

Marketers Should Be Wary of Playing Up Living Long

By Buzz McClain

Rarely has someone in marketing been as frank as Chuck Nyren. The international creative strategist, consultant, columnist, speaker and award-winning copywriter doesn't hesitate to take the sizzle right out of anyone's seemingly misguided marketing campaign, particularly those aimed at Boomers and seniors.

Take this entry from his *Advertising to Baby Boomers* blog: "If the myth of the non-dying, perfectly healthy Baby Boomer persists, folks in the aging industry are going to have millions of very angry octogenarians on their hands. They might even blame you for all those false promises."

In other words, marketers are using the wrong message when they reach out to seniors and Boomers. In that blog, posted five years ago but still in circulation on the Internet -- and still germane -- Nyren sums up a troubling trend. Proponents of health, health care, disease control, self-improvement and other products and services for the mature market are pushing the wrong thing. And in many cases, knowingly doing so.

"I was referring to products and services that promise too much and promise the wrong things," he tells *Selling to Seniors* from his office in Snohomish, WA, north of Seattle. "I know people in their 80s and 90s and they have a different attitude than me; they're amazed that they're still alive, and they probably should be because they did not expect to live that long. But Baby Boomers are being fed this stuff about how they're going to live happy, healthy, wonderful lives until they die at 120 and that's not going to happen. They're going to be very depressed."

Or take this recent excerpt from his writings: "If I were digging into a marketing/advertising campaign for a client in the aging industry, I would extract as much quality inherent in the product/service -- and toss out any (or most) mention of longevity. This would hold true even with basic nutritional and exercise products. A significant number of people who eat only healthy foods and exercise regularly die of

heart attacks, get cancer, are the victims of all sorts of diseases and afflictions. You can't fool me.

"I look at things through a jaundiced eye and I see positive things," he tell STS. "Most of us *are* going to live long and be healthier, but it's not a panacea."

His recommendation to marketers? "Of course, it depends on the product, but if you want a generalization, talk more about the *quality* of life, not the *quantity*, not the longevity. Longevity is luck."

It's a message Nyren, 60, has been conveying for years, not so much as advice but as a warning. "If you don't, it's going to backfire," he says. "You're going to see your friends dying left and right, you'll see yourself getting afflictions and diseases, and you'll realize the longevity promise is a shallow one. The quality of life one is not as shallow."

By the way, his book, "*Advertising to Baby Boomers*," was the No. 1 book in the Paramount Market Publishing stable this week.

Info: Chuck Nyren's blog is at www.chucknyren.com; 206/914-0686. For information on his book, see this: <http://tinyurl.com/m3qd7t>.

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