



Dear reader

We live in interesting times, today Citigroup announced that 50,000 people worldwide were being laid off, simultaneously ABC Radio with Red Symonds ran a breakfast talkback inviting listeners to call in and explain how they were going to tighten spending this Christmas (regardless that none of those who called had a rational reason for belt tightening, as none had lost their jobs, and all had seen their interest rates and fuel costs drop).

How these daily doses of pessimism are being absorbed by the consuming public is not only making for a highly fluid business environment, but literally moving the ground under marketers before they can react to yesterday's news.

In this issue of IO we can see urgency in giving business planners a sense for the market intelligence driven tactics they are going to need to 'suspend disbelief' and promote positive sales activity.

## **Insight of the week**

### **What's the difference between a running a successful US Presidential election campaign and doing business in a global downturn?**

Nothing!

Barak Obama ran a two year brand and retail campaign that sold one core truth and one central proposition within a constantly shifting customer environment against aggressive and well organised competitors.

Pessimism, optimism, the fragility of personal insecurities, the momentum created by group psychology, plus daily new news from competitive actions, the environment, the economy and more, removed any chance for 'orderly marketing, considered consumer segmentation or cyclical sales strategies.

But Barak Obama was successful and has been nominated as the 'US Marketer Of The Year'.

### **The lessons we should be taking from the 2008 US Marketer of the Year, are these:**

1. **'Light on the hill'** - A fast changing, group thinking, overly pessimistic consumer market needs a single positive 'light on the hill'
2. **ONE central brand truth** that must become 'theirs'
3. **Fluid, flexible conversations** - respond to the daily shifts in mood by shifting your expressions of benefit to create variety, interest and leadership using humour, fact and analogy, both intuitive and counter intuitive to constantly position and reposition your product or service from your cost to their opportunity. (E.G. Qantas... 'Take advantage of the downturn, take two for the price of one on the trip you always wanted to do with the airline you always wanted to fly')

4. **Authority** - But most of all authority in times of public stress is critical, and true authority is expressed through obvious discipline, constant style and recognisable attitude, focus of purpose and benefit, clear unambiguous language that speaks with an implicit and explicit understanding of the environment, personal circumstances and how to make your 'light on the hill' their opportunity.



Barak Obama's campaign managers achieved all of this through the discipline of a constant unrelenting promotion of one brand truth: 'Change'

#### **Flexible 'War Room' Business management**

And then supporting that promise of 'Change' using a 'War room' of tacticians, marketers, communicators and market intelligence people who while never deviating from the central truth, invented and reinvented the mix of product benefits and public (cluster group) conversations on a daily basis.

This was a top to bottom tactical business operation driven by market intelligence and the flexibility to both lead and follow opinion instantly.

The net effect for Obama was a strong sense of community connection with leadership.

#### **Doing business in a global downturn is going to need a similar mix of 'Obama' discipline, tactical flexibility and constant market intelligence.**

Different situations will demand different mixes, but here are some insights to stimulate planning:

##### **Consumer intelligence:**

- The average Australian has not been materially affected by the global financial crisis, media driven insecurity and 'group pessimism' is driving caution and restricted spending.
- Research is indicating that equal to the 'group negative' is the growing sense of opportunity that falling prices and government subsidies are presenting... the positive momentum for advantage in tough times is rising.
- Use your existing consumer segmentation models cautiously, and when you set out to track the current mind and mood, do so using political style 'cluster attitudinal group' models because personality type matched with financial position are now more important than previous aspiration or rational segments
- Track and measure only what is current and can be acted upon now. Future plans and consumer aspirations are important but they have taken on a much greater currency than previously.
- Look at the next two years as Obama did his campaign: seek to connect, inspire positive thinking and positive action – and come out at the other end with your single brand truth, stronger than ever.

### Quote of the week

The two-for-one promotion had sold "many thousands of seats",

"You could call it Qantas' own stimulus package, we have seen booking rates weaken over the last few weeks and we saw this as a good way to stimulate demand, not just out of Australia but globally."

- John Borghetti Qantas Executive General Manager

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