

Set the Ex-Sample

An Ample Sample of Exemplary Sampling

Have you been stuck in rapturous daydreams about world-rocking sampling? We're not surprised, after **our last Smartshot webinar** walked through – or, more accurately, stomped all over – sampling's ho-hum past. We showed how present-day sampling's become ever more engaging and dramatic, and introduced 5 best practices. Admittedly, some were more exciting than others; even though steps like precise targeting and holistic integration are imperative to sampling success, they're not quite as fun as, say, "generating curiosity and anticipation." In fact, that particular best practice provides enough room for innovation, experimentation, and general craziness that it's worth flushing out in its own Potty Posting. So let's get to it.

As noted in our Smartshot, distributing samples is easier than ever, and today's consumers are simply *bombarded* with free swag. With this much clutter, it's hard to get consumers to even *see* your samples. Well, it's a good thing you've got four other senses to work with! For instance, Welch's got our tongues wagging with their lick-able **Peel & Taste** print ads, generating plenty of curiosity while also making you look like a crazy person who licks magazines in public. But print ads are not only getting tastier – they're also getting better for your skin. Thanks to BeautiSeal pouches, P&G has been able to sample moisturizers in print ads, allowing consumers to experience the product's scent and texture without turning the whole magazine into a dripping glob of Olay. And while that sounds much more appealing than blasting consumers in the face with dry, scented air, that's exactly the idea behind sampling via shelf puffers. These devices are gaining popularity as an in-store sampling tool for fragrances, scented CPG products, and anything else that could appeal to your nose. And, when you compare a puff of dry air to getting shot by a **fragrance-filled watergun**, I guess it doesn't sound so bad. And yes, we've made it this far without pointing out the connection to **Immersive Sensory Experiences** from our **10 Trends for 2010**, presumably because you already made that connection yourself, right? Don't make us blast Source-scented dry air at you! (In case you're curious, it's the intoxicating scent of smarts.)



Y'know what else is notable about the sensory sampling examples? None of them require the clichéd old lady in a hairnet to hand 'em out. In fact, there's a whole line of sampling tactics that have replaced human sampling because – dun dun dun! – the machines have taken over. (Shh, no one tell the Governor.) The formerly-bland vending machine now offers some of the most immersive sampling experiences available, and since there's no need to pay overtime (shh, no one tell the vending machine union), the samples can be distributed anytime, anyplace. **The Boobox** dispenses samples when users send a text from their phone, which ensures that consumers only get a single sample, but also enables the brand to collect data that can be used for follow-up conversations. Granted,

that's not as fun as, say, a **vending machine that gives you free ice cream** if you smile big enough, or one that dispenses your sample **after you successfully complete a brain teaser** (shown in the previous column). Honestly, you never thought you'd have this much fun with a vending machine, did you?

Blanketing the Earth with your samples makes for a great bottom line, but it also makes for a crappy Planet Earth. We've all seen the sorry remains of a sampling event strewn with discarded packaging and unwanted samples. Some CPG brands are switching to **Xela Pack** as a remedy, since they provide a line of 100% post-consumer recycled paper alternatives for primary and secondary packaging. Then again, it won't be long until we can get rid of much of the physical waste altogether. The growth of technologies like **virtual mirrors** has given rise to virtual sampling opportunities, where the product benefits can be experienced and personalized without any physical accompaniment.



Finally, in line with our 10th trend from 2010, you can never go wrong with **delighting your consumers** with the element of surprise. Normally, brands would be a tad concerned if they heard that residents were tearing down the contents of their billboard, but apparently that's how they do things in the Austrian city of Graz. Or, at least that's what happened when the outdoor clothing company Northland Pro affixed product samples to billboards throughout the city (see the image above). Each day, the 50-or-so billboards were graced with 20 items for the taking, generating a ton of word-of-mouth (and a handful of entertaining videos) in the process. Then again, perhaps your brand isn't keen on the possibility of starting a riot. No matter, thanks to the "**Interesting Stuff**" project from London's Matter. Manufacturers provide the service with samples that go beyond a single-serving, making a more compelling (or, more to the point, interesting) statement about what the company does and stands for. Matter boxes the stuff up, sends it to targeted recipients at no charge, and ensures that they'll arrive on a Saturday (when the person is more likely to spend time interacting with the items). Interesting Stuff has lived up to its name so far, intriguing brands like Sony Ericsson, Stolichnaya, Nintendo, and Virgin Atlantic.

Let the statisticians worry about sampling bias - you get to work on creating some world-rocking sampling!

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