

# Get under their skin

**Illuminate the branding process through truly insightful research that provides a deeper understanding of physicians as real people**

**Insight mining delves into the human context of the marketing business, providing brands with the opportunity to connect at a human level. After all, behind the doctor's white coat and stethoscope is a real, living, breathing human being who has beliefs, values, habits, desires, motives, feelings and needs that have an impact on his or her relationship with disease, patient and brand.**

To understand the power of the insight means believing that a brand exists as interconnected images, ideas, feelings, associations and facts in people's minds. Those marketers who believe that doctors are, first and foremost, people, will subscribe to the thought that the business of healthcare communications starts by identifying insights into the customer, the cultural context, the communications environment and the brand, in order to define the most powerful promise and benefit that will connect the brand to the customer.

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It is about defining what the brand's magic is and what it means to doctors and their patients. Getting this platform right is the most important task; everything else should flow from that, because the right insight has such power.

Insight drives positioning, brand communication ideas and brand engagement ideas and sits at the heart of enduring brand platforms.

There are many potential sources of insight. Initial instincts are always helpful, but a disciplined insight search usually leads to a more compelling solution. A well-considered piece of qualitative research can make all the difference.

## **TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE**

Unfortunately, communications agencies and clients' market research agencies rarely get the opportunity to interact before a piece of research has been commissioned, briefed and executed, resulting in market

research reports that contain a lot of data and facts, but little insight.

The communications agency usually receives a completed report, limiting the opportunity to mine for insight to an interpretation of what has made it into the final presentation.

Research should be considered an integral part of the strategic and creative process; knowing who to talk to, what to ask them, and how to ask them is integral to the brand positioning and campaign development process.

## **TEAM APPROACH**

Just as most components of the marketing process are a team effort involving a range of disciplines, so, too, is market research.

There is a great opportunity to improve the quality of the insights driving healthcare brand communication platforms through a more collaborative approach that involves the client, the communications agency and the market research agency.

Communications agencies have a perspective that complements what clients often want to gain from market research and therefore it is one that requires early and intimate involvement. This should include a contribution to preparing the brief, reviewing discussion guides and methodology, observing the fieldwork and mining for the insight that will drive an enduring brand platform.

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Research agencies have so much more to offer beyond delivering the final report. They should be considered a part of the brand team and, at the very least, they should be participating in the brand planning meetings that utilise the research, including the workshops that mine for insights. There is wealth of knowledge in the heads of the researchers that may not necessarily make it to the report. The process of post-research discussions, workshops and brainstorms may unlock the real insight. The researchers provide

the window on the customer and the opportunity to interrogate the learnings beyond the written report must be fully exploited.

## DOCTORS ARE HUMAN

The quality of insight is a direct result of the methodology. Doctors must be treated as human beings, each with a complex array of feelings and emotions that drive beliefs and behaviours, as well as relationships with their issues and their brands.

The brain has a tremendous ability to store a wealth of information, which it does not access consciously, but which can shape choices and decisions. It also has a tremendous ability to oversimplify. For example, when people are asked why they do something, their responses emphasise certain factors, de-emphasise others and they may be completely unaware of other influences outside their consciousness.

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Therefore, the conscious and subconscious, as well as the rational and emotional, must be fully explored. A range of techniques must be considered to help respondents access and articulate different information. This needs to include both cognitive outputs (the knowledge and beliefs that a person has about an object, its attributes or its benefits) and emotional outputs (the feelings

elicited by an object or phenomenon, both positive and negative).

This drives how respondents should be asked about their motivations, their decisions, their attitudes and beliefs. To really understand the respondents, they must be permitted to express themselves through non-rational mechanisms like drawings (‘how do you feel when...’), collages (picture sort), creating a story, role playing, sentence completion, word association, Gestalt rooms, cartoon strips and so on.

Just as the objectives of a communications campaign vary enormously, so too do research methodologies.

## WINNING BRANDS

Insight drives positioning, brand communication ideas and brand engagement ideas and sits at the heart of enduring brand platforms. It therefore makes sense for the client, the communications agency and research partners to collaborate closely in the market research process. In this way, they can look deeply into the minds of the customers and insight mining to find the space they want the brand to occupy and to find simple, yet powerful insights that can be magnified through great creative storytelling.

The winning healthcare brands benefit from taking the time to understand the customer, to uncover the universal human truths that cut across cultures and borders and to make the brand’s functional attributes personally relevant by defining the most meaningful role that it can play in the life of the doctor and the patient.

## The Author

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