

FIVE COMMON MISTAKES OF A GLOBAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

While there is no magic formula for creating a global campaign that has impact in every market around the world, there are some fundamental miscues to avoid to help ensure success.

Everyone in marketing and advertising has heard the famous story about Chevrolet launching its popular vehicle the Nova in South America. Executives at Chevrolet were initially surprised by lackluster sales, that is until they realized that “no va” means “no go” in Spanish. The story is important because it communicates a point that should be obvious to any company that is working globally: know the global markets before beginning to market to local customers.

Obvious or not, many pharmaceutical marketers still take a very U.S.-focused approach to their global campaigns. While there is no magic formula for creating a global campaign that has impact in every market around the world, avoiding the common mistakes can help ensure that a global advertising initiative is on the right track. These mistakes include:

1 Developing the creative concept in the United States with little input from global markets.

Creating campaigns at U.S. headquarters with a team of Americans and rolling it out to markets around the world with recommendations for implementation is a common but flawed approach. When you work globally, you learn that each country has its own unique cultural differences that impact how marketing messages are received. No group from a single country — no matter how diverse or globally experienced — can be truly knowledgeable about all of the cultural nuances that will affect the campaign in the local markets.

2 Assuming that translating an ad into the local language will make it locally relevant.

When it comes to understanding the unique cultures of each market, language differences are just the beginning. Many countries have their own set of rules and regulations that govern how pharmaceutical advertising is executed. For example, a campaign featuring real patients wouldn't be allowed in Italy, or a campaign that references research conducted in the United States wouldn't be permitted in Japan. Understanding these rules at the time of campaign development is critical, otherwise marketers may waste time creating a campaign that won't work in many markets.

3 Choosing the creative concept that offends the fewest rather than one that impacts the most.

Some pharmaceutical marketers think they are being inclusive of their global affiliates by developing campaign concepts in the United States and then sending them to their local marketers for review and input. There are two significant problems with this approach. First, it takes a tremendous amount of time to gather and incorporate input from numerous global affiliates. Second, it usually results in the selection of a concept that is the least offensive rather than the one that has the greatest impact. Or worse, a strong campaign idea gets watered down with modifications to the point that it becomes bland.

4 Failing to get creative input up front from those who know the local markets best.

The common denominator with most failed global campaigns is that the local creatives are not involved in the concept development. Having led many global campaigns, I've seen how remarkably effective it can be when those who know the local markets the best are involved in the conception of the idea.

Here's how it works: Once the global strategy is set, creatives from each market are brought together in one location for several days to collaboratively brainstorm a concept that is ownable and compelling but also broad enough to be adapted for any country. Each participant has an opportunity to contribute ideas as well as



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explain why certain ideas won't work in his or her country. In the end, the team centers on one or two big ideas that can work well across geographic and cultural boundaries.

5 Focusing on short-term costs rather than long-term campaign success.

When creatives from the local markets are not involved in the concept development, it is generally because the cost of bringing them together in one location seems too high. But in reality, the long-term benefits of identifying a concept that all of the global affiliates can execute locally far outweigh the up-front expenses associated with the brainstorm session. In addition, costly revisions and time-consuming discussions about “why the global campaign won't work in my market” are avoided, resulting in a more efficient overall campaign. Clearly, there are inherent challenges with any global marketing campaign. But gaining insight into different countries is key to overcoming many of those hurdles. To avoid launching a global campaign that is inconsistent, ineffective, or simply uninspiring, make sure to partner with those who know the local markets best. ♦

Source: Phil Deschamps, CEO and President of GSW Worldwide, Westerville, Ohio; GSW Worldwide is one of the largest healthcare advertising agencies in the world with offices in 13 major global markets. For more information, visit gsw-u.com.

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