

# Boomers: The Pig in the Python

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## Executive Summary

### What?

Boomers, all 76 million of us born in the years from 1946-1964, have changed the rules at each juncture of life. Whether it was the huge influx in pre-school beginning over 50 years ago to the monstrous college enrollments of the '60s, we have, and always will be, "the pig in the python." Society has swelled and changed to accommodate us.

My research led to three industries: multi-national automobile corporations, AARP, and the Del Webb Corporation. These three have a commonality: they each are making billion-dollar bets on the future tastes of Boomers. Beginning with a brief trip down "Penny Lane," I looked at the most pressing concerns of Boomers: health, finance/work, retirement, and spirituality.

This is a generation like no other before it and we again will change the rules forever. Get ready, here come the Zoomers.

### So What?

Moving from "success to significance" is the phrase first coined by management guru, Peter Drucker. Boomers are beginning a last quest to find God through diverse sources ranging from Oprah to Dale Earnhart.

There are two Boomer sub-categories to consider: those long-time servant leaders in the Church of the Nazarene (I have three Colonels in my ABF class), and those multitudes still searching. Flush with resources—time and/or money—Boomers represent a huge market hungry to serve in meaningful ways.

Which begs the question, "Is the Church of the Nazarene ready for the greatest growth opportunity of the last 100 years?" The answer, sadly, appears to be a resounding "NO!"

### Now What?

"Nuke the seminary!" is just one proposal put forth to jar us out of our comfort zone. Four practical suggestions, though given a bit tongue-in-cheek, hope to spark a dialogue for creation of ministries by and for Boomers.

With apologies to our global Nazarene family, this paper is aimed squarely at the North American church. A PowerPoint slide show is available for downloading.

### Methodology

As an organizational psychologist with an engineering background, I took the road less traveled from my sociologist colleagues in ANSR. I studied business.

Clipping articles the entire year and looking at three major segments that cater to Boomers, I wanted not only to study the topic, but also put forth meaningful dialogue starters to nudge the Church of the Nazarene (COTN) forward. A review of literature was also conducted.

The North American Auto Show held annually in Detroit, MI (Where else?) is an “extravapalooza” of eye candy for the car aficionado. The '01 show alone was rumored to have cost nearly \$500,000,000. The biggest and arguably most important auto show of the year, it is a harbinger of trends that affect the church.

Beginning a few years ago, a new theme emerged. Starting with a trickle, then with the success of Volkswagen's New Beetle, it has become a full-fledged market segment with literally billions of dollars at stake. Daimler-Chrysler's PT Cruiser, Ford's Thunderbird, Forty-Niner and 500, Chevy's Bel Air and SSR Truck, Pontiac's GTO, Mazda's Miata, and soon to be the biggest fad car of the sixties (TA DA)—the Mini Cooper—all represent this segment dubbed Neo Retro.

Neo Retro might be defined as something old wrapped in a new package. Anyone who has recently driven a '60s era muscle car knows they are more fun to look at than to drive. Hence, Neo Retro gently flirts with the past but has the latest and most expensive creature comforts such as 10 speaker, 100-watt stereos and heated seats for those aging boomer ears and backsides.

AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) has done a complete makeover in the past two years as well. Recognizing there were profound differences in Boomers and their Builder parents, AARP has not only changed the name, but also initiated an additional magazine, *My Generation*, aimed squarely at aging Boomers. With '60s icons, such as beautiful Sally Fields, gracing the slick covers, AARP takes on diverse topics. These articles also shout “opportunity” for the COTN.

The Del Webb Corporation is now the largest homebuilder in America. Behind the Sun City movement around the U.S., Del Webb may be the most Boomer conscious company in America. Webb has banned the term “retirement” and introduced “active life styles.” Their beautiful Sun Cities come standard with bike trails, exercise facilities, and high-speed Internet connections, as well as the requisite manicured lawns and golf courses. They are building in places like (gasp) Chicago because Boomers want to stay active with their families. Del Web has leached onto the term “Zoomers” first used by *US NEWS* to refer to the newly or soon-to-be retired.

Some factoids:

1. Roughly 70% of Boomers will stay put in retirement.
2. Neo Retro is showing up in TV shows, music, vacations, et al.
3. Harley Davidson caters to Boomers.

**“Next time Granny talks about her choppers,  
she does not mean her teeth.”**

Ad for Harley Davidson

**Health:**

Boomers are generally healthier than their parents. Though not all, significant portions are moving toward healthier eating, drinking, and exercise habits. They want to “live forever” or “die before I get old” (The Doors). Yet in the background looms a dark specter—Alzheimer’s. The prospect of 35 million of us with Alzheimer’s at the same time is darkly humorous, yet could break the health care system and leave it bankrupt for Gen Xers. Let the generation wars begin!

**Factoids:**

1. Big Pharma is a growth industry for the next two decades.
2. Boomers will outlive their parents.
3. Boomers may have 20-30 productive years after leaving the work force.
4. Boomers have great faith in biotech, but fears remain lurking beneath the conscious.

Sarasota PD has put on extra bike patrols to rescue jogging Boomers who can’t remember how to get home. (Joke)

**The Coming Health Care Crisis**

Dayton Daily News

**Finance**

Boomers have lost confidence in the Social Security system to maintain their lifestyles. They have embraced savings, and the dot-com boom was a product of their desire for quick riches and easy living. The tech wreck at Lake Doughbegone has left many (purses) feeling empty. Wall Street has failed them and worse, proven to be a shyster and snake oil peddler. Bonds, anyone?

In spite of this, most Boomers appear to be better off financially than their parents at the same age. Question: What would happen if all the Boomers cashed out the 401Ks at about 2010? Holy stock market roil, Batman!

**Factoids:**

1. Boomers are investing heavily (not necessarily wisely).

2. The Tech Wreck wiped out Boomers' dreams of early retirement.
3. Many Boomers have significant financial reserves, dividing this segment into the "haves" and the "have-nots."
4. Philanthropy is "in" among the super rich; Bill Gates has given \$2.1 B.

## Work

Boomers will be the first generation to continue working in retirement. Hence the very term will change meaning. With longer life spans and the 20<sup>th</sup> century movement from handwork to headwork, Boomers express a desire to continue meaningful activity. Though the late '90s carried scare stories that suggested they were obsolete, the dot-com bust has clearly shown some adult supervision is still needed in organizations of the future. Since there are only 46 million Gen Xers to replace the 76 million Boomers, their continued presence in the work force is virtually assured.

### **Factoids:**

1. Boomers will continue working part time.
2. No longer interested in the fast track, many will serve as mentors.
3. Industries that hurried to retire the over-50 crowd are now realizing their mistake. Older workers are viewed as a plus.
4. Part-time jobs, flex work schedules, temps, and job sharing will become the norm.

## **Finished At 40**

Fortune Magazine

## **Retirement**

The Del Webb Corporation, builders of the Sun City communities, is leading the charge to "active lifestyles." No longer the shuffleboard and bingo blue-haired ladies crowd, Webb now includes full weight room and spa facilities, biking trails, high-speed Internet connections, and over 200 different clubs to join. Recognizing Boomers' desire to stay close to their grandchildren, Webb is now building in the North. Chicago Sun City, huh?

### **Factoids:**

1. Over Half of Boomers expect to work at least part time during retirement.
2. Estimates run as low as 20% on those who plan to move to a new community.
3. Every band that had more than one hit song in the '60s is touring again.

My 401K is now a 201K

(Country song)

## **Here Come the Zoomers**

*US News*

### **Spirituality**

A startling cover appeared on *Fortune Magazine* titled "God and Business." Other stories in major publications followed and it is now "cool" to be spiritual. Though spirituality may not be defined as Sunday school at 9:30 Sunday morning, there is increasing media coverage of the quest for meaning. From the failed drugs of the '60s to the greed of the '80s to the boom/bust of the '90s, Boomers are looking inward. Despite their '60s boast to the contrary, the Beatles are gone but Jesus is not.

Among those uniquely American institutions is the mega-church. Though perhaps less than 300 in total number, the Willow Creeks and the Saddlebacks have become icons of the church movement. Everyone knows someone who attends a huge church. Even management guru, Peter Drucker who coined the phrase "success to significance" is advising business leaders who want to eject the old management paradigm in favor of leadership to study the (gasp) mega-church. Thousands gather weekly (24/7) to volunteer for tasks they would not consider doing if paid.

### **Factoids:**

1. Half of Boomers expect to volunteer during retirement.
2. The queen of self-help spirituality, Oprah, is the 2<sup>nd</sup> richest woman in the U.S.
3. NASCAR is a religion; witness the Dale Earnhart shrines in the Old South.
4. There is a quest to find meaning beyond success; 51% expressed personal spiritual development as their highest priority.

## **There Must Be More To Life**

*Parade Magazine*

Conclusion: Boomers' attitudes toward health, finance, spirituality, and retirement will redefine the term "retirement." The pig in the python!

### **So What?**

Is there any evidence that the COTN is ready for the largest growth opportunity of the last 100 years? Sadly, no. Consider the laity who once held significant positions as industry chieftains, doctors, lawyers, teachers, or professionals of all types who are now, or soon to be, available. What is their task assigned from the

local pastor—set up chairs, drive the bus, or “lick and stick”-type activities! If you doubt this, ask a question. “Pastor, I am willing to volunteer 20 hours a week. What do you want me to do?” The best and brightest will pool their resources and reassign them to more productive ministries. Think Harvest Partners.

Let’s look at some facts (Source: Rich Housal)

**Diagram #1**

Church of the Nazarene (North America)

Worship Size	Active Churches	% of Total
<100	3,346	69%
100-299	1,219	25%
300-499	177	3.5%
500-999	81	2%
1000+	16	.3%
Total	4,839	

The COTN is a denomination of small churches. However, emphasis must not be on church growth but on church health. Enough already of making the small church feel guilty that they are not Saddleback and the pastor not Rick Warren (or anybody else). Healthy churches do grow, but may grow in different ways. Here are a few to consider:

**Growth can be measured:**

Vertically	People called to professional service
Horizontally	No. of ministry offerings
Depth	Spiritual growth, baptisms
Breadth	Attendance, new members
Spin-Offs	New churches/off site ministries
Sponsorships	Missions, missionaries
Power Ratio	Hours the facility is in use, Ratio of Servers/Attendees

The more important question is “Is the U.S. COTN healthy?” If your church is healthy, then shouldn’t you see growth in several of the above areas? Is it possible that the healthiest churches are growing in the most categories?

If our churches are not healthy (read: growing in the above 7 ways), then let’s look further.

## Diagram #2

Church Size	Pastor's Dominant Skill Set
<100	Motivated Doer
100—300	Compassionate Shepherd
300—500	Caring Administrator
>500	Successful Manager
>1000	Visionary Leader

In fifteen years as a consultant in the field of Leadership Development (which encompasses change management), I have observed organizations of various types, stripes, and sizes. A different mindset is required to grow than to maintain, and a different paradigm to be successful at the various sizes of organization, whether church or “for profit.” The principles of great leadership are Biblical principles, not business principles.

If the above two tables hint at causality, we would expect to find that our educational institutions are training for the first two sizes (Diagram 2) but not the last three. Let's look:

### Nazarene Theological Seminary (NTS)

#### Course Headings and Number of Courses

General Biblical Studies	16
Old Testament Exegesis	16
New Testament Exegesis	15
Biblical Languages	10
History of the Church	24
Theology	20
Philosophy of Religion	9
Pastoral Theology	22
Theological Studies	4
Christian Ed	26
Church Music	13
Missiology	29
Spiritual Formation	5
Doctor of Ministry	6

**Total Courses offered: 215**

**Total Courses with Leadership in the title: 3**

In a landmark international study across denominations involving over 1,000 pastors in 70 countries, Christian Schwartz found that 78% felt that seminary did not adequately prepare them to pastor and that church growth was negatively correlated to the percentage of seminary graduates in the denomination. Whoa!

The last five years have seen an explosion of literature on the concept of EQ (emotional quotient). Daniel Goleman's books are the most popular, but others (including me) have joined the parade. EQ may be defined simply as the ability to lead people in spite of their emotional state, or succinctly-people skills. IQ skills (technical skills: preaching, Bible knowledge, theology, Greek and Hebrew) may be less (but not UN) important than the ability to understand, get along with, and inspire people.

EQ is why those "smart kids" in high school accomplished little while others who seemed destined to mediocrity often achieve so much. Is it possible that we are teaching IQ (technical skills) and not EQ (people skills)? Does the church in south Oklahoma care more about the pastor's skills in Greek or whether he attended the local football game on Friday night? A paper by Chuck Crow ("Enduring Cultures of Church Laity", see ANSR web site) seemed to indicate the latter. How many pastors are unsuccessful (read: unhealthy church) due to faulty theology as opposed to those who get "called" to the next place when they cannot get along with the most caring laypersons at the local church? EQ trumps IQ!

**"There is no problem  
that good leadership will not overcome."**

Senator John McCain

### **Now What?**

No paper is complete without some proposals for solutions. Perhaps a spirited scholarly dialogue will begin and changes occur as the result of our pooled knowledge and love for the Lord and the COTN.

### **Laws of Change**

1. If you keep doing what you have done, you keep getting what you have got.
2. Doing the wrong thing faster never solves a problem.
3. Insanity: Doing the same thing year after year but expecting a different result.
4. Blaming someone/something else is a sure route to failure.

### **Four Modest Proposals**

1. Use a blended music approach to attract and retain Boomers.

Hymns are music for the soul. While there is also room for the newer 7/11 choruses, there seems to be a growing hunger for comfort "food" especially since 9/11. The best text on this may be *Building God's Church* by Bob Russell. The great heritage of the COTN may be more Louisville Christian Church than Willow Creek. Boomers buy 44% of the music sold in the U.S. Neo Retro! Hymns sang

upbeat with an orchestra and words on the screen, plus hymnbooks (please, no copyright violations) may be the ticket.

## **Boomers Buy 44% of Music** USATODAY

### 2. Nuke the Seminary.

(This took a bit of chutzpah...the current /former seminary presidents attended!)

Is it possible we are instructing in the “loves” of professors rather than meeting the needs in the pews? Why are so many pastors burned out and missionaries leaving the field? Are we adequately preparing them? Are we gearing them up for the last war?

Let’s look at the curricula and see where we might improve. How about a year-long internship rather than a third year of classes? Does anyone teach the basics of interviewing skills...how to work with a board...how to resolve conflict...change management...a hot group...the entire field of EQ skills? Until we change what goes in, we will not change what comes out. The best and brightest laypersons will seek opportunities outside the COTN for both giving and service. Why? The best cannot be managed, but they can be led.

Why not launch a “blue ribbon” panel consisting of retired DSs, pastors, laypersons, and professors to study and make recommendations? Teach leadership (EQ) not just management and technical skills (IQ).

### 3. Expand K Church

Why not follow the lead of the auto industry and create a high-potentials group of the best and brightest? These “youngsters” would receive special training the first few years to advance their skill set. Why wait for 10-15 years to put them into a K Church group?

Utilize key successful layman to mentor. People are people and the principles of leadership—though not necessarily management—are transferable between organizations. Consider the legions of laypersons, with backgrounds in leadership, who could provide mentoring with no threat of career implications for the local pastor. How about utilizing that newly retired DS or GS? Why waste talent?

### 4. Develop a “Nazoomers” Thrust

A Zoomer is a high energy Boomer; those ready to move from success to significance. A Nazoomer is a mid-career Nazarene Boomer who wants to give

their very best to the church. To date, there is no place for them in the local church. Anecdotal evidence indicates that many pastors may even be a bit intimidated. Unlike the '50s, the pastor is no longer the most educated in his/her church. Advanced degrees are commonplace, and successful caring Nazarenes layman can be found everywhere. Why not harness this energy?

Launch regional Nazoomers retreats (Don't call us seniors!).

Develop a district talent bank (database).

Implement a mentors program for young pastors.

Initiate local Nazoomers chapters and chat rooms to share successes/failures.

Expand international short-term/mid-term NIV opportunities.

JUST DO IT!

Send this to a friend. Let the dialogue begin! ☺