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Brands & The Mom Blog: What's Working? What's Next?

Stellar panel to share insights at M2Moms® pre-conference workshop Word-of-mouth + social media = a powerful combination, say experts

OCTOBER 9, 2009, Chicago, IL – One of the year's hottest marketing stories has been the rise of the powerful "mom blogs" – and how they influence the sales of everything from food to cars.

Now, as top marketers join together for **M2Moms® – The Marketing-To-Moms Conference**, show organizers have announced a complimentary, pre-conference workshop devoted exclusively to mom blogs on Tuesday, October 20 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Hard Rock Hotel Chicago. (The actual M2Moms® Conference begins the following day at the Chicago Cultural Center.)

"At times, companies can be stuffy, self-promotional and impersonal," said Workshop speaker Lesley Hettinger, Assistant Manager, Chevrolet Communications. "By contrast, bloggers are funny, outgoing and say it like it is – which readers like because it's a real person giving their point of view."

Hettinger said Chevrolet reaches out to mom bloggers to test drive their cars and share their opinions online, and they often point out features that go unmentioned by the mainstream automotive press, like child seat latches.

"In today's environment, people increasingly trust their peers more than official or traditional sources of news and information," Hettinger said. "With word of mouth being the number one source for automotive information for many consumers, it is essential that we give real people the ability to test out our vehicles and share their impressions with their friends and family."

According to a recent survey by BlogHer/Compass Partners, 36 million U.S. women actively participate in the blogosphere each week. And, half of the women surveyed said blogs influence their purchase decisions.

"The real value of the mom blogger is the relatable, personal experience she brings and her ability to reach the mom next door," said workshop speaker Laura Tomasetti, Managing Director, 360 Public Relations. "Mom blogs give brands an infrastructure for talking to moms at a very grassroots level."

But the power of the mom blogger reaches far beyond her blog, Tomasetti said, extending across other social media platforms and to her offline mom circles as well.

"We're starting to see an over saturation of bloggers," Tomasetti said. "They're targeted for countless events, tours and pitches every week. Campaigns must be sharply on point and on target to engage the established, 'cream of the crop' bloggers."

Liz Gumbinner, Publisher and Editor-in-Chief, CoolMomPicks, said blogs have become such a powerful force for marketers that the FTC has recently issued unprecedented guidelines to regulate bloggers who work with marketers.

"We hope to shed some light on the need for transparency, the pitfalls to avoid in working with bloggers, the untold difference between bloggers and journalists, and other tips for keeping the brand-blog relationship healthy and mutually beneficial," she said.

The two-hour workshop will tackle the issue of both brands' and bloggers' obligations when working together. Panelists will cover a wide range of topics, including:

- Ready Your Brand for a Blogger Campaign
- Setting Goals, Benchmarks & Measurement Criteria
- Identifying Influential Bloggers
- What Bloggers Want from Brands
- Working with Blog Networks
- A Protocol for Engaging in Discussions on Blogs
- Beyond the Blog: Interacting with Bloggers on Twitter
- Integrating Online & Offline Communications

The workshop is included in the M2Moms registration, but reservations are required, as seating is limited. A question-and-answer session will follow.

"Mom blogs may look friendly and folksy, but they can be a serious player in the battle for mom's spending money," said Liz Fongemie, VP of Sales, PME® Enterprises and Project Manager, M2Moms®. "This workshop will cover the strategies marketers need to create a positive buzz in this new and important type of social media."

Now in its fifth successful year, M2Moms® – The Marketing-To-Moms Conference brings together top brand leaders and marketing executives for two days of intensive presentations, case studies, original research, solution-based workshops, with representatives from such prominent brands as Kellogg Company, iRobot, PBS, The Coca-Cola Company, General Motors, Symantec, Stonyfield Farm, Seventh Generation, Hallmark and Allstate Insurance.

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EDITORS: RSVP to Elizabeth Barton-Fongemie at (860) 724-2649 Ext. 11.
E-mail Liz@pme-events.com. For more information, visit <http://www.m2moms.com/>