

Know Mother Best

Mom's Insight Network keeps retailers **connected** to powerful demographic

BY REBECCA LOGAN

If you're looking to alienate most of the mothers who walk through your doors, there are a few things that should do the trick, according to two marketing experts.

First, make it clear that you know better than they do what is best for their offspring. Then invest in advertising campaigns that circumvent moms entirely and aim straight at their kids.

Both tactics can really make moms mad, says Emily Morris. So can patronizing them and disregarding the fact that they juggle multiple roles, says Maria Bailey. An effective way to turn a maternal shopper against you, she says, is to pigeon-hole her into the role of, say, a soccer mom or — worse yet — a June Cleaver.

Those are just some of many tactics Morris and Bailey say won't sit well with Mom. And they should know.

Morris is director of product marketing for online communities at San Francisco-based MarketTools, where she developed and oversees the Moms Insight Network, offering companies a direct link to the online conversations of mothers.

Bailey, the author of "Trillion Dollar

Moms: Marketing to a New Generation of Mothers," runs BSM Media, a Pompano Beach, Fla.-based marketing firm specializing in that demographic. Both women actually spend most of their time focused on what does work for Mom.

"When you look at these moms, they're all customizing motherhood," Bailey says. "They want motherhood to be what they want it to be and they're using technology to make it that way." They hunt and gather information, she says.

Take the Gen-Xers. "Fifty percent of them came out of divorced households," Bailey says. "So as children, these women learned how to gather information from different places while at their mom's during the week and their dad's house on the weekend."

The successful retailer is one whose message may be found in many places, including online. "Moms sometimes feel isolated," Morris says. "And they really just want to go online and connect with each other."

Nearly 95 percent of mothers go online at least once each day, according to MarketTools, which officially launched the Moms Insight Network last summer. A variety of packages are available for subscribers to that service, with the top one costing about \$80,000 per year, Morris says.

Subscribers are able

to monitor the network's online community of about 10,000 mothers called "ZoomPanel Moms." They can put topics before those moms, conduct quarterly surveys and receive reports gleaned from an analysis of blogs, message boards and online media sites.

Through them, several themes emerge, says Morris. One is a desire to return to a simpler style of parenting — a sentiment, Morris says, that is wisely being tapped by companies like Kellogg, with its no-frills "Childhood Is Calling" campaign for Rice Krispies.

It wasn't long ago that words like convenience and speed were all the rage, Morris says. "Now, moms are saying, 'I need to slow down and pick one or two really quality things.'"

Going green

Another hot topic is "going green," but there is still much confusion in the mommy ranks about what that actually means, Morris says. The company that effectively educates consumers in this area "will really have a solid place in Mom's heart."

Bailey says she often hears from retailers who wish they could get mentioned on more blogs — but at the same time fear the online chatter because they can't control it. "The way to avoid the backfire is to create solution-based content that [moms] find relevant."

Also important is finding those mothers who most influence their peers. That's the thinking behind a recent promotion Bailey did with a chain of drug stores in California. Neighborhoods were canvassed to identify those women who run the playgroups or are just known by most moms on the block. Those influencers were then invited to in-store events where they could test out some photo center bells and whistles.

"We sent them home with electronic media kits and basically everything they needed to share with their friends," Bailey says.

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