

Integrated Selling drives bottom-line sales and better brand performance.

Smooth Selling

Given the fragile state of our economy, the marketing industry and our brands, this is an ideal time for marketers to take stock. Rather than define ourselves as Integrated Marketers, I think a more suitable characterization is to say that we're in the business of Integrated Selling.

What's the difference? Integrated Marketing is the antiquated practice of targeting consumers exclusively and aligning messaging behind television commercials and print ads. It fixates on traditional consumer measures such as advertising recall scores, aided and unaided brand awareness. It is focused on top two-box acceptance scores and the latest tally of advertising awards.

However, very little is said about how shoppers are addressed, sales are being driven or bottom-line business results are being enhanced. By comparison, Integrated Selling recognizes that people have both a consumer *and* shopper mindset, and that it is never too early to engage a consumer as a shopper.

Integrated Selling expands on Integrated Marketing by incorporating a strong sales message into the planning process. This includes in-store product visibility and availability, packaging design, retail communication, merchandising performance, inventory management, pricing and channel migration. The result is a 360° planning process.

A NEW DISCUSSION

I was recently talking with a manufacturer's research and marketing team when the conversation turned to the amount of time shoppers spend interacting with their products at retail. We discussed the difference in time spent for planned-purchase items versus impulse items.

We evaluated the importance of mass communication and retail communication for brand (emotional/imagery) messaging versus sell (product attribute and benefit) messaging. We discussed the best communication vehicles, shelf placement, channels-of-distribution and pricing. We conducted a complete 360° dialogue of how best to sell more.

This is what an Integrated Selling Organization (ISO) is discussing today. This particular manufacturer is investing in shopper studies, engaging shopper insights agencies, and considering both supply- and demand-side initiatives in its annual communication planning process.

Studies show that shoppers invest more time interacting with impulse items at retail than they do planned-purchase items. This then drove consideration of where to place *brand* (imagery) messaging versus *sell* (benefit) messaging for impulse versus planned-purchase items.

To get on the shopping list, planned-purchase items would communicate brand attributes and consumer benefits early in the path-to-purchase, for both in-home and on-the-go touchpoints. Meanwhile, impulse items would communicate brand attributes and consumer benefits strongly at retail through packaging and in-store communication.

This is the so-called "store back" model that Procter & Gamble is promoting: First understand where and what triggers the shopper to buy the brand, and then ladder back to consumer involvement. An ISO recognizes that people have both a consumer and shopper mindset, depending on where they are in the path-to-purchase.

When in a *consumer mindset*, people tend to be more emotional and have higher aspirations. They are looking to bond with the brand, feel good about it and what it stands for. In a *shopper mindset*, people are generally more pragmatic, looking for solutions, conscious of the price/value relationship and the tangible, functional reasons to buy.

To bridge these two mindsets and complete the path-to-purchase, an ISO invites the marketing and sales teams to the integrated planning table on an equal footing: The marketing team manages the brand and consumer messaging while the sales team manages the shopper and shopping experience. The ISO follows a simple three-step process to assure a balanced consumer and shopper planning orientation.

THE SUBWAY SUCCESS

The first step is to understand the brand, consumer/shopper and the retailer motivators.

For example, Tony Pace, chief marketing officer of Subway Restaurants, says that Subway has both emotional and tangible brand benefits to communicate. Subway's emotional value as a "healthy and active lifestyle" brand is balanced by the price/value relationship of "made fresh" and "made for you" for five dollars.

The emotional benefit of visiting Subway reinforces that its customers are health-conscious and that they lead an active lifestyle, which allows Subway to enhance the consumer's self-image. From a functional standpoint, Subway delivers a healthy, made-for-you sandwich that is delicious at a great price point. Subway, as the retailer, is motivated to drive greater foot traffic, higher loyalty and higher cash register ring.

Next, determine the appropriate balance of time and location of communication priorities between emotional/brand and rational/sell messaging. As Tony explains, "Subway communicates our 'healthy' and 'active' brand values by spotlighting Jared and famous fans of Subway (Ryan Howard, Michael Strahan, *etc.*). We also use these fans to communicate "\$5 Footlong" selling messages that reinforce a positive price/value relationship."

Through ongoing tracking studies designed to gauge consumer perceptions, attitudes and values for Subway versus competition, Subway balances the dual messaging through traditional vehicles such as television, print, radio, and so forth.

However, in-restaurant is where the price/value relationship is strongly reinforced. It is in the retail environment where Subway recognizes the mindset change from a *consumer* to a *shopper*.

Finally, an ISO recognizes and audits all the available communication platforms and vehicles. This places equal emphasis on in-store communication and traditional media. While many manufacturers grasp the shift from traditional media to in-store communications and are allocating more marketing dollars to retail media, measures still frequently smack of traditional marketing. For instance, marketers are scrambling to

determine advertising recall scores for in-store formats.

Taking traditional measures, such as recall scores, and force-fitting them into a new selling environment is a bad idea. Walmart has already come to this conclusion by engaging DS-IQ, a digital shopper-media analytics firm, to provide real-time sales evaluation, measure shopper marketing ROI, gain insights and optimize messaging from a selling perspective based on in-store communications.

Here are several recommendations to help capitalize on the emerging value of in-store media and realize integrated-selling solutions:

- Determine the sales value of your targeted messages to leverage fully the value of in-store media.
- Ensure that all marketing and sales efforts are driving shelf velocity and corresponding return-on-investment.
- Configure retail messaging around shopper propensity to buy brands, retailer merchandising and inventory initiatives, not traditional reach/frequency measures.
- Closely align integrated media buying with sales values and inventory measures.
- Be wary of traditional agencies that may not offer the best route to generate in-store communication or foster an integrated selling environment.

This last point is especially important. After all, retail by its very definition is a selling environment, not a place to win a Clio. In-store messaging demands appropriate sales communication — whether that is price-off and temporary price reductions, promotional offers and selling solutions, or image messaging and emotional connections. It is a venue that is designed to drive a shopper to pick up our brands.

The time is indeed ripe to evolve into an Integrated Selling Organization. We can then work to identify optimal brand and sales communication opportunities and target communications more effectively to consumers and shoppers to drive purchase, build sales and enhance business performance. ■



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