

Top Tool for Targeting Teens

Your target audience is teenage girls, and you want to place a banner ad on a website where they gather in big numbers. Do you know which site has the highest percentage of teen girl visitors? Or let's say you have TV dollars in your budget and you need to reach African American teens. Which program will give you the most bang for your buck?

Teen Media Monitor, a new quarterly publication developed by The Kaiser Family Foundation, can answer these and many other questions for non-profit groups involved in teen issues. The publication provides up-to-the-minute data on how teenagers are using the Internet; which TV shows they watch, magazines they read, and movies they attend; and plenty of other useful facts.

If you would like to receive *Teen Media Monitor*, you must sign a release form, and please note that while the findings can help you plan your outreach more effectively, you may not cite figures contained in the publication in any of your communications, research, or documents (which is why the questions posed in the first paragraph are not answered here. If you simply have to know, get the April 2003 issue.) To start your free subscription, contact Theresa Boston at 650.854.9400 or send an email to tboston@kff.org. ■



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a goodman

GOOD IDEAS FOR GOOD CAUSES

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When the email you send is Requested, Anticipated, Relevant, and Easy to digest, it can advance your mission and build your audience.

You're sleep-deprived, a bit overwhelmed, and completely in love—in other words, the parent of a brand new baby. In between diaper changes and midnight feedings, you steal a few moments to check your email, and amidst the offers of instant wealth and infallible diet plans you read the following:

"Now that your baby is one month old, his smiles and responses to your voice are his way of saying how much he loves you and trusts you to look out for his best interests. One way you can help keep him safe is to choose the best bottles and nipples for him to suck on."

In two more concise paragraphs, the email provides enough information to help you shop smarter and reduce your baby's exposure to potentially toxic chemicals.

Why Effective Email is RARE

In thousands of homes across the US, new parents are receiving messages like this each month thanks to "First Steps," a thoughtfully designed program of the Children's Health Environmental Coalition. First Steps is successfully advancing CHEC's

mission while building its audience because it capitalizes on the four factors which can make email a more effective communications tool for any public interest organization.



► Launched in 1992 by Nancy and Jim Chuda, CHEC educates the public—specifically parents and caregivers—about environmental toxins that can affect children’s health. With a full-time staff of five, 1500 members, and an annual operating budget under \$1 million, the organization could be categorized as small, but the board includes such high profile names as Erin Brockovich, Olivia Newton-John, and Kelly Preston, and its aspirations exceed its size. Each year, 3.9 million babies are born in America, and CHEC views their parents as a primary target audience.

Sword understood, however, that while these broadcasts would help educate new parents, nine minutes were hardly enough to cover all potential toxic threats. So she made sure the segments would direct viewers to CHEC’s website (www.checnet.org). Unfortunately, CHEC’s site was not designed to follow-up on the video segments, a major new section that would cover some of this territory wouldn’t be ready until February 2002, and Sword was beginning to suspect that email might be a better mechanism for handling parents delivered by the Newborn Channel.

So how does a nonprofit with modest resources reach and teach such a large audience? In this case, the answer begins with “Not Under My Roof,” a 15-minute educational video that CHEC produced in 2001. “We had a wonderful product that was clearly geared to young parents,” says Elizabeth Sword, CHEC’s executive director, “but we didn’t know how we were going to distribute it.” Fortunately, Carrie Cook, a board member with media experience, knew the ideal outlet: The Newborn Channel.

Distributed via satellite exclusively to 1,050 hospitals, The Newborn Channel reaches 63% of new parents nationwide. CHEC purchased nine minutes of advertising time per day and divided “Not Under My Roof” into three 3-minute segments that could appear in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Daily broadcasts were scheduled to run for one year beginning November 16, 2001, for a total cost of \$100,000.

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She shared this hunch with Larry Eason of The e Organization, an Internet strategy consulting firm, and Eason was inclined to agree. “Parents want new information,” he says, “but not all at once.” Eason told Sword that email would be an appropriate tool for dividing the follow-up information into bite-size morsels that could be delivered over time, but he set out four requirements that each email had to meet:

Requested

“Email needs to be requested,” Eason asserts, “because anything that’s not requested is considered to be spam, and that’s destructive for nonprofit organizations.” Newborn Channel viewers (and any other visitors) who arrive at CHEC’s site find a link to the First Steps program on the home page and have the opportunity to opt-in for free monthly dispatches.

Anticipated

Through the first two years of life, new parents tend to mark their child’s age in

months, so the beginning of each new month is a significant anniversary. CHEC schedules its email dispatches to arrive on this noteworthy day for *each* subscriber, which allows them to anticipate its arrival. “If the recipient has a sense of when the email will come,” Eason says, “it increases the chances it will be read.”

Relevant

“Email has to be as relevant as possible,” Eason adds, “and that’s where CHEC hit a home run.” Dr. Harvey Karp, a nationally recognized pediatrician who serves on CHEC’s board, drafted the text for the first 12 monthly dispatches. Each monthly message opens with a description of where the child is developmentally (sitting up, crawling, etc.), followed by a focus on the particular environmental toxin (or set of toxins) to which she is now exposed, and concluding with steps parents can take to protect their child from these health threats.

Easy to Digest

“People are not comfortable reading on a computer screen,” says Eason, “so we encouraged CHEC to keep their emails as short as possible and to break them up into manageable paragraphs.” Even when the topics veer towards phthalates, endocrine disrupters and other highly technical

matters, the emails are written for a lay readership. And the *tone* of each message, Eason notes, is another element to consider. “We also encouraged CHEC to make the emails as encouraging and positive as possible. People are tired of hearing about all the problems.” Action steps at the end of each email always give readers an avenue to a solution.

As of April 1, 2003, over 5,000 parents had enrolled in First Steps, a significant number for an organization with less than a third as many members. CHEC has expanded the scope of the email series to serve pregnant mothers as well as parents with children *over* one year old, but even with this growth, Sword estimates current operating costs for the program at roughly \$1,000 per month. “For an organization our size,” she says, “it’s highly cost effective. We can support 20,000 subscribers in this program as easily as 2,000.”

More subscribers appear likely. CHEC will begin advertising First Steps in *Healthy Pregnancy* magazine (which reaches 1.2 million women) later this year, and a survey of current subscribers shows they are happy to receive these emails and look forward to more—a RARE reaction by any measure. ■

