

Martino Flynn aims for gold in 'silver' market

By MARY STONE

Martino Flynn LLC has added a new practice to its marketing and communications services to get clients to throw out their stereotypes and look at senior citizens differently.

With a team of 12, Martino Flynn launched its Sixty Plus Marketing Practice six months ago. The practice has a roster of 10 clients, to which the most recent addition is MetLife Inc.

But there are other less likely clients who are responding to the group's specialty, such as ACE Heat Therapy patches, whose traditional target is athletes.

Originally, ACE wanted to aim its skin patches to an audience even younger than their typical target, but Martino Flynn got the client to reconsider.

"We said, 'Have you given any thought to going a little higher in age: Boomers and 60-plus people who are starting to feel aches and pains of everyday life,'" said Robbie Magee, director of client services. "That's how that case study was born, and it actually was very successful."

Targeting the 60-plus demographic is a trend called Going Silver, and experts at Martino Flynn said the phenomenon is growing.

"You hear about everything going green," Magee said. "Well, there's another trend right behind it, and it's called going silver. What we like to think we do is help our clients effectively penetrate that market."

Magee said it is not as simple as it looks because the population segment is one of few that really is different from the rest, because starting at 60, people's lifestyles change dramatically.

"We're starting with the older boomers because the younger spectrum does not behave all that differently from the rest of the younger audiences," Magee said. "Fifty-year-olds are not all that different from 32-year-olds. It doesn't really start to be a different set of expertise until you get up into people's early 60s because that's when their lifestyles start to diverge."

And those lifestyles have diverged dif-

ferently than they used to, said Kellie Fronk, Martino Flynn's public relations account coordinator. They are richer and more complex. Stereotypes, she said, apply even less than they used to.

"You can't paint these folks with a single paintbrush anymore," partner Kevin Flynn said. "While some people may do the traditional—move to Florida and play golf—other people might go to the Pacific Northwest and start teaching kayaking at 70."

In the Rochester Business Journal's list of marketing communications firms published last week, Martino Flynn ranked eighth with \$48 million in 2007 capitalized billings, up slightly from \$45 million in 2006. The firm had 62 employees in 2007, up one from a year earlier, and 37 accounts in 2007, down from 48.

Overall, Flynn said, his firm expects to grow by 15 percent this year, with approximately one-third coming from the Sixty Plus practice.

Given the economic climate, Flynn said, projections are ambitious but not unrealistic.

Another local firm that has begun focusing on a specific age group is Jay Advertising Inc., the region's top ranked firm on the Rochester Business Journal's list.

Last year, Jay Advertising introduced Passageways, a division to help advertisers tap into the minds of baby boomers and their changing lifestyles.

Jay Advertising developed Passageways when they realized that many agencies were preoccupied with the 18-to-49-year-old segment of adults. Baby boomers vary in age between 42 and 62.

Martino Flynn's practice looks at people age 60-to-80-plus. To study the group, the firm formed a senior advisory board of a dozen seniors age 60 to 84.

"We convene them quarterly and more regularly if we have a need. If we have a client who is interested in getting feedback on a particular initiative, then we gather and get their opinions on things we're conceiving," Magee said.

The firm is looking for other ways to better understand seniors. Magee attended an

Aging in America conference in Washington, D.C., where she took a crash course in what it feels like to be older.

"They put you in this room, and they go through this 20-minute exercise where they dim the lights, they blur the presentation screen, they turn down the audio and garble it so it represents hearing impairment," Magee said. "They give you gloves that make your fingers clumsy and give you a bunch of medications with child-proof caps and instructions that you can't read."

"I want to tell you that after 20 minutes of this, I never looked at older audiences the same way again," she said.

Flynn wants to introduce the entire firm to this experience and is looking for other ways to train them to connect better to seniors.

While their sensory capabilities might change, their lifestyles are not suffering like they used to. Flynn said while many companies are showing more interest in this segment, many fail to understand the complexity and diversity of seniors now.

As it is, the retirement age is getting pushed back in the United States and other parts of the world. By 2050 the United Nations projects that nearly one-third of the developed world's labor force will be 50 or older.

A study by Houston-based Media Audit Inc., which recently surveyed more than 80 U.S. metropolitan markets, showed people over age 50 with incomes of \$50,000 or more have increased from 17 million to 22.3 million since 2004.

Thirty-eight percent of those 22.3 million had incomes of \$100,000 or more compared to 32.9 percent in 2004.

Martino Flynn officials said the biggest challenge for the Sixty Plus practice is getting companies to look at seniors differently.

"The whole notion of retirement is thrown out the window," Flynn said. "The rocking chairs on the porch are gone."

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