New Dads Are Big-Time Social Media Users

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Marketers targeting dads should reach out to them as parents first, dads second

While moms used to be the social network standard-bearer of the family, fathersâ€”particularly first-time fathersâ€”are engaging in the same types of social media activities that new moms enjoy, according to a February 2012 survey by Edelman and The Parenting Group.

The study showed that 42% of new US dads who use social networks write family-related status updates on a daily basis. It further found that 56% of new dads post family photos at least a few times a week, while 21% post family-related videos.

The study defined â€œnewâ€• dads as those whose oldest child was age 2 or younger. The results were similar for the surveyâ€ overall population of US dads with at least one child under the age of 12.

There was even one area in which dads were actually ahead of their female counterparts: Millennial dads have more online friends than millennial moms. These dads reported an average of 96 online friends, while moms averaged only 70.

The results donâ€™t surprise Mark Wildman, vice president and group publisher of magazine and digital media company The Parenting Group. Pointing out that one out of six fathers are stay-at-home dads, he said that male parents today are more likely to view themselves in a broader way than they did in the past. â€œI donâ€™t just view myself as a provider,â€• Wild the father of preschool twin girls and a younger boy, told eMarketer. â€œThe nurturing, the cooking, the food buyingâ€”I am doing it in partnership with my wife.â€•

Indeed, even shopping activities like following brands on social networks, long considered the purview of the woman of the house, are being embraced by dads. A study by Arbitron and Edison Research found that, even over a year ago, in February 2011, US dads on social networks were catching up to moms, with 25% following a brand.

How should marketers reach these new dads on social networks? Present messages as a â€œmosaic,â€• Wildman said, drawing on his own experience with the Parenting.com site. â€œThe parent should feel like whatever he [the dad] is doing, who he is and his method of parenting will resonate because the advertiser isnâ€™t defining what the roles are in the family.â€•

Instead the advertiser should communicate â€œthe essence of the brand in a thoughtful way that demonstrates that itâ€™s an enabler of a lifestyle,â€• Wildman advised. â€œYou can mention a brand, but it cannot dominate the conversation.â€•

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