

As part of the open-ended questions section at the end of the survey, researchers noted that many respondents cited noise levels as a reason for dissatisfaction with their purchase. In other words, whereas the loudness of the tire had not been an important criterion that they considered when making their purchase decision, it became a significant issue after the purchase when the noise levels were considerably higher than anticipated. Researchers further noted that although these complaints showed up with some frequency among those purchasers of all three competitors' tires, they were virtually nonexistent among the purchasers of the Treadfast tires.

When researchers at K&M presented their findings to senior management at Fivestar, it was obvious to everyone present that the attempted positioning of the Treadfast winter tire ("All the traction of the better-known tires, at a price you can afford.") had been largely unsuccessful. Whereas consumers perceived the Treadfast tire as affordable, they did not think that it offered "all the traction of the better-known tires." Fivestar managers were understandably upset by the research findings and expressed these feelings to Laura Frederick, the K&M Account Manager responsible for the Treadfast research project.

Laura Frederick had been in the marketing research field for many years and was experienced at delivering research results to clients in situations where the results were sure to be viewed as bad news. She knew that the presentation required her to be tactful, sensitive to their disappointment, and persuasive in convincing them to focus on future opportunities rather than past failures.

After a lengthy discussion of the research findings, Laura said, "We've spent a lot of time thus far analyzing consumers' attitudes toward the Treadfast tire and its three major competitors. This time and effort has been well spent, because we are now in the very fortunate position of having a comprehensive understanding of consumers' attitudes."

Laura went on to say that although the results of the research didn't represent good news, this comprehensive understanding of current consumer attitudes was crucial to future discussions regarding ways in which Fivestar might be able to successfully change consumers' attitudes. For example, if attitudes are defined as a combination of consumers' beliefs about the degree to which brands possess certain attributes, together with their feelings regarding the importance of those attributes, then strategies regarding how to successfully change those attitudes typically fall into three basic approaches:

1. *Changing the importance/desirability of attributes.* This usually entails emphasizing the importance of an attribute on which your brand rates particularly well, de-emphasizing an attribute on which your brand rates particularly low, or both.
2. *Changing brand beliefs.* For example, one might choose to use advertising to show consumers that your brand is more positive on a certain attribute, and/or a competing brand is more negative on that attribute, than they had previously believed.
3. *Adding a new attribute.* This might include making consumers aware of an attribute that they hadn't previously considered when making a purchase decision, and/or adding a feature to your brand that the competing brands don't possess.