

Ever since POPAI started telling the world that most purchase decisions are made in-store (let's not go into that now); brands have rushed to spend more and more on marketing communication in-store. Unfortunately, much in-store communication investment is wasted. Some of this is inevitable: marketing communication is an inefficient business, and shopper marketing communication is even more so. There are typically three key mistakes that brands make with marketing communication in-store.

In-Store Marketing Communication Mistake Number 1 – Too Many Messages

I know. You love your brand. I'm sure its great. But very rarely are shoppers interested in hearing your full brand story. Depending on the category, you have minutes, maybe seconds to get a message across. And often, the attention the shopper gives you is subconscious. This over-communication problem often occurs in consumer electronics, but can be found everywhere (next time you buy a packet of anything, just count how many messages are on the packaging, and in the vicinity of the shelf). Shoppers are surrounded by messages, and when faced with messaging overload, they typically just zone out. The advent of in-store screens is making this worse with many shopper marketers falling for the adage 'more is definitely better'. No, it isn't.

In-Store Marketing Communication Mistake Number 2 – Using The Consumer Message

I'd have hoped by now that the practice of taking the key brand visual, sticking it on a piece of cardboard and then adding the tagline from the TV commercial would have died. But alas, this practice is still very common. The consumer message was a message designed to get consumers to want to consume the brand. The shopper message needs to get the shopper to buy the product. It's a different target (consumers and shoppers are not the same), a different marketing objective, and a different environment. It's highly unlikely that exactly the same marketing communication is going to be optimum. I'm not saying ignore the core brand message, just that it might not be the best way to get shoppers to buy.

In-Store Marketing Communication Mistake Number 3 – Putting The Message In The Wrong Place

Too often the location of messages is dictated by retailers, or by shopper marketer indifference. Shelf signage goes in front of the brand in perhaps 90% of occasions. Yet often the target shopper goes nowhere near your brand! The only shoppers you can guarantee to go to that part of the fixture are your current shoppers on the day that they are already planning to buy your brand. That means that pretty much the ONLY shopper marketing objective you can meet there is to increase weight of purchase. It is a poor location for penetration (put your shelf communication by what they usually buy for that). And poor for increasing frequency. It can't be the best location for 90% of campaigns, yet that is where the marketing communication material ends up.

Getting In-Store Marketing Communication Right

If you want to make your in-store marketing communication more effective, there are four key steps you can take:

1. Know who your target shopper (for this activity) is

All marketing communication is about focus and targeting, and shopper marketing communication is no exception. But we're not talking about your target consumer, we're not even talking about your generic target shopper. We're talking about the shopper you want to act on this communication. If you're hoping to drive trial, then it is the people you want to try it – those are your target shoppers. Spend time working out who the target shopper is and learn everything you can about how they shop.

2. Place your in-store marketing communication where those shoppers are likely to be

If you know your target shopper, you can work out where the best place might be to engage them with this message. The image at the top of this post shows Nestle communicating about its gluten free product – not in the cereal aisle but with gluten free products. Why? because they reckon that's where shoppers will be most receptive to the message. Check out [this post for more on in-store communication placement, together with a great case study.](#)

3. Understand how much time you have to engage with your in-store marketing communication

Based on your understanding of the target shopper and their current behavior, you can get a sense of how long you have to communicate. Yes, of course, if your marketing communication is brilliantly arresting, then you may be able to stop the

shopper in their tracks and get you a little more time. But that is unlikely. If your target shopper spends less than two minutes in the store, and less than 10 seconds in your category, that's the time you have, in all likelihood.

4. Target your in-store marketing communication message on the key barriers to purchase, or the key reason to buy now

So we can't tell our whole brand story, so what do we need to communicate? Typically there are three key considerations:

- What does the target shopper already know? If the target shopper already knows about your heritage, or your green credentials, or your secret recipe, it may be that this can be left out of your marketing communication in-store. It is likely that simply seeing your brand will bring much of this to the front of the shopper's mind
- What communication is already there? Consider the category communication in the store, and consider your packaging. The aisle may have signage which is communicating to shoppers: how can your messaging build on this? And don't forget packaging – one of the most powerful tools for shopper communication. Packaging has stacks of information, so consider how your messaging might complement this.
- What is critical to turn the shopper into a buyer? What is the key reason they haven't bought the brand before? What is the reason they aren't behaving in the way that you want them to behave. If you want them to buy more volume, then why should they do this? If you want them to switch from a competitor brand, why on earth haven't they done so before? These should be the focus of your shopper marketing communication.

Getting marketing communication right blends art and science. Its not easy to predict what will work and what will not. But by avoiding these common errors, and following the key steps above, your communication will be much more effective. If you want more help making your in-store marketing effective, check out our [shopper communication training and coaching programs](#) – you can find more details [here](#). They will help you and your team brief, create, design and implement [instore signage](#) and shopper communication much more effectively.