

## BUSINESS

## ENTREPRENEUR'S CORNER

# Targeting black women can boost fiscal health

By Pierre A. Clark  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

African-American women are the major economic force in the \$398 billion African-American community, based on U.S. Census Bureau statistics.

They are 54 percent of the population, 70 percent of the college graduates, 60 percent of the African-American managerial work force, live nearly a decade longer on average than black men and control 70% of the inherited wealth.

If you are an African-American woman who wants to be an entrepreneur (or you are a male owning a business selling to African-American consumers), and your message and selling strategies do not incorporate the desires, aspirations and motivations of African-American women, your marketing campaign will very likely fail.

Because most African-American businesses generate the majority of their revenues from the African-American community, it's critical that your advertising and marketing initiatives incorporate an understanding of African-American women, the major economic and cultural influence in the African-American

community.

The successes of movies like "Waiting To Exhale," "Love Jones," "Soul Food" and "Set It Off" are testament to the economic power of African-American women. Studies indicate they are the major decision makers in determining which cars are purchased by African-American families, where African-American families live, what movies and concerts they attend, what clothes they buy, where they shop for groceries, and the direction of most other life decisions.

The surging book sales of African-American female authors like Terry McMillan, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Toni Cade Bambara, Octavia Butler and others, indicate the potent influence of African-American women on African-American culture, art, and entertainment spending choices.

Black women are the major purchasers and readers of books directed at the African-American community and chronicling the African-American experience (70 percent, according to a recent article in Chicago's *N'Digo* Newspaper).

All the documented impact of African-American women in the \$398 billion African-American economy is being noticed by

strategists at major corporations and media companies who are designing campaigns and developing media vehicles targeted to African-American women.

There are at least ten national publications targeted to African-American women.

Among them are: *Heart and Soul*, *Black Elegance*, *Essence*, *Upscale*, *Sophisticates*, *Guide To Black Hair Style* and *Sister 2 Sister*.

African-American women are also major subscribers to elite general-market fashion and women's services magazines: *Vogue*, *Mademoiselle*, *Glamour*, *Sassy*, *Seventeen*, *Elle*, *Redbook*, *Good Housekeeping*, *People*, *Newsweek*, *Us* and *New Woman*, among dozens of others.

Hallmark Greeting Cards just introduced its Mahogany line of greeting cards with verses by motivational speaker and best-selling author Ilyana Vanzant.

The health and beauty aids market, perhaps the African-American community's strongest business sector, earns billions of dollars from African-American women. Indeed studies show Black women spend twice as much per person on health and beauty aids products as the general female population.

As an entrepreneur and small business owner, you can increase your sales substantially by developing a more precise understanding of how African-American women make purchasing decisions. You should be able to answer the following questions:

- What motivates African-American women to purchase specific products?
- What publications and television shows influence the thinking of African-American women?
- Who are the s/heroes and role models of African-American women?
- What product features are important to African-American women?

Here are some general personality characteristics that may help you to understand and formulate your marketing strategies for this high-profit market:

Black women are upwardly mobile. Aware of the value of education, they represent a majority of African-Americans in college and graduate school.

About 60 percent of all African-American professionals are women. Although still fighting to break the "glass ceiling" of workplace

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## DOWN TO BUSINESS

## Schools have two months to cash in \$3 billion in FCC money

By John William Templeton  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

SAN FRANCISCO—The nation's poorest schools and libraries have a two-month deadline to receive a 90 percent discount on everything from telephones to cable to wireless and satellite access.

Beginning Jan. 1, any school with more than 75 percent of its students receiving subsidized lunches can apply to have Uncle Sam, more specifically the Federal Communications Commission, pay for 90 percent of their telecommunications service, even retroactively from the beginning of an existing contract.

The application forms for the e-rate arrived during the holiday season, but principals could do well not to miss this package. The completed application has to be returned to a new organization called the Schools and Libraries Corp. within 75 days (mid-March). The address is P.O. Box 4217, Iowa City, Iowa 52244-4217 or <http://www.neca.org/inds>. The toll free customer number to answer questions concerning the Universal Service Application for Schools and Libraries is 888-803-8100.

Applications were sent to every school and library in the United States (113,000). The amount of the discount varies based on the percentage of poor students being served. Schools with 50 percent of its student population receiving free

lunches get an 80 percent discount. Schools with no poor students get a 25 percent discount.

But there is a big catch.

Each school must complete a technology plan that describes how they will use computers, wireless technology, cable and distance learning. Only schools that have completed such a plan will qualify for the discount.

Ironically, the schools that receive the biggest discounts are the ones who are least likely

to have a technology plan.

Books'n'Bytes, the technology alliance for African-American students, discovered that the 4,200 schools with 75 percent or more African-American student bodies — concentrated in the Southern states, Texas, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, New York and New Jersey — already have a 14 percent lower computers to student ratio than the national average.

The dilemma is that the schools generally face even

bigger problems. One-third have no library and many face serious building code violations and overcrowding.

The FCC universal service policy, developed with the strong urging of FCC Chairman William Kennard and Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Telecommunications Larry Irving, both African-Americans, addresses both parts of that equation. It not only provides more communications services but

gives the schools more money to use for other things.

Parents and educators struggling just to get by can embrace the latest forms of technology as a means to quickly improve the educational experience for their students.

Additionally, the FCC just approved a new spectrum allocation for the NII/Supernet, which allows unlicensed wireless communications for schools and health care. Products coming on the market

will not need expensive wiring, which could cost \$30 billion to wire every classroom in the country.

Not only is the new generation of products wireless, but it is much faster. Such educational services as the Black College Satellite Network or web sites featuring animation and music, can now load on computer screens without long wait times. Exciting curriculum like real-life role models and television

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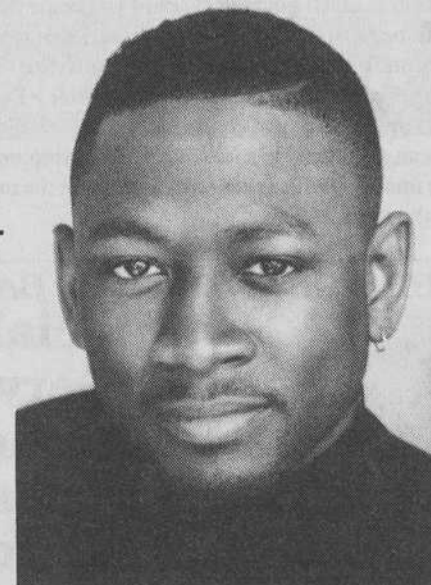
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