

HOW TO SELL TO OLDER CONSUMERS by Peter Baxter, The Business Solution Group

Step 1

Recognize that seniors are a lot like everyone else. But maybe better. They need—and buy—most of what everyone else does-- From accounting to zoo visits. And the good news: they often have more money and freedom than their juniors.

Step 2

Realize that seniors are not just one homogeneous group. They run the gamut from their 50's to their 100's, active to infirm, wealthy to hard-up. In general, they're more active and well off than their predecessors. As with any marketing, it is important to segment your audience.

Step 3

Know how they view themselves. Pick your niche and learn it well. According to studies, older people typically see themselves as a decade or more younger than they are. For clues to their attitudes, study the era of their youth, when values were formed. Take the trouble to get personally acquainted. Discover who else may be involved in their decision-making. Family? Caregivers? Professional advisors?

Step 4

Develop a senior USP. Construct a senior version of your Unique Sales Proposition. You DO have a general one don't you? Recognize that today's regular customer may be tomorrow's senior one, and that others may influence senior's decisions.

Step 5

Look for line extensions or ways to position what you sell as solutions for seniors' needs. Examine your sales offerings. Can you add complimentary things that will serve seniors' needs? Can you change the name or description of existing offerings to highlight their value to seniors?

Step 6

Tailor your message to their experience, needs and interests. Use what you've learned to fashion a message that explains your offering in ways that will resonate with your audience

Step 7

Don't talk down to them. Avoid stereotypes. Not everyone who's older is deaf, blind, infirm or addled. No one who's going to buy from you will appreciate being treated as if they are. Seniors hate being called that, but no one's come up with many suitable alternatives. You could try.

Step 8

Adapt your message to their changing physical needs.

It's a reality that our faculties begin to decline as we age. To [communicate](#) with your older customers, use larger type, good contrast and avoid visual clutter. Limit your message to one or two major points. Not bad advice for any ads, actually.

Step 9

Discover and eliminate any physical or mental barriers to seniors.

If you're serious about getting more business from elderly customers, look at your business from top to bottom through their eyes. Ask their opinions. If you find anything—from advertising to customer service, from your [phone](#) system to the physical premises—that discourages elderly customers, try to change it.

Step 10

Advertise in publications and other media that reach seniors. Go beyond mainstream media to find local publications that cater to older readers. Many areas have them. Look for and consider getting involved with organizations that advocate for seniors. Research senior centers and retirement communities to find opportunities to speak, sponsor or participate in events and make a name for your company as one interested in the older audience.

About Peter Baxter

Known widely as “Peter the Publisher,” over several decades, Peter has provided professional business communication services around the globe to clients ranging from associations to fortune 500 companies and Mom & Pop operations. He has handled marketing, public relations, event management and sales assignments, and was once part of a team that chartered the Queen Elizabeth II for a one-week ocean voyage in the Mediterranean for 1,500 corporate presidents. His company, The Business Solution Group, provides custom publishing, marketing and advertising services to businesses throughout Florida.