

Day One

The marketing challenge of the century – 5 insights on how best to encourage uptake of the COVID vaccination



Thanks to the dedicated scientists within the pharmaceutical industry, 2021 is already looking much brighter than 2020 and it finally looks like we have the vaccine we have all been waiting for.

However, a recent survey conducted by *Sermo* suggested that 80% of physicians were concerned that their patients may be reluctant to get on board with the new vaccine. A further study conducted by *Kantar* shows that an alarmingly low percentage of the general public claim they would definitely get a COVID-19 vaccine if available. This is as low as 21% in France and still less than half (43%) at its highest in the UK.

What this tells us is that the battle is far from won and we need to leverage more than just the science if we are to defeat this deadly virus. These are the 5 insights we feel every government and pharma company should heed to help in the mission to vaccinate the planet.

1) Don't blind people with data and facts

There are a number of reasons why this doesn't work. Firstly, even for the most highly educated of people, the science behind vaccines is complex and difficult to comprehend. In our experience the more you tell people about how they work, the less likely they are to understand, the more wary they become and the more questions they have.

Secondly, as humans we do not always act in a rational or logical way. We know overeating, smoking and drinking is bad for us, but we still do it. Likewise, we know there is a risk of getting sick if we don't vaccinate, yet some people remain hesitant. The truth is that our decision making is not driven purely by rational facts, but a myriad of factors, experiences and belief systems built up over time.

Focussing too much on just the rational arguments often misses the mark entirely. We need to understand what really matters to people and then work with this to help them feel instinctively, that getting vaccinated is something they want to do.

2) Link the COVID vaccination to an immediate personal benefit

We all know we should get the vaccination as at some point in the future it may stop us from getting sick. Yet all our work in this area has shown us that asking people to take action today, to prevent something that may or may not happen in the future, is not always that motivating.

In contrast, reassuring people that if they get vaccinated, they will be able to keep living the life they love today, is much more motivating. This could mean focussing more on immediate concerns such as protecting their job, enabling their children to go back to school or simply being able to go watch their favourite football team play. All of these things feel more tangible and with a short-term benefit that is more likely to drive vaccination uptake.

3) The message needs to be conveyed by the right voice

In the same survey conducted by *Kantar*, when people were asked about their 'confidence in public authorities to propose a COVID-19 vaccine that is not dangerous', it was clear there has been a significant erosion of trust. At the extreme end of the spectrum, an alarming low 37% of people in France somewhat or strongly disagreed they had confidence in the authorities to do this.

So, if people do not trust their governments, then should they be the ones persuading us all to get vaccinated? A better solution is to perhaps convey the message down through multiple voices and channels. Voices that people trust, feel a greater connection to and are willing to follow. This may be doctors and nurses, religious leaders, teachers or dare I say it, well known, respected celebrities with no obvious political axe to grind.

4) Associate the idea of 'risk' with non-vaccination

When we try and persuade people to take vaccines it's tempting to focus solely on how effective and safe they are i.e. to convince them of a positive risk : benefit ratio. However, to the average person this doesn't always mean very much, and they are still likely to have nagging concerns over safety.

But what about if we re-frame those messages. Rather than trying to convince people that there is limited risk in having a vaccine, should we not instead highlight the relative risk of not having the vaccine. By associating the idea of 'risk' firmly with non-vaccination, then suddenly the decision on what to do seems much easier to make.

5) Make the process of vaccination easy

This final insight is not rocket science but possibly THE most important of all. Humans are inherently lazy and are far less likely to do something (no matter how good it is for them) if it requires a lot of effort. So, if getting the vaccine feels complicated, involves multiple steps or a requirement to travel a long way, then the less people will get it. So, if nothing else we need to make the process of getting the vaccine as easy and simple as possible.

There you have it, years of healthcare market research boiled down to 5 key insights. We can only thank the likes of Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna for their truly amazing work on developing these vaccines. However, it's now arguably time to turn our thoughts from the science of vaccine development, to the art of human persuasion and we hope that the insights industry can continue to play its part.

Hannah Mann is a Founding Partner of Day One Strategy, a research and insight agency that combines technology and human intelligence to help healthcare companies better understand their customers, wants needs and behaviours. To find out more please get in touch at enquiries@dayonestrategy.com

References:

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**Kantar – COVID 19 Vaccination the Citizen perspective