

Capturing Competitive Advantage:

Using Insights to Tame the Planning Beast



insights in marketing

Connecting people to brands.



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Introduction

Thank you for downloading Insights in Marketing's eBook. I hope you find it beneficial.

Want to capture competitive advantage in strategic planning?
Start by understanding the consumer!

In essence, when consumer insights are the foundation of a company's strategic plan and marketing initiatives are rooted in consumer insights, a business is more likely to succeed!

This book is about better using consumer insights information in the strategic planning process to create competitive advantage, and how you can continue to impact that process most effectively. Whether you are deeply involved in the process now, or whether consumer insights are an afterthought to the planning process, this eBook is designed to stretch your thinking. It's designed to give you tips, tools and best practices for ways to plan with the consumer in mind, and as a result, tame the strategic planning beast.

The strategic planning process is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Each company puts its own spin on the process. We wrote this book to challenge your thinking on how consumer insight informs the entire strategic planning process—before, during and after—so that you can arm your strategic planners with the information they need to create competitive advantage for your company.

As you read through this eBook if any ideas or questions come to mind, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me. Helping companies build successful brands is what we do!

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5 Steps of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning generally has five steps, each answering important questions that can and should be informed by consumer understanding:

- What is the current state of the company, its competitors, and the consumer?
- What do we want/need to achieve?
- What does success look like and how will we get there?
- How do we invest our resources?
- What progress are we making toward reaching our goals and what course corrections are needed? How are we tracking our KPIs (key performance indicators)?

Taming the Strategic Planning Beast

A recent study conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit and sponsored by SAS found that **only six in ten respondents from global businesses viewed their companies as consumer-centric and just over half reported a clear understanding of consumers' tastes and needs.** If strategic plans should be based in consumer understanding is there any wonder why so many companies struggle with differentiation and competing effectively? One thing is clear: There is a distinct opportunity to better leverage consumer insights information to tame the strategic planning beast.

Businesses need forward-thinking strategy more than ever in today's rapidly changing environment, as most companies are not able to react as swiftly as needed to out-pace shifts in the market. Staying ahead of the game requires superior vision, effective strategy, and strong execution. And that is only possible when a deep understanding of the consumer is the foundation for all decisions in the planning process.

Consumer insights information tames the strategic planning beast in these ways:

Key Benefit	Rationale
→ INCREASED COLLABORATION	Insights about consumers, their behavior and their motivations keep the strategy discussion rooted in a consistent and cohesive understanding of the market.
→ FASTER AND EASIER BUY-IN	A consistent fact foundation for the strategic plan that is facilitates acceptance and implementation the plan.
→ MORE THOUGHTFUL DIALOGUE	With so many competing priorities, a clear understanding of what matters most to consumers enables the business to prioritize and focus on those insights/initiatives that most positively impact the consumers and the bottom line.

60% of global businesses viewed their companies as consumer-centric



Without this base of information, participants in the strategic planning process can only rely on the past for information about the future, and increasingly, the past is not a good predictor of what the future will bring.

■ How Does Your Company Tackle the Strategic Plan Now?

The first step for increasing the integration of consumer insights into the strategic planning process is to understand the process by answering these key questions:

WHO LEADS AND WHO PARTICIPATES?

Understanding who leads and who participates in the planning process will help you understand how the discussion will be framed and focused, and what consumer insights information could be useful—or even game-changing.

WHEN DOES STRATEGIC PLANNING TYPICALLY TAKE PLACE?

Find out when the process starts and ends for your company, and understand what that means for timing the development and delivery of consumer insights information.

WHAT INFORMATION IS USED IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS NOW AND WHAT'S MISSING?

If companies are not sufficiently consumer-centric, strategic plan participants may not know what information is available to them currently and what could be available to them with some advance planning.



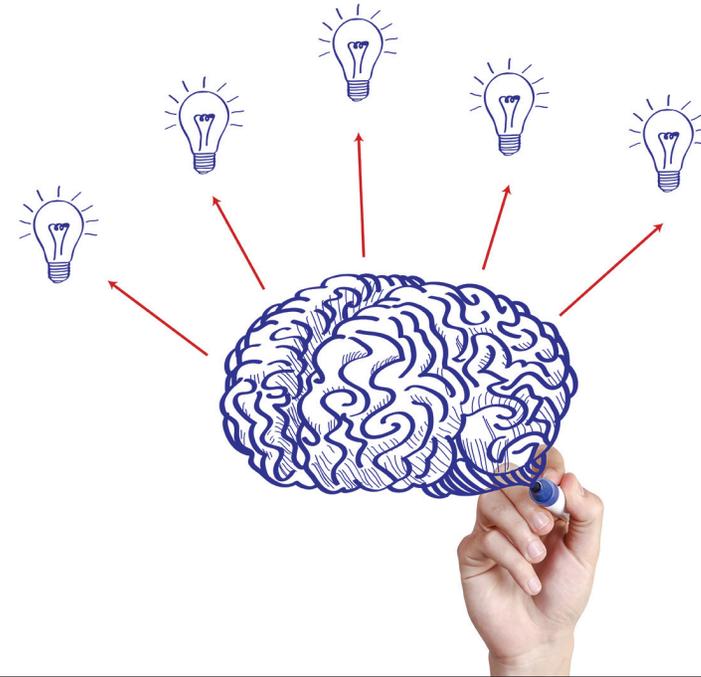
“Marketing is too important to be left just to the marketing department.”

– Philip Almond, Marketing Director, Diageo

■ What Information Is Used Now?

Start by assessing the level of consumer understanding shown in the most recent strategic plan. You want to identify what consumer information was used, and of that information, what was most helpful and influential, and why, as well as what information was not helpful and why.

This is also your opportunity to identify how to improve the use of consumer understanding in the strategic planning process. Marketing and Consumer Insights professionals have the opportunity to partner with members of the strategic planning team by making sure the business is asking the right questions and leveraging the best consumer-driven insight to drive strategy.



“Insights is science and art, the left and the right brain in balance. It gives confidence in management decisions, but it is not the decision itself. It is one tool to be applied, together with financial and economic data, market structure and competitive position, trends, internal capabilities and capacity, to inform the most important strategic decisions facing our clients.”

– Christine Barton, Partner & Managing Director, BCG

To get you started, we have prepared a checklist of the types of information commonly used in strategic marketing planning so that you can be sure to get the complete picture. As you consider each one, determine whether it is currently being used in the strategic planning process, how well it is being used (or how satisfied leaders are with it) as well as any gap in information that you can address now or need to fill in for the next round of strategic planning.

Strategic Plan Information Checklist

- Financial and sales performance and trends*
- Industry trends: size of market, growth, hiring, technological innovations, etc.*
- Competitive intelligence—current and emerging competitors*
- Macro trends (global social, economic trends)*
- Internal capabilities, operations, capacity*
- Consumer information and insights, such as demographics, category behavior, attitudes and perceptions, consumer psychological profile (Described in detail in Chapter 3)*
- Secondary research—government information, trade association studies, etc.*

■ What Information is Missing?

Once you understand how your company approaches strategic planning you will start to identify opportunities to use information about your consumers to improve the strategic planning process. Start with your organization's current key priorities, and give your strategic planning team insight and perspective that they would not be able to come to on their own. For example:

- 1 IMPACT:** What innovation did your company launch and what impact did it have with consumers? What product or service innovation does the team wish had been launched, based on what is known about consumers? Why?
- 2 COMMUNICATE:** Did the team change the brand's advertising messages? How are consumers responding? What is the team hearing in marketing research that might offer some adjustments that would improve performance or give insight for next year's efforts?
- 3 RELEVANCE:** How relevant is the brand to the consumers you want to attract?
- 4 COMPETE:** What battles did the brand's competitors win last year? And how does the team propose to win this year's battles?

■ Taming the Strategic Planning Beast Starts Now!

Infusing consumer insights into strategic planning should start months before the actual planning process begins if you want to impact the process and the plan. Custom marketing research, trends analysis, and evaluation of other information resources will take time and probably can't be done successfully at the last minute. Additionally, especially if consumer insights have not historically played an important role in the company's strategic planning, you will need to educate company leaders on the information available from consumer insights and how those insights can be used in the strategic plan.



Here is a Game Plan that ensures consumer insights are ready to tame the strategic planning beast:

Strategic Planning Game Plan—Part 1	
Timing	Activity
STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING! (Ongoing consumer insights activities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include key strategic planning participants in reports and presentations of consumer insights projects. • Enhance corporate understanding of your consumers and bring consumers to life: who they are, what motivates them, why they behave the way they do. • Provide metrics and analysis about progress in achieving previous year goals, competitive response and recommended course corrections. • Address gaps in strategic planning information with new projects. • Monitor industry, social and economic trends and share information.
TRAIN FOR THE GAME! (Six months before strategic planning process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide high-level information, such as social trends, economic forecasts, brand health status and competitive activity, before the start of the planning process. • Identify consumer insights projects to provide information specifically for the strategic plan. • Provide trend information to guide senior leaders' identification of strategic priorities for the next 3 to 5 years.



Strategic Planning Game Plan—Part 2

Timing	Activity
QUALIFYING ROUNDS! (Immediately prior to strategic planning process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesize key consumer insights for the strategic planning process in 3–7 easily digestible consumer themes (find an example in Chapter 2). • Position consumer insights as a resource for the strategic planning process.
IT'S GAME TIME! (During strategic planning process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide most current data updates or recent learning. • Develop strategies and recommendations for strategic priorities based on relevant consumer insights data. • Be prepared to implement consumer insights projects with extremely tight timelines and budgets, such as omnibus surveys and online qualitative research, to address strategic planning information requests.
FINALS! (During implementation process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for measuring the success of the identified strategic plan/priorities. • Align team on and integrate metrics into marketing and the future learning agenda. • Continue to implement fast-turn-around projects to provide information for strategic planners.
RECAP/REVIEW! (Immediately after strategic planning / implementation process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan to address gaps in information. • Track Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). • Conduct a post-mortem on the use of consumer insights in the strategic planning process and identify opportunities to improve.



As a marketer or consumer insights professional, your role in the strategic planning process is to provide strategic recommendations based on necessary information and insights in a form that is accessible, timely and accurate. Most executives will intuitively understand and welcome the clarity and direction that consumer insights bring to the dialogue of the strategic planning process. **Having a strong fact-foundation drives discussion very quickly to “what should we do?” That discussion reduces uncertainty, encourages collaboration, and builds cohesiveness.**

**“It’s always about timing.
If it’s too soon, no one
understands. If it’s too late,
everyone’s forgotten.”**

– Anna Wintour, Editor-in-Chief, Vogue



Chapter Two



Chart the Path: The Consumer Information Roadmap

It's clear that consumer insights information is what you need to tame the strategic planning beast. Now that you better understand your organization's strategic planning process, the schedule, and the information currently being used, you're ready to do a deeper dive into the role specific consumer insights information will play in taming the beast. **The first step should be to conduct a Consumer Insights Audit, so that you know what information you currently have, and when and how the information was gathered.** Some of the information that you should have available (depending, of course, on your industry/category) are:



Consumer Insights Audit

Type of Consumer Information	Frequently Included Information
SEGMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavior, attitudes, demographics• Current and growth targets
HABITS AND PRACTICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavior information for category and similar categories
AWARENESS AND USAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brand tracking• Behavior
BRAND IMAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brand affinity and equity• Brand attribute tracking
ADVERTISING AWARENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key messages• Media usage
PURCHASE DYNAMICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purchase behavior and frequency
CONSUMER SATISFACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loyalty, competitive advantage
MARKETING MIX	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Model to illuminate marketing mix optimization
PRICING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Price sensitivity• Promotional response
MARKET STRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competition• Distribution• Vertical and horizontal integration• Emerging competitors

Shelf-Life of Consumer Data

Type of Information	Typical Shelf Life ¹
SEGMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat every 3–5 years • Replicate periodically to test validity
HABITS AND PRACTICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat every 3–5 years • Include in qualitative discussions to monitor changes
AWARENESS AND USAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat every 3–5 years • Include in qualitative discussions to monitor changes
BRAND IMAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearly or more frequent as tracker
ADVERTISING AWARENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearly or more frequent as tracker
SHOPPER INSIGHTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearly or more frequent as tracker
CONSUMER SATISFACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearly or more frequent as tracker
MARKETING MIX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on volatility of category
PRICING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on volatility of category
MARKET STRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on volatility of category

¹Typical shelf lives may vary and are dependent on category and industry.

How Good Is Your Information? The Shelf-Life of Consumer Data

A key consideration here is the age of the information you have. Consumer insights data—like most good things in life—does not last forever, and while the shelf-life for marketing information is variable, you should consider whether your information is too old to be used. Insights in Marketing’s Senior Marketing Consultant Christine Holt recently [blogged](#) about this topic and recommends the guidelines¹ in the chart on the left.

Once you have determined how usable existing consumer information is, what should be updated, as well as what information is missing and must be created, you can develop your plan and budget to address the gaps. If you know in advance what corporate challenges, issues and financial goals will be addressed in the strategic plan, you can prioritize your consumer insights learning agenda to produce the most important information first.

[Note: Click here to access her full blog post.](#)



■ Focus on Consumer Insights!

As consumer insights are produced throughout the year, make sure that the strategic planning participants receive the information in a way that they can really digest—insights that are simple, accessible and can readily be incorporated into their thinking. You might need to create special communications showing how the information should be applied to the strategic planning process. In any event, sharing consumer insight information throughout your company will help everyone better understand the consumer, the marketing environment and competition.

Over the years, the trend in consumer insights reports has been toward shorter and more impactful reporting. In addition, **try to bring the consumer to life for your colleagues by humanizing the information with consumer personas, story-telling about your target consumer, videos and imagery.** Many of your consumer research partners have a world of experience in communicating insights through organizations and you

should reach out to them for innovative and impactful ideas, such as:

- **Create imaginary example target consumers.** Find images that represent your consumers, develop their backstories, and bring them to life.
- **Make a video, infographic or slideshow to add dimension to the consumer.** Use consumer immersion and ethnography to add to your team's target understanding.
- **Write a monthly letter to your company from your target consumer,** describing a recent experience he/she had with your products or services.
- **Create posters about your target consumer** and hang them throughout your company's buildings to keep the consumer top-of-mind.

Your Target Consumer 



Who Doesn't Love a Cheat Sheet?

Assuming you have done all you can over the course of the business year, and if the strategic planning participants have been paying attention, they should be steeped in consumer understanding and ready to take on the strategic plan. However, just in case a few of them were not able to absorb the consumer insights information you have been producing, you still have time to ensure that they have the critical information they will need.

41%

of insights professionals believe their business leaders could pass a pop quiz on important facts about their consumers.

Create a Consumer Insights Digest highlighting the key insights and facts that will be needed by the strategic planning team. In a [BCG survey](#), **less than half of consumer insights professionals (41 percent) believe their business leaders could pass a pop quiz on important facts about their consumers.** So think of this Consumer Insights Digest as a cheat sheet for your business leaders: It must be brief if the strategic planning

participants are to keep it top-of-mind, so hit the high points. This will be a great tool—and they can always call on you for more detail.

Here are some questions that you should consider answering in The Consumer Insights Digest:

- **Our consumer is best described as...**
- **Our consumers' key behaviors are...**
- **Our consumer is motivated by and needs...**
- **Our consumers' lives are...**
- **At the point of purchase, we know our consumers...**
- **Our consumers' mindsets are...**
- **Trends that will most likely impact our consumers...**

“Get closer than ever to your customers. So close that you will tell them what they need before they realize it themselves.”

– Steve Jobs, Former CEO Apple

This is also your opportunity to identify the need for new products and services to meet emerging consumer needs. At this point in the planning process, participants are open and interested in new and innovative thinking so they will welcome perspectives that shine new light on the business and pathways for success. The next page shows an example of a Consumer Insights Digest.

Consumer Insights Digest

Purchase Behavior

60 PERCENT

SHOP 2-3 TIMES PER WEEK

Majority shop for the category online



Motivation and Needs

95 PERCENT

HAVE A DESIRE TO "HAVE IT ALL" AND "DO IT ALL"

Secretly motivated by being the envy of friends



Actual Lives

74 PERCENT

WANT TO LOOK CALM DESPITE CHALLENGES

Surrounded by chaos, but want to exude a calm image



Our Consumer

Middle class women ages 35-54

45 PERCENT

ARE MOMS WITH CHILDREN AGES 6-12



Point of Purchase

75 PERCENT

DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO PRODUCT'S PRICE

Less price sensitive—will pay for quality



Media Behavior

25 PERCENT

DECIDE TO BUY A PRODUCT BASED ON ADVERTISING

More likely to buy based on good reviews from others



Trends

80 PERCENT

ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR RAISING A CHILD

Feel stress of more responsibility in home



Chapter Three



The Ultimate Weapon: The Right Consumer and The Right Benefit

Consumer insights information answers many questions for marketing, but none are more important than to identify the right growth opportunities, and to deliver a deep understanding of what matters most to your target consumers. **Only 20 percent of marketers say they truly know their consumers.² And, 81 percent of marketing decision makers are concerned about reaching the right consumer.³**

20% of marketers say they truly know their consumers.²

81% of marketing decision makers are concerned about reaching the right consumer.³

How can you tame the strategic planning beast without the right information? Knowing your target audience and the benefit that audience truly desires from your company is the best weapon—perhaps the only weapon—capable of creating competitive advantage.

What consumer insights information do you need to make sure that you have identified the right target market—the

one that will allow you reach and exceed your growth goals? Typical consumer characteristics that are widely used:

- 1 DEMOGRAPHICS:** Demographic information is the first-level of description for identifying and choosing the target audience. What do these demographics say about consumers' ability and likelihood to purchase your products?
- 2 CATEGORY AND ADJACENT CATEGORY BEHAVIOR:** How do consumers use your category? Are they heavy or light, recent adopters or people who have been using the product/service for a long time? What is their behavior in categories adjacent to your category? What does their behavior say about why they use these products or services the way they do?

² <http://www.dmnews.com/only-20-of-marketers-truly-know-their-consumers/article/306535/>

³ <https://www.images2.adobe.com/content/dam/Adobe/en/solutions/digital-marketing/pdfs/adobe-digital-distress-survey.pdf>



- 3 CONSUMER SEGMENTATION:** What consumer segments provide the best opportunity for your organization to meet its goals? All segments are not created equal so consumer insights must build an understanding of which segments are the best choice.
- 4 MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA:** Understanding what media your target consumers use is critical in understanding how to communicate with them, and even more important for engaging and interacting with them.
- 5 SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY:** How deep is your relationship with consumers? Is their purchasing behavior more opportunistic and influenced by what your competitors are offering? And most importantly, how can you make them more loyal?

There are additional behavior-driving characteristics that provide meaningful insight. These characteristics aren't always uncovered with traditional research, but are essential for a complete consumer understanding. The following characteristics motivate behavior:

- 6 HABITS:** How do they use your product and how does your product align with their typical behavior patterns? The key question here is assessing how entrenched specific behaviors are for your consumers. The more entrenched, the more difficult the change to adopt a new product or service, and the more support they will need from you in marketing communications.

Brand X?
 Brand Y?



“The trouble with market research is that people don’t think how they feel, they don’t say what they think and they don’t do what they say.”

– David Ogilvy of Ogilvy & Mather

7 VALUES AND BELIEFS: All consumers have deep-seated values and beliefs about their lives and how they play their varied roles (e.g. parent, spouse, employee, etc.). What do you need to know that consumers may not readily be able to tell you and have your research methods dug deep enough to get at this? When consumers buy cars, they are not just buying transportation; they are buying statements about themselves, and what's important to them. Understanding the values of your consumers—and how your product/service fits with those values—is critical to business success.

8 PERSONALITY: Consumers' personalities are made up of the qualities and characteristics that make us unique and set us apart from others. Consumers choose products and services that reflect their personalities, or the personalities they aspire to have. By choosing brands similar to their own personalities, they tell the world who they are—or whom they want to be.

Marketing and consumer insights professionals tend to focus on metrics that describe consumers, as they are easier to measure and report. However, these last three characteristics are equally—and often more—important in developing unique and compelling insights for your consumers.

Marketers and consumer insights professionals are uniquely capable of bringing this information together to create innovative and effective strategies and plans. The important thing is to challenge your understanding of the consumer, continually bringing additional depth and clarity to your insights.



■ Spotlight on the Key Benefit

The second significant area of the strategic plan that must be informed by consumer insights information is the question of defining the key benefit to be delivered to the target consumer: Why should the consumer buy your product or service? When attempting to answer this question, many managers look to features and benefits. But to be truly compelling and meaningful to the consumer, the benefit must go beyond tangible features and align with consumers' values, attitudes and beliefs.

Why should the consumer buy your product or service?

Let's take cars as an example. A car might deliver features such as good gas mileage, sporty styling or safety. But consumers buy cars for the benefit of expressing something that they value about themselves. **Consumers buy Volvos because they are very safe cars, providing the ultimate protection for their families. In doing this, they are telling the world they are good, caring parents. Volvo then reinforces that key benefit by communicating product features that make Volvos safe.**

Once the key benefit is identified, consumer insights and marketing professionals can use the key benefit as a guiding principle for all marketing plans and activities, as everything (yes, everything) should contribute to delivery of the key benefit.



Chapter Four



Feeding the Beast: The Consumer Insights Culture

After the strategic planning beast is tamed, helping the company implement the strategic plan and measuring progress toward accomplishing the plan are important activities for marketing and consumer insights professionals. But even more important to the long-term success of the business is building a culture of Consumer Insights within the organization by informing and educating, being the consumers' spokesperson, and delivering insights that truly make a difference. The most critical year-round function of marketing and consumer insights professionals is to integrate the customer into all of the company's activities.

Here are three key activities to achieving consumer-insights company-wide integration:

1. Feed the Strategic Conversation
2. Live, Breathe, Eat & Sleep Consumer—and Make Sure Your Colleagues Do Too
3. Deliver Insights that Matter

“For all companies, effective marketing accountability requires a mix of art and science: it requires transformation of culture, of process and of the methods used to measure marketing effects, and to act on the insights from those measures.”

– Frank Harrison, Strategic Resources Director, Worldwide, ZenithOptimedia



Feed the Strategic Conversation

Marketing and consumer insights professionals carry the ball for continuing the conversation about strategy—for the entire organization, as well as for marketing. As information from marketing research and other consumer insights activities are communicated throughout the organization, they focus the discussion on important strategic questions, such as:



Ask Key Strategic Questions

MARKET OR BRAND POSITION

- Where do your products and services fit in the market?
- How does this compare to competitors?

KEY BENEFIT (or unique selling proposition)

- What is your key benefit?
- How is it delivered to consumers through everything you do?
- How can you reinforce it, especially against competitors?

DEMAND ANALYSIS AND GROWTH STRATEGY

- What volume of products/services will your consumers purchase?
- Why?
- How can you increase that by removing obstacles or limitations?

PRICING STRATEGY

- Are your consumers price sensitive?
- How do consumers respond to promotional pricing—yours or your competitors’?
- Should your organization consider bundled pricing? What is the optimal bundle and how do you price it?

CONSUMER PROFILES

- How are your consumers changing?
- What is causing the change?
- What does that mean for your organization?

■ Live, Breathe, Eat & Sleep Consumer—and Make Sure Your Colleagues Do Too

The most successful companies constantly keep the target consumer top-of-mind. Marketing and consumer insights professionals must take responsibility for ensuring that all activities and tactics align with the key benefit to be delivered to consumers.

This makes socializing your research within the company a very important activity. And in socializing research, creativity counts! The days when you could produce a 100-slide PowerPoint deck and believe you communicated the insight are long over. Creating a plan to disseminate the information creatively and with more impact is a requirement for success; variety is the spice of life. Insights in Marketing recently published a [blog](#) on this topic that highlights four key strategies for socializing consumer insights information:

● Create an inspiring and visually appealing “intel room.”

Bring your consumers to life in a space dedicated to all things consumer with a centrally located space where you educate and remind associates and executives what makes consumers tick.

● Conduct a final “consumer review” stage for key initiatives.

Before pressing “go,” create a team to take one last hard look to make sure what you’re doing is completely aligned with your target consumer.

● Sponsor trivia-based lunch-n-learns.

Make it fun to learn about the consumer, and who doesn’t like a free lunch?

● Continue to Build Your Cheat Sheet.

A portable, visually-appealing cheat sheet with consumer insights is a great tool to keep the consumer top-of-mind. Periodically update it to highlight what’s changing with the consumer ([see Consumer Insights Digest example in Chapter 2](#)).





■ Deliver Insights that Matter

One of the most important disciplines that marketing and consumer insights professionals must develop is to focus only on insights that truly matter. Not data, certainly not just information that is interesting—we have to raise the bar on the insights that we deliver. To the right are six ways to determine when an insight truly matters, and when it is merely interesting.

Insights that matter integrated into your organization's strategic plan provide creativity and innovation, and create the foundation for continued business success. As we pointed out early in this eBook, it is never too soon—or too late—to get started bringing consumer insights information to strategic planning.

INSIGHTS THAT MATTER...

- drive new ideas, thinking and behavior within your company.
- turn consumer pain points or problems into opportunities.
- say more about the consumer than about the product or service.
- are often more about the category than the brand, and especially about the category driver.
- reveal more about how people want to feel (their personality, habits and values) but can't articulate, rather than what they think.
- focus more on what is enduring and slow to change.

“Bridge the gap between the interesting and the impactful. For instance, here’s an interesting fact: 42% of legal-related searches happen on smart phones. I love that factoid...It’s very interesting, but I need it to be relevant: ‘All our solutions need to be fully optimized for mobile devices.’”

– Michael Mathias, Findlaw, “What CEOs Want from Marketing Research”

The Tamed Beast: Signs of Success

This book has a lot of “to do” items and by now you may be feeling a little overwhelmed. You don’t have to do all of this at once—in fact, you don’t have to do all of this at all. As we pointed out at the beginning, all companies plan differently and you have to figure out what is most important for your company to tame the strategic planning beast. Don’t try to boil the ocean—focus on the actions and the consumer insights information that will have the most impact on bringing the consumer into the strategic planning process. That’s how you maximize your impact.

“What is the value to a marketer of insight that isn’t implemented? Zero.”

– Rex Briggs, *Marketing Evolution*

What will success look like?

How will you know when they are paying attention?

When will you know when you are making a difference?



Generally people learn and absorb new information over time, gradually accepting and integrating the information into their thinking and actions. It is very rare that light bulbs suddenly pop on over their heads! So here's what you can expect as people integrate insights into their business decision making:



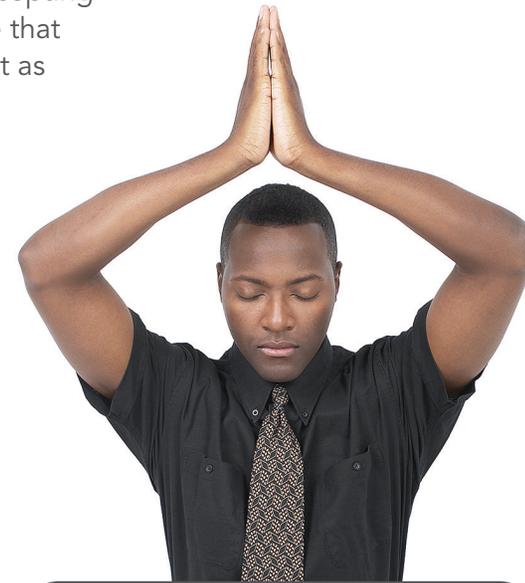
> Phase 1
Hearing

At this phase, people accept the information. They may ask questions about the information, but they have yet to fully engage with it. There are some things that you can do to make sure that people hear and remember the information. What you're trying to do is create "sticky sound bites"—short, memorable, retainable information bits that represent important insights.



> Phase 2
Understanding

In Phase 2, your audience starts to talk about the information. People test it in different situations, to see how it fits with their current views of the world. They may challenge the information or they may resist it in some way. That's OK. That is how we learn.



> Phase 3
Internalizing

At this point, the information is no longer new. It is part of your audience's belief set. You have successfully changed your audience's view of the market and the business. At this point, you will hear your CEO or CMO quoting the statistics that you have shared. You will hear other executives reinforcing that behavior and basing their own decisions on those facts. And finally, they don't verbalize it—they simply act on it. When your information becomes completely integrated into your company's behavior, you have reached consumer insight Nirvana.

So get going—learn all you can about the strategic planning process, and then start sharing your consumer insights. As you go along, you'll build a consumer insights culture. And your organization will become more adept at using those insights for taming the strategic planning beast and creating competitive advantage.



So, what are you waiting for?

About Insights in Marketing



Insights in Marketing, LLC. is a research-based marketing consultancy dedicated to bringing consumer and market insights into the strategic planning conversation. Since 1989, Insights in Marketing has helped brands develop impactful marketing strategies through better insights and better use of those insights in all aspects of the business. We look forward to sharing how we can help you improve the impact of your marketing efforts.

To learn more about **Insights in Marketing**, visit our website at www.InsightsinMarketing.com or contact us at:

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