

Read It Today!

The Art of Woo: Using Strategic Persuasion to Sell Your Ideas. G. Richard Shell and Mario Moussa. 2007, Hardcover, 312 pages, \$24.95. Portfolio.

The mnemonic WOO stands for Winning Others Over, although its similarity to the word “woo,” meaning to court another person, is no coincidence. The authors describe their approach to gaining people’s attention, pitching ideas, and obtaining approvals for plans and projects versus relying on coercion to win support. Their model applies to all elements of customer relationship management, including experiences, interactions, communications, and relations with partners, employees, investors, and key decision makers in one’s own organization or prospect/customer organizations.

The recommended WOO model follows a four-stage process: 1) Survey the situation, 2) identify and confront *barriers* to persuasion, 3) make the right pitch, and 4) secure commitments.

The situation stage involves clearly looking at ideas to solve a problem, the problem’s causes, as well as the distinctiveness of what is to be “sold” and to whom. Addressed are the communications preferences and biases of the seller and potential purchaser, the *level* of commitment needed, and how the seller’s style fits the situation and the purchaser’s needs. A discussion of the barriers to be identified and overcome covers the status of the seller’s relationship with the buyer, credibility and how social networks can help, communication channels and adjustments, and belief and value systems at play. Coverage of the buyer’s interests and how they can be addressed rounds out the discussion.

Execution of the pitch requires clarifying the critical idea, the selling proposition, and gut motivations; engaging both conscious and unconscious drivers; and supplying a rationale that will reinforce a decision, even if the decision is made for another reason.

The fourth stage, to secure commitments, requires creation of the right framework for decisions as well as anticipation of and readiness to address objections. Channels of persuasion may include tapping mutual

interests or negotiated trade-offs, addressing the other party’s underlying needs, drawing on the authority and reasonableness of others, and handling turf issues.

The book is a reasonable first resource for someone who has little or no familiarity with persuasion, including the persuasion challenge of conventional marketing or sales. It does a good job of summarizing the essentials in a readable fashion, although for marketing veterans, it will be fairly elementary.

Baby Boomers and Their Parents: Surprising Findings about Their Lifestyles, Mindsets, and Well-Being. George Moschis, PhD, and Anil Mathur, PhD. 2007, Hardcover, 244 pages, \$47.50. Paramount Marketing Publishing.

This relatively short book contains far more information about the generations that straddle mine, only one of which represents likely readers of this review. Boomers, of course, are those 43 to 61 years of age, and their parents could be anywhere from their 60s to their 90s or older. The main focus of the book is to report on the differences between the two “generations,” based on surveys of thousands of people on a wide range of characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors.

The major findings reported are that:

- Boomers are in worse health than their parents were at the same age, primarily due to an epidemic of obesity.
- Stress has taken a major toll on both generations and is worse among those who have been most successful in their careers.
- Having a positive attitude and high self-esteem is an independent predictor of good health and low stress.
- Depression weakens anyone affected, and low self-esteem means four times the likelihood of being affected by depression.

There is a lot of information about health status and problems among boomers and their parents, for whom good health is the No. 1 source of happiness and well-being, although having enough money is also necessary. Despite the great deal of attention given to both health and wealth management in recent years, boomers are nowhere near well-prepared in either respect, with their parents better prepared for retirement than the boomers.