

When only the best will do

Retailers, brand owners and manufacturers have enough on their plates without having to manage the kind of sophisticated sales and marketing programs that are so crucial to success in the modern retail environment. Fortunately, help is only a phone call away. **Jane McConnell reports.**

In the increasingly competitive Australian grocery retail environment, retailers and FMCG brands are facing challenges everywhere they look. The internet, arrival of major international players into the market and increasing range of Coles and Woolworths' own-label products are just some of the many factors impacting the industry.

So what to do? In these challenging circumstances, a strong sales and marketing program can make all the difference. This doesn't mean huge budgets and flash TV ads necessarily, either. In fact, the right sales and marketing strategies can be relatively cheap while helping ensure your customers keep coming back for more. As always, getting the right advice is absolutely critical.

"Sales and marketing is simply critical for modern retailers," says Lynne McKay, General Manager Retail Activation at Retail Safari, which offers a suite of retail marketing services that connect consumers with brands.

"And getting the right advice can often be the difference between coming up with a good idea and developing a great strategic marketing program – if the retailer's marketing partners do not fully understand their business, their customers, their strategy, the market and a myriad of other important connections, a campaign can be a very costly and potentially



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Lynne McKay – Retail Safari

brand damaging exercise.”

According to Ms McKay, grocery retailers are dedicating an increasing amount of time to their sales and marketing programs as they try to establish that crucial emotional connection with shoppers. To

achieve this, she says we're seeing increasing collaboration with local and/or international celebrities to leverage their connections with primary grocery buyers, while online and mobile offers are also becoming prevalent.

Again, though, especially when committing to larger-scale campaigns with commensurately larger budgets, finding the right partner is absolutely essential.

"Try and partner with a specialist that's on the same wavelength with you and also, has a deep, vertical knowledge of the retail industry and experience in executing strategies and programs that have had proven results in that space," Ms McKay advises.

"Ask others, both in and outside the grocery retail business, about who delivers best-in-class services and results. Ask for case studies and mechanics on how things will work and what sort of results can be expected. Look at the culture of the agency to confirm it's in alignment with yours. A history of creative thinking and operational excellence is key – as a retailer, you're not looking for another job to do; you want a partner who understands what you need and will 'run the show' with successful results.

"You can usually find out just

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Questions to ask before launching any retail sales and marketing campaign

- What do we want our store environment to look and feel like?
- How do we drive shoppers into our stores based on our local knowledge?
- Is the store easy to navigate?
- Is the environment welcoming and are products easy to find?
- How do we create and sustain an emotional connection with our customers?
- Do we constantly offer something new and different?
- What sort of activities do customers respond well to and what do they avoid?
- Does this sales and marketing campaign speak directly to the shopper I'm attempting to gain loyalty from?
- Is the quality and service consistent no matter which of our stores they visit?
- Are our offers compelling enough?

From Lynne McKay – Retail Safari

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how good or bad an agency is by asking the right questions – either of the agency or those they've worked with. With so much riding on the outcomes, it's critical that you're confident your agency is both aligned to your strategy and delivering exactly what you need to achieve genuine cut-through."

One absolutely crucial aspect of retail sales and marketing strategy is merchandising. With many grocery retail categories now cluttered with similar products, how you merchandise your lines can make all the difference when consumers are gazing at the shelf, trying to make a purchasing decision.

"The retail store environment is a dynamic showcase for brands and categories," says Michael Bartholomew, CEO of Strikeforce AMC, Australia's most awarded sales and merchandising company with more than 40 years' experience.

"If you showcase your products effectively, it's a great way to create shopping destinations and connect with consumers," he says.

"Shopper engagement studies have shown that consumers are making up to 80 per cent of their retail purchase decisions in-store. While retail shoppers are more empowered than ever before to make educated buying decisions, they also heavily rely on in-store marketing cues, which highlights the importance of effective visual merchandising.

"If you invest in merchandising, positive results will follow. The key benefits of merchandising include obtaining ranging, increasing distribution, promotional compliance, increased on-shelf availability, consistent presentation of products and speed to market for your new lines."

While the importance of merchandising cannot be questioned, making sure your merchandising has genuine impact and, most importantly, stacks up against your competitors, is easier said than done. According to Mr Bartholomew, utilising an outsourced merchandising specialist is a cost-effective strategy that allows you to achieve maximum coverage and

Technology enabling better sales and marketing

Company name

Opmetrix.

Product/service

Tablet-based, mobile sales force automation technology.

Target market

Any company involved in the wholesaling and distribution sector that has reps and merchandisers out in the field.

Key benefits

This tablet-based software is utilised by sales reps and merchandisers out in the field. It enables organisations to maximise their efficiency by doing away with paperwork and double-handling. They can set journey plans and key in-store tasks by banner group, region and/or sub-region while the reporting



features help optimise the productivity of sales and merchandising teams operating throughout Australia.

While in the field, a rep can easily complete a multitude of tasks, including sales orders, quotes, credit requests, contact management, calling cards, promotional compliance, promotional opportunities, shelf checks, competitor analysis, surveys, objectives and creating new sales prospects.

Approximate cost

\$15,000 up-front, which covers installation, ERP integration, consultancy and training, with ongoing user licence fees of \$65 per month per rep.

Clients

A wide range of companies use this technology, including:

- Avanti.
- Cerebos Gregg's Ltd.
- Masterpet.
- Fine Wine Wholesalers.
- Tasmanian Bakeries.
- Pacchini & Sons.
- Nudie.
- Chemcorp International.

Quote from a happy client

Chemcorp International promotes and distributes beauty products to more than 15,000 retailers in Australia, including department stores, pharmacies, supermarkets, convenience stores and beauty supply stores. Its sales team has been using Opmetrix for over eight years.

"We've always had a great relationship with Opmetrix and our guys in the field love it," says John Fisher, National Business Director.

"It's created efficiencies in our business both from a management perspective and, most importantly, out in the field. The continuous innovation and constant updating of the program means that everything runs really smoothly. We couldn't live without it."



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Michael Bartholomew –
Strikeforce AMC

frequency as well as giving you full visibility of the results.

"Retailers depend on merchandising field teams to support their store operations teams in a wide range of roles, including planogram implementation, display builds, shelf merchandising, on-shelf availability management, planogram and distribution compliance and new line speed to market," he says.

"There are three key benefits from contracting a quality merchandising and sales specialist:

- Access to live, state-of-the-art field-reporting technology and data-driven initiatives.
- Increased store coverage and call frequencies enhancing new line speed to market.
- The ability and flexibility to resource up and down in line with peaks and troughs of workloads."

For anyone considering contracting a sales and merchandising specialist, Mr Bartholomew has the following advice:

- "Seek a company which can offer flexible sales and merchandising solutions supported by insight and technology and consider:
- What reporting and field communication technology does it use? Can it provide instant data and give you

full transparency and measurable results?

- Does the company invest in its people, customer engagement, systems and infrastructure?
- Can the provider offer you a flexible model which suits your particular needs?
- Does it have channel expertise and excellent relationships with key buyers at national, state and store levels?
- What is the past track record of the company and does it deliver on commitments made?
- Does it have a successful and long history of relationships with its clients?
- Does it have ASACA [Association of Sales and Marketing Companies Australasia] membership and operate to its ethical code of conduct?" ♦