

Katy Sputo

Professor Ophir Lehavy

PUR 6934

12 November 2017

Final Strategic Plan: Hoka One One

Summary: Hoka One One is one of the newest premium running shoe brands across the world. Founders Jean-Luc Diard and Nicholas Mermoud started Hoka in 2009 with a specific need in mind. They sought to create a shoe that would allow athletes to run downhill faster and provide more shock absorption for runners. Initially targeted for and embraced by the ultra-marathon community, runners and walkers of different distances started integrating the shoes into their training. In 2013, Deckers Brands purchased Hoka, which catapulted the brand into the global market almost overnight.

As Hoka One One believes that the brand is for runners of all abilities, paces, and ages, Hoka will be launching the *Master Your Run* campaign targeted towards masters runners (aged 40 years and older) to promote the benefits of the shoes. The campaign will feature stories submitted by masters runners and also feature blog and social media posts focusing on topics important for the aging runner. The campaign will begin on September 1, 2017 and run through December 9, culminating at the USA Track and Field National Club Cross Country Championships.

Hoka currently has marketing and communications campaigns focused on women (*Women Who Fly*) and a broad campaign focused on all runners (*Humans of Hoka*), however has never implemented a targeted campaign for masters runners. In 2016, 50 percent of all marathon finishers were 40 years or older and the number continues to grow (“New U.S.

Marathons and Halfs Report Reveals Participation is Declining”). This is a relatively untapped demographic for Hoka, and the running industry overall. The *Master Your Run* campaign will build on the successes of the *Women Who Fly* and *Humans of Hoka* campaigns, which generated enthusiasm and engagement online. The main campaign hope is to raise awareness for the brand within the masters runner demographic, increase fan engagement and to increase online footwear sales over a three-month period immediately following the campaign. By doing so, this will set Hoka apart from other brands in the market.

Goal: The goal for the *Master Your Run* campaign is to raise overall brand awareness and sales with runners 40 years and older in the three months following the campaign’s completion.

Objectives: This campaign will have a few target objectives:

- Raise overall brand awareness among masters runners through tracking online impression and engagement on social media, website traffic and surveys.
- Increase online footwear sales by 15% across all categories over a three-month period after the conclusion of the campaign on December 9.
- Increase engagement on social media platforms such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#) aiming for a total of 10,000 likes, views, or shares across all platforms.

Furthermore, increase the click-thru rate by 10% from our social media pages to the Hoka One One website resulting in a footwear purchase.

- Aim for 10% of the runner field at the USA Track and Field National Club Cross Country Championships to be wearing Hoka shoes during competition, measured by a shoe tally taken as runners cross the finish line.

Target Audience: The focus audience is current male and female masters runners aged 40 years and older who run as individuals or as part of a group or team. While the campaign messages will cater to all ages within our target audience, we will have slight modifications in messages and strategy with those 40-64 years of age and those 65 years and older. Additionally, we are focusing specific campaign messages towards individuals who currently do not identify themselves as runners but are interested in getting involved in the sport. We consider our audience to already be engaged and interested in running, our products and are actively seeking information.

We believe that runners come in all shapes, sizes, ethnicities, and religions; we do not plan to focus on one specific ethnicity or religious group at this time. Our target audience will be part of the middle class, defined as having a median household income of \$59,039 (“Middle Class”), with at least a bachelor’s degree or higher. The professions that these individuals practice vary from teachers, accountants, nurses, and IT professionals, among others. Individuals at the higher end of our age demographic (65+) may be retired or partially retired.

We consider our key stakeholders to be our customers, employees, shareholders, and retailers who carry the Hoka One One product. To guide our strategy and tactics in our communications plan, we have created four personas of individuals that fall into the category of runners we are targeting.

Brian: Brian is 45 years old and has been running for seven years. He competes in marathons and other shorter distance races. He is married with two children and works as a manager at a sales agency. Brian primarily runs alone but occasionally participates in a group run that meets at a local running store. He is active on social media, mostly to check in with family and friends, but

also follows brands that he enjoys.

Cindy: Cindy is a 51 year old who is an active volunteer in her community. She has been running for over twenty years, is part of the masters runners club at her local YMCA, and competes in track and field events. She has a daughter and is a stay-at-home mom. Cindy has a large friend base who often seek her opinions on purchases. She maintains a lifestyle blog with a respectable following of 5,000 subscribed readers.

Frank: Frank is 73 years old and a retired sales supervisor for a furniture store. Frank and his wife Lisa travel frequently around the world and are health conscious. They run together three times a week and participate in charity 5K's with their grandchildren on the weekends. Frank has a Facebook and e-mail account to view and share photos of his grandchildren but still gets his news from the newspaper and television.

Martha: Martha is 60 years old and was recently told by her doctor to lose weight. She was active in her teenage years but stopped working out after she had children. With her children in college, Martha now has more flexibility to focus on her health and get more active. She does not like the gym and has considered a "couch-to-5K" training program but does not know what gear to purchase and how to start. She has seen different running shoe advertisements on her Facebook news stream but does not know which brand is best for her.

This campaign affords many opportunities for our company. With the Baby Boomer population getting older, they are becoming more concerned about health and overall well-being. They also have more disposable income compared to other populations (i.e. - Millennials) and are more willing to put this money towards fitness and wellness services and products. The senior (65+) population is also health conscious and more physically active than ever.

With opportunity come challenges and considerations. One of the largest hurdles for our campaign is ensuring that our messages reach the older population of our audience. Internet use among seniors (65+) is increasing, but still not at the level of younger populations. Seniors often read more and watch more television and alternative media will need to be considered to better reach them. Seniors are less easily convinced on products and messages versus younger individuals, so ensuring that our key messages and tactics are strong enough to convince this population is important.

Strategy: We are implementing our public relations campaign for masters runners for multiple reasons. In our research, messaging directed towards the masters athletes demographic is underrepresented in the global running market. We see a huge opportunity to not only raise brand awareness within this demographic but also to build a community of runners who share similar running experiences. In postings on social media and our blog, targeted placements in television and print and other tactics, we will spread the key messages of our campaign and work to influence public opinion.

There are opportunities and challenges we will face when implementing our strategy. Hoka One One has the opportunity to gain a new loyal group of Hoka wearers and enthusiasts through brand awareness and the sharing of success stories among other runners. If our strategy is implemented effectively, we can continue to grow in the specialty running market, where we are currently the number six brand, behind better-recognized brands such as Nike and New Balance.

One of the major challenges Hoka One One faces is the number of competitor brands in the running shoe market. There are dozens of other running shoe brands in the market, some of them being in existence for over a century while we have only been in existence for eight years.

These companies have built a strong reputation in the marketplace and have fierce brand loyalty. Hoka One One offers a unique, but effective product and some may be reluctant to try out the shoes because they are different from any other running shoe.

Another potential challenge is persuading people to purchase a pair of running shoes that exceeds \$100. Quality running shoes from any brand start at \$120, but with discount retailers and websites such as Amazon offering similar, but not as durable shoes at a lower cost, it is key to stress the importance of quality and durability over low cost and cheaply made products.

Messaging: Key Message #1: Hoka One One shoes began with a specific need in mind: create a running shoe that allows athletes to run downhill faster and with greater cushioning than any other shoe on the market. Hoka One One shoes meet this need by providing quality cushioning for comfort, stability and more shock absorption versus its competitors.

Key Message #2: Hoka One One provides benefits to all runners, but especially to masters athletes 40 years of age and older. For longer distances, the extra marshmallow-like cushion provides shock absorption that is gentler on the joints of aging runners and potentially extends their running career. We have received thousands of success stories from runners who have reduced their injury risk when wearing their Hoka shoes.

Key Message #3: Masters athletes always look for a competitive edge in their running. The unique rocker platform design of Hoka One One shoes propels runners forward and encourages a natural running stride. This along with [maximum cushioning in a lightweight package](#) can provide runners with a safer, stronger and speedier performance.

Key Message #4: Runners look to gain from their involvement in running in ways such as connecting with other athletes, health benefits and competition. Hoka One One shoes can help

them reach their goals by making running a more enjoyable experience by helping reduce pain and keeping them off the sidelines with an injury.

Tactics: We will use a variety of different tactics to reach our target audience. We will utilize traditional and social media to disseminate our message, but also use creative strategies to make us stand out.

- Develop a new blog entitled *Master Your Run* where campaign messages and runner stories will be shared on one central hub.
- Create quality photos and video to share and post on our *Master Your Run* blog and social media platforms. Additionally, utilize television and print media to spread our message to older audiences over 65 who may not be as active online.
- Invite masters runners to show us how they “master their run” by sharing their own running stories on Facebook and the *Master Your Run* blog. If featured, they will win a pair of Hoka One One shoes.
- Identify key influencers and “supermoms” in the target demographic who either blog, podcast or produce video content relating to running. We will invite these individuals to the USA Track and Field National Club Cross Country Championships to cover the event. The goal is to gain support for the brand from these influencers in hopes that they will share their experiences at the event and our products with their “fan” base.
- Host free running seminars at the USA Track and Field National Club Cross Country Championships that not only educate about common concerns in runners over 40 but also discuss the benefits of Hoka One One. We will also invite top masters runners to

speak on a panel and live-stream and record these seminars online for runners to enjoy at home if they are unable to attend the competition.

- Host a competition between the different masters runner teams in attendance at the cross-country championships. The top three teams who have the most athletes wearing Hoka shoes during the competition will win a Hoka prize pack. The goal is to have 10% of the runner field at the competition to be wearing Hoka One One.
- Collaborate with local running stores in the Lexington, KY area during the cross-country championship weekend to drive business into the store to increase sales. Additionally, develop an incentive or referral program for masters runners to encourage e-commerce sales. The goal is to increase footwear sales in all categories by 15% over a three-month period following the end of the campaign on December 9.

Evaluation: To measure success in our campaign, we will use the following evaluations for each specific tactic.

- To measure our digital footprint and effectiveness, we will look at engagement on our social media platforms. We will measure the number of likes, shares and views our posts receives (impressions). We will also measure the click-thru rate on our posts to outside links and our *Master Your Run* blog. We will look at the click-thru rate from our *Master Your Run* blog to the main Hoka One One e-commerce website and vice-versa. Furthermore, measure if people made a purchase after viewing our media messaging.
- To measure the success of our “supermom” and key influencer efforts, we will look at the total impressions and click-thru rate their posts generate to the Hoka One One and

Master Your Run blog. We will also evaluate the comments and feedback they and their audience provide and use that to continue to target our demographic audience.

- To measure audience comprehension, we will follow-up with attendees and individuals who live-streamed the seminars the following day with day-after-recall surveys and in-person or phone interviews. We will follow-up with questions regarding specific topics that were discussed in the panels. We will also conduct attitude surveys prior to and after the event to pinpoint how much change is attributable to our public relations efforts.
- To measure how many athletes are wearing Hoka One One at the championships, we will hire an individual to sit at the finish line and keep a tally of which shoe brand runners are wearing when they cross the line. As a backup system, we will position a camera to record the feet of the runners.
- To measure the success of our footwear sales following the event, we will look at the online overall sales over the three-month period after the event and compare it to the same three-month period from the year prior. We will also track web analytics in how many masters runners utilize their unique code designated for our referral program versus how many codes were distributed.
- To measure our overall message exposure, we will look at the total number of media impressions and mentions we receive in the media such as television, print and radio. We will track the type of publications, the tone of the coverage, quotes and mentions of our key messages and objectives.

Works Cited

Hoka One One. Deckers Brands, www.hokaoneone.com. Assessed 06 Sept. 2017.

“How Does the U.S. Economy Work?” *The Balance*, 13 July 2017, <https://www.thebalance.com/how-does-the-u-s-economy-work-4056835>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2017.

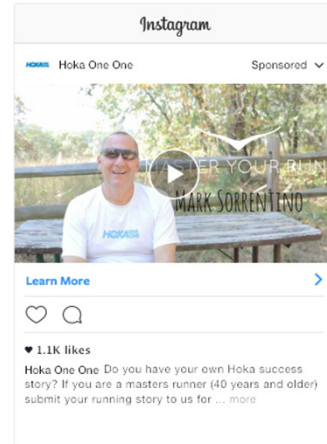
“How much income you have to earn to be considered middle class in every US state.” *Business Insider*, 17 Sept. 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/middle-class-income-us-state-2017-9>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2017.

“New U.S. Marathons and Halfs Report Reveals Participation is Declining.” *Competitor Running*. Competitor Group Inc., 19 June 2017, www.running.competitor.com/2017/06/news/new-report-2016-marathon-half-participation_165419. Accessed 06 Sept. 2017.

“The Hoka Difference.” *Hoka One One*. www.hokaoneone.com/technology.html. Accessed 10. Nov 2017.

Master Your Run Campaign

- Targeted campaign to focus on masters runners (runners 40 years and older).
- Runs September 1st – December 9th, 2017 culminating at the USA Track and Field National Club Cross Country Championships.
- Campaign highlight is to invite masters runners to share their Hoka success stories with us and to share on social media and our blog.
- At the championships, host a speaker series to grow brand awareness.



Overall Goal and Measures of Success

Goal: *Raise overall brand awareness and sales (by 15%) with runners 40 years and older in the three months following the campaign's completion.*

Measures of Success:

- Increased likes and views our social media posts receive.
- Increased conversion rate from our social media pages to our website.
- Increased audience comprehension in day-after-recall and attitude surveys and measure changes.
- Increased number of media impressions and mentions.
- Increased e-commerce footwear sales 2017 vs. 2016 for same period.

