

Last week Stagwell attended the [ANA Masters of Marketing Conference and annual CMO Growth Council](#) meeting in Orlando and this year's programming was nothing short of incredible!

The agenda was packed with sessions featuring the world's top CMOs and brand leaders, each providing a peek behind their brand's respective curtains. Each spoke to their brand challenges and strategies, ranging from well-established brands to those still on the ascent. And while each shared the view from their unique vantage point, one common denominator emerged: now more than ever, consumer insights, sharp positioning and differentiated messaging are the winning formula.

1

INSIGHTS ARE LIKE A GOOD BOOK(END)

The conference was bookended with the consumer insights theme. P&G's Chief Brand Officer, Marc Pritchard, began the week speaking to the importance of insights saying "You can't just talk about your product - it's the consumer's problem you need to solve," and Stagwell's Chairman and CEO, Mark Penn, ended the conference providing insights on microtrends every marketer needs to know, stating "Products, to be successful, don't need to sell to everybody - but you have to understand the convergence of what's happening in society."

2

AN INSIGHT FOR EVERY SHAPE, FORM AND FASHION

Consumer insights are as varied as the brands that leverage them. For instance, Alia Kemet, Shipt's Chief Marketing Officer, spoke to the importance of insights for a brand that's just beginning to hit their full stride, saying "Knowing your audience is crucial when building your brand when you're a challenger brand."

On the opposite end of the brand-maturity spectrum, Crayola's Executive Vice President of Marketing, Victoria Lozano, spoke to the importance of insights to an established brand looking to inspire creativity and leverage innovation. She made the point that for "a 120-year-old brand, insights fuel what we do and how we do it." Shakir Moin, Chief Marketing Officer of North American for Coca-Cola, shared similar sentiments, saying "Our future will not be shaped with the legacies of our past" and drove home the importance insights play in the evolution of a brand by acknowledging "If you don't get the insight right, everything breaks down." Distilling this perspective was Mazda's Chief Marketing Officer, Brad Audet, who stressed the impact of understanding your audience, saying "Transformative marketing has to be about how we orient ourselves around a human focus."

3

INSIGHTS TRANSCEND INDUSTRY

Insights, by definition, are unique but their value transcends industry. This point was clearly demonstrated by Tabata Gomez, Chief Marketing Officer of Tools and Outdoor at Stanley Black and Decker, Inc. Tabata fielded a question from a member of the audience who inquired if there was difficulty for her transitioning from her past roles in the beauty and CPG categories to her current role with power tools. Tabata answered, "It doesn't matter what you're marketing...as long as you know the insights for your consumer."

4

THE HUMAN CONNECTION + THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

The importance of storytelling is as pronounced as ever. Using insights to inform that story is now table stakes, increasing its probability to resonate more authentically. Take the time to uncover the microtrends that will comprise the chapters in your book. Gabrielle Wesley, Chief Marketing Officer of Mars, shared sage advice: “Be obsessed with your consumer and be authentic to your brand...do the soul searching and work to find what your brand is about...every brand has a story.” Insights fuel that story, allowing brands to show up in meaningful ways to their consumer, engaging them to interact with them.

This is no small feat. “One of the most challenging parts of marketing is getting your audience to feel something, which in turn, leads to growth” said Marisa Thalberg, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer of SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment, and SeaWorld’s Chief Commercial Officer, Chris Finazzo, underscored the importance of this point adding “you have to know your audience.”

It may be easy to get fixated when you uncover a big insight. However, it’s important to not forget smaller trends add up to inform big ideas. As Emily Ketchen, Chief Marketing Officer and Vice President of Intelligent Devices Group and International Markets at Lenovo said, “Small trends can have big impacts.” Emily demonstrated this point by explaining how Lenovo’s “Importance of Giving Back” insight informed their “Work for Humankind” initiative, which strives to change how people work by empowering them with the tools to work from anywhere while positively impacting the places they visit by leveraging various technologies.

5

WHERE AND HOW TO LEAN IN (AND KICK BACK)

As Mark Penn spoke on the topic of microtrends, he touched on counter trends which stand in opposition to what is happening in the market, saying “For every trend there is a counter trend.” This point was clearly demonstrated by Christy Hoskins, Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer at La-Z-Boy. Christy spoke to how La-Z-Boy turned hustle culture on its head by embracing the insight of the importance of rest and reclaiming “lazy.” Christy said “We’ve seen a surgency of a counter conversation - reclaiming rest, relaxation and balance” to hustle culture. The result? The “decliner,” an AI powered recliner that automatically turns down plans via text messages for you, allowing you to bask in the moment of being lazy on your recliner.

Hilton’s Chief Marketing Officer, Mark Weinstein, acknowledged that the hospitality industry was suffering from a “sea of sameness” look and feel in its work coming out of the pandemic. He demonstrated the point by showing different brands’ work in the category side-by-side and explained how interchangeable the work presented. The insight?: Leverage humor to capture the excitement of travelers who had been cooped up in their homes for so long. This distinction drew clear lines between Hilton and other hospitality brands and injected a breath of fresh air into a category that had become stagnant.

6

CLAIRVOYANCE, A SKILL WE ALL POSSESS

Inspiring change and driving growth begins with unlocking consumer insights. Brands, both big and small, are leveraging insights that make their consumers tick and move the needle for their business. Each walks the tightrope of being present in the moment with their consumers, while simultaneously predicting the implications today’s consumer behavior has for tomorrow’s market, a delicate yet essential balance. The present tense is our proverbial crystal ball, encouraging us to discover how today’s behaviors will impact future consumer behaviors. We just need to be attuned to the signals and ready to act on them once discovered.

Put simply by Mark Penn, “If you want to predict the future, have a better understanding of the present.”