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Marketers suggest new approach to retirement

Baby boomers expected to tackle goals, projects

BY JIM FABER, *The Island Packet*
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Hilton Head Island seems a reasonable place to host a conference on marketing to retirees.

But the marketing gurus who spoke Thursday at the National Active Retirement Association conference at the Hilton Oceanfront Resort challenged the conventional approaches retirement communities take.

As more members of the baby boomer generation retire, they won't be satisfied with playing golf daily and relaxing. Entering the autumn and winter of life, they will still have goals they want to tackle and a legacy they want to create, said Robert Snyder, author and president of Stonetrust Partners, a marketing firm based in Connecticut.

Communities that are more creative about feeding the passions of residents will do better. Snyder suggested providing office space in active-adult communities for resident entrepreneurs, offering help in creating a business plan, or even creating an internal venture-capital group to help fund fledging businesses.

Only by having an interesting and compelling story behind the community will a new development really stand out.

Buzzwords like great service and world-class golf, while probably true, are used so often that they no longer resonate with consumers, said Snyder, co-author of "Ageless Marketing."

Speaking to more than 50 developers, government officials and other interested parties, Bill Borg said that association with the word "retirement" can turn off some baby boomers.

"Retirement is about freedom," said Borg, who is the founder of Now! Inc., a sales and marketing company out of North Carolina.

In terms of baby boomers as a force in the retirement marketplace, the richest demographic is just getting started.

"What's in front of us is so much greater than what's right in front of us or right behind us," Borg said.

Patricia Camden, a partner in Liquid Advertising, an interactive marketing firm in California, warned that the baby boomer market is diverse, and marketing efforts aimed at it need to go after specific segments.

For instance, her firm's marketing efforts for a development in North Carolina appeal to boomers who value community, environment and family.

The National Active Retirement Association is a seven-year-old trade group created to help businesses learn how to best serve the over-50 population. The conference continues today.

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