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How to Market to Silvers

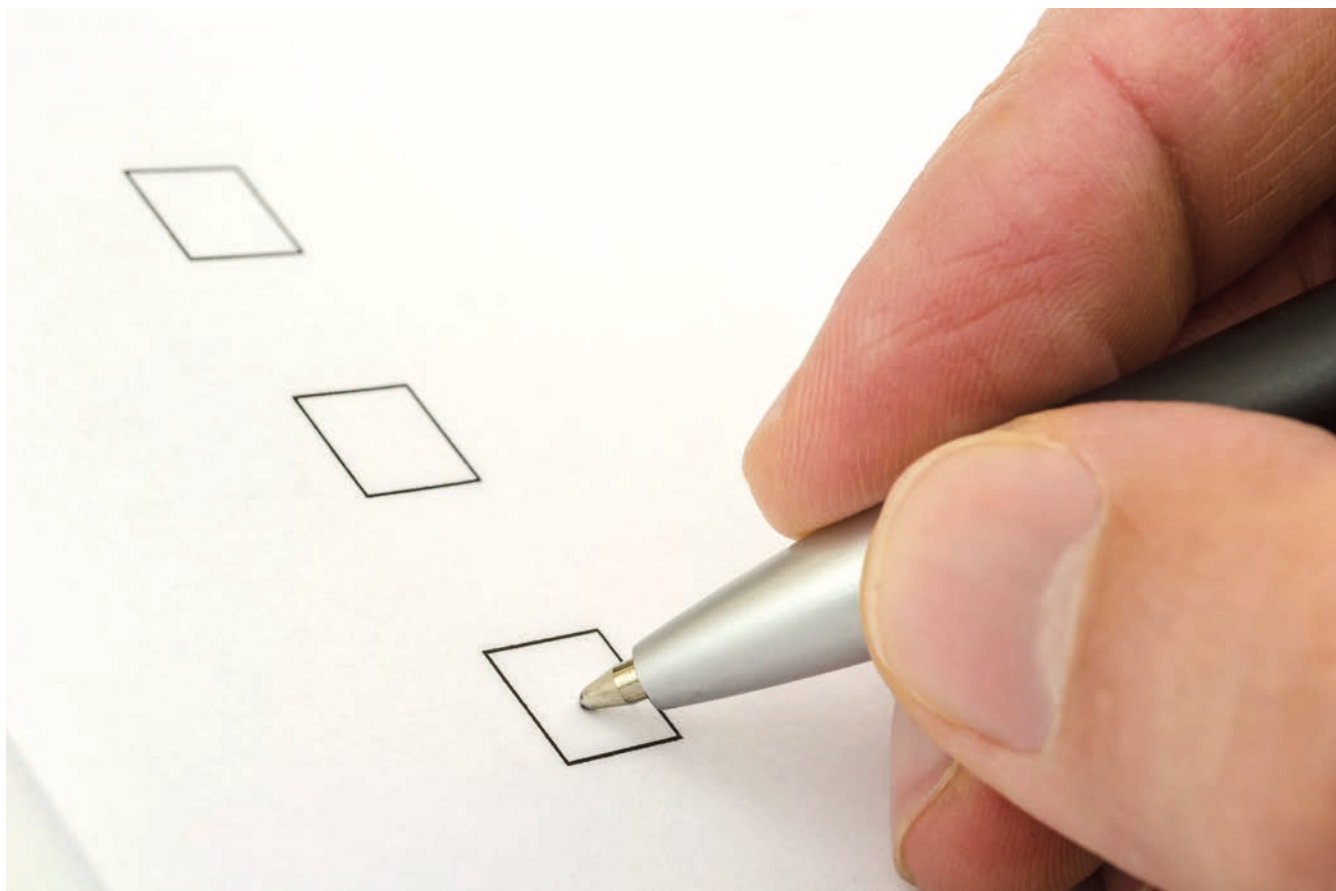
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Published on 2nd June 2015

Honey is a brand and communications agency. We deliver brand and design solutions for some of the UK's best known companies. Our 11 Design Effectiveness Awards bear witness to the commercial effectiveness of what we do.

Honey is chosen by our clients because we are:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Collaborative | Working with our clients to achieve their aims, curious, challenging but supportive |
| Commercial | 11 Design Effectiveness Awards prove our commercial understanding and awareness of the reality of sales and marketing |
| Connected | Honey is part of a group that includes an innovation business and a sales and distribution business. |



How to Market to Silvers

That was a nasty moment for the Silvers. A couple of weeks before the election, 485,057 people registered to vote. Well over half of these latecomers were under 35, potentially denting one of the Silvers' strongest bargaining chips, namely that we are the ones that turn out to vote so you'd better treat us right, politicians.

In the event, only 60% of younger voters bothered to cast their vote, compared with 75% of the over 60's. That's well up on the 2010 election for the young ones but it still meant 650,000 more people over 60 voted than the 18 – 24 group, and we are the growing age group. The pseudo man of the people, Russell Brand, the one who has replaced intelligence and analysis with some long words, has a lot to answer for.

Our message is simple. We understand the deal. We vote you into power, so give us the goodies. It's quite fun watching politicians squirm as they come under attack for the largesse that they offer to over 60's (not that we believe them, of course, they are, after all, politicians). But, in fairness, they do get it back. Over 60s contribute, net, £40 billion per year to the economy through taxes, spending power, provision of social services and the value of volunteering. They need us to be happy.

So, we have our concessions – index-linked state pension increases, unprecedented flexibility on how we use our pensions, massive inheritance tax concessions, on top of all the trinkets such as free travel and heating allowances, even if we know that they will try to claw as much back as possible by some underhand tax.

“We have the money and we have the wealth. We know that everyone wants to get their hands on it”



But we have always got what we wanted. From free love to free eye tests, cars, houses, holidays, the world has fallen into place for us. This is not, of course, true of every Silver in the land – no tribal or demographic segmentations are ever more than a dominant trend – but anyone out there trying to market to our generation would be well advised to approach with care.

We have money and we have wealth. We know that everyone wants to get their hands on it. Sometimes, reading the ads and direct mail and hanging up on those sales calls that always come during supper, it feels as if we have been rediscovered by a large herd of hopeful distant relatives, all trying to ingratiate themselves by demonstrating their unique (what an over used word) benefit to us.

So, how does today's marketing team deal with this irritatingly wealthy and confident group? It seems that every article nowadays has to have a specific number of rules to follow that will take you along the path of total fulfilment. Here are mine.

If you're marketing to anyone over 60, remember that we don't only know the rules, we invented the game. Be really certain that you've got your ducks in a row, otherwise you will be dead in the water.

Rule 1. Practice.

No generalisations, no clichés, no me-toos, no clumsy slight of hand. I've sat in a C2D, over 60 research group in Huddersfield and heard them discussing the marketing strategy behind the innovation that was being tested and, incidentally, putting their collective fingers instantly on the weakness of it. Which brings me to the second point.

Rule 2. Do not condescend.

We are not one homogenous group of 'oldies'. Attitudes vary widely and by age, health and, of course, income and perceived status, as well as the enormous differences that life experience has delivered. We are cynical but far from complacent about the state of the world and, ironically, often have a clearer vision of the future than many younger people. We know what we like, but that does not mean that we are set in our ways. Like any grown up, make our lives easier and more enjoyable and we are interested. It's just that, with us, the benefit has to be very clear, very precise and very relevant. Which brings me to my third point.

Rule 3. Recognise the imperatives.

Empty nesting, downsizing, we are at the stage when we want to declutter, not accumulate. If you are going to attract our attention, it has to be for an experience that is transitory or a product or service that replaces, ideally, more than one present proposition. Something that combines, for example, the interaction of a shop visit with the ease of online. At Waitrose, the patron saint of the Silvers, we can shop in the supermarket and have the goods delivered. It's not because we can't carry the shopping, it's just that we have better things to do and the time to go on to another event or two before going home. Or something that fits our needs – healthy meals for one or two, stylish but easy to handle tools. We are looking for simplicity, something many a marketing person seems to find it very hard to achieve. Which brings me to my fourth point.

Rule 4. Three rules are enough for anybody.

Silverback