

# DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

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## DON'T LET YOUR HOUSE CATCH FIRE

Recently I learned about Air Optix Colors, a new brand of color contact lens. I tried a pair of Sterling Gray and they transformed my eyes from the color of brown coffee, served black, to a vibrant blue-gray. Amazing! I thought “what fun,” I can wear these as an occasional accessory when I go out with my wife. Change your look and change your outlook, bring out another side of your personality, mix things up a bit.

On a business trip to Barcelona I stopped into an optometry store to pick-up a pair to bring home. I asked the optometrist if she had Air Optix Colors to which she replied she did. I told her I wanted a pair of Sterling Gray, no visual correction. The optometrist returned with a pair of FreshLook color contact lens. I told her I did not want FreshLook color contact lens. I want Air Optix Colors. The optometrist informed me that both the Air Optix Colors and FreshLook color contact lens are manufactured by the same company, Alcon. In other words she wanted me to infer that they are basically the same, which they are not, and I would be satisfied with the FreshLook color contact lens, which I would not.

I informed her what she already knew, despite her trying to substitute FreshLook for Air Optix Colors. Air Optix Colors are made with an advanced material, SiHy (for silicone hydrogel) whereas FreshLook uses old HEMA technology. The Air Optix Colors, with SiHy, are more comfortable to wear, significantly more comfortable than FreshLook or any contact lens product using HEMA technology. Additionally, Air Optix Colors utilizes new color technology for a more vibrant, yet natural eye color. She acknowledged this and told me that she currently did not have the Air Optix Colors in stock but could order it for me. I left the store without purchasing anything.

Why this story? Why should you care that I want to wear Air Optix Colors, Sterling Gray, as an occasional accessory when I go out on the town with my wife? Why should you care about the difference between the two brands? SiHy versus HEMA technology? New color technology? You shouldn't because that's not the point of this article. It's only an example to illustrate a more important point. What then is the point?

One of our clients, who is a Regional President for his corporation, will exclaim in a bellowing voice delivered from his 6-foot 4-inch frame, “The House is on Fire! **THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE!**” *Que quieres decir?* What does he mean? He's saying, “you're not taking care of a critically urgent success factor,” a strategic imperative. In the case of the Air Optix Colors the critically urgent success factor is securing distribution. You can't sell if you don't have distribution, or access, or if you're not on the formulary, or if you are out-of-stock, or on back order, or continuing to ship with product quality problems. If you suffer from any of these **THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE!**

Another one of our clients who enjoyed a successful career and retired at the top of his game, credited his success to his *focusing on* “critical, non-urgent issues and activities” *as opposed to* those “urgent, non-critical issues.” He made big things that had a big impact on the business happen! If we are to keep our house from catching fire it is essential that we focus on those critical, non-urgent issues and activities.

We doubt that there isn't a marketer who doesn't have a “to-do” list that's longer than a 9-year old child's wish list for Santa. We have far more on our plate than is humanly possible to handle. On top of it all we are bombarded with requests from management for more reporting which requires us to work overtime pull together fresh new 50-slide PowerPoint decks that are edited by our bosses ad nauseam for a meeting that is rescheduled (multiple times) for a project that is eventually cancelled. (Okay, I'm exaggerating, but just a bit.) And, if you're like most marketers you try to do it all, which you can't, at least not well. Unfortunately, those urgent, non-critical activities garner your attention while those critical, non-urgent activities get pushed to the bottom of your to-do list, if they even make it onto it at all. **THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE!**

So what are those critical, non-urgent activities that tend to be postponed in favor of those urgent, non-critical activities? How can we determine which ones deserve our focus for the health and growth of our brands? Here are our picks:

1. ***Contribute to incremental growth*** – “Incremental” is changing the *growth acceleration rate* of the brand. If the brand is growing at 3% it will contribute to boosting the growth rate to double or more. In other words, it's those activities that will make a real difference in brand development in the short and/or long-term.
2. ***Critical Success Factors*** – These are the problems we must resolve and opportunities we must exploit if we are going to achieve our Business Objectives of sales, market share and profit. For example, it could be getting on the formulary and securing access so HCPs (health care professionals) can prescribe your pharmaceutical brand with the confidence it will be available for their patients. In the case of Air Optix Colors it's having the requisite level and quality of distribution.
3. ***Preserve the future*** – It's recognizing future marketplace developments and taking actions to ensure your brand will remain competitive. This might include developing product improvements, broadening the brand's indication or gaining indications for new conditions, developing a new ad campaign before you need it, building capacity to meet future demands, etc. It's all about what you will need to be successful tomorrow that you do not have today.

## **BOATS & HELICOPTERS**

Here are a few suggestions to help you avoid your house catching fire and, importantly, contribute to the health and growth of your brand:

1. ***Separate the wheat from the chaff*** – Breakout your activities into two groups: critical, non-urgent activities; and urgent, non-critical activities. Know what's “what.” Please don't get hung-up on the term “non-urgent.” Critical activities should demand a sense of urgency for your attention. We use the term “non-urgent” to refer to the fact that it is either not due or it cannot be accomplished immediately. In the case of Air Optix Colors

achieving distribution is urgent since they cannot sell where they don't have distribution. As per the "wheat," here are some things you might want to include in your listing:

- Develop a competitive, enduring and ownable brand positioning to transform your product, compound or service into a brand to create "brand" loyalty;
- Pro-positioning your brand before repositioning, which has low probability of success and can negate your original positioning, is needed;
- Developing a back-up communication campaign while your current campaign is continuing to grow the business and market share;
- Gain approval from the appropriate regulatory authorities so your product may be offered for sale;
- Building capacity in anticipation of peak sales;
- Developing product improvements, securing new indications (and doing the clinical studies to earn them) or strengthening claims to provide compelling advantages versus competition; and
- Instituting Marketing By Objectives (MBO) Brand Activation planning, with a comprehensive testing program, to develop a performance-driven brand (or for CMOs, "culture") with proven ROI for marketing activities ... among others.

- 2. *Prioritize*** – Ask yourself this question, "What are the top three things I can do to incrementally impact sales and the health of my brand?" We have a tendency to pile-on the number of activities on our to-do lists. But the reality is  $\leq$  or "less is more" when it comes to making a difference. It is not the number of activities you perform but their importance as it relates to incrementally impacting brand health and growth.
- 3. *Stay the course*** – This is about not getting distracted by those urgent, non-critical activities. They're going to crop-up daily. Here's another meeting put on your calendar of which the output will not change if you are present or not present for it. It can be a myriad of things that will push those critical, non-urgent activities out of your mind and cause you to delay working on them. So set short term goals for each and work consistently to achieve them.
- 4. *Keep-up with housekeeping*** – Hey, we're not suggesting you don't keep-up with housekeeping or ignore requests from your senior management. If you don't attend to each your professional house will be consumed by fire. Instead, tend to housekeeping to keep the brand functioning but remember to stay the course on the critical, non-urgent activities.

So, don't let your house catch fire by ignoring those critical, non-urgent activities. Identify and get working on those top 2 or 3 imperatives that will make a real difference in the health and growth of your brand.

Do it now. THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE!

Best wishes,  
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