

# Concept Testing: Moving from Optimism to Realism



As researchers, we talk with many respondents. They all have an opinion, and their opinions are often different. However, what often is the same is that they are unknowingly optimistic. Optimism is not inherently a bad thing, but it is potentially dangerous when testing new product concepts.

For instance:

- We have heard a diabetic say how she would buy a sugar-filled product when her out-of-state grandchildren are visiting.
- We have heard a stay-at-home mother with 4 kids who cuts coupons and makes home-made soup say that she might be interested in a small-serving, convenience-focused product with a premium price-tag.

Neither of these shoppers will contribute to the products long-term success. These examples show that nice people, answering from a hypothetical perspective instead of real behavior, can taint the understanding of a new concept's viability.

How do we rise above this unfounded Optimism to understand the Reality?



### 1. Get Rid of Hypothetical Guessing

The only way to truly move past the optimism is to remove a hypothetical scenario and replace it with a real decision. This is possible and this is how it is done: Create mock-ups of the concept product. Put it on a real retail shelf as if available for sale.

#### The True Concept Test:

A shopper who looks at the product, considers its benefits, reacts to the price and determines it is worth their own money.

You can trust the learning when a shopper makes a purchase decision before your very eyes without knowing any research is taking place. To generate awareness of the product on the shelf, while maintaining the unaided environment, we have developed a method in which flyers are distributed at the ends of the aisle in which the test product is located. Shoppers assume the flyer is an in-store promotion for a new product. They are made aware of it, decide whether this is something they are going to consider, and if so, if the new product is something they are interested in buying. This method enables true purchase decisions to be made without any hypothetical guessing.

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## 2. Understand Level of Product Passion

Consumer passion for a new product is a very important indicator of its ability to be successful. There are so many products vying for a shopper's limited grocery budget that a lukewarm reaction to a product will rarely result in consistent, future purchases. As qualitative researchers, we observe and record levels of passion. We see and hear how the respondent talks about the product, and whether or not they have already made plans to use it. We spot discrepancies between what a respondent says and what they mean. For instance, the statement "I did not get it today, but I would get it for when I have company coming over," does not indicate true interest in the product.

In our experience, the greatest moment of passion comes at the end of the interview. The respondent has already picked the mock-up off the shelf, put it in their cart. At this time the respondent is still thinking they have been talking about a real product that they will be able to purchase that day. When it comes time for us to ask for the prototype back, a lot can be learned. The more reluctance the respondent has at the thought of giving the product back, the stronger the new product concept is. At that moment, you see the genuine interest and excitement they have for this product.

**The in-store environment provides the opportunity to remove hypothetical guessing and to gage passion, enabling you to move from optimism to realism.**

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