



Creative Problem Solvers for Marketing to Moms

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# One woman who saw the blind spot of car companies.



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*"When you come to my class, you're going to get dirty. Don't get your nails done beforehand."*

So warns Lori Johnson, Founder of **Ladies Start Your Engines**, automotive repair classes and a **Facebook community** just for women. Working as a technician for 23 years, Lori was one of the first in the automotive industry to recognize how overlooked women are by car companies.

"74% of women feel misunderstood by auto marketers. And no wonder. Most car companies assume it's men they're selling to. I remember a client telling me about going car shopping with her husband. The vehicle they were seeking was for the wife, yet the salesman spoke exclusively to her husband. Finally, the female shopper stopped the salesman and asked 'What's my name?' He couldn't answer."



**Kat Gordon**  
Founder,  
Creative Director

I write not as a mom, but as a mom marketer. I blog about trends, myths, best practices, and observations from the frontlines of our mom-centric agency. Each month I give out "Warm Blanket" and "Wet Blanket" awards to campaigns that market masterfully to moms - or miss the mark entirely. You'll learn something here. I promise.

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**Katherine M. Gordon** on

## Getting women comfortable under the hood

"There isn't a car gene that is given exclusively to men. More men are simply exposed to cars than women, often when spending time with their Dads in the garage as kids." Yet 65% of women bring their own cars in for repairs and find themselves at a disadvantage by not understanding the basics of how a car runs. If a car company can help educate women on their cars, they become more invested in that brand and more knowledgeable consumers. That's powerful.

### The a-ha moment

Lori first had the idea for all-women instruction when running new-owner clinics at auto dealerships. She noticed a curious phenomenon. The men would all congregate in front and kind of take over the discussion. They asked questions and got involved. Women, conversely, appeared to not want to appear stupid in the group setting and reveal how little they knew about cars, so they remained silent and disengaged.

Lori saw an opportunity to help make women more comfortable with their vehicles, giving them a greater sense of control and awareness when buying cars or bringing them in for service. She proposed an all-women class and now travels to dealers all over the country to conduct 2-hour, hands-on classes. At the end of the class, it's not uncommon for women to clap and hug Johnson, feeling really empowered by what they've learned.

We'd like to hug Lori, too. Here's a woman working in a male-dominated field who saw the value of female consumers and did something concrete to help both car companies and consumers better understand one another.

### Who's doing it right?

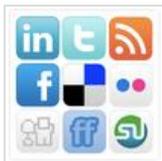
After hearing Lori's story, we asked her what car brands she thinks appeal most to women... and why. She credits **Subaru** for being one of the first companies to align their brand with green technologies, which are attractive to women. She also bemoans the death of Saturn, a car company with vast appeal to women, largely due to its no-haggle pricing. And some companies are succeeding with thoughtful details like **Volvo's** head-rest which has an open center, allowing a woman's pony tail to fit more comfortably while driving or riding in a car.

Little details, big gains. Which car companies do you think are doing it right by women? And who's missing the mark? We can think of a few but would love to hear your thoughts.

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