

Key Analysis of Gallery Walk Marketing Campaigns: Doing Your Research, Understanding How Your Target Audience Thinks

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NeighborWorks® America's *Loan Modification Scam Alert* campaign, Ad Council's *Foreclosure Prevention* campaign, Self-Help's *Manufactured Housing Loans* campaign, and Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven's *Empowering Multi-Cultural Women* campaign are exhibited via the Gallery Walk in NeighborWorks America's symposium, "The Mind of the Homebuyer: How Consumers Decide and Act". Each campaign is an example of how good marketing seeks to understand the target audience's motivation for taking action. Each campaign identified a need, and then conducted the necessary market research to determine how to address that need.

Step one was identifying the need for a new product or approach. The Loan Modification Scam Alert campaign saw the need when a flood of homeowners sought help because they had become victims of fraud. In other situations, such as in the case of Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) of New Haven, an organization sought a new direction to meet its existing mission.

In both cases, the organizations needed to learn more about the market they targeted. New Haven's goal to promote sustainable homeownership in their community drove them to find out which demographic they could most positively impact. They used various avenues such as census bureau data, focus groups, and surveys in order to compile information on whom to target and how to best to reach this target audience. The research showed to New Haven that reaching out to multi-cultural women was the most effective way to meet their mission, so they began to further research that demographic.

Market research will also assist a marketing campaign in determining how best to influence their audience to buy into their services and products. For instance, Self-Help worked with realtors to help them sell manufactured housing with mortgages. Through focus groups, Self-Help learned that the Spanish-speaking target demographic relied heavily on trusted advisors. They were able to identify realtors as the key to their strategy because these realtors had formed important bonds with their Hispanic consumer. Therefore, instead of getting their flyers into the hands of consumers directly they gave them to the realtors. This enabled the realtors to use their bonds with this community and help them to appreciate the affordable manufactured housing option. Without Self-Help identifying through market research the trust the realtors had built with their constituents, capitalizing on the influence of the realtors would not have been possible.

The Loan Modification Scam Alert campaign also listened to their market research done via focus groups, which taught them how their consumer thinks. Subsequently they built their marketing campaign to adapt to their research findings. They found it was important to have materials that made distressed homeowners feel empowered, with actionable points and facts about scams. The materials and website include federal government branding as homeowners had more trust with government logos present. The campaign also found that it should include bold colors such as yellow and black that implies caution or warning across cultures. Subsequently their marketing campaign prominently featured real-life mortgage scam stories, government branding, and distinct colors that expressed danger.

Another key learning of the day is that it is important to constantly measure results. Self-Help realized that putting flyers directly into the hands of the consumers was not working as they did

not notice a visible uptick in manufactured housing loans. Therefore they took a step back and researched their consumer, which prompted them to reach out to realtors instead of directly to consumers.

NHS was successful with their campaign on empowering multi-cultural women via home-maintenance workshops, yet they knew they could attract more multi-cultural woman. Thus, after talking to the women who attended their inaugural workshops, they learned they should increase their outreach via Christian, Spanish and African-American radio and print media.

The Ad Council is another example of how measuring results can be beneficial to refining a campaign. In 2007, they created a campaign that would shock distressed homeowners into action as they knew at the time that distressed homeowners were prone to not take any action. Yet after the housing crash occurred, they needed to change their campaign because they now found that distressed homeowners' behaviors had changed. These homeowners were now doing anything possible to save their homes yet they needed direction on where to obtain assistance. Thus the Ad Council needed to adapt their campaign in response to their changing target audience. If the Ad Council had not constantly measured results and obtained new market research, they might have continued with their original campaign of shocking people into action, which would no longer an effective message.

Knowing the consumer is arguably the most important part of marketing. As hard as it is, preconceived notions must often be tossed away when researching consumers. Simply by listening, your customers will tell you how to connect with them and tailor a product that will positively impact the community.