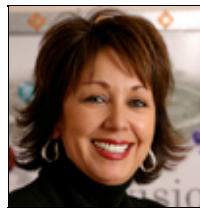




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Spice Up Your Retail Promotions for Hispanic Participation

By Yvonne "Bonnie" García



You're ready to launch your product in the Hispanic market with a retail promotion. Your "sign up to win" display is set up in a Latino neighborhood store. You're offering a fantastic grand prize: a weeklong cruise for two to Hawaii. Your display features a ballot box with a large "Enter to Win" sign in a basic subdued color palette.

You stand back, ready to reap the rewards of the growing Hispanic buying power you've heard so much about.

What happens? Next to *nada*.

Your Latino response rates likely will be less than stellar because you haven't followed a few key tenets of Hispanic retail promotions:

"Up close and personal." Hispanic consumers typically do not participate in large numbers in ballot-box-type contests. The "unmanned" display lacks personal interaction. No one is available to provide information when consumers have questions about the product, the contest rules, or the prize.

Putting a human face to a promotion increases Hispanic consumers' level of trust and believability in the program. If your product is new to the Latino market, make sure you have bilingual product "ambassadors" handy, as well as sampling, if appropriate.

"I thought YOU had the ballot box!" Logistical concerns with in-store entries may affect the promotion's success. Mom-and-pop neighborhood stores may be unaccustomed to promotions. Ballot boxes may get shoved aside in the convenience-store stockroom or never reach the processing clearinghouse because a third party must pick up the entries.

"Dale vida" ("Give it life"). The subdued colors and the English-only sign do not bring the display to life for Hispanic consumers. Spark up your promotion with DJ remotes, in-store sampling, and "retailtainment." Create festival executions where you can access large crowds and generate excitement while driving traffic to retail.

Promotions that draw on culturally relevant, popular marketing assets such as musical acts, sports, pastimes, or

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entertainment add to Hispanic consumer interest. Activate your existing assets and align them with your brand to create one-of-a-kind, valued prizes that resonate with Hispanic consumers...throwing out the first pitch at a ball game, dining with a telenovela star, or appearing in a commercial or Cinco de Mayo parade with the family.

“Who wants to know?” Hispanic consumers may be reluctant to provide personal information for a chance to win. Will the information be misused? “Will salespeople call me and try to sell me something?” Consumers may not be accustomed to filling out entry forms or they may simply not have the required information (such as an e-mail address).

“Sounds great, but who will take care of the kids?” That awesome trip to Hawaii could be problematic. Because Hispanic households tend to be larger than those of the general market, a trip for two means this family stays home. Many Hispanic consumers would find it difficult to take a week off from family and home responsibilities, not to mention work. Others may lack proper documents or may not be able to travel outside the U.S. without risking residency status.

By law, consumers are responsible for paying taxes on any prizes they win (over a certain dollar amount) and for claiming the prize as earnings on their tax returns. When the winner of the expensive car has to decline the prize because of hefty taxes, he is likely to become a dissatisfied customer.

The “yeah, right” factor. Hispanic consumers’ “believability index” meters work overtime in promotions, and the needle drops way down when they cannot see who wins. If only one grand-prize minivan or trip to Hawaii is offered, Hispanic consumers tend to doubt they will be the lucky winner.

Allocate the same dollars to hundreds of little prizes and you will significantly increase the odds of Hispanic consumer interest and believability. In Latin America, thousands of prizes on the pack tend to be the norm.

“Dazzle prizes” may serve other purposes, though. Retailers may request the high-dollar cars or entertainment-center prizes and the spectacular accompanying POS materials. You might be able to make the trip prize work too. Why not send the whole family to Latin America to see *abuelita* (grandma)? In any case, be sure to publicize the winner in the Hispanic media.

Here are some other ways to spice up Hispanic consumer participation in retail promotions.

Instant gratification prizing. Promotions that offer *raspar y ganar* (scratch-and-win) cards, game pieces, and package messages (under the cap, for instance) have a high level of Hispanic consumer participation because of immediate prize notification. Typically such promotions also have a large prize bank that increases odds of winning, and the participant doesn’t have to do much to win. If the prize is small enough, no personal information may be required at all.

Games of chance. Hispanics have a love affair with games of chance such as prize wheels at festival booths. You might see a hundred or more consumers standing in line at a booth at a Cinco de Mayo festival waiting for a chance to spin the wheel to win nominal prizes such as a bag of chips or a T-shirt.

In fact, a “spin and win” may be more effective than simply handing out free samples. The interaction creates a sense of personal involvement and adds to the fun.

At one recent event, a well-known brand with high share among Hispanics was distributing free branded canvas tote bags with product samples. Brand ambassadors were having a hard time giving away the high-value samples, while the prize wheel in the booth next door had a constant line of consumers waiting for a chance to win a hand towel, a ballpoint pen, or a fabric softener product sample.

En fin, grab your Hispanic target’s attention with culturally sound promotions, keep it simple and believable, hold information requests to a minimum, be mindful of lifestyle issues, empower Latinos through interactive games of chance, and inject a human element with bilingual brand ambassadors.

The president of Market Vision, a full-service marketing agency based in San Antonio, TX, Yvonne García pens a bimonthly column on Hispanic marketing for CHIEF MARKETER.

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