

Talking about the Consumer Conversation Model

Issued by [Pyrotec](#)

3 Feb 2012

There is no denying the fact that the Industrial Revolution changed the way the world does business and similarly, the so-called 'Information Revolution' is also bringing about drastic change. The Information Revolution is based on the premise that the current age will be defined by the ability of individuals to transfer information freely and to have instant access to information that would have been challenging to find previously. The concept carries the ramifications of a shift from the traditional industry that the industrial revolution initiated, to an economy based on the transference of information.

In the Information Age, we are talking more than ever before



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In terms of retail, this revolution has far-reaching consequences and subsequently brands owners are confused as to where to direct the main focus of their marketing efforts. "In order to connect and relate to our audience today, we need to know where to start the conversation," says Stephen Beattie, Marketing Manager of Pyrotec, a leading privately-owned South African company specialising in innovative and top quality product identification solutions.

With the explosion of new media, including mobile and social media, there is more conversation than ever before. However, this is not without its limitations. "Yes, we are talking," agrees Beattie, "But are we talking at the right place, at the right time? The problem arises when brand owners cannot connect with customers at the most important point of all- the point of sale. As a result of the supply chain, the distance between the two is large. The sole focus of all marketing efforts is to develop a relationship with the target audience by closing this gap and ultimately driving sales, and if we fail to engage at the point of sale we have not succeeded in our primary goal."

Start the conversation

This is where we need to look at the consumer conversation model and how we are talking to customers at the actual point of consumption. "All of our social media and marketing efforts are redundant if we cannot connect with the customer at this critical point. In order to do so, we need to evaluate our on-pack efforts," says Beattie. "On-pack is the catalyst in starting a conversation with the consumer and provides an opportunity for ongoing engagement. This is ultimately what cements the relationship," explains Beattie.

Beattie maintains that it is vital that we connect with the customer at the point of purchase or consumption through clever on-pack campaigns. "On-pack campaigns fuel engagement with the brand by enhancing the overall journey for the customer. A promotion or competition is a good opportunity to kick-start a conversation with the customer," explains Beattie. "Customers can SMS their details to a pre-determined number in order to enter a competition. The customer is able to quickly gain entry via their mobile phones, which acts as an incentive to engage with the brand."

Connect and engage

"Once you have opened the conversation, engage the consumer through value-added on-pack drivers such as discounts, competitions and coupons. This acts as an incentive for the customer to keep talking." Devices such as Pyrotec's Fix-a-Form™ leaflet labels are a practical way to relay these incentives, as they provide vast amounts of space for additional information, without compromising the aesthetic of packaging.

Brand owners can continue the conversation through a new campaign based on the information already collected from

these drivers, or through initiatives such as Quick Response Codes (QR codes), which are a good opportunity to offer a value-added service to the customer. By downloading a QR code reader to their smart phones, customers can scan a product's QR code and link to a mobi-site page that contains useful information, such as a recipe or helpful hints.

Collect, analyse...

Through this engagement, brand owners can build a database and thereby analyse the purchasing patterns of their various audiences. Due to new legislation, brand owners will need to compile their own databases and cannot simply purchase them. "This actually provides more value long-term as it allows for the easier investigation into consumer buying habits."

In effect, brand owners can build on to an existing relationship, or begin a new conversation through other marketing initiatives. "Brand owners must make a point of always including a 'call to action' in their on-pack devices, such as requesting contact details as a requirement for competition entry or coupon redemption. A solid database provides ample opportunity to engage with customers and measure the results," confirms Beattie.

By collecting this data, brand owners are given the ammunition to ultimately refine their conversations in accordance with the preferences and purchasing patterns of their various audiences. "Brand owners can identify what their customers want and tailor their offers accordingly."

They can enrich the existing data collected by starting another conversation through a new campaign. By constantly engaging with the consumer and refining the information collected from these conversations, brand owners are able to immense offer value to their target audience. "They can then go back to the customer and continue the conversation through a new campaign," says Beattie.

...and keep talking

This brings us back to the beginning of the cycle. "Through this conversation model, on-pack campaigns can seamlessly integrate with new media to continue to strengthen the relationship and create a multi-dimensional marketing strategy," says Beattie.

Pyrotec's MobileInteractive product demonstrates this theory in action. MobileInteractive is a time-saving, one-stop service that allows for easy integration across on-pack campaigns. This unique solution offers brand owners the tool with which to engage their customers through their mobile phones and social media, thereby enriching an existing on-pack campaign by adding a further dimension and exponentially increasing outreach.

A word of advice to brand owners? "Keep talking to your customers, especially through on-pack campaigns, as it is the only direct link between you and them at the point of purchase."

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