



People-to-People Marketing is Key for Parents

When targeting products and information at parents – related in any way to how they see their lives as parents – one must factor in marketing strategies that connect them to referrals from friends, colleagues, and experts they don't know but who communicate with them through their daily routine.

The information may come “word of mouth” through relationships with people they know and trust. Or, it could come “virally” by receiving and sending valued information to large numbers of friends. It's by phone. It's through email. It's in a chat room. It's at events. It can be at your child's school or at a public venue. It can be as simple as bumping into someone at the park.

Parents don't have time to do lots of research, but care deeply about getting the best for their children and families. They look for easy ways to get input from others who are either experts or

may have personal experience with a product or service they may want. When they believe the information they have received is truthful and the reference comes from someone who has honestly used a product, they find the source reliable.

Parents are an important catalyst for word-of-mouth marketing, as once they have a positive experience, they are enthusiastic to let their friends and colleagues know about it.

Some of the products that parents seek expert information about include: cars and car seats, household items, children's clothing, baby products, health care, family meals, and more.

Companies have had to get very clever about incenting viral marketing. They establish a presence online on websites and blogs that reach women and stay-at-home dads. They have targeted promotions and outreach initiatives at malls or groceries, even children's mu-

seums. Schools are usually off limits due to district policies about product endorsements. Nevertheless, entertainment properties have an easier time getting visibility with parents and kids, since schools and community organizations welcome talent appearances.

Events and guerilla tactics may attract interest and disseminate high-level information about products, providing they are clever and strategic enough to rise above the clutter and communicate key product benefits or announce a new product's availability. In addition, contests and award programs encourage people to share their opinions about products and become loyal consumers and advocates.

Through another approach, bzzagent.com charges companies to “get out the buzz” about particular products, encourage people to talk about their product preferences and get regular people to talk about products.

A Community of Moms

A new group, Role Mommy, is stimulating a community of professional moms to use the Internet, as well as interface in person at special events, to figure out how to “have it all.” Through “communities” moms can learn from each other's experiences and feel less alone -- even without face time -- by connecting with others who experience the same balancing act and want to make good decisions for their families.

Starting in New York, hosted at the Children's Museum of Manhattan, events each quarter attract women who are raising young children while at the top of their professions in industries such as finance, entertainment, publishing, real estate, and law. There are many women who were once on fast career tracks, had a baby and quit working; these talented women still want to use their skills for enterprising means, so this initiative helps them meet in an environment

that values their talent and supports their balancing work and children. Some of the speakers to address these events include Rene Syler, host of CBS News *The Early Show*, Carolyn Kepcher, executive vice president of the Trump Organization and advisor on NBC's *The Apprentice*, Barbara Corcoran, founder of the Corcoran Group, and Lisa Caputo, president & CEO of Women and Co. for Citigroup.

Feedback from attending moms, many younger women who are pregnant or newly married and contemplating motherhood, is that they are drawn to this high-powered program to gain insights into “how she does it”. This is a program aimed at women who are figuring out how to balance career and family. The environment provides role models that can give new ideas about how to creatively structure one's life and be fulfilled at home AND at work.

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