



# Insights and Sound Bites

Jan/Feb 2009

*"What is research but a blind date with knowledge?" - Will Harvey*

## Following the rules doesn't have to break the bank

The coming months will bring some new changes for pharmaceutical companies who are active members of Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (commonly referred to as PhRMA). As the representative body of the country's leading pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, PhRMA conducts effective advocacy for public policies that encourage discovery of important new medicines for the millions of patients across the United States. In January 2006, PhRMA created "Governing Principles" as a guiding force for pharmaceutical firms in the way of sales representative interactions, clinical trials, and direct-to-consumer advertising, to name a few.

Recently, PhRMA strengthened these principles to further define how companies can best promote discovery and distribution of their products. These strengthened principles will take effect on March 2, 2009. This has particular impact on pharmaceutical companies designing direct-to-consumer advertising, as the newly-enhanced principles require companies to test DTC ads not only with the customer segment, but healthcare professionals as well.

Now, while some of you may be in the fortunate position to simply request an increase in your budget to conduct qualitative research for your DTC ads, chances are that many of you will have the same question that our client asked:

***"Help! How am I going to fit this into a budget that's already been tightened for 2009?"***

The good news is that incorporating this guideline into your current qualitative research curriculum is surprisingly easy to do and can give you insights which the target audience themselves (patients) may not shed light on. In other words, there is true value in conducting practitioner-oriented research on DTC ads outside of simply "following the rules!"

Here are several ideas for structuring DTC research projects:

### **Test DTC ads against details to ensure congruency**

Screen for healthcare practitioners who have heard a comprehensive detail on your product within the last two weeks, and then share the DTC ad, asking questions around how closely its message aligns with their recall of the detail. By sharing the DTC ads via the web, you can conduct these interviews over the telephone without hammering your budget.

### **Test DTC ads to gauge/prevent any negative reactions by practitioners**

The biggest issue physicians have with DTC ads is that they feel it often overrides their ability to make a therapeutic selection for their patients. By gathering physician opinions on consumer-targeted ads, you can bridge the gap between physicians and their patients, and head off any unwanted backlash from practitioners.

### **Use current research projects as an opportunity to gather feedback about a recent change in the marketplace**

Suppose your product's main competitor just received a black box warning. You may need to publish a statement or advertisement assuring consumers of your product's safety, but might not have time to organize a full-blown project. If you're already conducting research of another type and you've got the audience you need in front of you, it's both cost effective and timely to tack on a few more questions regarding a DTC communication.

There are many other ways to design this type of research around your needs. If you're looking for help on strategizing or ways to manage your research budget while adhering to new guidelines, Ladd Research Group is here to serve you!



## Welcome to our New Team Members!

Sally Lund is an avid opera fan and has traveled the world to see Wagner performed. She is actively involved in disaster relief efforts and spent a month in New Orleans following hurricane Katrina.



Carla Essen is an aspiring photographer specializing in pictures of children and babies and combines this hobby with her love of travel!

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Insights and strategies for healthcare marketing