

# DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

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Sunday, March 28, 2010

## SAY IT WITH FEELING

During a recent training program with a medical device client, one of the participants volunteered to share some thought-provoking data about the impact of emotions on messaging. The data shown was a measurement of “ad effectiveness” from a range of consumer brands, and the gist of the findings was that advertising or messaging that contains only rational content is typically only *half as effective* (presumably, in generating purchase interest) as advertising or messaging that contains a mix of rational and emotional content. While there was little background provided about how this data was collected or how recently it was collected, the intended effect was nevertheless clear: to encourage a team of marketers to more consciously include an emotional component in their future communications.

This notion of adding an emotional component to the brand’s story is not new. Even among marketers of professional brands, such as drugs and medical devices, it is more and more common to hear them affirm a commitment to “making an emotional connection” with their physician targets. But how to do it well, that’s the challenge. And we know it is a challenge because so few brands **are** doing it well. We are constantly on the lookout for good examples of brands that promise their targets an emotional benefit that meets these three criteria:

1. It is logically-linked to the brand’s rational benefit(s);
2. It is meaningful and motivating to the brand’s target--  
in other words, it is one of the target’s true Needs);
3. It is differentiated from others in the market.

Finding brands that can deliver on the first of these criteria is relatively easy. For example, in the oral care category one could easily appreciate that a toothpaste like Colgate Total can provide the most complete cleaning and protection for up to 12 hours (rational benefits), so that users can *feel more confident* they are taking the best care of their teeth (logically-linked emotional benefit). Or, even in a lower involvement category like toilet tissue, one could readily make the link between a rational benefit like “softer on your skin” and the ensuing emotional benefit “so Mom’s can *feel they are giving the best* to their families.” But neither of these emotional benefits is legitimately differentiated versus others in the market, and given the prevalence of these same emotional benefits across many categories, how meaningful and motivating are they really?

So, including an emotional component within the brand’s communications (“saying it with feeling”) is all well and good, but if the best your brand can do is simply plug & play a

commonplace, over-exploited emotional benefit like *feeling more confident*, we would say don't expect to double your ad or message effectiveness. Actually, we would go even further and say, "Don't bother—until you have done the hard homework of figuring out exactly which emotional benefit will meet the criteria above." Regarding this hard homework, we have some ideas for you to consider...

**BOATS & HELICOPTERS** (Toward well-linked, motivating, and differentiated emotional components in the brand's communications)

- 1. Start with the Brand Positioning.** Perhaps it's obvious, but remember that whatever emotional component you add to the brand's communications derives from the *Emotional Need-Benefit* in the brand's positioning statement. And because the brand's positioning is not merely designed to direct what the brand says, but everything the brand does, that Emotional Need-Benefit should show up in more than just the brand's messaging (such as in its packaging, its sponsoring, its promoting, and so on).
- 2. Mine the Consumer's/Customer's Feelings.** Not just any consumer or customer, but devote most of the research efforts to "digging deep" among the regular or loyal ones. These are the ones who, if probed via the right questioning, can best tell you how and why they **feel** about the brand.
- 3. Invest Time in Constructing the "Mining Methodology."** Rather than simply rely on the same old research techniques, spend time with your company's best research suppliers to explore better ways to get inside the target's feelings, to get beyond the "usual suspects" of confidence, control, empowerment, and giving my best. And, as part of this, avoid the pitfall of asking un-helpful questions like "Do you like this emotional approach?" (Ask instead questions that require a considered response, such as, "How might an emotional approach like this fit with the brand you use/prescribe most?")
- 4. Go Outside—for New Perspectives.** Rather than relying only upon research suppliers and company research managers, hire some professionals to work with the team (in #3 above) who study human motivations: cultural anthropologists, behavioral scientists, clinical psychologists, even therapists. It's amazing how much richer the emotional vocabulary becomes and how much broader the "evoked emotional set" becomes when we work with people who are not constrained by our category view.
- 5. Thoroughly Check-out the Competition.** Literally, conduct a wide-ranging gathering of emotional approaches (Benefits!) in communications that are being fielded by other brands...and not just brands within your brand's category or class. Segregate the examples into some classifications: those meeting only one of the criteria mentioned earlier; those meeting two; and those meeting all three.
- 6. Use the Benefit Ladder.** See how many "ladders" you can create that **do** link the features, product benefits, consumer/customer functional benefits, and emotional benefits well—and that are legitimately differentiated up and down the ladder. (If you're not familiar with the Benefit Ladder, join us for the upcoming *Brand Positioning & Communications College* from April 27 to 29 in Kansas City!)

Richard Czerniawski & Mike Maloney

Just another quick reminder...time is running out to register for the one and only this year Brand Positioning & Communications College session. This one will be at the Intercontinental Hotel on the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, Missouri beginning April 27<sup>th</sup> and extending through April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Please call the Central Division at 800-255-9831 (620-431-0780) and Lori Vandervoort will be more than happy to help you. Hope to see you there!

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