

A Picture is Worth A Thousand Words...

Tapping into Customers' Feelings and Perceptions Through Visual Imagery

By Clay Dethloff & Pam Koenig

"How can we reach the doctors... they are so rational and matter of fact?," "What do doctors and patients really think?," and "How do we differentiate our product and ourselves?" How many times have clients come to you with these questions?

With the high costs associated with bringing each new drug to market, it is critically important that pharmaceutical companies identify the most effective ways to sell their products. Ultimately, to help answer the question, "How do we differentiate our product and ourselves?," companies must make their offerings personally relevant to their key audiences by identifying and understanding both the rational as well as the underlying emotional needs associated with those offerings.

The premise of this article is not to diminish the importance of more rational aspects or specific product characteristics used in healthcare research; rather, this article seeks to provide insights into techniques to elicit the complimentary emotional and personally motivating characteristics associated with choice and decision-making.

There are several techniques available to marketing researchers that can help understand the emotional underpinnings of physicians, healthcare professionals and patients in the healthcare industry. Among these techniques are:

- **Role playing** – participants are put into different situations and asked to act out their adopted role.
One of the most successful techniques that we have used in the healthcare space to elicit more emotional insights utilizes visual stimuli or imagery – a technique we call Life Moments.
Life Moments is a projective technique that uses iconic imagery as a means for uncovering deep rooted feelings of a respondent group. Life Moments consists of a montage of pictures that can represent different feeling, emotions and perceptions. These images are used to stimulate conversation and help respondents talk about prescribing a treatment, the disease that they live with, or other
- **Word association** – provides a word or phrase as stimulus in order to generate discussion and ideas, words can be more "concrete" product oriented or more emotionally oriented.
- **Personification** – ascribing human characteristics and dimensions to a product, service or company to understand the emotional equity.
- **Laddering** – an interviewing framework that seeks to understand the relationship between product characteristics and the personally motivating (more emotional) reasons for product choice.

attitudes and perceptions. Through our work in trying to understand both the emotional and rational aspects of healthcare, we have found that imagery provides a framework that often allows the respondent to "open up" and provide deeper insights. Interestingly, we have found Life Moments also works very well on a global level as the images and associated emotions tend to be universal, therefore mitigating cultural differences. The Life Moments exercise features respondents viewing a selection of images and then choosing the imagery that best represents how they think and feel about the disease state, the treatment, etc. The focus is then to gain a thorough understanding of the underlying

Universal Survey



Opinionsite
Panel Services



Universally
Trusted
Data
Collection

Reach Your **Target Audience**

212.391.5243

www.UniversalSurvey.com/opinionsite

Universal Survey 

motivators for the images that were chosen. As is the nature of qualitative work, the specific image (or visual) is important, but as important is the reasoning behind the image – fully understanding the “whys” behind the image choice provide a deeper level of emotional and intellectual insights.

“One of the most successful techniques that we have used in the healthcare space to elicit more emotional insights utilizes visual stimuli or imagery.”

When considering a project using imagery, pictures are often chosen which are intended to elicit multiple types of emotions or feelings. In analyzing the output it is important to understand the various ways individual images can reach a respondent, but it is also important to take a holistic look across all pictures for particularly strong emotions identified only when looking at the compilation of all respondent comments.

Imagery techniques can be very beneficial in answering many business questions. You may immediately think of it for communication testing when developing or changing new messages or the brand campaign and you’d be right... it is a perfect fit when that is the research objective. However, its use stretches beyond that to other areas such as creating global positioning platforms and during the clinical development stage where one can understand both patient and physician needs to help guide product development.

The following case studies are based on actual Life Moments projects conducted by M/A/R/C for major pharmaceutical company clients. The case studies were chosen to illustrate the applicability of the technique with both physicians and patients as well as to illustrate different applications in the product development process. Due to the highly confidential nature of the research, all specifics – even therapeutic area have been removed.

Case Study #1

Business Issues

A major pharmaceutical company is interested in understanding how patients afflicted with a disease view themselves, their futures, and what motivates them

when making healthcare decisions. Given timeline and budget constraints, ethnographic research was not an option. We were commissioned to design a qualitative research project to yield deeper, more meaningful results than are obtained via a more traditional approach. The outcome of this research was to be

used to shape all future communications for the product.

Solution

Our qualitative division conducted 20 one-on-one in-depth interviews with patients in

two central locations. First, respondents were asked to recount in detail the story of when they were first diagnosed with their disease, the treatment choices they were faced with, and the influencers that played a role in their treatment decisions. All of the thoughts, feelings and emotions were fully explored. Next, to help respondents better articulate the source of their perceptions, Life Moments was used. Respondents were shown a series of 25

highly symbolic images, such as a rocket launching, children laughing, etc. They were asked to choose the five images that best represent the way they currently feel about their disease and the five that best represent how they feel about their current treatment. In explaining what each of the images mean to them personally, respondents were able to express emotions that may have otherwise been left untapped.

Results and Recommendations

As a result of this research, clear iconic images, words and expressions that deeply move patients were uncovered. The client’s research team and ad agency were able to craft communication themes around these motivators, resulting in highly relevant DTC messaging.

Case Study #2

Business Issues

A major pharmaceutical company currently markets a drug that is considered the “gold standard” of treatment for its indicated purpose. There is a strong emotional connection to the brand. However, there is low recall of the

Universal Survey



Survey Convergence
Multi Channel Integration



**Universally
Trusted
Data
Collection**
COLLECTION

Seamlessly Integrating
Data Collection Methods

212.391.5243

www.UniversalSurvey.com/surveyconvergence

Universal Survey 

current communications campaign. We were commissioned to design a qualitative research project to evaluate elements of the current campaign with prescribers to determine if a new promotional strategy is warranted and to elicit suggestions for improvement. In order to meet these objectives, we recommended a multi-faceted approach combining both traditional “rational” research with two different insight mining techniques, including Life Moments.

Solution

Our qualitative division conducted 27 one-on-one in-depth interviews with physicians in three central locations. First, respondents were asked to evaluate the current promotional pieces including the Journal Ad and Sales Aid. Extensive probing was done to gain an in-depth understanding of specific recall of each piece/element, the likes and dislikes, and the degree to which they resonated with the respondent. Next, to help gain an understanding of the brand personality, two emotional techniques including brand analogies and Life Moments was used. The brand analogy exercise was used to obtain underlying thoughts and perceptions about the brand by asking

respondents to relate it to an animal or beverage and then deeply explore their reasoning to understand the root of the perceptions. Respondents were then shown a series of 20-25 images representing a range of characteristics, such as strength, longevity, etc. They were asked to choose 3-4 images that best personify the product. In discussing why they chose each image, and what it meant to them, respondents were able to better articulate more deep-felt perceptions than would not have otherwise emerged.

Results and Recommendations

As a result of this research, it was determined that while the current pieces were informative, they did not convey the images and feelings that the drug itself had cultivated. Recommendations were made to include imagery that depicted underlying feelings physicians had about the drug and its benefit/effect on patients' lives. The client's research team and ad agency were able to create a new professional campaign around these motivators.

Conclusion

In the constant effort to differentiate oneself in the marketplace, product related characteristics alone are not always

enough to provide incentive for trial, purchase or use. Imagery often provides a means to understand on a deeper level “why” respondents respond the way they do and offers insights into their decision making processes. Imagery is particularly helpful in areas such as healthcare where some respondents may not have a natural predisposition to talk in anything but more rational tones.

Clay Dethloff is senior vice president qualitative services and **Pam Koenig** is account director healthcare practice at M/A/R/C Research.





www.MDLinx.com/MR

**World's Largest
MRA Verified
Healthcare
Professional Panel**

SECURE, ONLINE,
TRIPLE-VERIFIED
PHYSICIAN PANEL



USA
Japan
Korea
G5
BRIC



**Unparalleled
Global Reach**

A division of M3 Inc, a SONY Group Company



M3 USA/MDLinX
WASHINGTON DC



M3 Germany/Medquarter
MUNICH



M3 China/DXY
HANG ZHOU



M3 Japan/M3
TOKYO



M3 Korea/Medigate
SEOUL