



Media Mindsets *can* be changed

AC '99 journalist, Helen Elliott, explains how she went about it.

The aim of a publicity plan for any product or issue is to heighten awareness in a general way through the wider community. With AC '99, our product was the vast, but market-specific one of ageing – of changing attitudes towards ageing. Taking an overview was disquieting. Those over 55 could be relied upon to give our product a second glance, but those under 55 could equally be relied upon not even to see it the first time. We had a highly visible product on one side of the ridge and an equally invisible one on the other. Where could we even begin to find our starting point?



We had to decide to focus on one general theme about how we could 'sell' it. This evolved into the idea that ageing can be positive but it will also, invariably, be as individual and as unique as any other aspect of a life being lived. What we didn't want was to cut off ageing from the rest of life, but see it as a part of the ongoing pattern of life. We needed to grab the narrowly-focused short attention of younger people but we also wanted to relate to people of all ages, particularly those in the age often seen as 'young' old. This group is not so much age-related as health defined.

To do this, we targeted mass media outlets and advertising agencies. There were five key strategies that proved most effective over the course of the Year.

The Australian Women's Weekly

This mass circulation national monthly is read by three million people of widely diverse ages. To introduce the concept that young people will one day be older people, we devised a contest with the *Weekly* donating their prime space to advertise it. Junior, intermediate and senior students up to 18 were invited to write in no more than 500 words a story that had to begin with the words 'In 2050 I ...'. We assumed that this would catapult them into considering that 'I' as an older person. To help them become enthusiastic we approached eleven of Australia's best-known writers and asked them to write the same story, beginning with the same words. These stories we put on our website. The prizes were the result of the extraordinary generosity of Collins Booksellers, IBM and The Body Shop. We had over 1,100 entries and the winners were presented their prizes by the Minister for Aged Care, The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP, at Darling House, an aged care residential house in Sydney.



Billboards

With the intensive cooperation of White. Advertising and Beyond Advertising, we devised two billboards with a photo from Sydney photographer, Ella Dreyfus. The boards were placed at strategic positions in Melbourne and Sydney for a month. There was little reaction in the wider world, but we live in hope.





Ad News

Ad News is one of two key trade magazines for the advertising industry. If marketing drives the world, advertising provides the keylock for the steering. Advertising has brazenly marginalised older people. The editor, Jeremy Light, was as keen as we were to see a youth-obsessed industry become more conscious of issues of ageing. Perhaps the advertising industry would not be so dismissive about anyone over fifty if it were shown the huge financial market in this age group as well as interest in most of the commodities it sells. We wanted younger copywriters to think again about ageing and to do this we had to lure them on their own turf.



Another competition was devised, with great help from Jeremy Light. Advertisers were invited to submit advertisements targeting 18 – 39 year olds that were positive about ageing. Again, we tried to gauge what they would value and go for. Winners were given a watch from Tag Heuer, two business class tickets to Europe courtesy of LaudaAir and five days staying in luxurious accommodation in Austria, courtesy of The Leading Hotels of the World. At the function to announce the winners, we invited key people from media and advertising in Sydney. As always, it was the personal contact at this function that produced further possibilities.



Dolly Magazine

This was perhaps our most audacious move because *Dolly* is the most widely read magazine by the female market (200,000 circulation) aged between 13 and 17 in Australia. How could we appeal to this most unlikely market? Give them what they want, was the answer. We set up a competition where readers had to write in under 25 words about 'why older people are cool' and correctly identify celebrities 'morphed into older age'. This probably made the girls stop and think for a minute, but their real interest would have been upon the prizes: dates with the stars of *Neighbours*, dinner at Planet Hollywood, a \$1,000 wardrobe from Morgan de Toi and \$1,000 worth of video, CDs and posters from Roadshow Entertainment.

The achievement for us was to get the editors to think about the issues, and stimulate their interest enough to donate the space for the competition in an extraordinarily tight market.

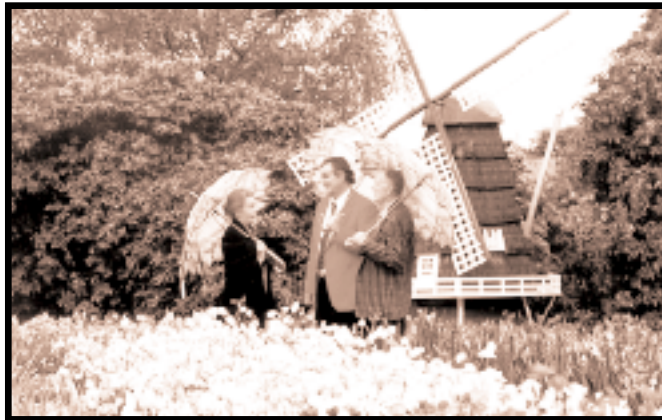




The Body Shop media event at Tesselaar's Tulip Farm

As The Body Shop had been our most significant business partner, we arranged to have a media launch at the end of September 1999 at Tesselaar's Tulip Farm in the Dandenongs, on the outskirts of Melbourne. Domaine Chandon, Food and Desire Productions and Lavazza Coffee were wonderfully generous in their support as were three of the older members of the cast of the ABC's production, *Seachange*, Jill Forster, Alan Cassell and John Howard, who gave very personal and appealing speeches.

The morning was a celebration for over a hundred and fifty invited guests from the community and the media. Media-wise it was extremely successful with wide print and radio coverage. Food-wise, it was perhaps even more successful with Beverley Sutherland Smith, the food critic, asking Food and Desire for recipes!



Even the refusals can be regarded as successes because they made new people aware of the purpose of the UN Year. Christie's Auction House distributed a flyer to its clients to raise awareness of the Year, and they would have liked to have helped us further, as would King Island Cheeses, but we couldn't find a way around the concept of 'how much nicer older things are' in the time and with the funds available. Most of what we achieved was on a shoestring budget.

There are still great gaps that haven't been touched when it comes to talking about age and ageing, but we chose to confine ourselves to the younger market and the business market. We perhaps just nibbled away at the edges, particularly with the young, but with the advertising industry and some of the businesses we worked with, the impact was direct. We hope that Ad News will be interested in on-going initiatives around issues concerning the older community.

My personal estimation of the success and the possible future direction of the fusing of business and age is that it is an untapped market, and the more business knows, the more interested they will become. And business is already talking. Business is about networking as much as anything else and once key people begin talking about possibilities of an older market as well as the moral directive of this market, change will occur. The fact that so many conservative and even staid institutions were happy not just to listen but to become actively involved strengthens that point.

For me it also constantly raised the worrying issue that in the contemporary world 'old' when applied to humans is not valued unless it is also associated with 'market'. Last year was a beginning in attempting to reinvent ways of being and of seeing 'old' in a society frighteningly and increasingly youth-obsessed. The question to ask now is how do we move on from these fragile openings?



Business and community partnerships

One of the key outcome areas of the agreement held between AC '99 and the Commonwealth Government of Australia was the facilitation of business – community partnerships during IYOP.

It is notable that throughout the course of the Year, within the AC '99 network, there were a number of partnerships established between businesses and groups within the community sector. Although partnerships were difficult to achieve at the national level due to limited resources and the finite life of the AC '99 secretariat, there was one singular success.

Case study: The Body Shop's body image and ageing campaign

The Body Shop's ideology is a unique one in the business world. The company's core values are to uphold the well-being of individuals and the community and it has a dedicated communications unit to address socially contextual issues. In early 1999, the company released a Social Audit on itself which was deemed a first of its kind in Australia.

Discussions regarding a partnership between The Body Shop and AC '99 commenced in 1995 between Delys Sargeant, Chair of AC '99 and Graeme Wise, Managing Director and proprietor of The Body Shop, Australia. The introduction was made via a Melbourne-based philanthropist.

The Body Shop was undertaking a commercial risk in its agreement to co-partner AC '99 in running a national campaign and addressing a traditionally taboo subject – ageing. To date, there had been no evidence of an Australian skin and hair care company undertaking a campaign addressing this issue. The Body Shop also ran the risk of alienating members of the public, and there were incidents when various individuals – particularly older women – expressed great discomfort with aspects of the campaign throughout the Year.

The Body Image and Ageing campaign was undertaken in two phases: the first led by The Body Shop and the second by AC '99.

Body image and ageing campaign phase one: January – August 1999

In collaboration with AC '99, The Body Shop scoped what the campaign would mean to the company, including the education of staff. The company's previous experience indicated that the success of a campaign can be dramatically undermined without the full understanding and participation of staff.

A significant investment was made in staff training by The Body Shop, with trainers in each state meeting with staff out of hours. The training revealed the discomfort that a number of staff members felt with the issue of ageing, including the creative execution of the campaign.

The focal point of the campaign was the female character Ruby, a 60 year old version of the young adult Ruby who featured previously in the Body Images and Self Esteem campaign of 1996 (this campaign was well known for the slogan, 'There are 7 billion women in the world and only 7 are supermodels.').



The image of Ruby was used to raise awareness of issues around ageing, particularly within media and customer populations. Copylines including 'The only way to avoid wrinkles is to live in outer space and never smile again'; 'Ageing doesn't matter unless you're a cheese'; and 'Ageing bosoms – handle with care' were employed. These clever and humorous slogans were useful in attaining the media's attention – particularly that of beauty and fashion journalists.



A magazine, *Full Voice* (winner of a Commonwealth Government Media Award for IYOP), postcards, T-shirts and complimentary make-over/massage cards for older people were distributed throughout the first half of 1999.

The Body Shop also undertook a collection of personal comments on ageing through its 70 retail outlets around the country. Customers aged between 10 – 90 years left comments in stores over five months.

The company then undertook qualitative and quantitative analysis of the responses and released the findings in October 1999.

Body image and ageing campaign phase two: June – December 1999

This phase of the campaign was undertaken by AC '99 through generous financial sponsorship by The Body Shop. The development of this multi-pronged strategy was based on the performance and review of the campaign in the first half of the Year.

It was agreed that Ruby had raised awareness of ageing, yet there was a need to increase the relevance and sensitivity of the messages. There was also the issue of creating a clearer context for the campaign with the increased visibility of the International Year of Older Persons logo and positioning statement, 'towards a society for all ages'.

New creative concepts were developed by AC '99 in tandem with the Melbourne-based advertising agency, White Advertising and Beyond which provided pro-bono services to the project. An image from Ella Dreyfus' highly acclaimed photographic exhibition, *Age and Consent*, was used along with copylines including 'Look past the wrinkles' and 'A few lines on the beauty of ageing'.

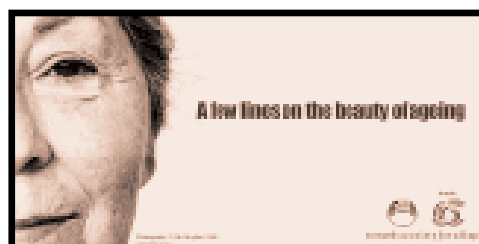
Although The Body Shop in Australia has a 'no-advertising' policy, it supported AC '99's plans to promote positive ageing messages on billboards. Two billboards in each of Melbourne and Sydney were erected (unfortunately costs prohibited a stronger national presence), complemented by posters which contained the same copy and visual and which were displayed in each of the 70 stores.



AC '99 invited The Body Shop to participate in other promotional initiatives organised for IYOP, including the national children's writing competition with *The Australian Women's Weekly* and a promotion with popular teenage magazine, *Dolly*.

A special media event was held on 30 September 1999: the 'A Toast to Life' celebration held at Tesselaar's Tulip Farm, where The Body Shop's market research findings were released. The snapshot summary document was written by The Body Shop in collaboration with AC '99 and has been a useful tool for both the media and the community (website: <http://www.avoca.vicnet.net.au/~ac99/bodyshop/coverpage>).

The market research undertaken by The Body Shop was an interesting exercise, confirming in our minds the value of our partnership with the company. The Body Shop has been an ideal partner with whom we have worked towards building a society for all ages.





New opportunities and direction beyond 1999

In October 1999, AC '99's Project Manager, Lisa Ellis, attended a international symposium in New York entitled, *The Effect of Globalisation on the Images of Older Women in the Media*. The symposium was co-sponsored by AARP (formerly American Association of Retired Persons) in collaboration with the Netherlands Platform on Ageing and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. An overview of AC '99's partnership with The Body Shop and the subsequent campaign in Australia was presented to the symposium. What emanated from the formal sessions and the informal dialogue among the many international delegates was a desire to develop an international coalition to promote positive and diverse images of older women in the media. Discussions continue between non-government organisations, IYOP affiliated organisations, media outlets, journalists and image makers.



The Body Image and Ageing campaign has effectively been a one year project focusing on IYOP, with three years in the planning. However, given that the theme, 'towards a society for all ages' is not time-dependent, there is an opportunity to utilise and build on this slogan in the future.