

Strategic Consultant Finds Fruitful Partnership for In-Field Market Research

Background and Client Objectives

A consulting agency needed boots-on-the-ground data collection for their manufacturing client; the agency was adept at big picture analytics and strategic recommendations but lacked the in-field capabilities to carry out their own research to establish a foundation for higher level work.

As part of a broader initiative, the agency required data comparing their manufacturing client to its competitors in terms of in-store customer experience and satisfaction within their largest retail partner's stores. The retail partner utilized different manufacturers in different stores, and the agency (and its client) were looking for ways to increase their count.

The agency believed that such data would help their manufacturing client increase the percentage of the retail partner's stores in which they were featured—the retailer is famously data-driven and market research demonstrating the manufacturer's comparative merits stood to protect their existing business relationship and potentially increase their store count.

Program Development and Methodology

TrendSource brought its nearly thirty years of in-field market research experience to the engagement, quickly developing and executing the program with efficiency and accuracy.

Understanding the client needed to develop a way to quantify the manufacturer's in-store performance relative to that of their two largest competitors, TrendSource recommended in-store audits as the ideal market research methodology. These would be conducted at the retail partner's stores, both those in which the manufacturer was featured and in which its two nearest competitors were featured.

In order to accurately and fairly compare the manufacturer and its competitors, TrendSource Insights Managers developed a rating scale and six in-store attributes (ranging from product condition to cleanliness and signage), and further determined the audits should be conducted blind. This meant Field Agents were not told whether the manufacturer they were evaluating was client or competitor.

Results and Analysis

After dispatching Field Agents for over 600 evaluations, TrendSource's analytics team developed an executive summary it first shared with the consulting agency and then ultimately presented to their manufacturing client.

This summary provided direct comparisons to the manufacturer's competitors on each of the six evaluation points and offered deep dives into the areas in which the manufacturer was underperforming.

The summary further offered overall, regional, and competitor-specific results, which ultimately showed that the manufacturer did, indeed, outperform its competitors. This was a fortuitous outcome but one that came directly from the data—the consulting agency could tell the manufacturing client with confidence that it did surpass its competitors in a number of areas, and the manufacturer could report this to the retail partner with the same confidence.

Conclusion

Though often working directly for Fortune 100 and Fortune 500 retailers and manufacturers, TrendSource also partners with consulting and marketing agencies to perform in-field market research, allowing agencies to focus on the bigger picture.

In this case, the consultant had already conducted their own initial research and developed a plan, but they lacked the operational strength to execute the 600+ in-store audits required for statistical relevancy. TrendSource's program design experience and vast Field Agent network means it can quickly and precisely turn around in-field research projects. This is an invaluable asset for agencies lacking their own data collection operations.