



# Walmart and The Martin Agency for Listening

How The Martin Agency and Communispace  
Helped Everyday Moms Become Walmart's Muse

communispace™

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Submission





# listen

## MOM AS "MUSE"

There was always one voice that drove Walmart's amazing growth and success—that of legendary founder, Sam Walton. Walton had built a brand based on serving the underserved, being aggressive with competitors and slashing prices to help his customers. But the vision that worked for a small company in the 1960s, made a big company in 2008 look like the bad guy. Their advertising agency, The Martin Agency, understood that it was time for Walmart to listen to another voice—the voice of Mom. The agency set out to understand who she was and what she needed. They asked Communispace to create a private online community of 900 moms that was always on and always connected to moms voices. These moms were given the challenge of helping Walmart rediscover who Walmart was at its best, to help find that emotional connection between the brand and its 200 million shoppers.

Walmart didn't create this connection because they saw the dark clouds of a bad economy gathering; they did it because they knew they needed a genuine and trusting relationship with their most important customer in order to succeed. In the end, the rapidly changing economic climate made it an even more powerful asset. As moms faced more challenges to plan fun activities on a budget, host relatives and friends at home and simply feed their families on a daily basis, Walmart was able to tap directly into her thoughts and needs to bring her relevant solutions. They listened carefully to their Middle American Mom and elevated her to a new role of "muse."

The Martin Agency and Walmart combined the deep insights from their private Communispace communities with other innovative research tools (such as ethnographies and mining "mommy blogs") to inform nearly hundreds of marketing initiatives the retailer has undertaken in 2008 and 2009.

### **DAILY CONVERSATIONS LEAD TO DEEP INSIGHTS.**

The Walmart moms in the communities provided an authentic, fresh voice to weigh in on key decisions and inspire the company—from understanding how she shops for back-to-school items, through her morning beauty routine choices, to the impact of the recession on her family and attitude.

Through daily conversations with these moms and a variety of creative activities in the communities, Walmart learned foundational insights and universal truths that would help re-shape the brand and the retail experience.

Utilizing Communispace, daily conversations in the online communities revealed moms' feelings, ideas, and needs through activities such as:

- Describing moments when Walmart helped them pull off great feats in the midst of their own doubt.
- Writing "Help Wanted" ads detailing the job description, required experience, and benefits of being a mother.
- Writing "Dear John" letters for brands and products they were "breaking up with" due to the recession.

By listening to moms in this continuous, multidimensional way, Walmart and The Martin Agency were able to meaningfully co-create a new brand position that resonates with their customers.

### **TRANSFORMING A COMPANY, CREATING A BRAND.**

The "Save money. Live better." campaign created by The Martin Agency was inspired by listening to moms closely in the Communispace private communities. The agency learned that to "Live better." meant something totally different for these moms. What they valued about Walmart's low prices wasn't actually a rational thing, but an emotional connection to the idea that saving money makes them feel smart. Knowing how much they've saved over time by shopping smarter and getting the best value is truly what drives them.

According to Katherine Wintsch, The Martin Agency Group Planning Director, the key foundational insight that informed their approach was that, "for these moms, saving money isn't a burden—it's a badge." Additionally that value was not only about money saved or low prices, but also the value of the moments that are created by saving money.

To celebrate the everyday heroics of mom and play it out through all of their marketing elements, in over 1,120 creative executions, promoting everything from dog food to deodorant, Walmart has shown that they really understand moms and are going to be there alongside them to help them "Live better." In real terms, this means that the value message isn't about a price, but about what she can do to create fun and meaningful family times with the money she saves. Buying food at Walmart saves her enough money to feel fine taking the family to the movies.

"Save money. Live better." has become more than just an ad campaign; it's also a strategic framework for the company, a whole new way of thinking for Walmart, showing how a deep connection to a mom's world can ultimately transform a company.

### **LISTENING AND CONNECTING DELIVER MARKET-LEADING RESULTS.**

Walmart continues to outperform the market even in a difficult economic environment, increasing total net sales by 3.8%, and same store sales have risen for 24 straight months. Ranked as the most valuable retail brand in 2008, it was only one of two companies among the Dow Jones Industrial Average to post overall gains in share price for the year. USA Today awarded it the Best Economy-Related Ad Campaign of 2008. Walmart also continues to attract many new customers with its message. In February 2009, approximately 17% of measurable growth in traffic came from new customers.

Mike Duke, President and CEO of Walmart said in their Q1 Earnings Call, *"We have unique insight into how our customers and members are weathering the economy. We know better than ever how to meet their needs—and this is a tremendous competitive advantage."*

