

Biologist Turned Marketer Brings Data To TV Advertising—And Wins

Facing challenges from both the market and Mother Nature, Zicam's VP of Marketing, Lori Norian, develops a smarter approach to TV advertising and drives huge growth for her business.



Every marketer knows it's hard to make your brand stand out. It's even harder when you have to differentiate yourself from 250 other products in a single aisle at the pharmacy. It's harder still when your target audience is likely feeling achy, stuffy, and generally out of sorts.

If you're a challenger brand with limited budgets and even smaller market share, how do you cut through the noise and compel a person to reach for your product?

That was the challenge facing Zicam, and they tapped their VP of Marketing, Lori Norian, to find a solution. Lori knew the task would require innovation, risk taking, and possibly an entirely new approach to their TV advertising—because the competition wasn't the only thing they had to worry about.

Searching For A Cure To Seasonality

There was also the not-so-small question of Mother Nature. Zicam advertises on TV once a year, during cold season. Some years cold season starts in November. Sometimes it arrives in late January. Its peak can last just a few weeks or as long as a few months. Until it begins, nobody knows for sure.

Like many brands, Zicam had traditionally bought TV advertising at the upfront. For years, this strategy was their only option, but it also forced Lori and her team to guess—often months in advance—when that year's cold season would begin. And if they were off by even a couple of weeks, their TV campaign ultimately would be rendered ineffective.

To address the variability, Lori began testing digital advertising. Turns out that most people don't go online looking for medicine when they're sick. As a result, those campaigns returned just \$0.11 for every dollar spent.

Experimenting With A Smarter Approach

It soon became clear to Lori that traditional TV advertising and digital marketing was not working for them. In order to increase sales, drive growth, and take market share from the competition, Zicam would need to try something different. Luckily, she had a knack for experimentation.



At Zicam HQ with marketing award hardware.

"It's very difficult to continue to grow a brand year over year with flat budgets if you don't continuously get more efficient and effective with your media."

As a former cellular biologist, Lori was accustomed to testing new hypotheses and developing the data necessary to prove them. In her role at Zicam, she decided to bring this same mindset to her marketing strategy. She knew they couldn't outspend their competitors, but she was determined to spend smarter.

Data Makes All The Difference

Knowing that its massive reach would be her best ally in attracting new customers, Lori returned to TV. She felt great about their creative, but buying in the scatter market didn't offer the precision targeting—nor the results—she was looking for. She and her team then turned to Advanced TV, and when she discovered Simulmedia, she was immediately intrigued. With the resources afforded by a complete data-driven solution, Lori realized she could use data to reach higher value targets on TV, measure the business outcomes of a campaign to learn how they respond, and then seamlessly apply those learnings to optimize her audience targets for the future.

After an initial test, not only did she see her media dollars per consumption unit go down dramatically, she also began to understand the value of Simulmedia's flexibility of scheduling. Being able to get a campaign up and running in a few weeks—compared with selecting flight dates months in advance at the upfronts—could potentially cure Zicam's cold season timing troubles.

Looking ahead to next cold season, Lori commissioned a segmentation study to help her further home in on her ideal customer. She then worked with Simulmedia to develop an optimized target audience, and set out to reach them the following cold season.

Zicam Reaches New Levels Of Success

The results from the following year's campaign were astonishing. Here are the highlights:



Three Times Is A Trend

Still, the scientist in Lori wanted to prove that those spectacular results weren't a fluke. Using the data gleaned from the campaign reporting, she and her team refined their target audiences yet again in advance of the next cold season. That year, Zicam gave even more of their budget to Simulmedia and saw sales go up another 13%.

How It Worked:

- Simulmedia's VAMOS platform created a custom target based on age, gender, household income, and multiple MRI attributes.
- VAMOS's patented predictive algorithm forecast what TV programs consumers would be watching throughout cold season.
- Just weeks before cold season peaked, Simulmedia scheduled and activated a three-month campaign that included over 11,000 spots across 85 networks.
- Closed-loop reporting determined ROAS and identified optimization opportunities for optimization.

Leading The Industry Forward

Zicam's success has not gone unnoticed. Lori has built one of the most cutting-edge marketing teams in the Pharma industry, and in September 2017, they were awarded Marketing Team of the Year at the PM360 Trailblazer Awards Gala.

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