

# Know Your Audience

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**By Gerry Gunster, President/CEO Goddard Gunster, Inc. (article originally published on Connectivity)**

Remember the dawn of the “soccer mom” — the voting segment known for putting the needs of her children before her own? Bill Clinton wisely microtargeted this swing demographic in his 1996 presidential campaign.

Almost 20 years later, the campaign strategy known as “microtargeting” has become a campaign must-have. In fact, the **Interactive Advertising Bureau** estimates that during the 2012 presidential campaign, microtargeted ads accounted for between \$130 million and \$200 million in advertising spending.

But can you really put a price tag on connecting with the individuals

who matter most to your campaign?

## Mother's Instinct

The American Lung Association recently launched an advocacy ad as part of its "**Fighting for Air**" campaign. Fittingly titled, "Mother's Instinct," the ad urges constituents to pressure Congress to support full implementation of the Clean Air Act.



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When I saw the ad last week, my initial reaction was that it went too far and that it felt a bit emotionally exploitative to use a baby. But without commentary, I showed the spot to my wife — the politically engaged mother of my two young children. Her response?

Let's just say, our representatives in Congress have already received some emails. The ad worked for her because it was meant for her.

## Finding Your Target

For insight into why this ad makes an impact, I turned to **Bryan Gernert**, CEO of **Resonate**, which is the microtargeting intelligence firm I often use on my own campaigns.

**GG: Why should you identify the specific target audience before developing messages or outreach plans?**

**BG:** If you want to communicate with people, you need to know why people are motivated to take actions. Why do certain images or certain types of languages resonate with some audiences, but not others? That's what microtargeting seeks to answer.

**GG: The American Lung Association ad targets mothers of young children. What do you know about this audience?**

**BG:** "Mothers of young children" is pretty broad. We're talking about more than 2,000 unique characteristics. But I can tell you that on some level that segment is likely to have some crossover in terms of values, consumer preferences, and civic engagement levels.

When compared to the rest of the adult population, these moms are more likely to rank "Protecting Family" as one of their core values. On the issue of emissions regulations, you find a lot of room for movement as a

large percentage (61%) reports that they are “undecided.”

The bad news is that “mothers of young children” are also about 30% less likely to reach out to politicians on issues of importance.

**GG: If this were your campaign, how would what you know about this target audience impact your outreach strategy?**

**BG:** Well, from the start we know that for the ad to work it must not only persuade, it must also spur these mothers into actions they are statistically unlikely to take.

If it were my project, I would split the audience again so it looked like this:

Mothers who support regulations but who require encouragement for taking that extra step of contacting a politician

Politically-engaged mothers who are likely to respond without much prodding, but who need to be educated about the issue first

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