Pampers’ bond with Moms

Pampers became Procter & Gamble’s first $10 billion brand in June 2012, serving 25 million babies in more than 100 countries. P&G’s biggest brand was born in 1956, when company researcher Vic Mills charged his research and development colleagues with making an alternative to the cloth diaper that would be disposable, affordable, and high quality.

Mills found the inspiration for his project while changing his newborn grandson’s diaper, and it is that same personal spirit that later drove the brand’s success. Pampers has won millions of loyal customers by creating an emotional connection between the brand and consumers.

“Our goal has been to move the brand from a mark of trust to a mark of love,” says Bryan McCleary, associate director of communications at P&G. “We want to connect with consumers beyond the 30-second commercial.”

A prime example of the brand’s personal approach is its Miracles campaign, launched in 2011 to commemorate its 50th anniversary. The initiative included random acts of kindness by Pampers and its employees, such as distributing 30,000 care packages to infant intensive-care units in the US. Pampers encouraged fans to share stories of miracle babies on its Facebook page, and gave its bloggers money to conduct “miracle missions” supporting babies in their communities.

Special connection

More recently, Pampers teamed up with recording artist Jennifer Hudson to “connect with moms in a very emotional way,” McCleary says. The company commissioned Hudson in June to record a rendition of the song “Lullaby and Goodnight,” which it then unveiled at a listening party and made available for free download on Pampers’ Facebook page.

As the Miracles and Jennifer Hudson campaigns show, social media is one of the biggest ways Pampers connects with consumers. And Pampers has a significant presence in online forums for mothers, such as Baby Center where the company hosts a “Connect with Pampers” group. Bloggers have also helped build brand awareness, and Pampers was the first P&G brand to bring mommy bloggers to the company headquarters in Cincinnati.

Pampers now employs five full-time community managers to interact with customers on social media, monitor online forums, and attend events. They “were hired to be where moms are,” McCleary explains. The company also established a 20-member Pampers Baby Board three years ago, a diverse group that includes Hispanics, African-Americans, fathers, and gay parents. The board shares its opinions on upcoming efforts, attends events, and participates in campaigns, such as when some members made videos for the Miracles campaign.

“It’s a group that’s become very important to us,” McCleary says. Pampers’ mantra is to “win where the babies are,” he adds, and international expansion has played a large role in the company’s growth. Increasingly the brand has focused on countries with booming birthrates, such as India and China.

Jennifer Hudson recorded a song that was made available on Pampers’ Facebook page.
Olympic beach volleyball player Kerri Walsh and her family partnered with Pampers for their special USA diaper range as China, India, and Vietnam. Product delivery ranges from individually packaged diapers in small kiosks in markets such as India and Southeast Asia to bulk online purchases in North America, Europe, and Japan.

Since 2006, Pampers has partnered with UNICEF to help provide vaccines for maternal and neonatal tetanus. Pampers also allows its employees to take a three-month sabbatical to work with UNICEF. “To many of us, this is the program we’re most proud of,” McCleary says.

American-themed diapers

For the London 2012 Olympic Games, Pampers sold a limited-edition USA line of red, white, and blue diapers and partnered with beach volleyball player Kerri Walsh and her family. The company also offered a sweepstakes with a grand prize trip for a family to travel to London for the games. It’s an example of the brand’s celebratory approach, says Angela Alvarez, group director at Citizen Paine, which has been Pampers’ agency partner since 2004. “It’s about celebrating babies’ unique spirit of play,” Alvarez says.

Recognizing that more and more babies born in the US are Hispanic – 25% to be exact – the company is launching a program this fall called the Latino Baby Boom. The year-long campaign will celebrate the integral role the fastest-growing minority group plays in the US.

Pampers found that Hispanic moms want to assimilate in American society without losing their ethnic heritage, so it built the campaign around that idea of cultural duality, McCleary explains. The company has enlisted Mexican singer and actress Thalia as campaign spokesperson to travel the country on a media tour. The Pampers Latino Facebook page will include giveaways for mothers and a ticker counting Hispanic babies born in the US. P&G also plans to donate money to a national Latino organization for every new birth.

Pampers has an internal communications team of three in the US, led by McCleary, with counterparts in Western Europe, Latin America, and Asia. McCleary characterizes Pampers’ communications strategy as “a combination of shouting, humming, and singing.”

The team executes long-term campaigns, such as the Latino Baby Boom, while still trying to remain current and relevant with short-term efforts, such as the partnership with Jennifer Hudson, he explains.

McCleary adds, “Sometimes we shout for brief bursts that create a lot of excitement and advocacy. Sometimes we hum along for the whole year.”

The Latino Baby Boom campaign and social media will be two primary focuses of the brand in the coming year. McCleary hopes to double Pampers’ Facebook fans in half the time it took to build its current following, along with reaching Hispanic moms “in new and relevant ways.” Content creation will be another area of growth for the brand, Alvarez adds.

Creating an emotional bond between the brand and consumers will continue to be the foundation for all of Pampers’ efforts, McCleary and Alvarez both say.

“OUR GOAL HAS BEEN TO MOVE THE PAMPERS BRAND FROM A MARK OF TRUST TO A MARK OF LOVE”

– Bryan McCleary, P&G

1974 Ed Hannes is elected to head the company.

1973 P&G begins manufacturing and selling products in Japan through the acquisition of The Nippon Sunhome Co.

1980 P&G sales reach $10 billion.

1981 John Smale becomes head of P&G.

1985 The company significantly expands its OTC business worldwide with the acquisition of Richardson-Vicks, owners of Vicks respiratory care and Oil of Olay product lines.

1988 The company announces a joint venture to manufacture products in China – its first operation in the largest consumer market in the world.

1990 P&G acquires Shulton’s Old Spice. The company opens its first operation in Eastern Europe with the acquisition of Rakona in Czechoslovakia. New businesses in other Eastern European countries quickly follow.

1992 Pantene Pro-V is introduced. Originally a small part of the Richardson-Vicks acquisition, sales of Pantene make it the fastest-growing shampoo in the world.

1993 Company sales exceed $30 billion. For the first time more than 50% of sales come from outside the US.

1994 P&G re-enters the South African market. P&G South Africa doubles its overall business during its first year.

1999 P&G introduces Noxzema, a skin care brand.

2000 P&G announces its commitment to sustainability.

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