CASE STUDY: RECALLED CONSUMER-PACKAGED GOODS

Recall program assists with healthcare brand’s reputation and customer satisfaction
Executive Summary

Program Overview

A notable company specializing in health-related consumer-packaged goods (CPG) partnered with Alta Resources for coupon fulfillment. So Alta Resources could accurately manage and quickly ship to the client’s audience, a seamless integration between the two parties’ systems was essential. That existing relationship and system integration were the groundwork for program expansion when the client needed a vendor to assist with a series of major product recalls affecting seven of its brands nine years later:

- January 15
- March 31
- May 3–July 23 (the focus of this study)

Whereas other potential vendors were forced to find ways to integrate on the fly, Alta Resources was able to leverage its already-present connectivity to delve into new client opportunities such as a product-recall care program. In fact, the client was searching for a vendor with system capabilities already in place because having them would result in an easier, quicker transition — a major concern considering product recalls can happen unexpectedly, with service levels hurriedly ramping up or down. In this case, the recall program came with just a five-day implementation period in an effort to meet the anticipated influx of inbound contacts.

This is the story of how Alta Resources provided effective crisis-communications support, which aided reputation management during a tense time of product recalls.

Challenge Overview

Even the world’s most-reliable brands have become all-too familiar with picking up the pieces after unexpected events. Oil spills, faulty brake lines and contaminated lettuce are just a few unpredictable crises that have created public-relations nightmares.

Not only do we live among heightened safety, security and environmental concerns, we also operate in a world of hyper connectivity and social media. The latter means news can spread like wildfire and public opinion can be shared instantly, causing a brand’s reputation to change in the blink of an eye.
Solution Overview

This case study on a world-leading healthcare brand reinforces the need to be proactive by implementing a crisis-management plan, particularly for product recalls. Addressing reputation-damaging events head on versus burying heads in the sand says, “We will not pass the buck. Rather, we accept responsibility and are working feverishly to restore your faith in us.” Saying so goes a long way in helping brands save face and regaining customers’ trust.

As a brand marketer, be prepared to take on the brunt of customer and media criticisms — a necessary step toward repairing brand reputation and customer relationships. Therefore, part of any brand's plan should be crisis communications — internal and external — as well as training and well-planned protocol for the response teams. It should also include — without sacrificing service quality — the ability to ramp up and down with little prior warning.

Results Overview

Handling the scale and scope of product recalls may require the assistance of a third party that can seamlessly integrate systems, rapidly downsize and expand teams as necessary, and offer dedicated resources. By working in unison to step from the shadows of unexpected crises, both parties can restore brand equity to its former glory.

On the following pages, you’ll see how a brand and its partner of choice embarked on a journey in crisis communications, which accomplished the following:

- Nearly 500 team members responded to 80,000-plus inbound customer contacts and issued more than a quarter of a million outbound pieces.
- Beyond quantity, service quality was an ongoing emphasis, as demonstrated in the nearly perfect scores for service level, case quality and call quality.
- Average attainment rate reached nearly 90 percent, while internal scores showed a majority of response associates had high levels of project satisfaction.
- The recall campaign’s success prompted follow-up programs between the two partners, as well as the outsourcing of all customer care two years later.
As one can imagine, recall efforts are complex undertakings. This particular recall program was a three-part challenge.

First, the uniqueness of every situation, company and product complicates recalls. They occur at varying levels and require different actions, from pulling products from store shelves to having customers send in the defective products. Therefore, every scenario requires carefully administered response protocol and thorough training to ensure that frontline associates are prepared. In addition to training associates, resource planning includes:

- Staffing
- Facilities
- Technology (hardware and software)
- Financials
- Human resources

Second, considering that this client is in the healthcare industry, many checks and balances existed that didn’t otherwise apply to product recalls. To even be considered a partner of choice, Alta Resources had to be equipped to handle the added sensitivities and intricacies of healthcare recalls. For example, being conscious of the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) regulations was critically important for a successful program.

Finally, when a program has a short turnaround, fitting all those complexities into a tight timeframe makes for a compelling challenge in its own. On April 28, Alta Resources was notified of a program to launch on May 3, giving five days (three business days excluding the overlapping weekend) to ramp up and meet the client’s highly specific needs.
The Solution

A proactive approach ensures that a program of such size and scope can be launched without pitfalls or much warning. With proprietary recall documentation readily available, Alta Resources conducted a thorough assessment of the upcoming program, better understanding the client’s needs and the resources necessary to proceed:

- Identify “the what”: the product(s) being recalled, the issue(s) affecting the recall and the size of the program
- Assess seating capacity and the number of dedicated reps, both internal and external
- Gauge facility needs to meet increased staffing
- Address technology and connectivity issues such as Interaction Client (telephony) and Salesforce integration
- Notify IT team for quick preparation of workstations, including hardware and software
- Implement a readily available support team to provide assistance as needed, especially as programs can ramp up or down in very little time
- Pinpoint and notify the affected internal leadership
- Evaluate human-resources needs such as requirements and standards for hiring (if hiring is necessary)
- Determine if internal or client-led training is necessary, followed by securing training facilities and materials
- Establish secure financials for payment tracking

By juxtaposing the client’s needs with Alta Resources’ capabilities, it was determined that all demands could be met. Then, Alta Resources implemented a care program designed to support the client’s overall recall communications. The program was fully staffed, complete with facilities, technology and support, and was ready for the May 3 go-live date. At that time, Alta Resources’ reps transparently assumed the client’s brand and began issuing responses to all inbound contacts via phone and email, often answering questions as well as issuing refunds and rebate coupons.
The Results

In addition to the two major recalls in January and March (see “Program Overview”), the period between May and July resulted in one major recall and two additions to a recall from earlier that year. Between May and July, 485 Alta Resources employees were involved, resulting in the following:

Sixty-three percent of all labor hours, 75 percent of all emails and calls, and 74 percent of all shipments were processed during the first month. At the project’s conclusion, Alta Resources issued an internal survey to gauge project satisfaction among all care reps associated with the recalls. Survey findings revealed that three-fourths of the agents fell in the top two box scores, having rated their experiences as either “satisfied” or “very satisfied.”

In addition to the immediate results, the program’s success was a catalyst to a similar program launched for the client in October. By the conclusion of the following year, Alta Resources’ program netted more than:

- 110,046 production hours
- 18,680 leadership hours
- 57,525 handled calls
- 122,402 reviewed cases
  - 11,796 email
  - 22,363 due diligence
  - 7,787 healthcare professional
  - 101,870 phone

(e.g., coupons, rebate checks and letters)
In terms of quality, those reviewed cases either met or exceeded the client’s goals, resulting in an average 99.7-percent service level, 97.2-percent case quality and 89.6-percent call quality by year’s end. Those results are further attributed to meeting or exceeding expectations in the following areas:

When the client initiated its own call-monitoring metrics in Q3, Alta Resources achieved an average attainment rate of 89.6 percent, which is factored by 93.7 percent in consumer interaction and 85.6 percent in documentation best practices. Two years after the initial recall project, the ongoing relationship had reached new heights, which eventually led to Alta Resources’ management of the client’s full-scale care program — written response (e.g., email and social media), telephony and bilingual services — in autumn of that year. At that time, it was one of the largest-staffed programs in Alta Resources’ history.
An Insider’s Perspective

“‘Peace of mind’ is a commonly used phrase in our industry. But it’s what effective crisis communications is all about. Communicating during unexpected events can make or break a consumer’s perception of a brand as well as that brand’s immediate and long-term reputation.

At Alta Resources, we serve as an extension of brands, meaning a brand’s customers are our customers. We don’t take that lightly. We actually assume the role of instilling trust in those customers so they can confidently buy. And when a situation arises, no matter how large or small, it becomes our purpose to re-engage consumers as well as manage — even mend — the brand’s reputation.

Yes, Alta Resources met the demand for a large, quick-to-launch program. We also met head on the added complexities of things like security and responding to healthcare-specific recalls. But what we are most proud of is our ability to earn the client’s trust. After all, entrusting brand reputation and essential customer relationships to another is a major decision. We took that trust and really delivered — something that has been well documented through quantifiable results and our continuing partnership with the brand.”

— Todd Van Dyn Hoven
   Program Director, Care
Since 1995, Alta Resources has been in the relationship business. That’s because many of the world’s best-known and -loved brands trust us to help them connect and reconnect with customers across every major touch point, from online to offline. Between the moment a customer shops a website or calls in to the day a package arrives, Alta Resources fuels those essential interactions, both technical and physical.

The secret to helping brands resonate with consumers and achieve defined results is creating seamless transactions. So we wear the brands we represent with transparency, meaning one team dedicates itself to a specific client — and only that client — careful to uphold its culture, reputation and success. While our success has been documented, you may never know the Alta Resources name behind the products and services you use daily — and that’s cool with us because it means we’re doing our job well.

It also means that our full slate of integrated solutions — customer care, sales, e-commerce and fulfillment — are working together to not only create consistent brand experiences but also make them better. That, in turn, attracts new customers, while keeping current customers engaged and coming back for the long term.

With headquarters and a fulfillment facility in Neenah, Wisconsin, privately held Alta Resources has additional domestic operations in California, with a global footprint in the Philippines.

To learn more, visit AltaResources.com.