

Kid New Year

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August. We call it the dog days of summer. Summer is winding down. All that was green is beginning to fade, beginning to show the colors of Fall. Labor Day feels like the last gasp of summer as we all go back to work. So do kids. For them, back to work means back to school.

But, for kids, August/September holds a different, special meaning. Probably no kid would characterize it this way. But, all kids, when probed, would most likely agree, yeah it's true. This is Kid New Year.

The Real New Year?

December 31 and January 1 hold no special New Year meaning for kids. Christmas and Chanukah are over with the related gifts and festivities now history. New Years is a made up adult holiday. For the kids, maybe they get to stay up 'til midnight on New Years eve, but probably not. Maybe they get some New Year's treats, but probably not. Maybe they get to party, but probably not. The real New Years is for adults, to go out, to party, to eat, drink and kiss at the stroke of midnight. Yuck. What fun is all of that for a kid? None.

Kid New Year

August/September. For kids, back to school is their real new year. It's the time that they move up into the next grade. They rejoin their old friends after a long summer. They get lots of new stuff -- new clothes, new supplies, new accessories. They make new friends. They take on new challenges. They watch new TV. They discover new capabilities in their now year older bodies and minds. This is the real New Year, the real time of renewal for kids.

Kids look forward to their new year with hope and trepidation. It is the most exciting time of the year for them. The boredom of summer will now be over. They come together with friends and fashion, activities and aggravations – all the stuff that shapes them and makes them older, wiser and more in touch with who they are and what they want in their developing lives.

Getting Ready for New Year

It starts in the summer at the mall. In July and early August kids go to the mall to check out what's going on. You'll see them in Claire's, Limited Too, Old Navy, A&F, American Eagle, Wet Seal, Contempo Casuals. What are they doing? They're trend surfing. They need to know what's in the stores. They need to know what other kids are into. They read Seventeen and YM, Nick and Disney Adventures, SI Kids and Teen People to know who and what's cool and what to buy, to update the new them for day one of back to school.

New Years Day

Day one of back to school is the coming out party. It is full of anticipation. There is trepidation for the insecure, and celebration for the confident kids who feel they look right and feel cool. It is measured in jeans and tops and shoes and makeup, backpacks and school supplies, music, their newest technology and stories from the summer. Kid Cool is on display all over the place as it takes hold day one.

Kid New Years is also a time of recalibration. Every kid observes the fashions, rituals, behaviors, and styles of those around them. Every kid wants to feel a sense of belonging. And, every kid takes an inventory of where they've gotten it right, and what they need to "adjust." The first week of school may mean buying another pair of the "right" jeans or sneakers, adding an accessory that says Kid Cool or filling in with pens and school supplies that reflect new school stylin' for this New Year.

All That is New

The first month of school brings with it new challenges – tougher classes, more homework, higher expectations. By October, kids have a sense of where the New Year will take them. They have made new friends. They have set their new personal style. They have their new favorite TV shows. They agree who the coolest new music idols are. They've made their new purchases and their new set of brand decisions.

What Kid New Year Means for Marketers

For manufacturers and marketers, the stakes of Kid New Year are high. To capture the imagination of kids with new brands, behaviors and entertainment choices can mean big business. To be the jean, sneaker, backpack, pen, TV show or any other brand of choice can equate to big successes for companies throughout the year.

Winning with Kids at New Years

It all starts well in advance of back to school. The planning process needs to target back to school with action plans that get into new kid mindsets well before classes start. The cycle is an annual one.

Here are seven simple principles to get in front of and win with kids for back to school.

1. **Stay in touch with kids** – Design and capitalize upon research and trend spotting techniques on an ongoing basis.
2. **Be new, yet familiar** -- Design products that are familiar to kids yet offer newness.
3. **Stay ahead of your competition** – Know what they are doing and why you are better.
4. **Build marketing plans that connect with kid lifestyle** – Be evident in the summer, so they'll “buy you” for the Fall.
5. **Be Kid Cool without being adult obvious** – Kids are increasingly suspect of blatant sales pitches. Empower them to adopt your brand on their terms.
6. **Provide incentives that motivate kids** – Use promotions, offers and tie ins that add heat to your brand.
7. **Keep your innovation constant** -- Once you get it right, get to work on the next new idea that will capture the hearts, minds and dollars of your kid audience for next Kid New Year.

KidShop is a customized marketing solutions company. For new dimensions in innovation, ideation, strategy or kid marketing and communications contact Paul Kurnit (paul@kurnit.com) 914 666-4800 or visit www.kidshobiz.com.