MARKETING | PERSUASION | RESEARCH | WOMEN

Pretty maids all in a row

How to translate gender-specific insights and the power of word-of-mouth and -mouse marketing into impactful tactics that get results by the author of the business best-seller Marketing to Women.

by **Marti Barletta**

plus ATTACHMENT

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“So what’s new?” Karen asked as they sat down for lunch. “Not much.” Gayle said. “I spent the morning scoping out cars on the Internet. With a second baby, we need something bigger than our sedan, but I can’t make up my mind between a minivan and an SUV.”

“My neighbor just got a new SUV,” Karen said. “She was raving on and on yesterday about this new GPS navigation screen on the dashboard— how it’s such a relief not to have to worry about getting lost every time she has to drive Jack to a new ball field. Sounded pretty cool. You want me to find out what make it is?”

“Sure!” said Gayle. “And find out what dealer she bought it from, too.”

“So what’s new?” Dave asked as they sat down for lunch. “Not much.” Tom said. “Same-old same-old. Hey— did you see the game on Sunday? I couldn’t believe it when they fumbled the ball on the 10-yard line!”

Mary, Mary, quite contrary— How does your garden grow?

With silver bells, and cockle shells and pretty maids all in a row.

Let's say your company has recognized that wooing women customers can grow your share significantly— especially in an industry that has historically viewed men as its primary prospects. Women control an increasing portion of the spending in the category. Trend projections show their influence will continue to grow rapidly. And remarkably, the women's market still remains largely overlooked by most companies in the industry. Uncluttered by competitive clamor, the opportunity offers a wide-open share of wallet to the marketer who recognizes the power in the premise "first in, first win."

Even better, those few marketers who have ventured onto the scene are learning something surprising: When you adapt your marketing to appeal to women, customer satisfaction rises among men as well. Moreover, because women customers return both more loyalty and more referrals to the companies they patronize, every female convert represents more business in the long run than her male counterpart. All of which adds up to a pretty persuasive argument that an incremental marketing dollar applied to marketing to women will return more bang for your marketing buck than a dollar put into conventional gender-neutral marketing, or even into marketing to men.

That is, if you do it right.

The Need to Dig Deeper

Unfortunately, many companies have adopted marketing to women initiatives that have been both costly and ineffective. Because the field of gender-specific marketing is relatively new, few marketers have experience developing programs that tap into the particularities of this consumer group. After all, we've only recently begun to acknowledge that women are different. ("Mary, Mary, quite contrary... Not the same as her friend Harry...")

In fact, women perceive, believe and behave differently than

men— and those differences affect their buying decisions.

Marketing to women can be compared to where marketing to kids was 15 years ago: We know the target has money to spend, and we know they're different— but not too many people know how to put together a comprehensive program women will respond to.

Most articles on the topic offer generic platitudes and stop disappointingly short of concrete applications. General observations such as "You have to understand the target... All women are not the same... Women are complex... Recognize her values and emotions... Women are all about relationships...," while undeniably true, are hardly actionable.

The root of the problem is that most people who know a good deal about gender differences don't know much about marketing; and most people who know a good deal about marketing have only a rudimentary understanding of gender differences.

The end result is that most marketing programs targeted to women fail to maximize the power and potential of this opportunity.

How Does Your Garden Grow?

As a marketer, your goal is to have women lining up to buy your brand. (Crossword clue: Pretty maids all in a row?) Certainly, women are already buying the category. Your challenge is to grab share: to persuade women to choose your brand instead of your competitor's. To ensure that your marketing efforts have high female appeal, you must graft the new findings of modern gender research onto the proven effectiveness of

classic marketing tactics. The resulting “silver bells and cockle shells”—tactics tailored specifically to women’s needs and preferences— will lure women to your brand and away from the competition.

The first hurdle is to get a handle on the differences that really matter. With hundreds of studies sprouting findings in fields as disparate as anthropology, brain structure, human development, sociolinguistics, and more, how do you integrate these into usable insights? The TrendSight Group uses the GenderTrends™ model to organize learnings into three areas: (1) inherent differences in male/female gender culture, (2) differences in how women respond to each of the twelve elements of the marketing mix, and (3) differences in the goals and process of reaching a purchase decision.

Once the key insights are identified, the second step is to translate them into actionable tactics. If women are different from men on a given criterion, what does that actually mean for how you design and conduct your marketing program?

A systematic way to answer this question is to take one key insight and play out the implications across a wide variety of marketing tactics. For example, let’s look at word-of-mouth, and see how it activates and energizes your thinking across sales and marketing, message and medium.

Ten Ways To Translate Word Of Mouth Into Actionable Tactics

1. A New Media Vehicle—The most direct application is simply to get people talking. Whether you call it “buzz marketing,” “viral marketing,” or an idea that reaches “the tipping point,” the new concept of using people as a human marketing medium is a fascinating new tool in the marketing toolbox.

> ***However, what hasn’t been addressed by all the new books on the subject is that word-of-mouth is much more leverageable***

when marketing to women than to men.

The simple act of talking to one another, sharing experiences and observations, is one of the fundamental bonding mechanisms of female gender culture.

Think of it in terms of a social exchange, where each gender has its own currency. Whereas men who find themselves in a conversational situation tend to exchange remarks on impersonal topics such as news, work and sports statistics, women reach out to one another by trading personal stories and highlights from their daily lives.

Consequently, while the initial stimulus to start a buzz about a product or company may be equally likely to attract the attention of both men and women, it is much more likely to be passed along to others by the women.

The key components of buzz marketing remain the same: identifying group influencers (whether you call them thought-leaders, “sneezers,” “connectors,” or mavens); and creating talk value. The essential difference lies in what you choose as your initial stimulus— make sure it’s relevant to women.

For example, a car company trying to create attention by linking itself to a sports milestone might find itself overlooked by some women— or at least unreported by them in a chat with the neighbors. Contrast this with a technique used by Oldsmobile for its Intrigue introduction. Drivers at a tollbooth learned their fare had been paid by the car ahead of them. Diners at a trendy new restaurant discovered their bill had been paid by an anonymous friend. Who could fail to be intrigued by these random acts

of kindness? And what woman could resist telling the story to every friend she spoke to for the next week?

But that's only one way— the most obvious way— to tap into the power of women's word-of-mouth.

2. Media Plan Multiplier—The highly quantitative media planning process often yields several options with identical audience delivery. At that point, media planners apply judgment and secondary criteria to choose among them. To tap into the power of women's word-of-mouth, the tiebreaker that would most extend the impact of the media plan would be reach/frequency among the audience of all women.

This recognizes that...

> ***... a woman is always looking out for information relevant to everyone in her daily circle. Throughout the day, she seeks to reinforce relationships by offering ideas to help with whatever aspect of life comes up in the conversation.***

So even though "Women 35+" is not the target for a youth-oriented brand like the Ford Focus, each woman in this age group has daughters, sisters, nieces, and neighbors who are. The more women you reach with your message, the more you multiply the impact of your media budget.

3. Event Audience Builder— Sponsors of female-targeted events and conferences can make the most of their sponsorship by encouraging invitees to spread the word and bring a friend. Women like being able to pass along the benefits of a worthwhile event, and any event is more appealing when it can be combined with a social outing. Sponsors get a chance to extend their prospect list and attract additional attendees for the event. Financial services companies like American Express and

Merrill Lynch generate word-of-mouth about their investment seminar luncheons when they invite their prospects to RSVP with another guest.

Wachovia Bank boosted its presence at the Southern Women's Show by offering both customers and their friends' ticket discounts on the price of admission. Then Wachovia ensured post-event talk value with a game at its event booth. Instead of a small number of high-value prizes, Wachovia's marketing team chose to award a substantial number of modest prizes. The more winners, they reasoned, the more word-of-mouth.

4. Product Promoter— Increasingly, marketers are encouraging word-of-mouth referrals by offering explicit incentives for their current customers to share their enthusiasm for the product. You could say they are escalating the tactic from "tell a friend" to "sell a friend." Peapod offers a subscriber a $20 rebate on her next grocery order if she signs up a new customer who uses the service.

The Swiffer electrostatic floor mop system delivered in-pack coupons for an additional system purchase— an offer that would clearly have more appeal to someone who hadn't just bought a new system for herself! But assuming the buyer was pleased with her purchase, what woman wouldn't be pleased to pass along the $5 savings to a friend? "Waste not, want not"— and so she spreads the word.

5. E-mail Emissary— The pervasiveness of Internet access and the popularity of e-mail chain letters has inspired an electronic version of word-of-mouth. The most straightforward is the ubiquitous "Forward this to your friends" suggestion on most e-zines and web pages.

A new variation taps into women's urge to improve the world: Each visitor to the targeted website triggers a corporate contribution to a worthy cause. Companies supporting The Breast Cancer Site (thebreastcancersite.com) count the clicks to generate mammograms for poor women.

A U.K. company called Thames Water, contributes cash to a developing nation fresh water project every time a two million-click threshold is passed. More clicks mean more money— and women are eager to help by asking their friends to do the same.

6. Advertising Enhancer— While other differentiating "female factors" will impact strategy, the word of mouth phenomenon primarily affects execution. Brands that want the word passed need to make it easily transmittable. The execution needs to be not only memorable but also "tellable." To get word-of-mouth working in your favor, you'll want to consider three executional devices as you develop your campaign: stories, soundbites, and strong visuals.

Stories— It's a lot easier to play back 30 seconds with a simple story line than a 30-second collage of images and music. Take Saturn for example: "The girl goes to pick up her first Saturn, and the whole dealership comes out and has a little party when they hand her the keys. And then they take a picture of her and post it on their customer bulletin board— you know, like in the pediatrician's office!" Not only does that get across Saturn's "customer first" message, but because it doesn't rely on symbolism or abstract imagery, it doesn't need a lot of explanation to recount.

Or think about Tide's "real moms" approach: "Have you seen that Tide commercial where the mom is sorting her son's T-shirts and the sayings on them are so awful that she'd almost rather they would fade out instead of coming clean in the wash?" Any mother of a teenager can relate to that scenario— and that makes it more likely to come up in an everyday conversation.

Soundbites— Most of us have succumbed to a memorable phrase at some point or another— and found ourselves transmitting it almost without meaning to. Some people use the term "memes" and describe them as the communication equivalent of genes: self-contained little packets of information that get transmitted from one individual to the next, intact and complete. Some recent examples include: "It's not delivery, it's DiGiorno!" and the "$...$...$...Priceless" litany from MasterCard. Of course, the absolute classic in the women's word-of-mouth marketing genre is the '70s shampoo commercial which chanted,

"She'll tell two friends, and she'll tell two friends, and so on, and so on, and so on..."

Strong visuals— The visual equivalent of a soundbite, in this case the “tellable hook” is a single powerful image, a mnemonic whose mention immediately delivers the brand’s marketing proposition. Think of how a woman chatting with a friend about skin drying out in the wintertime might bring up the giant alligator from Lubriderm as conversational shorthand. Other examples that transmit well in the course of normal conversation are the Oppenheimer Funds interlocking hands, the Taco Bell Chihuahua and the Gateway cowhide.

7. Revelation Research— An indirect use of word-of-mouth can help you come up with the “tellable hooks” you need for your ad message. Try a new twist on focus groups. Instead of limiting your research to seeking consumer reactions, invite women to have a more proactive part in developing your message.

Get a few female brand enthusiasts together in a room with women who are unaware of your product, or even resistant to it, and watch them role-play how they might tell a friend or coworker about it. Not only will you learn more about how women create a buzz, you may even make a few converts who will go out and pass the word themselves.

8. Brand Champions— As a matter of fact, many marketers use exactly that technique when they recruit “circles of influence” to assist their prospecting and recruiting efforts. New York Life set up Women’s Advisory Boards comprised of accomplished, high-profile women in several major markets. The primary purpose of the Boards was to create networking opportunities for the participants and to ask for their help in creating contacts and alliances. But the halo effect was to create a group of successful women engaged in the company’s mission and proactively supportive in accomplishing its goals. These “brand champions” were highly effective word-of-mouth ambassadors for the brand.

9. Referral Reward— Most established, successful salespeople will tell you referrals from current customers are the most productive source of new business.

It is well known that women provide far more referrals than men.

One statistic from the insurance industry shows that over the lifetime of a customer, women provide 28 referrals, whereas men provide 13.

One savvy salesperson in Investors Group High Net Worth sales force recognized the opportunity and made an extra effort to generate word of mouth among his women customers. Every time one of them sent him a referral, he sent her a thank you note and a jar of his homemade apricot jam with a name-customized label. This personal touch was so unexpected in his world of big-money investments that many of his clients would call to thank him for the thank you! And you can bet it gave them something to talk about to their high net worth women friends.

10.“Surrogate” Word-of-Mouth— Word-of-mouth really means real women talking directly to other real women. But there are also a couple of “first cousin” applications of the word-of-mouth principle that merit mention.

Testimonials— Even an indirect version of word-of-mouth can be very persuasive in generating interest and credibility among other women. One marketer who applies this principle very effectively is Coldwater Creek, a catalog selling primarily apparel and jewelry.

Throughout the catalog, the company posts excerpts of customer letters they have received. “‘I recently ordered a watercolor skirt and shell to wear to my daughter’s wedding. It looks absolutely fabulous. The material is exquisite. You have the classiest operation in the catalog business.’ Diane Fallon, California.” The details and colloquialisms of the comments and the use of full name attributions both convincingly convey the impression of real women you can believe in and whose opinions you can trust.

Trusted Spokesperson— Whether the spokesperson is a high-profile celebrity or a credentialed expert, the key to this variation of word-of-mouth is the degree of trust involved. When Rosie O’Donnell’s enthusiastic remarks about Tickle Me Elmo propelled

the toy to #1 on toddler moms' Christmas list, it was because moms believed Rosie really meant it— not just because she was paid to say so. And when Dr. Randy Shelerud is cited in the Mayo Clinic Women's HealthSource newsletter, women accept his opinion— and probably pass it along— because they trust the Mayo Clinic's expertise and unbiased judgment.

The 10 tactics above show that there are many ways to leverage women's word-of-mouth across your marketing program. The power of the strategy lies in its ability to generate awareness and credibility for your brand.

Awareness— Once you light the fuse, word-of-mouth is free; but how far it travels and how hot it burns is unpredictable. That will depend on the content's newsworthiness to your target, which will in turn depend on how relevant she sees it to be, or how important, unusual, or amusing.

Credibility— Even more importantly, word-of-mouth is almost unmatched in its ability to persuade.

> ***Nothing is more believable to an individual than a personal recommendation from someone she knows.***

This exploration is just one example of how a gender-specific difference, viewed through the lens of marketing expertise and experience, can result in a major boost to your marketing to women initiative. Dozens of other male/female differences, translated through the same process of applied marketing expertise, yield equally impactful results. For example, women approach the buying process differently from the way men do, structure their thinking and lifestyles according to a different focus strategy, hold different attitudes and value rankings, express themselves according to different gender culture paradigms— and all of these elements have their own sets of marketing and sales implications.

By thinking through how these principles apply to your own industry and segment of women consumers, you will be able to tailor your tactics to

your unique business situation and marketing goals. And that will earn you the competitive edge you need to create leadership in the women's market.

Marti Barletta, author of *Marketing to Women,* is a recognized authority on building marketing, sales, recruiting and retention results through better communications with women. A Wharton MBA, she honed her talents via a distinguished career at top-flight agencies like McCann-Erickson, TLK, FCB and Frankel, and work on blue-chip brands such as Kraft, Kodak and Allstate. She is currently CEO/ President of The TrendSight Group, a consultancy specializing in marketing to women.

Barletta's dynamic style, command of her subject and passion for her topic make her a popular speaker at corporations and conferences. Combining gender expertise, marketing experience and a lively sense of humor, she delivers eye-opening insights and practical "how to" pointers that audiences find enlightening, entertaining and easy to apply.

She has been quoted on *CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News*, *ABC Money Matters,* and *CNN*, as well as in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Fast*

Company, Business Week, Brandweek, *Entrepreneur, Ad Age,* and many other publications worldwide.

Marketing to Women is in its seventh printing and is available in 13 languages, including Japanese, Chinese, Russian and Brazilian Portuguese. (The revised second edition, with substantial new material, will be released in January 2006). Her second book, ***Trends***, co-authored with Tom Peters, was published in July 2005, and features a new focus on the golden bulls-eye of target marketing, PrimeTime Women. Additional information, strategies and tactics on that topic will be presented in her upcoming book, *PrimeTime Women: The Marketing Bulls-Eye,* which is expected out in early 2007.

To learn more about Marti, The TrendSight Group, subscribe to the free Gender Trends Newsletter and read Marti's blog, visit her website here: TrendSight.com

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Marketing to Women

How to understand, reach and increase your share of the world's largest market segment. Excerpted from the best-selling book, written by one of today's most respected experts in the field.

by **Marti Barletta**

a 58 page ebook in downloadable PDF

In *Marketing to Women*, marketing expert Martha Barletta presents a compelling business case that shows how the buying power of women drives sales and profits in virtually every industry, including financial services, automotive, computers, health care and home improvement, as well as for business-to-business and companies targeting the

entrepreneurial market. A concise summary of key gender findings from fields as varied as anthropology, biochemistry and psychology serves as the foundation for her observations. Her proprietary *GenderTrends* marketing model then explains why women reach different brand purchase decisions than men and how they react differently to the 12 marketing elements marketers use to influence those decisions. Loaded with real-life examples and specific "how to" techniques. *Marketing to Women* shows readers how to use gender-savvy strategies to outsmart the competition.

With carefully researched gender expertise, 20 years of hands-on marketing experience and a subtle sense of humor, Barletta provides a detailed field guide to successfully access the largest untapped market in the world— women!