

Lip - Sticking

December 16, 2004

Smart Woman Online: Terri Whitesel

At **Lip-sticking** we know that marketing to women is not so much of a mystery as a research project. Too many small business owners, however, think they know how to market to women because they-- well, are women, or they're married to one, or they know one.

The reality is something quite different. Even some women need to learn more about this topic, and we've found a fantastic woman who can truly help. Our Smart Woman Online this week has a [Web site](#) that exists to take the mystery out of reaching the women's market.

Welcome **Terri Whitesel**, and her team of marketers, as she reveals some of the secrets you should learn about marketing to women, offline and on:

Lip-sticking: Terri, our connection just goes to show what a small, small world we live in. We met you through another delightful lady, Mary Hunt, who now works for you. Jane wants to thank Mary for the introduction-- because your Web site works for us on so many levels! But, where did you get the title of your business? Give our readers some insight into how you chose *Interpret-
Her*[™] as your [Web site](#) title.

Terri: Though women make up 50% of the worlds population, have more earning power today than ever before in our history, and more learning power in terms of their level of education, much of the world still doesn't "get us."

When I began researching the woman's market through books, articles and newsletters I found a common thread running through all the material—the need to truly understand how differently women learn, communicate and make decisions.

The word *interpret* literally means to explain or translate, or to give one's own conception of a thing. The challenge that we all face, not only in business, but in global economies and cultures is to better understand each other, to *interpret* what the other person wants and needs from us, or from a product, or service. From this universal need, came the name. *Interpret-Her's* goal is to keep companies on track, much like a mediator keeps two parties talking, we find out what women want to talk about and then make it happen.

Lip-sticking: You have some excellent resources that speak to the women's market, on your site. Can you give us some indication of your visitor stats: specifically, we're wondering if you get more women than men (as our [women's marketing site](#) does) to your site, when, in reality, it's designed to teach EVERYONE how to market to women.

Terri: We just launched our site in September and have not begun the active market push, so the stats are too premature to tell. I can say that it is our intention to educate our clients and prospects and to be looked at as a resource for them.

In many ways, the site is **more for men** than women. The areas responsible for developing products and service delivery in many companies are guided by men. These facts and figures provide the foundation needed to build a financial case for what may be a 180-degree shift in their market approach.

Lip-sticking: Tell us something (in your own words...not copy from the site) about your *Interpret-Her*[™] team. Are you open to adding someone from that 'other' gender, or is your goal to keep this female-focused?

Terri: When I began to develop the concept for [Interpret-Her™](#) I knew from the beginning that this was not a venture I wanted to do alone. I believe strongly that you must practice what you preach. "Going it alone" -- while at the same time educating clients about the collaborative strength of women -- would be hypocritical from my point of view.

My direct team is all female. Women come "pre-wired" to know what makes this market tick, our job is to make it tick faster and with more reliability. However, some of the businesses doing the most exciting work in new areas of marketing such as neuroeconomics and Consumer Generated Media are directed by men. (*hear, hear!*)

We are establishing relationships with these "partners" to deliver the best and most current thinking to our clients ...the fact that a man or woman sits behind this work is irrelevant. We see you have a background in medicine. What a coincidence! **Jane** has a background - sort of - in medicine. We were a veterinarian's assistant before working at a local medical facility in gastroenterology... before becoming writers and experts on the women's market.

I'd like to add one last thought -- women have been ignored in the market for years -- and we haven't liked it much. I would expect men to feel the same way if we ignored them. Our business is not about "her against him," it is about delivering the best product for all the market and research has shown us that if we serve a women's need for simplicity, time savings and value he will love the product just as much she!

So, does this mean we might look for a man to become part of the *Interpret-Her* team? **Absolutely** -- if he gets *it*, if he is passionate about what we do and most importantly, if he sees the bottom line value our services deliver.

Lip-sticking: Do you think this background helps you in your endeavors to teach others about women? We're thinking, specifically, of that woman's "caring" element... the one that says we bandage bruised knees and soothe hurt feelings.

Terri: My early years in healthcare gave me an incredible respect for women in the care-giving field. I could tell many stories about the strength, compassion and caring in the nurses, nurse educators and patient educators I had the privilege to work with. I have seen women translate their innate abilities as a mother, family peacemaker and problem solver into customer centric product line development.

The results were products and services, co-created with patients and their families in mind—the end result, programs that met the entire needs of the customer, i.e., education, psychological, and healthcare needs. I have built my approach on this co-creation model and continue to build upon it today.

Lip-sticking: How has the Internet impacted your life, both personal and professional?

Terri: First and foremost, the Internet has given me time and the ability to be connected with friends, family, business partners and the world. It has transformed my work, some of the *Interpret-Her* team is scattered across the country, but we are as close as a click of the mouse. This technology allows us to tap the best talent needed for each jobs' unique requirements and enables us to tune into the latest thinking in marketing from visionaries across the globe. That would have been impossible 10 years ago.

I remember the first time I really "got" the power of the Internet. It was 1995, I was sitting in a class at [Georgia Tech](#), learning about this new thing called the Internet when a flash came across my mind that said, "This thing, whatever

it is, has the power to change the world and, if we are lucky, **to bring the world together** so we better understand each other."

I believe it is doing just that.

On a more personal level, I use the Internet to speak to my sister who lives in Germany over VOIP technology (Voice Over Internet Protocol); I "talk" to my niece in London using IM (instant messenger); and to my family and friends on a daily basis, passing humorous clips, family photos and those all important "did you see this?" messages! I can't imagine life without the Internet.

Lip-sticking: How much shopping do you do online? What kinds of things do you think are great for online buying, and what kinds of things are just not suitable to online buying?

Terri: I am an Internet marketers dream! According to [The American Interactive Consumer Survey](#), \$106.5 billion was conducted in direct online consumer spending this year- I am proud to say I have contributed to that figure!

Using this holiday season as an example, I ordered at least 80% of the gifts for my family and friends online.

I am no different than the women's market we report on, we are all strapped for time. What drives me online is what drives other women online - the ability to comparison shop, find exactly what one needs and leave the packing and wrapping and mailing to the online vendor. All this time and convenience saving is the reward for doing business on line. *(is there an echo here? who else tells you that, dear reader?)*

I realize I am not the average consumer, but our research about women and their use of the Internet indicates that online shopping has nowhere to go but

up. Those generations who grew up on the Internet - Gen X, Y & the Millennials will be willing to buy almost everything online.

In many ways, I view the future retail store as a place to “test drive” a product which I can order, customized exactly to my specifications. There will always be those “must have now” items, but the Net is closing the gap on many products that, in the past, we would not have bought without seeing, touching and feeling. In the future, technology will come closer to closing the gap by providing richer, more interactive experiences on line.

Lip-sticking: Tell us what your aspirations are for 2005? We know you are working on microfinance, something we wrote about in last week’s interview, but which bears repeating—especially at this time of the year.

Terri: When developing [Interpret-Her](#) I established a program called *Woman Reach*[™]. It is my way of giving back. As successful businesswoman in America, I believe it is my responsibility to help women around the globe lead a safer, healthier, and more empowered life. To that end, *Interpret-Her* will become more involved in the planning and acquisition of funding to support the development of a documentary film on micro-lending.

This film will bring the incredible success stories of women moving beyond poverty to a world audience; and if we are very lucky, a corporate sponsor will take up micro-lending as a sustainable cause of choice.

Unrelated to micro-lending, I feel we sit at a **potential crossroads** in marketing that can lead us down a very tricky path - I am referring to a hot new topic - neuromarketing. This new field, that of “getting inside” consumers minds through the power of MRI’s, has a potential for great abuse. *Interpret-Her* will be seeking ways to keep our eye and ears on this growing trend and the implications that come from this new collaboration of marketing and science.

Lip-sticking: We love your *Her-Facts*[™] page, and the *Lose-Her*[™] Awards and *Win-Her*[™] Awards pages. How much brainstorming went into developing those?

Terri: The *Her Facts* section came naturally out of our mission to educate our site visitors and clients. We conduct ongoing research into the vertical markets where woman's buying power has become dominant - travel, real estate, healthcare, to name a few. These markets mirror what we track in *Her Facts* as well as the background and experience of the members of my team.

The *Win-Her* and *Lose-Her* Awards are a great way for us to showcase marketing to women's Best and Worse Practices. Almost daily, we see examples where corporations suffer the wrath of female consumers who, through the Net, raise their collective voices in protest. We also are seeing those few companies who understand that it is more than just adding "pink" to their current content and communications.

These companies, the *Early-Adopt-Hers*[™] as we call them, know what it takes to differentiate their products and services by working with and through women.

Lip-sticking: If you could give a small business owner one piece of advice on how to reach the women's market in the New Year, what would that be?

Terri: Walk in her shoes. Go into your store, go online, call your support desk and listen to how she is treated EVERY step of the way. Never dismiss anything she says as trite or not worthy of exploration. Make corrections in those areas that you find need it. If you pay close attention to every detail that impacts



her purchase, you will improve your bottom line.

Lip-sticking: So... why don't you have a blog?

[Terri](#): Stay tuned! ☺

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There you have it, dear readers. The secret to learning how to market to women successfully is in the interpretation. We could not agree more! Stay tuned...as [Terri](#) says...for the announcement of her blog.

What's not to like about that?

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