

Getting better with age by Matthew Flamm

'More' magazine finds formula to succeed with women over 40

Most magazines don't make it a practice to tell the age of every single woman featured in their pages, particularly women of a certain age. But readers of *More* would know that life is great for Annette Bening at 46, and that Paulina Porizkova doesn't mind turning 40, or that the contestants for the magazine's 40-plus model contest range in age up to 59.

More wouldn't have it any other way. "If you're not really comfortable with how old you are, then you don't belong in the magazine," says Peggy Northrop, the title's 50-year-old new editor in chief.

More, with its celebratory, "Let's embrace our age" approach, has a story as empowering as the women it profiles. Launched in 1998 with a circulation of 350,000 copies, the Meredith Corp. title recently crossed the 1 million-copy threshold. It's also just finished its second year in a row of double-digit ad page growth. Now, the title has embarked on its first promotional ad campaign since its launch. Touting both its high-profile new editor and a lively new design, the magazine is also forging new media partnerships for its message.

"The company has been seriously pressing the gas pedal on this magazine for the past six months," says Lauren Buerger, associate publisher of *More*. "You have attention being paid because it's moving."

Forerunner flameouts

Whether by good execution, good timing or good luck, Meredith has done what no other publisher has managed to do. It has created a successful lifestyle magazine aimed specifically at women over 40. *Lear's*, *Mirabella* and *New York Woman*, the forerunners in the 40-plus women's category, were edgy, flamboyant titles, and they all flamed out expensively.

Middle-of-the-road *More* has hit on the right, upbeat formula. It's made considerable gains in the last two years. Ad pages grew 33% in 2003 over the year before, and ad revenue jumped nearly 70%, to \$52 million, according to Publishers Information Bureau. This year, ad pages are up a healthy 14% through November, with ad revenue spiking 35%, to \$64 million, compared with the same period last year.

More has also had the advantage of targeting a growing 40-plus population.

"It's timing," magazine consultant Martin Walker says of *More's* success.

More clearly is winning the battle for readers. But despite rising ad sales, the magazine still battles the perception among marketers that its over-40 female fans are less valuable than younger audiences.

Fashion and beauty

The title is handicapped partly because it relies on beauty and fashion advertising, which traditionally chases youth. By contrast, magazines for over-40 women that focus on design and decoration, such as *Real Simple* or, pre-scandal, *Martha Stewart Living*, can run up annual ad revenues in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Media buyers say that *More* can't charge anywhere near as much per page.

"Home furnishings advertisers want 40-year-old women who can buy their expensive products," says Polly Perkins, business development director at AdMedia Partners. "*More* has broken the mold in having a fashion and beauty slant, and that's a tougher category."

Time, however, is on *More's* side. "By 2010, the 40-plus age group will be 60% bigger than the 18-to-39 age group," says Ms. Buerger. And according to the U.S. Census, Americans over 50 already control two-thirds of the nation's wealth.

For advertisers, *More's* exclusive focus on the 40-plus lifestyle can mean reaching this population without waste.

"*More* has filled a niche," says Steve Greenberger, director of print media at Zenithmedia Inc. "Other women's service magazines reach that target to some degree, but the concentration is not as thorough." Meredith's goal now is to gain some heat for a magazine that observers say has prospered despite being undermarketed. The company has begun running ads trumpeting *More's* appeal in trade publications such as *Advertising Age* and



Women's Wear Daily, and is considering extending the campaign to outdoor and transit advertising.

In addition, *More* will be doing monthly lifestyle segments with *The Early Show* on CBS.

Media buyers have also been cheered by the appointment of Ms. Northrop, who took over in April, replacing *More* founding editor in chief Susan Crandell.

Immediate update

Ms. Northrop, who made her name jazzing up *Organic Style*, set out almost immediately to update the magazine. She hired *O: At Home* design director Robert Priest to do a redesign, and gave *More* a bolder, more sophisticated look. She has also doubled the number of photo shoots, devoting more space to the spreads of ordinary women that have been a signature feature of the magazine.

"We're at a million circulation now, and we know we can grow," Ms. Northrop says. "We talk to our reader in the way she wants to be talked to, and that strategy is paying off."