When Consumers Report

Mommy blogging your way to success

By Stephanie Azzaroni

I f you’ve ever thought that the power of the mommy blogger is overrated, consider this quote from The New York Times, which called this demographic "one of the most vocal, quickest to blog, strongest to band-together-and-form-a-social-voice-like-the-Borg-collectives-out there."

The publication was referencing the gale-force storm that broke last fall when McNeil Consumer Healthcare, maker of pain reliever Motrin (and a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson), posted an ad on the Motrin website about "baby wearing"—carrying a child in a baby carrier, such as a sling or a wrap. A number of moms were deeply offended by the ad's implication that they wear their babies to be "trendy" and by the voice-over saying that "in theory" carrying your baby around is a good idea and that "supposedly" it's a real bonding experience.

The moms blogged and tweeted their thoughts, which of course were read by other moms, many of whom also reacted negatively to the ad. Next thing anyone knew, bloggers were demanding that the ad be cancelled and calling for a boycott of the product. Within 48 hours the ad had been pulled and an online apology issued by the brand's marketing executive.

The lesson here for toy manufacturers, toy retailers and every other company targeting the mom market: Mommy bloggers have tremendous influence and impact not only online, but beyond.

Friend or frenemy?

Blogging is increasingly how this generation of moms communicates. They blog about what they know and what they are passionate about—and they know toys, which means they can talk about your product or your store knowledgeably and passionately. When you contact a mom blogger, you're not just reaching one mom with your message, you're simultaneously connecting with hundreds, thousands or even millions of other moms that rely on her advice.

Our advice? Understand the importance of communicating with mommy bloggers, and how to do it properly, to ensure that they are your best friend and not as in J&J's case—your worst enemy.

At Child's Play, we have worked intensively and successfully with mom bloggers for the past several years, through proprietary programs such as Web Mom Directory, a compendium of mom-focused blogs, websites, podcasts, e-zines and newsletters; Team Mom, our own network of mommy bloggers who regularly review our clients' products; and the Bloggers Brunch, a special co-op event featuring exhibitors of products for kids and moms.

Mother knows best

Influential mommy blogs

Celebrity Baby Blog
www.celebritybabies.com

Cool Mom Picks
www.coolmompicks.com

Mamanista
www.mamanista.com

Babble
www.babble.com

Parents GoodyBlog
www.parentsgoodyblog.com

This Full House
www.thisfullhouse.com

*Motivation.* Trash the old perception that these women have nothing better to do, and therefore blog. In many if not all cases, the moms behind the most successful blogs are former marketing professionals who see blogging as a means not only to create and participate in parenting communities while they raise their children, but to develop additional business opportunities for themselves. Keep that in mind when you ask them to give your product or store visibility, ask yourself, what's in it for them?

*Approach.* Do not communicate with mommy bloggers as if they are traditional press. Opt for "short and sweet": Maintain a friendly tone and send only the most important facts (versus reams of useless press releases). Providing a link to a webpage that contains additional information and images of your product or store is always appreciated.

*Expectations.* Mom bloggers are an incredibly enthusiastic group. If they like you and your product, they'll do a wonderful job spreading the word. We have seen not just mentions of our clients but, regularly, lengthy reviews including features and benefits, photos and even videos of our children playing with our clients' toys, links back to clients' websites, and more. You can get far more visibility in a blog than in a typical traditional-media story.

*Evaluation.* Unlike, say, traditional advertising, evaluation of blog results involves more than just numbers. While it's generally better to be covered by a blog that reaches 2 million moms than one that reaches 10,000, there are far more out there the size of the former and far more of the latter. It's essential to recognize that even the smaller blogs are to be valued for their specific focus and very loyal audiences. How your product is positioned in a blog post, the scope of the coverage, the degree of comments from visitors to the blog, and where that blog lands on the search engines—all of these factors are key in evaluating impact and value.

Stephanie Azzaroni is founder and president of Child's Play Communications, New York, an agency specializing exclusively in publicity and marketing communications for products and services targeted to moms. For more information, please visit www.childsplaypr.com or call (212) 388-2909.