

PARENTING

BLOGGER MOMS RULE

Women are becoming powerhouses online

By ERIKA PRAFDER

BLOGGING is changing the way we find and exchange information, and it's a domain in which moms are becoming increasingly influential — and affluent.

For a crash course in blogging, pick up a copy of "The Digital Mom Handbook" by Audrey McClelland and Colleen Padilla. (Harper Business, \$15.99).

The authors, both successful bloggers and at-home moms, wrote the guide to inspire other mothers to leverage social media.

"We wanted to share our expertise," says co-author and mother of two Colleen Padilla. "When I started classmommommy.com five



Stephanie Elie

Audrey McClelland (left) and Colleen Padilla encourage moms to find a voice through blogging.

years ago, there was no roadmap, no book."

While the vast majority of the 3.9 million American women with children under the age of 18 who publish blogs do so to be "heard" and "have a voice," according to Padilla, "Many of them are now being approached to be [paid] spokespeople. It's a very inexpensive way for companies to reach a frag-

mented, niche audience."

Popular mom blog topics include parenting, eco-consciousness, decorating, fashion, beauty, style, arts and crafts, travel and food.

Even if you don't consider yourself a natural writer, "If you can write an email and attach a photo to it, you can write a blog," says Padilla. "The more you practice your writing, the better you'll get at the craft. You'll eventually find your voice."

Padilla adds at least one product review daily to her blog — perhaps a new baby food, diaper bag or pregnancy pillow — along with a vlog (video link) or photo and product giveaway.

The flexibility of being her own boss is "tremendous," says Padilla. "I may have one day that's really busy, and the next I can be at the pool with my kids."

While 1,000 visits to a blog site a day is deemed successful by industry standards, according to Padilla, 30,000 visits can add up to big bucks.

"I make six figures today, though I started small — making pennies in the beginning from affiliate marketing revenue. I featured two new product reviews on my blog every day for the first two years — persistence is very important."

Networking with other digital moms, either online, via Facebook and Twitter, or in person at industry conferences, is an important step in growing your brand. "It's a great way to collaborate with other moms, share information and pass on public relations contacts," says Padilla.

WORKING FOR TIPS

Erin Chase's know-how brings in big bucks

THREE years ago, Erin Chase (below), a wife and mother of three from Dayton, Ohio, was working hard to keep dinner meals under \$5. These days, close to half a million people a month tune in to her wildly popular — and lucrative — blog site, 5dollarinnings.com, for her winning home economics tips.

"It was a necessity to keep from going into debt," recalls Chase. "I had to figure out how to cut our food bills. So I did coupon homework and began stockpiling canned goods."

Chase decided to tell others about her newly learned cost-cutting secrets, including drug store food deals and \$5 meal-planning ideas. "I thought I'd share them with Facebook friends," says Chase. But within one month, Chase's site was averaging 1,000 visitors a day.

Dedicating an average of 20 hours a week to her blog, Chase earns money through an ad network, as well as being a consultant and spokesperson for major food brands. Chase steadily dug her family out of the poorhouse and is now earning six figures, she says.

"Authenticity is the key to success. I say it like it is," says Chase. "I write about when I burn the beans and I'll post a photo of my disastrous-looking kitchen. It's more relatable when you show your imperfections."

— Erika Prafder

