

Story Time

Manna Nosh transcript.
3 April 2009
Voices: Bob Manna, Matt Manna

Matt Manna: It's time for Manna Nosh.

From Dallas Texas this is Matt Manna welcoming you to this edition of Manna Nosh.

Today on the show, Bob Manna talks about advertising.

We all know the purpose of advertising is to help us sell stuff. But understanding purpose is not the same as understanding function.

How does advertising, which actually brings about an increase in sales, function?

The answer is the subject of today's Manna Nosh entitled, Story Time.

Bob Manna: There are few management questions that cause more frustration than the question as to whether the money spent on advertising is well spent?

The advertising question never really is should we advertise? The question is what should our advertising be?

We'll get to that in just a moment but for now I'm going to ask you about some products. I'll mention the product, and you respond with the brand that first comes to your mind - you ready - here goes.

Ketchup, facial tissue, mayonnaise.

Now I have no way of knowing what brands you named but I do know this. You named the brands that first came to mind because experience demonstrates, customers buy the brand they think of first.

Odds are for ketchup you responded with Heinz, for facial tissue Kleenex, and for mayonnaise Hellmann's - unless you're on the west coast in which case you said Best - it's the same mayonnaise as Hellmann's but it sells

under the Best label on the west coast.

What do these brands have in common?

They're product leaders. They're first. So the odds are most listeners named these brands.

OK you agree that's true, but you say I also prefer them to other brands. Well let me ask, why do you prefer them?

Let's take Heinz ketchup as an example.

How often do you buy a brand other than Heinz, put it on the table and use it to measure for yourself that you are using the brand that most satisfies your taste? I'll bet you don't and neither do most others. This recurring purchase process explains why most new products fail.

Most newly introduced products fail not because they aren't advertised or that people don't like them after they try them - it's because no one ever buys them in the first place. And here's why.

For each brand with which a customer is familiar, there exists in that customer's mind a personal story about that brand. That story will be an amalgamation of taste, of price, shape, store location, service, attitude of clerks, ease of parking. It will be a large number and variety of things, but a story nonetheless.

What this behavior means to you the advertiser is that, customers buy the brand they think of first. Stated differently, new products that don't tell a strong enough story to replace the customer's existing story will fail to get the customer to switch.

Now let's examine how Heinz got to be first in the customer's mind and how it remains the product leader, with a 60 to 70% market share.

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In all probability Heinz was the first brand of ketchup you, as a child, ever saw on your family table. It's been around since 1869. The same is true for Hellmann's mayonnaise first introduced in 1905. Heinz and Hellmann's brought these products to market. I'll get to Kleenex in a moment.

For now let me move on by saying one way to be first in the customer's mind is just that, be first. So if you have a product that no one else has, your story is the story in your customer's mind and that puts you in first place.

But for most of us that's not the case. We're faced with bringing to market our version of what already exists. So to my second question, how does Heinz stay first in the customer's mind? More personally, how does your competitor stay first in your customer's mind?

You obviously believe you have an equal or superior product or you wouldn't be trying to bring it to market. Does your competitor simply have more resources than you? Does your competitor have more advertising bucks to spend? Maybe so, but that's not the reason.

If superior resources guaranteed market position, no new products would come to market. But they do!

Apple didn't have superior resources to IBM

Honda didn't have superior resources to General Motors.

And Starbucks certainly didn't have superior resources to Maxwell House!

It's not resources that maintains Heinz and your competitor. The reason Heinz and your competitor stay first is because no one, including you, has been able to deliver and create a story to replace their story in the customer's mind.

Until a new story replaces the Heinz story in your mind you will continue to buy Heinz.

Until your story replaces your competitors story in your customers mind they will continue to buy from your competitor.

It's your failed story not your competitors resources that is making the difference. Yes, it's that straight forward.

And that brings me back to Kleenex.

What was the Kleenex story that brought it to prominence?

Kleenex wasn't the inventor of facial tissue. Facial tissues had been in use for years. The fact is, Kleenex in 1924, was introduced and advertised as a tissue for women to remove makeup. It's ads featured movie stars, shown in their dressing room, removing makeup after a performance. It was almost accidentally, that Kleenex discovered that its users more frequently used it to blow their nose; a use that Kleenex had never advertised.

With that discovery Kleenex realized it owned the first convenient disposable handkerchief

Uncovered in the customer's mind was the story that would push Kleenex to the top. The story - I wish someone would sell a throw-away handkerchief.

"We do!" said Kleenex and that's all the ad had to say.

It wasn't long before advertising changed to include men and product improvements such as the pop-up box, colors and germ fighting varieties.

For Heinz and Hellmann's it was all about the product. They introduced a heretofore unknown product which by default was the story.

But for Kleenex it wasn't about the product.

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The product already existed. For Kleenex it was the story. The thought changing force that drives successful advertising.

What these examples illustrate is when your product is unique the product defines the story. When your product is comparative the story defines the product.

So if you're wondering whether you're getting value for you advertising dollar begin by asking what is your current story? If you don't know, you probably are wasting your advertising money.

Now here's a summary of this Manna Nosh.

Customers buy the brand they think of first

Customers associate a story with every brand

To become first in your customer's mind your story must parlay with the story that already exists there.

This is Bob Manna.

Thanks for listening.

Matt Manna: Ladies and gentlemen that just about concludes this Manna Nosh.

I hope Bob convinced you that the stories we hear about successful products have more to do with the products story than they do with the product itself.

Create the right story, the one that makes you first in your customers mind and good times are on the way.

That really is all there is to it.

And that's all there is to this edition of Manna Nosh.

The program returns next time via the internet at www.mannanosh.com that's www.mannanosh.com where you can find transcripts of

this and every Manna Nosh.

This program is also available as a free podcast via iTunes. You can find us in the iTunes store by searching for Manna Nosh.

You've heard from us and we'd love to hear from you our email address is comments@mannanosh.com

Manna Nosh is a production of Manna Groups, Inc. and is recorded and produced at the Manna Groups studios located in Dallas Texas.

This is Matt Manna saying thanks for listening and we'll talk to you again next time right here on Manna Nosh.