

DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

Sunday, September 18, 2011

THE REAL MEANING OF THE “ER” IN MARKETER

*“No matter how well we are doing now, we need to do bett**ER** tomorrow.”*

Ah yes. How many times do we hear something like this? It must be the enduring, motivating mantra of businesses everywhere. Certainly, those of us working in major corporations have learned that, regardless of “what wonderful things we have done for them today,” more and better is always expected tomorrow. Of course, you could argue that such a challenge is at the heart of competition, of what drives us to aim higher and accomplish even greater things.

One of our favorite (and most motivating) true stories about this very thing comes from the world of sports—from baseball and one of its former heroes, Sandy Koufax. In case you weren’t around when Sandy Koufax was dominating National League pitching—he retired in 1966—here’s the gist of his “do better, do more” story:

- Sandy Koufax pitched in the major leagues for only 12 years, all of them with the Brooklyn and then Los Angeles Dodgers;
- But his first 6 years and second 6 years could not have been more different—in terms of performance and results;
- For his first 6 years, he won 37 games and lost 40...winning only about 50% of his games—definitely “average results” at best;
- But for his second 6 years, he won 129 games and lost 47...winning about 87% of his games—for sure, not average;
- Even more telling, during his first 6 years, the Dodgers Team only participated in one World Series;
- But in his second 6 years, they participated in three World Series, winning two of them. Now that’s better!

If you want to learn more about what happened to transform a mediocre 50/50 performance pitcher into a Hall of Fame “unhittable” pitcher, well, you’ll have to read one of his biographies. The point is, such stories about elevating one’s performance, even from the world of sports, are important to those of us in marketing. Actually, they’re more than that: they’re downright *inspiring*! Talk about inspiring real-life stories for marketers, how about the Steve Jobs story at Apple? There are so many aspects to that one, not the least of which is that Apple now has

grown from a 2% share of US laptops to 10%--and to a commanding 91% share of laptops priced over \$1,000.

But here's the thing: while we marketers will always be challenged to perform, to deliver bigger, better *numbers* for our brands, there are many more ways for us to elevate our total performance...many that we often overlook. The truth is that, to increase the likelihood of better brand business results, there are some steps along the way—day in and day out—that we need to keep doing better. For this week's Boats & Helicopters, here are a few that we think have the most impact on doing better tomorrow.

BOATS & HELICOPTERS—The Real “ER’s” of Marketing

- 1. Define a bettER Target.** Whether you're looking to determine a brand's overall positioning target or some sub-set of that target (for communications development, for example), defining it only in broad, demographic terms is mediocre performance at best. More specifically, saying that a brand is positioned against “all moms with kids” or against “all physicians treating hypertension” is not only unrealistic (no brand *really* has the resources to position effectively against targets like these), but it's incomplete. A better target includes other essential information: psychographic profile and driving attitudes; current usage/treatments and dis-satisfactions, if any; other “telling behaviors” inside and outside the category that demonstrate the target's true attitudes; and, for sure, the target's needs—rational and emotional.
- 2. Articulate a moRE accountable Marketing Objective.** First and foremost, this means a *behavioral* one: one that specifies the consumer's or customer's behavior that the brand requires. And what makes this truly accountable is ensuring it is expressed SMARTly—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-Oriented (to the business results, that is), and Time-Bound. When specific behaviors are measurable and time-bound, they are inherently accountable...the marketer is committing to setting up the methodologies for “reading” the behavior results over a period of time—against the going-in objective.
- 3. Insist upon a brightER Insight.** All too many so-called insights are really nothing more than Need-Statements warmed over or research facts. How often do we see in a Communications Brief an “insight” expressed something like this: *“I want to be sure that my kids are getting the proper nutrition. But so many products today maybe taste good but have almost no real nutritional value. I want something that does both.”* In the first place, this is nothing more than a Need-Statement; secondly, it's one that food and beverage marketers (and their R&D counterparts) have been hearing for about 30 years now. To get to a brighter insight, marketers cannot settle for something this superficial. They must go *deep* to better understand the consumer's ultimate anxieties and motivations. As the old saying goes, “Down deep—that's where the money is.”
- 4. Develop moRE Ideas.** All too often in searching for new innovation or communication ideas we converge on only a few options way too early in the process (sometimes we do this because we have not allowed for sufficient time in the process itself). An agency shows us two or three new Campaign Ideas at a first presentation and we ask, “Which one do you recommend?” But what we should be asking instead are these kinds of questions: “When can you show us another 6-9 ideas?” and “What ideas did you come up with at the agency that you didn't bring to show us today?” More ideas always make

us smarter—because we can see the range of potential options that are being covered...and can discover options that have been overlooked.

- 5. Be relentless in pushing for bettER product performance.** In a recent *Dispatches* we talked about the critical value of the product performance analysis: the on-going assessment *by consumers or customers* of the brand's functional performance versus that of its key competitors. We also noted that, unfortunately, too many companies and their marketers are content with "class-effect" functional performance, with securing only their "fair-share" of that class or category. But, for sure, this kind of acceptance is not in keeping with the never-ending drive to "do better tomorrow."

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Don't forget to make your intentions known to this office if you're thinking of joining us at the Open Brand Positioning & Communications College session in Evanston, Illinois November 15-17, 2011. We still have space available but it's quickly being snapped up. We truly don't want to leave anyone out, so if you'd like for us to hold a space for you, call Lori Vandervoort at the Central Division Office 800-255-9831 (620-431-0780).

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