



PGS MONTHLY

Designing for Memorability

Volume 4, Issue 10 October 2020



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Cover photo courtesy of Food GPS, Dec. 6, 2011 blog post...www.foodgps.com



About PGS

PGS is a sole proprietorship consultancy for entrepreneurs and investment firms focused on the premium end of retail food and beverage.

- I help clients plan exponential growth.
- I help clients implement, evaluate and revise those plans.



Introduction

In *Ramping Your Brand*, I begin by introducing two critical pillars of growth in consumer brands: memorability and distribution. This month, I'd like to expand on how you can design memorability into your business. Memorability is essential for any brand in any industry, but it's insanely crucial in a premium-priced product line selling within a crowded category where, on average, ~90% of consumers refuse to pay a premium price. In many cases, your premium offering will have to persuade them to be discontent with cheaper, existing offerings. If you're lucky, they were already discontent. And yes, all this involves more than 'great branding' (face slap).

The Primary Components

There are three primary components of brand memorability that you want to think through as you devise your 4P playbook. In the early years, you need to experiment a lot to find what works for your team, your budget, and your offering.

Here are the components you need to master:

- symbolic differentiation
- recall
- emotional impact

While it's possible to generate above-average memorability with the last two and not the first, I don't recommend it as an under-capitalized business. Why? Because scaling me-too brands is a privilege of wealth and deep industry connections like Waterloo sparkling water has recently done.

These three buckets are nice, James, you're saying to yourself, but how do I measure memorability? How do I quantify it?

Well, you do it by measuring its direct consequences. You know have above average memorability when:

- 1) research confirms your brand's attribute-outcome signal is both differentiated and tied to a mass-market outcome relevant to the category (e.g., symbolic differentiation)
- 2) consumer repeat purchase on an annual basis is 75%+ early on AND preferably 30% or higher every month (loyalty card data will tell you this early on)(recall is fundamental to repeat)
- 3) smoothed monthly velocities grow off-promo at a steady incline throughout the year (recall drives repeat, which drives strong velocity growth)
- 4) consumers share your online marketing assets widely and enthusiastically (e.g., heightened emotional response)

Touchpoints for Symbolic Differentiation

So, the pre-requisite for getting your key attribute-outcome signal noticed by the right consumers in a crowded marketplace is to get your product placed where those consumers shop AND where they are likely to see you. In general, shoppers are much more likely to notice you at channels and banners where discovering cool new things is normative behavior. Costco. Whole Foods. Specialty Foods. Online portals.

Alternatively, you may have fertile ground selling in everyday Hi-Lo supermarkets where *you have little premium competition*.

Assuming the above context and premium-pricing that filters out commodity purchasers in your category, the most powerful touchpoints to communicate your attribute-outcome signal(s) are in relative order of reach:

- 1) **front panel:** not only is an exact, big bet on focused signaling critical while folks are browsing in-store (or online), the signal you display linguistically serves as a constant reminder of what the brand is about once the package is at home. In the case of *spindrift*, on my issue cover, they have put the ingredient list on the front panel...implying to sophisticates that there is no 'natural flavor' in this beverage.
- 2) **Shelf-talkers** at the point-of-purchase (POP): So, this is one of the more accessible 'support' items that retailers will allow a de-leveraged small brand without the expense and fuss of display space. But you do need an agency experienced in grabbing eyeballs from down the aisle. The point of shelf-talkers is to catch the eye of the category browser or someone newer to the category. The best linguistic hook to use is your key outcome, assuming you can condense it down to 2-3 words. If not, symbolic differentiation will have to occur on the front panel.
- 3) **Digital communications:** Whether earned, paid, or owned, your digital awareness-building communications need to repeat a key phrase frequently, generally the one signaling your key outcome. The trick here is that it may be language that *implies* the outcome (e.g., yup that's it = badge status among urban low-calorie soft drinks consumers) or explicitly states it (e.g., Red Bull gives you wings). Sloganeering and tag-lining are where digital promotions can drive memorability of your key outcome, but only if carefully chosen and *ruthlessly repeated*. I'm a big supporter of generating a tagline like "yup, that's it" and putting it on the package AND in all marketing communications. Repetition trumps continuous creativity in messaging.

Touchpoints for Recall

Early on in the adoption process, consumers of new trademarks with low levels of traditional advertising and PR (i.e., you) experience trouble with trademark recall. The front panel graphics are often something the brain seems to recall much easier, long before the trademark itself. Spotty

recall in the first several purchases is not uncommon. Aiding recall is one reason to get consumers onto e-mail lists ASAP. Or advertise locally if you can afford it.

In my experience, there are two very critical tools to drive enhanced recall in the modern CPG marketplace:

- 1) **sensory experience**: heightened emotional experiences tied to our senses encode powerful long-term memories. This is neuroscience 101 at this point. On top of this, consumers will layer on various cultural meanings to these memorable experiences. A new cracker? It could be challenging. But possible. If your product line creates a very positive, distinctive sensory experience, it will be easier to recall the trademark unaided later. Like when your fans are shopping online or in-store for your category. In most CPG categories, especially food and beverage, consumers don't fixate on just one brand (unless the brand has created the category as a cultural phenomenon). Instead, they slosh around in a 'consideration set' of a few brands. It's possible to get in this hallowed set, but again, for a premium price, it's more challenging without a very distinctive sensory experience or urgent health outcomes tied to your formulation. Is your sensory experience that different? The 10th organic tampon? The 25th dry, gluten-free cookie?
- 2) **Owned digital communications**: Owned media refers to the easily mocked media channels whose content you control: social media, e-mail marketing, flyers, signs, swag! E-mail is the primary tool here. I say 'easily mocked' because traditional advertisers know that owned media lack scale. True. But if curated well, they are full of repeat-purchasing fans. And repeat purchasers are worth up to 10x the dollar value of every one-time purchase. These are the consumers who produce half or more of your annual revenue. You need to keep creating them out of the flow of trial. The key to driving memorability through these channels is to devise a repeatable, low-cost series of offers, events, and sheer entertainment to keep them engaged. Not quickly done for the 25th granola brand, but possible.

Touchpoints for Emotional Impact

Memorability is primarily an *emotional* reality for human beings. We encode long-term memories because of heightened emotional experiences (positive or negative). What I just wrote is now fundamental neuroscience. It's also common sense for social scientists who, like me, have expertise in eliciting life story narratives. It's what humans talk about when we meet up again with our friends. We talk about the emotionally salient events since we last met. Not about doing laundry or cleaning the house.

It's important to remember that the emotional impact of your products for the consumer is often very different than it is for you, the founder. You probably have all sorts of emotionally heightened memories of product development, operations, logistics, etc. Yawn. What you remember about your brand is NOT something you should just run with and start promoting as a demand driver. Nope.

Here are the top three ways premium CPG brands can generate emotional impact, often quicker than a commodity brand that must rely heavily on repetition-advertising.

- 1) **Sensory experience:** Does your product line create a ‘wow!’ feeling when it’s used? This is not that easy and nearly impossible in specific CPG categories that don’t produce much sensory feedback. But when you can, this is critical to encoding trademark memory in your consumers’ brains. When they see you again on the shelf, it will trigger repeat purchases in proportion to the power of that experience.

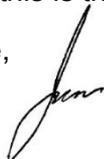
- 2) **Video storytelling:** for those of you who can’t reasonably generate that kind of candy-like ‘wow!’ via the human senses during usage, you’ll need to use the power of moving media. Some of the most successful early-stage marketing campaigns have pioneered high energy, fast-paced, highly humorous video storytelling to drive memorability through extreme contrasts. My favorite continues to be [Dr. Squatch soap](#). “Your soap is shit!” is an opener that tends to garner attention, now doesn’t it? Especially among adult men well socialized to getting ribbed as part of male-to-male interaction. When I point to custom video production, I’m doing it because campaigns that work with superb, emotionally triggering storytelling generate enormous ROI for young brands, especially when connected to a subscription business model. For brick-and-mortar only businesses, the return will be less direct in sales, but memorability is still the result of more vital brand awareness.

- 3) **Events:** eventually, the pandemic will ease, and live events will return. When they do, the magic of field marketing can resume. And the magic is NOT found at in-store demos. The best way to create memorability is to have an entertaining event presence inside a niche, lifestyle event your preferred audience already attends. When I say *entertaining*, I don’t mean ‘standing-and-handing’ in silence. I see this often. It pains me. Events are about sampling AND intelligent outcome signaling. The sample offers them a free trial of the sensory experience, and your team’s high-energy presence will provide an entertaining way to communicate the critical attribute-outcome on your front panel. Don’t just stand there and hand samples. Ugh. That only works as reminder advertising for larger premium brands. You must take it to another level and create an event-within-an-event: contests, offers, something to attract a carnival crowd. Crowds attract even larger crowds. It’s a human thing.

I hope this deeper dive on memorability’s three components and how to execute against them helps you and your team during this frustrating and unsettling time.

FYI: If you’re doing 2021 planning, don’t forget [my Oct. 9 webinar on strategic planning for exponential growth](#). I do it every quarter. Although this year, I’m doing it twice in Q4 because I skipped it in Q1. As a VIP, you get a discount off the current \$95 price. PGSVIP is the code. Price is going up for the next one, grab one of the ten or slots left now! If you’re thinking about working with me in the future, this is the absolute best preview of my strategic planning services.

Be safe out there,





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