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Selling with a visual aid

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Selling with a Visual Aid

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By

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MASTER OF ARTS THESIS

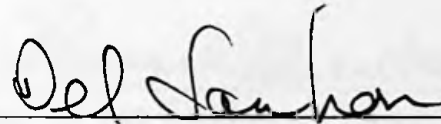
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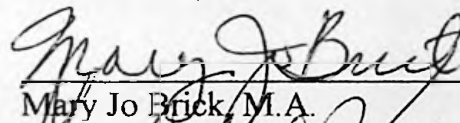
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Literature Review

Many have pondered the key to delivering an effective speech. Speculation ranges from what one wears to the tone of voice used to how the speech is outlined. No matter the opinion, most agree that visual aids are key to getting and keeping the attention of your audience. Visual aids can add interest, clarity, and drama to a presentation (Pollock, 2000). Clearly, all advertising seeks to influence behavior (Berger, 1999).

In the case of Boise Cascade Office Products, a visual aid helped to differentiate it from Office Max and Staples, while also driving the business 44% over the previous year (Estell, 2000). The company examined its targeted audience and created the fictional Boise High School in 1964, the year Boise Cascade was founded. In what would normally be a very plain sales pitch for office supplies, they created something interesting for their audience and it took off. The promotion centered around a romance between “Judy and Steve”. A newsletter was mailed to customers updating the romance and magnets of the twosome were given out. It appeared that their customers could not get enough of “Judy and Steve” (Estell, 2000). In sales,

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something new and fresh is always needed, and this promotion provided just that.

How a product is packaged and advertised affects the consumer's perception as well as purchasing decisions. Otherwise, how would a Swedish vodka that isn't even popular in its home country become the number one US vodka import and one of the top 10 distilled spirits in the world? First, the label would assert that Absolut vodka was produced according to centuries-old traditions and originated in the ancient distillery town of Åhus (Forster, 2001). In reality, it was actually distilled at a new plant just outside of Stockholm.

In 1980, the American advertising agency of TBWA took over and created the "Absolut Perfection" ad featuring the bottle wearing a halo. Eventually many similar ads followed. Although Absolut vodka is an undistinguished liquor that few Swedes drink, Americans bought the savvy ad campaign and purchase more than 3 million cases a year (Forster, 2001).

Another interesting example of generating interest through visual advertising is the XFL. Recently, 38,000 people jammed into the first ever XFL football game in San Francisco (Lochhead, 2001). In this day of an entertainment packed culture, an event must stand out against 30,000 to

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40,000 marketing messages every day. The XFL accomplished this by creating excitement and interest. Merely communicating the features and benefits of products and services is not sufficient. Marketing must capture people's imaginations with a story that compels them to buy, love the experience, and tell others about it (Lochhead, 2001).

In the pharmaceutical industry where there are 60,000 or more representatives the competition is intense. The key is how to give the sales call the necessary drama, without compromising the scientific tone of the product or the status of the representative (Castagnoli, 1999). Endo pharmaceuticals and its agency Dudnyk Healthcare believe they have found such a key in their latest campaign for the analgesic Zydone.

The marketing piece is centered around the comparison of a shark in the ocean that you cannot see and acute pain which is similarly lurking and threatening. The second part to this campaign is the reference to Zydone's ability to stop the pain. In extensive market research, they found that physicians associate a shark with severe pain (Castagnoli, 1999). Endo pharmaceuticals feels that it has created a visual aid that is aggressive and in-your-face, which will assist the sales representatives in delivering the intended message (Castagnoli, 1999).

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Experts say that the use of a visual aid increases listener retention to 75-80% (Britz, 1999). People may forget lists of words, but they remember images. As a general rule, a visual aid should be visible, simple, second to the audience, and not overdone (Pollock, 2000). Be sure the visual aid is visible to the audience, or it may distract from the message. Irrelevant details should be left out, as they will also detract from the message. One should always face the audience focusing on them and not the visual aid. Last, nothing elaborate is necessary. The more elaborate the visual aid, the more likely that the message will be smothered (Pollock, 2000). Following these simple guidelines will prepare the salesperson for the actual sales call.

Selling is just one word, but encompasses many steps that must occur before the actual process of selling can take place. It encompasses how to influence the mind of another and fit in successfully with the needs of the organization (Buckley, 1982). In the pharmaceutical industry, a representative is taught three major steps: rapport, interaction, and follow-up. An effective representative can do all three completely and naturally.

Dale Carnegie (1981) once said, "If you want to gather honey, don't kick over the bee hive." Sales people often have a plan of action in mind

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before they walk into a physician's office. The key to rapport with the staff and physician is not to be so focused on the plan that one forgets all else. Forgetting to acknowledge the person at the window diminishes their sense of importance. Forgetting to ask how your physician's day has been, may send the message that you really aren't interested. Exchanging greetings is a start, but one can excel by taking it a step further.

Make their day by creating a positive memory. Customers enjoy being a part of the show and receiving the extra attention from the representative (Lundin, Paul, & Christensen, 2000). A smile, knowing the names of the employees, and a general interest in them will endear a representative to the entire office. Often, this may be the only entertaining interaction of the day.

Focusing your attention on ways to make another person's day provides a constant flow of positive feelings (Lundin, Paul, & Christensen, 2000).

Once rapport is established, the representative will need an ice breaker. This will serve as a way to open up the conversation to business. The key is to be proactive rather than reactive in the approach (Gschwandtner, 1998). Asking questions of the physician establishes an

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interactive dialog where the representative is perceived as empathetic and genuine (Carnegie, 1981). It is the representative's job to handle any objections completely, so that there is not doubt regarding the usage of the product. Trust is essential in this interchange (Wells and Kipnis, 2001). Once completed, it is time to sell.

Using a visual aid is always recommended. The more creative, the better. It's not enough that the physician simply remember the product, but rather that they remember the reasons to use the product. Packaging is the loudest possible advertising vehicle available. It's the place to activate the consumer's impulse to buy (Masterson, 2000). Advertising is remembered to the extent that it appeals to existing interests (Strong and Loveless, 1926). Anything a representative can do to separate from the other sales pitches is advisable.

The final step of the interaction is the closing behavior. This is when the representative asks for the business. Depending upon the personality of the physician, different approaches are warranted. A more direct approach would work well for an analytical physician, whereas a softer approach would be necessary for the amiable physician. The right to close must be earned. Rapport must be established and reasons given to justify the use of

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the product. One must create the desire of the client and then present the solution. This solution would include how the product adequately satisfies the client's needs (Strong and Loveless, 1926). All objections must be answered. Carnegie (1981) lists the last principle as making the other person happy to do the thing that you suggest. This would complete a successful sales call.

The last note to remember is to always follow up. Use this time to inquire about the last call, any results since the last visit, and to remind them about future business.

Background

The basis of sales training through Pfizer pharmaceuticals is to leave an impact on a physician, which will then influence their prescriptive writing habits. This impact is achieved through 'detailing' which involves providing literature or sales aids in an effort to sway the physician toward a product. A staple of this detailing process is a visual aid. These aids can help draw more attention from the physician, and therefore hopefully leave a more lasting impression.

This study utilized all of the sales steps outlined on a bi-monthly basis for twenty-two physicians. The representative used an apple as the visual aid with a sales message relating to the apple. The visual aide procedure was predicted to increase the number of prescriptions written.

Method

In a single blind trial, this pilot study tested the effects of a sales aid in the prescriptive writing habits of 22 male, family medicine physicians. An apple was used with a Glucotrol XL sticker on it and the message that of the class of diabetes medicines, GXL was the one that would not make their patients gain weight, resulting in the 'apple shape'. It is well known within the medical community that the apple shaped patients are most at risk for cardiac complications. Diabetics are at an even greater risk. The goal was to leave a lasting impression on the physicians that GXL has no weight gain associated with it, and therefore influence their choice of the diabetic medicines. Each physician was seen approximately every two weeks with the identical message throughout the months of June, July, and August. Two sets of data were collected. The first was the amount of Glucotrol XL prescriptions written at the end of May. The second was the amount of Glucotrol XL prescriptions written at the end of the intervention, or August.

Results

There was no significant difference in the means between the baseline and experimental periods ($t_{21} = 1.42$ $p > .01$). Of the 22 physicians used in this study, 13 exhibited increases in raw numbers of prescriptions per month, 5 exhibited decreases, and 4 exhibited no change at all. Therefore, the hypothesis of effect was rejected.

Discussion

The available literature would suggest that utilizing a visual aid would be an effective tool in sales. In this study the intervention was not clinically significant. However, it is my belief that visual aids remain effective and should be used in the sales industry. Although this study was not statistically successful, 13 physicians were affected enough to write more prescriptions. If repeated, I believe there are several changes that could result in a successful intervention. When examining the study more closely, a few recommendations are appropriate. Because this study used a quasi-experimental design, rival hypothesis of history, selection, and maturation experiment should be explored using time series. If this

study had had the effect predicted, a time series study would be useful to examine outside variables such as the time of year. However, the hypothesis was rejected so recommendations will be made based on that. Using time series to address history, one could closely examine the external factors not addressed in this study. This study did not include such factors as the effects of other representatives selling competitive drugs, or the launch of a new drug into the market. For instance, during the trial period a new diabetic agent was launched that offered significant improvements over the product used in this study. In addition, the two pharmaceutical companies launching this medicine were exhausting all of their resources to promote this compound. At a time like that, an older medicine could define success as maintaining the market share versus losing it to the new product. In this study, 13 physicians not only maintained their market share, but actually increased it.

One could also utilize time series to address selection. This study could be repeated using different physicians, different ethnicity backgrounds, different gender of physicians, and different gender of representative. Maturation should also be tested to examine this study one year later. In the field of medicine, views often change as new advances are

made in the field. The instrument effect should also be considered. One way to re-analyze the data for this effect would be to use the monthly scores to test for a greater initial response to the visual aide versus the later responses when the aide had been seen several times.

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