



Marketing Lessons from a Vaccine

No matter which side you're on in the debate over the COVID-19 vaccine, you have to admit someone has done an ingenious job of marketing this thing. I've outlined below some of the marketing aspects which caught my eye. If you're marketing a controversial product, these might help you too.

1. Market positioning — this product is being marketed as a safe and effective vaccine regardless of how it actually works. Vaccines are certainly controversial but not as controversial as “experimental gene therapy” which it’s called in some scientific circles. By labeling this product as a vaccine, it will seem more familiar to people and they’ll have less resistance to it.

2. Publicize that it prevents COVID. An example of something you do NOT want to do — make false claims for a product. In this case, the vaccine only mitigates symptoms if you get sick. It doesn’t prevent you from getting COVID. If this was a normal product, you would be having a very unpleasant conversation with the FTC.

3. Use a spokesperson. In this case they used Dr. Anthony Fauci, who’s reputation is questionable at best. Using a spokesperson is a great idea, but that person has to be someone people trust. If they trust in the person, they’re likely to trust the product and buy it. By using Dr. Fauci, who has a tarnished reputation, the vaccine marketers aren’t necessarily guaranteeing themselves more sales. In fact, the opposite could be true — he might be a good reason for people not to take the shot.

4. Scarcity is a great way to boost sales. Vaccine marketers have scarcity built in since the vaccine has only been available in limited quantities to certain parts of the population. So far scarcity seems to be working to a certain extent. Many older people, scared stiff of getting COVID by the media, have rushed to take the shot without

doing any research on it. They believe they're going to be immune to getting COVID and will finally be able to get "back to normal" without having to wear a mask or social distance. Unfortunately, the CDC has said mask wearing and social distancing must continue even after vaccination.

5. Tie the product into something that will be mandated. Right now we're seeing more and more about "vaccine passports" with Israel's Green Badge program as the model. While this will generate sales, it's also mandating people take the vaccine rather than giving them a choice. Note: while Israel does not mandate the shot, it's the only way one can get a green badge and live a "normal" life.

6. Launch the largest ever public service campaign. When you've got a product that is controversial and you're not sure of getting the response you want, go big, \$500 million big, on advertising. The COVID-19 vaccine campaign is all centered around the big idea "It's up to you". They're talking about it's up to you whether to get educated about the vaccine, not whether to take it.

To get this big idea across to as many people in the vaccine hesitancy group, the Ad Council is targeting many areas of the U.S. population as possible, especially the Black and Latinx communities, with ads that remind people of all the things they're missing in their lives: getting together with friends and family, going to church and traveling. Ads featuring members of the local

community enable the message to get to as many communities as possible.

The marketers involved in this campaign are attempting to make their ads sound proactive as well as giving a sense that better days are coming once everyone gets vaccinated. In order to reassure as much of the population as possible, the ads call for getting the facts. The “facts” however, leave out saying what’s in the vaccine, how it operates within your body and exactly what it’s supposed to accomplish.

For all the innovations in this marketing plan, it’s obvious the marketers have a long way to go if they’re going to convince the 50% of the U.S. population that’s on the fence about getting this vaccine. They will need to convince them that Big Pharma, the U.S. government and the WHO are really trustworthy and on the side of the people. A tall order, in my opinion.

What do you think marketers?

If you liked this article and think I could help with your campaigns or do them for you, message me now

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