

Shopper Marketing



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Planning for the Future

The final step in full optimization

By Christopher Brace

In developing strong shopper marketing capabilities, organizations must pass through three stages:

- **Stage 1: Incubating.** Testing small-scale programs with retailers, mainly tactical in nature.
- **Stage 2: Scaling.** Larger-scale, more strategic programs, generating higher returns.
- **Stage 3: Cultural embedding.** More sophisticated programs that generate significant improvements on ROI.

Companies successfully work their way from incubating to scaling, but making the

transition to cultural embedding presents bigger challenges. This is where shopper marketing sits today: on the verge of full optimization.

The Hurdles We Face

There are three main hurdles impeding shopper marketing's progress toward full cultural embedding. First, the discipline is still often seen as the tactical extension of trade marketing rather than being valued for the strategic contributions it can make. Secondly, in some cases shopper programs are being developed, executed,

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and measured as stand-alone programs, disconnected from the brand's prioritized strategic growth initiatives. Finally, shopper communications are sometimes considered sub-optimal because they focus on product attributes, promotion, and price. If companies want to complete their journey to fully optimizing their shopper efforts, they must overcome these hurdles. They must move from a siloed planning process to a fully integrated one, and build communications that connect emotionally with shoppers to engage and inspire them.

Integrated Planning

In developing shopper marketing disciplines, companies that haven't yet fully bought into the idea of "integration" essentially added a third functional silo, one that sits between the already existing consumer and trade silos. It's across these three vertical functions that a brand builds its go-to-market strategies and plans. In a simplified description of this process, the brand team creates the consumer plan, the shopper marketing team builds the shopper plan, and the sales team develops the trade plan. Then, at the end of the process, these three different plans get smashed together in the hopes that they align with each other and deliver great efficiencies. This often does not happen. Shopper efforts will never be fully optimized through this type of isolated planning process. But marketers often confuse sitting in a conference room and having a conversation with integration.

Another common mistake is defining integration as cutting and pasting the campaign idea across all consumer and

shopper touchpoints. Real integration means moving the shopper and retailer inputs to the very beginning of the planning process and giving them the same strategic significance as the consumer and brand inputs. Then, instead of the campaign being the vehicle for integration, companies can integrate through four key elements:

1. Growth strategy
2. Emotional and behavioral insights
3. Communication strategies
4. Story

This process results in a much deeper level of integration and delivers growth initiatives that meet the needs of the brand, shopper, and retailers equally, generating a higher return on marketing investment.

Shopper Communications

There is a belief in many camps that for shopper communications to be successful, they must focus on the rational aspects of product attributes, promotional offers, and price. Shopper teams exert great effort to create the strongest combination of these elements with the goal of winning shoppers' dollars. Whenever we ask marketers what shoppers' most valuable asset is, we consistently hear that it's their money. But their most valuable asset is really their attention. If companies do not first win shoppers' attention, it becomes very difficult to win their dollars. Neuroscience has shown that the mechanisms controlling attention reside in the non-conscious mind, beyond the conscious mind's

control. Using emotion that appeals to these non-conscious mechanisms is the best way to win shoppers' attention and overcome their purchase hurdles. This is supported by the physics principle of resonance: as resonance increases, resistance decreases. The more emotionally resonant our messaging, the more successfully we overcome shoppers' resistance to purchasing our brands. Emotion is the new currency in the game of conversion.

The Final Step

The discipline of shopper marketing will play a very important role in how companies win in the future. So taking that final step into cultural embedding is crucial. As is the case in many journeys, the last bit of distance is the hardest but holds the biggest rewards. Companies must change their planning process so it integrates all of the marketing disciplines, creating a seamless brand experience that optimizes not only shopper marketing but the entire marketing budget.

Christopher Brace is the CEO of Syntegrate Consulting and can be reached at brace@syntegrate-consulting.com. Syntegrate Consulting is an insight-based strategic consulting firm that specializes in helping clients build better brands, communications, and go-to-market strategies that create new value in the marketplace through synte-gration: the bringing together of dissimilar research, knowledge, insights, and people to create something completely new. Learn more at <http://www.syntegrate-consulting.com/>. ■

