



CHAPTER 1

How to Start a Revolution

Quick. Picture a typical mom. What do you see? Moms have become an analogy for the powerless, the anti-sexy, the timid underdog. More often than not they're seen as harried, wearing bad jeans, in need of a makeover, or some kind of life transformation that drags them out of their homes into some job for a day, where they're bossed around, told what to do, and made to feel generally inadequate in order to reveal to them all the things they're missing by sacrificing their lives to take care of those pesky kids. That is, unless we're talking about commercials, where moms are shown to be all bright and shiny, ensconced in an immaculate kitchen, or bathroom, or something else they're furiously trying to keep bright and shiny.

Let's face it, a mom is an image nobody aspires to—an image more likely than not to be the subject of ridicule. The image of a mom has become so maligned that I know women who won't even admit to being mothers

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on job interviews, fearing they won't be hired because they have children. Hey, I've been there. Going to sleep with baby puke on your shoulder, waking up with baby puke on your shoulder, taking showers between cartoons, breastfeeding babies all day while watching commercials telling you you'd better get around to scrubbing that toilet again and disinfecting your entire house of all possible germs in the universe. That, or watching reruns of *Teletubbies*, or the cartoon *du jour* all day, or inane talk shows where—aside from celebrities—only those women willing to reveal their innermost embarrassing secrets and shortcomings are deemed interesting enough to be on TV shows that exploit their misery. Can you believe these ordinary puke-stained, baby-balancing, toddler-chasing moms are the women who are creating and leading the revolution?

MOM IS THE NEW SEXY

Why? Because power is sexy, and the new moms are powerful. That's right, you're powerful, and you don't even know it yet! Your power might even be scary! In fact, it is threatening to certain people, who are hoping you don't figure out how powerful you have become, until they figure out a way to continue to sell you the insecurity that keeps you in your place. In the cultural universe, the planets have aligned, opening a pathway to power and possibility for women, particularly mommies, unlike anything seen previously in history. Is it really possible that the ultimate underdog and perhaps the most marginalized demographic in American society—ironically made up of 38 million women with children—is suddenly the most powerful group on earth? You'd better believe it!

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THIS ISN'T YOUR MOTHER'S MOTHER ANYMORE

Forget about soccer moms. Forget about millennium moms, and alpha moms, too. Today's moms are Manifesto Moms, defying any narrow categorization except that they're uniquely plugged into technology, particularly technology that enables communication such as my smart-phone, which has become a natural extension of my own right hand. This new definition of moms includes everybody, not just those with college degrees, high household incomes, big SUVs, accomplished careers, or kids in sports. Even if you've never spent a day in college and find yourself working at Wal-Mart and scraping together enough money to buy toilet paper and macaroni and cheese for your family, you still have the power. If you can turn on a computer and surf the Web for free at the library, that's where power lies. It's the ordinary mom's ability to use new communication tools to shape and influence opinion that is historic, and radical, and transforming.

IT'S A COMMUNICATION REVOLUTION, STUPID

What makes Manifesto Moms special—and dangerous to the status quo—is their adeptness in using technology to communicate in new and powerful ways. Manifesto Moms surf the Web an average of an hour and a half a day—that's more than some of them spend watching TV—and that number is increasing daily. Manifesto Moms are not just passively surfing the Web looking for content created by the usual suspects; they're creating the content that they can't find anywhere else. They're building their own online communities, writing their own blogs, making their own

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videos, capturing their own personal and dramatic stories, most of which have never been told before by any conventional media outlet, creating infinitely more fascinating, riveting, real and moving stories than anyone could make up. Real stories, by real women—imagine that! And guess what? They're not like anything you see on TV. Instead, these stories are of fulfilling hopes, dreams, and aspirations, of husbands losing their jobs, of struggles with special needs children, of newly divorced women confronting new responsibility that centers on them alone, of emptiness that neither consumerism nor a sparkling house can fill. These stories are being told and being read by women all over the world, who are discovering that whether they live in the United States, in England, in France, Denmark, Korea, India, or China, they are all in pursuit of the same thing: respect, freedom, the opportunity to find personal or professional fulfillment without compromising their maternal roles, and a society and a workplace that doesn't penalize them for being women. Most of these stories, revelations, and affirmations are centered on women who are saying "enough is enough," and "screw this job thing," who are instead taking control of their financial destinies by starting their own businesses, chasing dreams for personal and professional fulfillment from their kitchen tables, in between making peanut butter-and-jelly sandwiches for their kids.

THERE ISN'T ENOUGH MONEY IN THE WORLD TO BUY THIS

It's not just the Web. This communication involves cell phones, e-mail, text messages, BlackBerries, Pres, and iPhones. It's videos sent from smartphones and uploaded

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to YouTube where they're watched by millions in just hours. It's 255 million wireless subscribers, or 85 percent of the entire U.S. population, who will soon have the added ability to get the same content they're searching out or creating on the Web on their cell phones, whether they're at the park, at a job, at a PTA meeting, on the sideline of their child's soccer game, or hiding behind a bathroom door for a few minutes of peace while toddlers pound for their attention on the other side. But it's 10 times bigger than this—it's 3 billion wireless handsets in use across the world and another 500 million being added every year. Just like that, gone is the isolation that kept these mommies voiceless, powerless, and lonely. Instead, women are trading in their victim status as media consumers for ruling status as media creators. Women are talking; women with opinions, women shaping opinions, women finding their voices. As women find their voice in each other, they have yet to perceive how powerful it is. I'm here to tell them.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

The revolutionary phenomenon is this: There are infinite channels of worldwide distribution with immediate delivery, at almost no cost. Can you believe it? Is that revolutionary enough for you? Women can communicate with each other in real time, disseminating ideas, shaping opinion, redefining lifestyle, making their own media, and creating worldwide influence. Giving 38 million women with children a voice? And that's just in the United States. When you add in the number of women with children around the world, the influence—and power—of women becomes exponential. It's a new world, and in this world ideas are

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currency. They can become powerful overnight, but wait, there's more! As mind-blowingly powerful as that is, it's not even where the real power lies!

CONTENT IS KING AND CONTACT IS QUEEN

In the world of new media, content is still king, but contact comes in a close second as queen. Especially for mommies, who have historically struggled with the isolation that goes along with being stuck as the only adult in a house, consumed with the incredibly demanding job of raising good kids while looking at the world as if from the outside in. What the heck is new media and what is content? New media refers to the new computerized, digital technologies that allow you to watch, read and communicate online, on the Web, or on your smartphone. Content refers to the information in whatever form—audio, video, printed words and so on—communicated via the new media. Unlike TV, new media content is usually something you seek out, instead of waiting for it to be delivered to you. Once you find it, you can watch it whenever and wherever you'd like, as many times as you like. New media content is the toothpaste that has already come out of the tube. It's messy and free and uncensored, made by mommies and kids with skateboards, and anyone else with a video camera or even a phone. With new media, ideas find immediate expression and delivery into the marketplace. The contact part of the equation comes in when we receive those ideas and embrace them. Anybody can put ideas into the marketplace nowadays. Millions of women have their own blogs where they create their own special form of content. There's lots of great undiscovered content

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all over the Web. The creation of content isn't remarkable anymore, though remarkable content is still rare and incredibly valuable, making it king. The ability to connect with others through that content is what is remarkable, and a lot of people unfortunately are using other people's remarkable content right now to make those connections for their own profit. The ability to reach out and create a social network or international community around unique and original content is where the real power is found. It's not content that makes Google worth just under \$200 billion. With that valuation you would think that Google owns all the content it points to all over the Web, but, of course, that just isn't the case. It's not content that turned YouTube founders into billionaires overnight. It's *contact* that makes both these companies so valuable, the ability to use other people's content to not only connect millions of people across the world in seconds, but simultaneously to sell advertising, and eventually products to those same millions.

JUST ONE MORE BALLS ANALOGY

There's so much money to be had in new media—or the revolutionary ability to create both content and contact—that Sumner Redstone, an old media titan and majority stockholder in media giant Viacom, reportedly bragged about it, claiming to shareholders that “they would all be dipping their balls in gold” as a result of the money they were going to make. I wonder where that left ball-less women shareholders? This new form of contact is powered by innovative ideas. The more innovative the ideas, the more powerful and influential the contact attached to

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it is. These ideas are creating revolutionary new trends across the world at record speed. The winners in this new world are going to be those people who have innovative ideas. Technology and the contact creators are just the machine, but it's content that makes the machine work. The real opportunities for money and power in the new media world include you, working out of your home while helping kids with homework, pushing them on swings, or driving them to their soccer games.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY REVOLUTIONARY

Besides telling their own stories, these Manifesto Moms are becoming cultural arbiters, flexing new muscles in the influence department, shaping buying decisions when even the most expensive Madison Avenue ad agency with the biggest budget cannot. In fact, Madison Avenue ad agencies are courting these new plugged-in Manifesto Moms and worrying about them at the same time, understanding their social influence and knowing how important contact is in creating connection with consumers, they're seeking their praise. They know they can't keep us down on the farm anymore, watching the content they put on broadcast TV, confident that our butts will be in chairs for specific hours on a regular weekly basis. Sure, maybe Manifesto Moms will record their favorite programs on their DVRs, but it's all but certain that we'll fast-forward through the commercials, something called time shifting. Why? Because we're early adopters—a phrase that describes those people who embrace new technology before most other people do. Besides young men, the only other large group of early adopters are women in the 18- to 34-year-old age

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group—or mommies! Who’s got a greater need to time shift than mommies? In fact, women lead even young men in time shifting and web surfing. Getting the content we want to watch at the time we want to watch it—especially during that midnight feeding or after the kids have gone to bed or even on the sideline of our kids’ soccer game on our smartphones—is what it’s all about!

A WORD TO THE WISE

Where is all this new media money coming from? Advertising to Manifesto Moms, that’s where. If we’re not getting our media on broadcast TV, and if we are fast-forwarding through commercials, how are advertisers going to connect with us? Why is it important that advertisers connect with us anyway? Because we’re the most powerful consumers on earth—that’s why! Women are not only chief purchasing officers for their families and households, they are the single most important factor in the U.S. economy. It’s estimated that women in the United States control 85 percent of consumer spending, or \$8.5 trillion annually. That’s 75 percent of this country’s economy! When consumer purchases account for 75 percent of this country’s economic activity, just the mention of the word “recession” can bring Wall Street to its knees in fear that it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. In a culture in which success is so often measured by the outward display of conspicuous consumption, consumer confidence is everything, and yet it is as fickle as dandelion down on the wind. It’s time for the United States’ 38 million women with children to recognize their power to control the country’s economy—and its future. And as America goes, so goes the world.