

# *About the Author*

**Laura A. Lake** has been involved in the marketing industry since 1997. She brings a fresh, easy-to-understand perspective to consumer behavior. Despite popular belief, the understanding of consumer behavior can even benefit small companies, because it enables them to market more effectively by meeting the needs of the buyers in the marketplace. The end result is a higher rate of success; this is where Laura finds her passion.

Laura has helped many companies understand consumer behavior and the management and implementation of the findings within. Understanding why consumers purchase, consume, or dispose of products is invaluable as the battle for customers intensifies day by day. Laura consults with companies to emphasize the importance of investing in research to determine why customers think, feel, reason, and ultimately purchase from among alternative products or services.

Laura serves as the current marketing columnist at About.com, a New York Times Company. She shares her extensive marketing knowledge in more than 600 articles published on some 4,000 Web sites and in various publications. She's also a featured writer in several magazines. As if that weren't enough to keep her busy, Laura has served in director and vice president positions for well-known advertising agencies in previous years. In 2008, she founded her own successful marketing agency and sales training company. She now advises companies on how to create and implement effective marketing strategies that help them grow their businesses.

# *Dedication*

As most authors will tell you, it takes much more than just them to write a book. It's a collaborative effort between you and those who encourage you to do the work it takes to get the book done. I had several people by my side along the way, and without them the possibility of finishing would have been impossible.

First and foremost I must thank my mom and dad, Jack and Jill Brown, for pushing me to live my dreams and follow my heart. Even if it seemed at times I wouldn't make it, you always believed.

A special thanks goes to my son Taylor. You've always believed and stood by me, even when change was difficult. You are my daily inspiration and the person who creates the drive to keep me moving forward. You never complain when it comes to the long hours that I work, and throughout the entire process of writing this book you were patient and understanding. We've come a long way, and your sacrifices have not gone unnoticed. Your patience, your love, your hugs, and your encouragement made the long hours spent in the office a little easier to bear.

Also, a big thanks goes to Abby. You made me smile when you understood that the hours locked away in the office would one day produce a book that you would see in the stores. Here it is! Thank you to my business partner Jamie Verkamp as well. You held down the fort and made things happen when my attention was elsewhere. You kept our business going and growing without skipping a beat. You were always encouraging during sharp deadlines, and you never complained when you had to pick up the slack. I couldn't have picked a better partner. To you I am grateful, and I couldn't think of a better person to share success with.

Last, but not least, thank you to my circle of friends: Hilda, Lori, Vicky, Kay, Rhonda, and Angel. You have pushed me through the trying times and encouraged me to keep moving forward. Your words of encouragement, e-mails, and telephone calls always came at the right times. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, your experiences, and your lives with me over the years.

To those who were affected by my crankiness, absenteeism, and requests for silence: I finally did it! Thank you all. You will never know the impact you had and the important roles that you played in the completion of this project. Not even words could express my gratitude.

# *Author's Acknowledgments*

I must acknowledge the people who made this book possible and who made writing easier. Of course, no one ever said this would be easy.

Huge thanks goes to my project editor, Kristin DeMint, from Wiley Publishing. Thank you for the support, encouragement, guidance, and patience during the course of this project. Just the mere fact that you had to read every page of this book and make sense of it in its initial draft form means that you deserve a Medal of Honor!

And to my literary agent, Barbara Doyen, thank you for keeping me on track, answering my questions, and guiding me through the process of writing this book. I couldn't have done it without you!