

Getting the Most out of In-Store Research



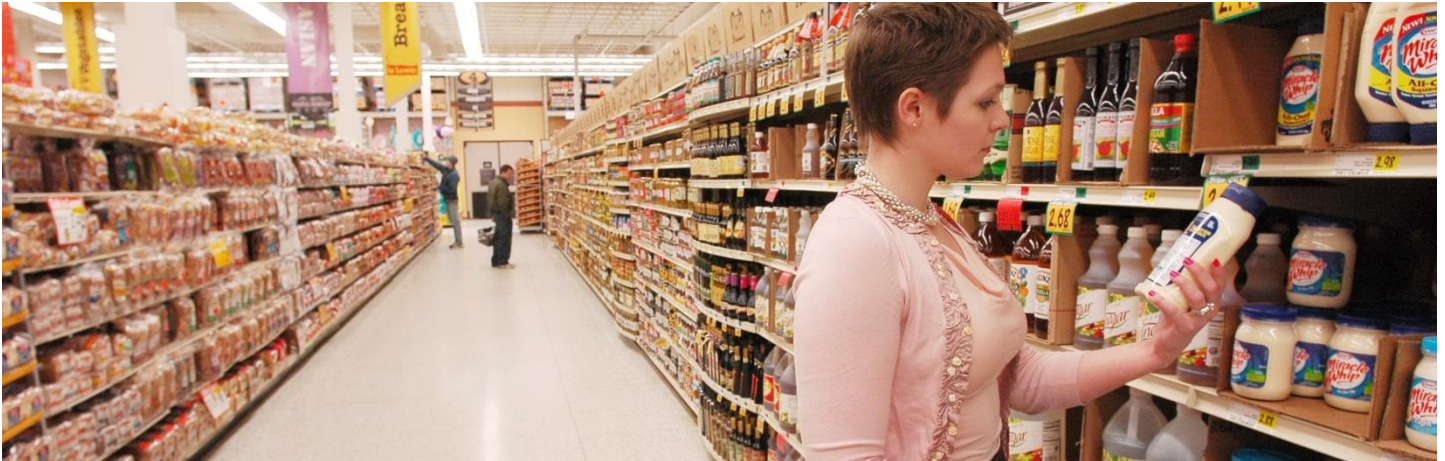
As one of the early pioneering in-store research companies, we have witnessed the explosion of interest in the use of this methodology. Quantitative uses of it in the form of control store tests, store audits, and multi-market surveys have been used for many years. The qualitative use is just beginning, but it provides deep insights that can only be captured within a real, unaided environment. This raises the question:

How does one get the most out of in-store exploratory research?

In-store exploratory research, when done correctly, can lead to rich insights that can produce direction, record verbatims and influence decisions. However, it can move beyond that.

In-store exploratory research is able to capture unaided buying behavior and shopper perceptions at the point of purchase. The result: truly honest and actionable insights. It is a powerful environment, but in order to realize the power and honesty it provides, **marketing teams need to fully participate in the research by spending time with us in the store, watching and listening to shoppers.** Only then will they see the power. Every study has multiple stakeholders with different agendas, which creates the need to have the entire team in the store, resulting in a true appreciation for the strength of the learning and a united view on the correct course of action.

To make this happen, an organizational culture that supports in-store



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There is no substitute for being in the store, so a culture that supports and prioritizes it as such, is imperative. Everyone is so busy that the thought of leaving the office to stand in a retail or grocery store for half a day – let alone 3 days - seems impossible. To get to the point where an entire team sees the value in committing the time requires an organizational culture shift. But it is worth it. Some of the benefits include:

- ❑ Team members are able to have a conversation with real shoppers after seeing their real behavior. It is unaided. It is utterly honest. Being in the store gives team members a tremendous level of strength and conviction.
- ❑ Team members talk among themselves throughout the day - not about plans or work - but about how the learning affects their thinking and what it means for this business unit as the learning takes shape. Since they all see and hear the same things, the team becomes unified. They form a direction. They have real verbatims from the interviews. They all get excited, having been together as the “research story” unfolds. They see the emotion of respondents, and that transfers into strength within them as they get “filled up” with the learning.

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Companies that have adopted this new culture are permanently changed. Division leaders and presidents have regularly mentioned how grateful they were that their teams took the time to participate in the in-store learning. After seeing the rich insights and the penetrating power of respondents' words from the aisle, they have made commitments to use this methodology in every future developmental marketing pursuit. Team members rally around it. The learning is valuable and solid. Good business judgment needs this vital link to shoppers reacting to what is being studied.

In-store exploratory research has become so acculturated in some companies that they have formed their own in-house, in-store team to make the methodology available. Others create partnerships with in-store research companies to work together to capture the learning.

By fully utilizing the in-store environment, companies are able to save money and time, but more importantly, decision makers have peace-of-mind knowing that the direction they take is the right one.

A SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESSFUL LEARNING:

It was time to test the 3 package designs created for a new product concept being readied for launch. Each design was intended to capture a different product positioning option. There were definite team member preferences for the various designs and plans for an expensive, quantitative positioning study.

We placed mock-ups on the shelf, generated product awareness, and waited for shoppers to react. Once a shopper reacted to the product, we intercepted them and conducted the interview. We tested each design separately and then at the end of the interview showed all three designs. We had 8 members of the team in the store with us representing consumer insights, marketing, R&D, Sales, and the design agency.

The result: *One design and positioning clearly rose to the top as the best choice. Team members with previous preferences, jumped on board with the recommended design, convinced by witnessing the unaided behavior and listening to shoppers talk with conviction. A key design element from a different package was incorporated into the recommended design for optimum benefit communication. The large, quantitative positioning study was cancelled because of the strength of the learning. An additional benefit was that because shopper interest in the concept was so strong throughout the study, more advertising dollars were allocated for its launch.*