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5 Ways to Get and Stay Listed in Grocery Chains

Every small food manufacturer I speak to complains about this one thing, how do we get distribution? It's no wonder people are dying to get listed as a sku in a grocery store. The traditional Canadian grocery sector is an \$87.5 billion dollar sector and is projected to grow at an annual rate of 4.6% annually as more Canadians choose to eat at home. Getting listed and staying listed is a goal most food manufacturers in Canada and abroad strives for. There is a methodology to achieving distribution. So to ease your mind, there are tried and true ways to get your new baby onto the shelves of Canadian Grocers.

Here are 5 questions I use to help my food manufacturer clients get and stay listed:

1. Do you know your brand's Unique Selling Proposition (USP)?

So you think now that you have a new product and retailers will be calling you for orders? Wrong. Consumers buy the brand; they do not buy the product. What differentiates your brand from the competition and convinces the consumer to switch is your USP.

For example, my client Rich's non-dairy On-Top whip topping was mired in a category that was controlled by the dairy industry with a +90% market share. Through our market and SWOT analysis we identified an emerging trend (beverage condiment) in which Rich's On-Top whip topping enjoyed a distinct advantage (stayed afloat for 2 minutes) over their competitor. Within the

first year, we successfully achieved incremental sales revenue of \$2.5M dollars. If you don't have something unique about your brand, you won't get listed in grocery stores.





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2. Have you positioned your product in the market?

How have you positioned your product relative to the competition in terms of product attributes that summarizes the qualities and advantages of your new product?

A brand I worked on Tabasco Brand Pepper Sauce was a brand steep in tradition dating back over 125 years. Despite, holding the # 1 category ranking and enjoying a brand loyalty level in excess of 80%, product sales were stagnant. More disturbing, 80% of consumers were using the product for a single purpose (Caesar drink). After exploring several different

positioning strategies through our research, we identified a new product usage. Positioned as a food condiment, we successfully netted an increase in sales revenue in excess of \$2M dollars in the first year. If you don't have a specific positioning for your brand, you won't get listed in grocery stores.

3. Do you have a distinct target audience?

Have you created an ideal target customer profile? It is critical for a businesses success and what need of the consumer are you satisfying? Another brand I worked on called Candle Impressions had stagnant retail sales. It had no specific target audience and tried to serve everyone. To help revitalize the brand, we researched and developed a distinct target audience: senior citizens as they were flameless. We then created a national marketing plan speaking directly to this new focused target audience that doubled product sales within the first six months and led to increased retail distribution.

Trying to target everyone never works. Remember what Bill Cosby said: "I don't know the key to success but the key to failure is to try to please everyone".

If you don't have a focused target audience you won't get or stay listed in grocery stores.





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4. Do you have a “Go To” market strategy to drive brand awareness?

Let’s face facts; the market you’re in is too saturated. You need to create a long-term relationship with your ideal consumer. In the new world of marketing, social media has provided business with the perfect tools to be able to do just that. Such as the time when we successfully launched the national line extension for Tabasco Garlic Pepper Sauce and Tabasco Green Pepper Sauce. Within the first year, both sku’s achieved Top 10 category ranking within the hot sauce category through our social media platform. Social media may not be the answer to every brand’s problem but if you craft a relevant “GO TO” market awareness strategy for your ideal consumer target, then you will get listed and stay listed in grocery stores.

5. Is your brand keeping up with consumers?

Consumer tastes are consistently evolving. Change is inevitable and the key to long-term success.

How are you keeping abreast of today’s consumer? For example, when I worked on The Vic Johnston’s Community Centre’s snack bar, sales were in decline despite an increase in attendance and general overall revenue. A general survey of the parents revealed product selection; in particular an emphasis on healthier food alternatives was a contributing factor. We developed a brand identity and marketing plan resulting in doubled foot traffic and a 15% increase in sales. Even if you have distribution, if you’re not evolving to keep up with consumer trends, you won’t stay listed in grocery stores.





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Are you currently looking for a distributor?

So you have a product and are looking to get listed in the grocery sector. If so you are probably looking for a broker and / or distributor. Unclear as to the difference:

Broker A broker does not take ownership of your product. They represent your brand in presentations to grocers and take a royalty on sales made. They typically represent a minimum number of brands.

Distributor A distributor takes ownership of your product and re-sells your brand in to grocers. They typically represent more brands than a broker.

When you sit down with a broker or distributor, you must be prepared to address the following questions:

1. What differentiates this brand from the competition and how will it be positioned in the market?
2. Who is your ideal target audience and what marketing support is in place to generate consumer awareness?
3. How will your brand support mainstream retailers?
4. Why should a distributor / broker represent you and why should a retailer list you?

If you get these 5 things right, you are one-step ahead of the competition and much more likely to get distribution and stay listed in grocery stores. For more help on getting and staying listed, connect with me on [LinkedIn](#) (richardecbaker) or tweet me on [Twitter](#) (@GRMS_Richard) or give me a call at 905-828-8145

