

Category 9a. Marketing Communications, Established Products & Services

"Pharmacy Times Debuts the 2014-2015 OTC Guide on the TODAY Show"

Client: *Pharmacy Times*

Company: Hornercom

PROGRAM OVERVIEW/OBJECTIVES

Situation Analysis

Pharmacy Times is the industry's leading monthly publication with a primary audience of practicing pharmacists. For 18 years, *Pharmacy Times* has surveyed its 172,000+ readers to create an annual supplement called the *OTC Guide* – which ranks pharmacists' top-recommended, over-the-counter (OTC) products. This guide covers 166 categories and ranks more than 1,100 OTC products – everything from bandages to allergy relief products to cold sore treatments.

When *Pharmacy Times* established a partnership with *U.S. News & World Report (U.S. News)*, the nation's leading publisher of quality rankings, the journal's publisher looked to its agency of record, Hornercom, to bring the 2014 *OTC Guide* rankings to a consumer market in a big, bold way. Not only was the top goal to secure a national morning talk show, but it had to be done for the second year in a row.

It was tasked to Hornercom to create a new angle to pitch the OTC Guide to the producers at the TODAY Show and other national outlets – and the guide does not drastically change year over year. In essence, Hornercom had to pitch an entirely new version of the guide that would entice producers to talk about it again.

Target Audiences

- National media (specifically the TODAY Show)
- Consumers (viewers who are primarily healthcare decision makers for the family)
- Pharmacists (*Pharmacy Times* readers)

Objectives

- Create a fresh media package that would secure coverage for the second year in a row
- Pitch and secure a second feature segment on the TODAY Show to demonstrate the benefits of the *OTC Guide* to the consumer audience
- Through national exposure, encourage top-ranked brand managers to purchase *OTC Guide* Badge licenses (the official program seal that is available to those companies)
- Create a marketing campaign utilizing the segment's visibility that is both sales- and reader-facing to promote *Pharmacy Times*

Research/Planning

As *Pharmacy Times* and *U.S. News & World Report* are both media giants themselves (in their own ways), there was an inherent challenge to entice a third party to cover their news, much less to cover it for a second year in a row.

The Hornercom team delved deeply into identifying a distinct group of targeted messages by combing through the OTC Guide and paying attention to news cycles that would relate to the guide. Hornercom identified industry trends and consumer news cycles that typically ran around the time of the launch. As it was the beginning of summer, a pitch would be crafted based on a specific news cycle to keep the news fresh.

Hornercom also collaborated with representatives from the *U.S. News* PR team to create a coordinated outreach approach and to vet the Hornercom strategic outreach plan, which was presented to, and approved by, both *Pharmacy Times* and *U.S. News* teams.

EXECUTION/TACTICS

Goals

- Book a segment on the TODAY Show for the second year in a row
- Draw attention to the OTC survey results by enticing the producer with consumer-friendly information about pharmacists' product rankings
- Offer the story as an advance to the TODAY Show – the number one outlet on the target list; distribute a national press release about the program concurrent with a TODAY Show segment
- Encourage sales of the "Top Recommended" badge through national media attention

- Leverage consumer media coverage with *Pharmacy Times*' pharmacist readers to increase survey participation in future years

Tactics

While most media relations campaigns rely heavily on press releases, Hornercom's approach required a more personal touch. The team strategically planned a sequence of emails and phone calls to producers of the TODAY Show, with whom we already had a relationship, to time a potential segment with distribution of the *OTC Guide* supplement and launch of *U.S. News*' Top Recommended Health Products website. While Hornercom had contingency outlets in mind, the TODAY Show was the top priority.

The outreach began weeks before publication and leveraged both the power of *U.S. News*' rankings credibility and the institutional knowledge of *Pharmacy Times*' readership. In addition, a custom pitch different from the original used to secure coverage the year prior was utilized to keep the news fresh. This combination of credibility and a new, different angle helped to reengage and reestablish the conversation about another TODAY Show segment with producers.

An extensive and collaborative dialogue was established between Hornercom's team and the TODAY Show's producer. The producer vetted the validity of the program with several pointed questions about the ranking methodology, and worked with the Hornercom team to create specific messaging for the segment. The top-ranking products were shared with the producer, which ultimately would be featured in the segment with Matt Lauer.

Once the feature segment aired, Hornercom immediately turned the piece into a marketing tool for the *Pharmacy Times* sales team members for their efforts to sell badge licenses to product brand managers.

An eblast was created to reinforce the *OTC Guide*'s importance, and to establish further credibility and engagement with their dedicated pharmacy audience.

EVALUATION/RESULTS

- Hornercom met all of its objectives, earning more than \$1,000,00 in advertising equivalency value; and reaching more than 25,000,000 people (including TV and online reach) from the TODAY Show segment.
- In addition to the aired segment, the piece was carried on the TODAY Show, NBC News and Yahoo! News websites, all driving awareness and traffic to the Top Recommended Health Products site.
- The coverage included both *Pharmacy Times* and *U.S. News & World Report*'s brands, as well as several product brands that are targets for badge licenses.
- Following the segment's airing, product brand managers reached out proactively to *Pharmacy Times* to inquire about badge licensing, referencing the TODAY Show coverage.
- Between badge licensing and new ad page buys in the OTC Guide app, there was a 15% sales increase year-over-year.

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Summary

Pharmacy Times, the industry's top publication, and *U.S. News & World Report* tapped Hornercom to generate big-time awareness of its health-product rankings, which resulted in a TODAY Show feature segment and a sales boost.