

Strategy: Pay Attention to Boomers

Lee Clow worked with the advertising great Jay Chiat at Chiat\Day. He was the creative director. He was the guy who created the famous Apple advertisement where a whole bunch of IBM people, like lemmings, walked off a cliff. He is now the creator of the subsequent company, TBWA\Chiat\Day.

At a big advertising conference recently, Lee said, “You’ve just got to hire youngsters. You’ve got to hire youngsters on top of youngsters. This industry is reinventing itself, and we’ve got to get with the program.” No issue about the reinvention of advertisement. But my response in part is, “Come on, Lee. The future is me. That is, recession or no recession, the future market with the money, for the next 25 or 30 years at least, is the market for boomers and the market for those of us who are boomers-plus.

It amounts to hundreds and hundreds of millions of people in Europe, Japan, North America, and so on. So, frankly, Lee, what about hiring me? Again, let me be clear. I don’t disagree that advertising is changing dramatically. I don’t disagree for a minute that we need young people. I don’t disagree that formats are changing. Where I do disagree is, company after company after company with damn near zero exceptions are not focusing on the boomer and the boomer-plus market.

Hey, my wife and I, and about 20 other people, went out on a two-and-a-half-week hiking trip in the Croatian-Dalmatian coast. I would say—and I was actually doing a little bit of counting—that out of these 20 people, 17 of them were over the age of 55. We, even after the recession, are the people with the money. We are going to live a long, long time. We are much healthier than our counterparts the same age were 10 or 20 years ago.

I bet you don’t have a serious marketing and product development effort going on at this moment focused on me. Me and my kind. You’re blowing it big time. Sorry, Lee. You blew this one.