



Woman Trends

Summer
2006

Connecting you with 80% of primary purchasing decision makers . . .

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WORKING IT

into the workforce. Most moms bring with them prior work experience and an ability to prioritize and listen. Many employers feel they have a more compassionate leadership style than childless workers. A study by The Center for Work-Life policy found that the vast majority of "highly qualified" women (74%) return to the workplace after having children and, on average women are out of the workforce only 2.2 years.

Programs to help moms stay in the loop of industry trends are sprouting up at colleges and companies nationwide. Dartmouth's business school has launched a new 11-day program which provides business and job search skills and career coaching called "Back in Business: Invest in Your Return." Some companies offer what they call "on-ramping" courses to ease the transition from home to work, teaching women how to organize resumés with "child-breaks," and allowing new moms "adjunct" positions which involve the occasional project, training and job counseling. Forward thinking Deloitte & Touche created such a program, called "Personal Pursuits," which permits employees to take leave of up to five years, all the while completing paid projects at home and interacting with mentors and trainers to keep skills sets fresh. (*Wall Street Journal, USA Today*). (Continued on page 2)

Marketing, Brands, & Advertising

Psst...Pass it On: An ongoing survey by the Keller Fay Group finds that Americans mention specific brands by name an average of 56 times per week, with compliments outweighing complaints by 6-to-1. Seeking to harness the power of water cooler, lunch counter, and soccer sideline conversations, Procter & Gamble recently unveiled a new marketing endeavor called Vocalpoint – a grown-up version of its very successful teen word-of-mouth program, "Tremor," launched in 2001. Vocalpoint consists of an army of 600,000 moms nationwide who spread the word on P&G products, as well as those made by other companies, including everything from dish soap to television shows. Vocalpoint moms are typically between the ages of 28 and 45 and speak to 25-30 other women each day (whereas the typical mother talks to just five).

Blue Moon beer, a "craft brew" distributed by Molson Coors Brewing Co., is relying entirely on pub chatter to drive sales. So far, the strategy has been successful – Blue Moon has experienced three straight years of double-digit growth with zero ad support. (*Advertising Age, BusinessWeek*)

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Welcome Back, Moms: The search for skilled labor has many companies looking to entice the best and brightest of stay-at-home moms back

In the Closet

Not Quite "Haute": A new category of fashion is emerging that captures some of the exclusivity and personal touch of runway couture, but at a price that non-starlets can afford. "Semi-couture," also known as "demi-couture," is the term used by designers to describe clothes that are machine sewn (unlike haute couture which, by definition, is handmade) but available in limited quantities, sometimes as few as eight or ten of each piece. Seams are often loosely stitched so they can be ripped apart and finished by a tailor.

Isaac Mizrahi, Dolce & Gabbana, Chanel, and Escada have all launched "semi" lines recently, selling at retailers such as Bergdorf Goodman and Neiman Marcus. Though semi-couture gowns sell for a fraction of the price of true haute couture, at \$5,000-\$10,000 they are still out of reach for the average women.

Some scoff at this new branch of fashion, however, dismissing it as a marketing ploy designed to capture a bigger slice of luxury apparel spending. And why not? Sales for that category reached \$10 billion in the United States in 2005, and are expected to grow by 6%-8% a year through 2008. Still, the French Couture Federation – the official bestower of the "haute couture" designation hardly said, "Oui Oui!" In fact, the president of the Federation called semi-couture "glorified ready-to-wear." (*Wall Street Journal, London Daily Mail*) (Continued on page 4)