

## **MARKETING TO KIDS**

### **A Measure Of Success > Lucy Hughes, VP, Initiative Media**

If we understand what motivates a parent to buy a product, that if we could develop a creative commercial, you know a 30 second commercial that encourages the child to whine or show some sort of importance in it that the child understands and is able to reiterate to the parents, then we're successful.

... With the nag study we were really looking at moms with children between the ages of three and eight. Because the primary focus or recipient of the study their key target was children between those ages. So that's why we focused with that. You know it would be fun to go back out in the field and stretch that a little bit to go from three to eight to like include nine to twelve year olds and thirteen to seventeen year olds.

### **Kids: An Influencer Market > Lucy Hughes, VP, Initiative Media**

Children today get a lot of allowance so they have a lot of money coming into them from their parents and grandparents and friends that they can spend. They represent a huge influencer market and this is what the nag study really looks at the amount of influence that they exert over what their parents are buying. And I just read an article that said that today's generation of consumers are about thirty times more powerful than the baby boom generation.

But you're starting to see you know more expensive products now being targeted at children because you know they do have an influence on their parents purchasing behaviour. More high end luxury items whether it's a cruise line, a cruise vacation. A trip you know, going to the theme park, cars, PCs. Yeah with cars it was very interesting. We worked with a radio station and the radio station was targeted towards children primarily it was kids' music.

But obviously when children or children listen to the radio they're often listening with their mom when they're in a car. And so we had a car manufacturer who thought what a great opportunity. I can talk to the mom and to the child at the same time. There are many, many features in a car that really do appeal to kids.

You know when we bought our car you know, we had to buy one that was big enough so that they had enough arm space cause they wanted to be able to watch their DVDs. You know that was a factor though in the type of car that we ultimately bought. So children do have a lot of influence now.

### **It Helps When My Kids Nag Me > Lucy Hughes, VP, Initiative Media**

I, I appreciate it if the kids nag me because I am the indulger, I'm the indulger parent because I'm working full time and I don't have enough time to figure out what are those ten products my children really, really want for Christmas or for their birthdays. So having them nag me and then I can understand through their nagging what's really important to them and what they're just you know, a flimsy little wish. So to me it makes my life easier. Maybe, maybe I'm different I don't know, but that certainly helps my life.

### **Response To Critics > Lucy Hughes, VP, Initiative Media**

So there are critics of the nag study but what we have to remember is that children's advertising is highly regulated in North America. As well corporations for the most part are socially responsible. We also have to remember that the role the parents' play. As a parent myself I know that there are certain networks on television that my children are allowed to watch and certain networks and day parks they aren't allowed to watch. I have to be involved in their media experience to safeguard them against any exploitations that might occur.

### **What's Next? > Lucy Hughes, VP, Initiative Media**

We'd like to take the nag study to Europe next to understand if we find the same type of parents. Do we still find the four segments of the kid's pals, the indulgers, the conflicted and the bare necessities? And do children nag the same way either with persistence or with importance? We tend to think that nagging is universal and that we will find the same characteristics regardless of the country.

### **The Drool Factor > Dr. Susan Linn, Prof. Of Psychiatry, Baker Children's Center, Harvard**

Today corporations are marketing to infants. If you read advertising magazines or trade journals, people talk about cradle to grave brand loyalty. You know if you don't get a child by two or by six you won't have them at all. Or if you get a child by six you'll have them for life. So all of a sudden infants are now fair game. And it's been discovered that six months old, children as young as six months actually respond to brands and recognize brands. And so it's like the drool factor. The little logo right here and the baby looks down and sees it. So they are now being targeted by marketers.

... Marketing to children has just escalated in the past ten years. It doubled from 1992 to 1997 the amount of money the corporations were spending on marketing to children. Well during that time childhood obesity has become a major public health problem in North America. The largest advertisers on television are foods high in fat and high in sugar and high in calories. Well is there a connection? I think so.

... Corporations have found because babies can be imprinted with brands, that they can do things like create board books for babies based on food characters. So there's the Cheerio's play book, or the M&M play book that are published by reputable publishing companies. And are given to babies. So babies are in their early years having this experience of cuddling with caretakers, or parents. And being read to, which is really important experience of childhood. And they're associating those warm cuddly wonderful feelings with candy. Or with breakfast cereal. I mean that's from the very beginning.

There's evidence that the frontal cortex isn't developed until, fully developed I think until 16. So children's brains are still forming even as adolescents. Adolescents may look like adults but they're not adults. They don't think real clearly. They tend to be overwhelmed by their hormones and their emotions. And they're very vulnerable and so they're vulnerable to manipulation. I think it's wrong for corporations to exploit their vulnerabilities to make a profit.

### **The Key To Happiness > Dr. Susan Linn, Prof. Of Psychiatry, Baker Children's Center, Harvard**

The corporate message that children are being implanted with is that buying things will make you happy. Things will make you happy. And in fact the research shows that that's not true. What makes people happy is challenges at work. And good relationships. It's not what you own. But that's what children are being taught over and over and over again.

And children are bombarded with corporate messages from the moment they wake up in the morning to the moment that they go to bed at night. And even in school. And they can't escape them they're everywhere.

### **The Use Of Psychologists > Dr. Susan Linn, Prof. Of Psychiatry, Baker Children's Center, Harvard**

The use of psychologists in helping corporations market to children is very troubling. Psychologists are supposed to do good. They're supposed to help people and marketing to children doesn't help them. It's not helpful to them. And that's trouble and it's something that professional organizations are actually starting to take up. And psychologists are useful to marketers in all sorts of ways.

For one thing they have a good handle on child development which corporations can exploit. So psychologists know a lot about teenagers. And know about teenagers being rebellious and, for instance. And can help corporations plan strategies that will exploit that rebelliousness. You know exploit developmental vulnerabilities. So that's one thing, that's one way.

They can also help corporations understand what children like and don't like. And they can also conduct market research and focus groups. And help corporations understand the results of focus groups. But it's a real twist on what all those skills are, are supposedly for.

### **The Battle For Kids' Minds > Dr. Susan Linn, Prof. Of Psychiatry, Baker Children's Center, Harvard**

If parents limit television, well what about the Internet? Well what about music? Well what about videos, what about movies? I mean you would be fighting with your child from morning till night all the time. If you really were doing your job protecting children from marketing. And then there's all the marketing that's going on in schools where corporations have a, essentially a captive audience.

So schools are desperate for money because there's not enough federal funding for schools. And they're turning to corporations because they feel like when they get these computers they're free. Well you know they're not free, the children pay for them because of the advertising. Children pay for advertising. They pay with their health. They pay with their sense of well-being. It's wrong.

I happen to feel very strongly about freedom of speech and about the First Amendment here in the United States. And I will defend the First Amendment up, down and backwards. But a corporation is not a person. And marketing is not free speech.

### **Merchandising > Dr. Susan Linn, Prof. Of Psychiatry, Baker Children's Center, Harvard**

You know Raffi left the Vancouver, you know this, Vancouver International Children's Festival because there was too much corporate sponsorship. And corporate marketing. I mean Raffi is an example of somebody who does wonderful work to children. But I don't see Raffi pajamas. And I don't see Raffi sheets. And I don't see babies being imprinted with Raffi. I don't see Raffi computer games. Raffi is not like Pokeman. He's a person who does wonderful singing for children and creates wonderful things for children.

### **It's Ok If It Doesn't Work > Joe Badaracco, Prof. Of Business Ethics,**

## **Harvard Business School**

Well on the question of advertising to young kids I'm inclined to say that it's fine so long as it doesn't work very well. I think I'm saying that as much as a parent as some sort of authority on business ethics. Most parents have probably been in these awful situations where the advertising actually has worked to a degree and you can't get out of a store without either severely disappointing your child or creating a scene. Or else buying something that the kid has had etched into his or her mind.

I think that this is probably an area that requires careful guidelines. As a practical matter it's hard to imagine anybody, any country terminating advertising to young kids. It's going to continue. So people need to work together I think and find, and look at the facts about how powerful it is. And my hunch is as time goes by these ads will grow only more powerful. And see what sort of guidelines might be appropriate.

At some point a company might be succeeding in getting the kids to like the brand and fight to buy the product but they're turning off the parent. So to some extent there are probably some built in limitations. But if you ask me to imagine a world where psychologists use all of their skills to assist extremely sophisticated campaigns. The result of which is that if McDonald's gets to a kid by the age of four it's got that kid for life. I'd have serious reservations about the ethics of that and I'd be inclined towards laws and regulations to control it.

## **When Corporations Go Too Far > Chris Barrett & Luke McCabe, First "Corporately-Sponsored" University Students**

### ***Chris***

We didn't want like to wear shirts in the classroom and distract from our education and other student's education.

And I think that's when corporations will go to far when like the chalkboard is sponsored by some corporation name or there's like a big banner on the wall because like they paid for the renovation in the building. I don't think, I think that's when it goes too far.

I think if it stays out in the hallway it would be okay but once you enter the education area then the kids need to learn and make up choices for themselves what they think of corporations and what they think about what they want to do it for the rest of their lives.