



BEST PRACTICES – ATTITUDE AWARENESS AND USAGE STUDIES

BELLWETHER FOOD GROUP, Inc.

May 2015

The Brands that have stayed connected to their consumers' wants and needs are prospering!

We were having a conversation with a principle at a well-connected industry financial institution recently about the “Sea of Sameness” in the casual dining category. He posed the following question: is casual dining as a category pretty much done as a viable growth category? Our immediate response was yes and no.

Puzzled, he asked, “What do you mean by that?” In a lot of the research we have done in the industry, it really is about differentiation and being the best at the points of differentiation. If you look around the casual dining arena, you see brands like Buffalo Wild Wings, Bar Louie, Red Robin and others that have focused on the core elements of what differentiates them from other competitors and drives success.

We then proceeded to explore how companies go about finding the differentiation or niche that separates them from the “Sea of Sameness” in all categories of the industry. The key is being a consumer and market driven brand that truly understands core customers’ wants and needs, both today and in the future. So his immediate response back to me was – “OK, I get that, but how do brands figure that out?”

It is our belief there are three important steps in the process:

- An Attitude, Awareness and Usage Study (AA&U): this very important study, done annually, should be able to answer the following questions
 - How well does your core consumer know you and the uniqueness of the products and services you offer?
 - How do those core consumers perceive your brand, and most importantly how do you stack up against the competitive set?
 - Who are your key competitors and how do they perform against your key (and hopefully unique) strengths, as well as your weaknesses?
 - What are the vulnerable areas of your competitors, and where can your brand compete effectively against them?
 - Who are the loyalist of your brand and why?
 - How and why do consumers use your brand today?
 - Are there any unmet needs, products, or services your consumers want from you in the future?

Boston

Dallas

North Carolina

617.281.5175

972.863.8057

843.422.4285

- How well does your brand perform in overall aided and unaided brand awareness versus the competitive set?
- As relates to aided and unaided advertising awareness – what have the consumers heard from your brand, and your competitors, and what resonates with them?
- Armed with that information, the next step in the process is to conduct a strategy session with the key members of the brand executive team, operators, and franchisees (if relevant). Prioritize the learnings and insights gained from the research, review the competitive set information, and then develop 3 – 4 key strategies to be implemented that address the findings.
- However, before implementation, take those key strategies to some core consumers of your brand and confirm the validity and detail of your approach. This is an important step in the process as it helps validate that the information you received from the AA&U is on target.

His next question was obvious: do you have some examples where that process has worked? We proceeded to share with him that we had one client that was focusing on driving a specific meal day-part. As we reviewed the research, it became clear that their core consumers, medium and heavy users, thought they performed much better at a different meal day-part than their competitors.

We redefined their product R&D and promotional calendar, developed new communications and advertising, and took that to focus groups to determine if they were on target. The results were a turnaround in both traffic and revenues, and an improvement in overall guest satisfaction. It was really about focusing on the key relevant strengths of the brand and executing those really well.

As we brought the conversation to a close, he asked why I felt it was important to do this annually - why wouldn't once be enough? The reality of it all is that the environment (and the competition) is constantly changing. The AA&U study revalidates the success of the strategies your brand is deploying versus the competitive set. It also evaluates how your competitors are doing versus last year. Finally, it helps you determine the continued relevance and effectiveness of your overall brand communication, including advertising.

At Bellwether, our sole focus is helping brands to compete more effectively in the marketplace, stay or become relevant, and drive their businesses to new levels of success. We can help you with all of the above steps, and we have a solid track record of success. For more information, please give us a call.

Founded in 2007, Bellwether Food Group is best known for our Restaurant Brand Architecture work for Chain Restaurants, growth strategy and professional sales skill development work for manufacturers, and pre acquisition due diligence work for private equity firms who invest in those industries.

See more on our website: www.bellwetherfoodgroup.com

Mac Brand;	mbrand@bellwetherfoodgroup.com ;	773-255-6466
Rob Hardy;	rhardy@bellwetherfoodgroup.com ;	617-281-5175
Jon Jameson;	jjameson@bellwetherfoodgroup.com ;	843-422-4285

Boston	Dallas	North Carolina
617.281.5175	972.863.8057	843.422.4285