



BEYOND PRICE CUTS:

THE 3 PILLARS

EVERY BRAND MANAGER
NEEDS TO BUILD BRANDS
THAT STICK



INTRODUCTION

What Brand Managers Are Up Against in 2025

Walk down any store aisle and you can instantly feel the pressure.

Private labels are growing faster than branded goods, with 50% of global consumers buying more private label products than ever before. Price promotions are everywhere. And consumers have become more discerning: 82% of consumers prefer a brand whose values align with their own, underscoring the need for brands to express their purpose clearly through storytelling, emotional engagement and distinctive value propositions.

If that wasn't enough, the average attention span has dropped to 8 seconds – meaning even fewer precious moments to convert consumers.

As a brand manager, your remit isn't simply to fill the pipeline with new products. You need to protect brand equity, deliver margin, tell a compelling narrative, and still hit short-term sales targets. Traditional levers like price cuts, BOGOs, and standard gift-with-purchase incentives are blunt instruments in a category where private labels can replicate innovations in weeks. It's time to adopt a new strategic framework that aligns with how today's consumers think and shop.

At TLC, we call this the **3 Pillars of Promotional Marketing** – and leveraging all of them in tandem will unlock extraordinary results for your brand.



DISRUPTION

How do we effectively differentiate in a retail world dominated by discounts?



AUTHENTICITY

How do we create promotional campaigns that uniquely represent our brand and storytelling?



VISIBILITY

How do we secure omnichannel awareness and engagement to reach a wider audience?

This playbook rebuilds your approach around the 3 Pillars. We'll explore why each pillar matters now, offer new insights into consumer behavior and commercial pressures, and share case studies showing how CPG brands use TLC's unique solution to win. A tactical roadmap at the end shows you how to put the 3 pillars into action and move toward value-led, emotionally resonant growth.

DISRUPTION



MAKE YOUR BRAND IMPOSSIBLE TO IGNORE

Why Disruption Matters Now

Disruption isn't about making noise for the sake of it – it's about intercepting shoppers before they switch to autopilot:

- 64% of consumers will try a new product because the packaging catches their eye.
- 90% of buying decisions are driven by emotion.

For brand managers, that means your challenge isn't just visibility: it's memorability.

Private labels are mimicking your functional benefits and undercutting your price, so the only way to stand out is to break the shopper script. That means creating emotionally-charged brand moments – both in-store and online – that disrupt expectations. Experiences that feel personal, premium, and purposeful will make shoppers pause, reconsider, and connect.

Disruption Is a Mindset, not a Mechanic

Many brands think of disruption as a gimmicky activation. The reality is that disruption starts at the strategic level: it's about creating multisensory experiences that express your values and tap into behavioral triggers such as curiosity, scarcity, and social proof.

Consumer neuroscientists note that unexpected rewards activate the brain's reward circuitry, making memories stick. For brand managers, this means integrating storytelling and interaction into packaging, digital, and shelf touchpoints. It also means challenging category conventions – placing your product in unexpected aisles or pairing it with complementary experiences can reshape how shoppers perceive you. Promotions that are surprising, appealing, and feel “worth it” in terms of value will get more attention than a standard discount or bundle offer.



CASE STUDY: RECKITT



“Walmart Wellness”: Boosting Sales Through Health, Recovery, and Convenience

The Challenge:

How do you sell seasonal health in a human-centered way?

The Context:

Seasonal illness periods present both a challenge and an opportunity for healthcare brands. Reckitt wanted to seize that moment in Walmart stores – boosting sales of Mucinex, Delsym, Airborne, and Digestive Advantage – while giving something of real value to customers with health concerns.

The objectives were clear:

- Incentivize seasonal health product purchases without discounting.
- Position Reckitt brands as trusted partners in proactive healthcare and recovery.
- Offer a reward that was highly relevant, instantly accessible, and easy for Walmart’s broad shopper base to use.

The Solution:

A promotion that softened the line between retail and real-world care. Every purchase of participating products came with a free Doctor on Demand telehealth consultation worth \$80.

By making healthcare feel accessible and rewarding, Reckitt positioned its brands as more than a transactional purchase. Instead, they became the solution for seasonal wellness.



The Impact:

10%
SALES INCREASE
DURING CAMPAIGN

**STRENGTHENED
BRAND TRUST BY
DELIVERING VALUE
BEYOND THE AISLE**

The Takeaway:

The most compelling incentives don't just save customers money – they support their day-to-day needs and wants.



CASE STUDY: MARS PETCARE

MARS

Mars Petcare – Connecting with Pet Owners Across a Brand Portfolio

The Challenge:

How do you increase household penetration for two distinct brands in one portfolio at the same time?

The Context:

Mars Petcare's subsidiary Nutro wanted a creative way to drive trial and acquisition for two of its dog food brands:

- Ultra, which had strong brand loyalty among consumers but needed a sales boost; and
- Wild Frontier, a newer and lesser-known brand.

The Solution:

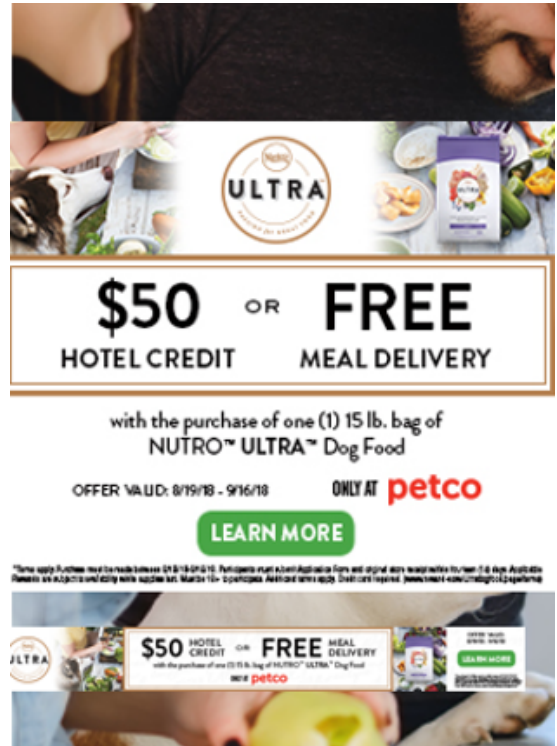
Create a personalized, interests-based rewards structure for each brand, redeemable upon purchasing a bag of dog food.

Ultra's target audience shared a passion for travel and food, so they could choose between a \$50 hotel credit or a meal kit delivery from Home Chef. Meanwhile, Wild Frontier customers who loved taking their dogs on outdoor adventures received a \$25 credit toward an annual National Parks pass.

The Impact:

19.3% COMBINED SALES UPLIFT

9.7% GROWTH OF PRODUCTS PURCHASED ACROSS BRANDS WITHIN 6 WEEKS OF EACH PROGRAM



"The rewards offered were such a success with consumers that there was a 19.3% sales lift."

- Marketing Manager,
Mars Petcare

The Takeaway:

Showing a genuine interest in consumers' passions led to deeper acquisition and brand loyalty that lasted long past the promotional period.



HOW TLC DRIVES DISRUPTION

For shopper marketers, disruption means more than flashy displays. It's about creating moments that stop shoppers and make them engage.

TLC's proprietary consumer rewards and insights platform, COSMOS, makes this possible at scale – powering unique codes, QR journeys and gamified experiences that invite participation right at the shelf. You set the budget and we provide a full campaign, leveraging consumer rewards that speak to your unique brand story, appeal to consumer passions, and spark action.

The result is a scalable, risk-free disruption at a fixed fee per reward, ensuring that every qualifying shopper leaves with a personalized, memorable interaction that projects your brand above the noise.

AUTHENTICITY

BUILD UNIQUE BRAND-CENTRIC CAMPAIGNS



Why Brands Need Authenticity More Than Ever

In categories where products are interchangeable and private labels are closing the quality gap, differentiation is the only defense against commoditization.

Traditional price promotions teach shoppers to wait for deals, eroding your positioning. Shoppers increasingly expect personalized connections and value alignment from brands; **over three-quarters of consumers are more likely to purchase from brands that tailor promotions to their interests and lifestyle**. But when the market is oversaturated with similar products and price-led campaigns, brand loyalty comes from emotional relevance and narrative strength.

Promotions that reward through storytelling, not just savings, can drive lasting consumer connection. These value-driven moments go beyond transactional incentives –experience-led promotions are directly anchored to your brand’s narrative. Shoppers see the promotion as authentic and relatable, naturally making it more engaging.

In this way, you can turn a simple transaction into something much more powerful: a moment of connection with your brand that offers more value, more meaning, and more reasons for shoppers to buy again. For brand managers, that means creating campaigns that are both commercially effective and culturally resonant.

Authenticity Is About Value Exchange

Connections happen when consumers feel they’re getting more than they give. But this can only happen if they understand and feel aligned with the brand’s purpose and story. That doesn’t mean giving away margin; it means offering experiences that fit with your brand purpose and audience aspirations.

Neuromarketing studies show that loyalty is driven by emotional resonance, not rational calculation. TLC offers added-value experiences at scale, helping brands move from transactions to connections. When shoppers receive a reward that resonates with them (like a free family day out, a wellness class, or a live event credit), they attach positive feelings and memories to your brand. These experiences build more meaningful connections, encouraging repeat purchases and generating social sharing.

The best part? Thanks to TLC’s deep network of experience reward partners, you only pay a fraction of the perceived value – making it easy to deliver high-impact rewards without overspending or eroding your margins.



CASE STUDY: DIAGEO

DIAGEO

“Here’s to Holidays Spent Together”: Creating Sharable Moments

The Challenge:

How do you create a true value exchange and shared experiences for holiday shoppers looking to gift festive spirits?

The Context:

Diageo wanted to enrich their consumer insights with better data capture, and they were looking to offer a true value exchange that rewarded the customer for sharing information with the brand. At the same time, they wanted to challenge the perception that gifting bottles is an impersonal gesture.

The Solution:

Lean into celebrating the joy of the season with sharable rewards, personalized bottle labels to incentivize thoughtful gifting, and an overall message of enjoying the festive season with the people you love the most.

The resulting “Here’s to Holidays Spent Together” promotion leveraged festive POS materials, gift tags and gift bags that shoppers could personalize themselves, and displays to showcase the reward: a \$50 live event credit received after participating in an online survey.

The Impact:

83%

OF SHOPPERS
PURCHASED AFTER
ENGAGING WITH THE POS

>5X

THE INDUSTRY
STANDARD FOR
CONVERSION RATES

64%

OF SHOPPERS
BOUGHT MORE THAN
ONE BOTTLE AT A TIME





CASE STUDY: BIRDS EYE



“From Meal Times to Fun Times”: Protecting Premium Positioning and Winning with Families in a Cost-of-Living Crisis

The Challenge:

How do you retain price-conscious customers when household budgets tighten?

The Context:

Birds Eye, a brand built on quality, trust, and wholesome family appeal, faced exactly that challenge during the cost-of-living crisis.

While competitors leaned into price cuts, Birds Eye needed a smarter way to protect its premium positioning, keep customers from switching to “value” brands, and reinforce the value it brings to family mealtimes.

The Solution:

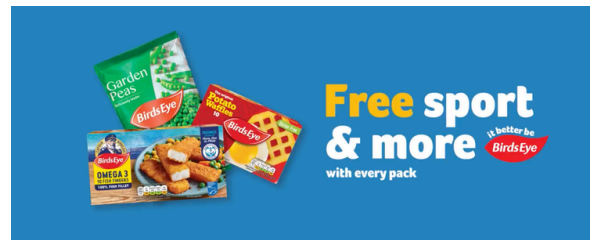
Many families were cutting back on extracurricular activities due to financial concerns – so finding a way to give that joy back became the center of our campaign.

“From Meal Times to Fun Times” was designed to put smiles back on family calendars with thoughtful incentives. Every qualifying purchase unlocked a free family sport or activity worth £20 or more, from swimming sessions to mini golf.

Ease and visibility were key to the strategy:

- Off-pack activation, communicated entirely via POS in Asda stores, meant no changes to packaging or production timelines.
- A clear, uplifting value-based message spoke directly to parents making tough spending decisions.

Seamless online redemption made claiming rewards simple, keeping engagement high.



The Impact:

9%

SALES UPLIFT
DURING CAMPAIGN

PROTECTED SHELF
POSITION AND
REDUCED RISK OF
SWITCHING TO
PRIVATE LABEL

STRENGTHENED THE BRAND'S EMOTIONAL
CONNECTION WITH FAMILY AUDIENCES

The Takeaway:

Birds Eye didn't just feed families with this campaign: It met a core need for parents and their kids and brought levity during a difficult time. Its success shows that true value isn't always found in a discount sticker.



HOW TLC DRIVES AUTHENTICITY

As a brand marketer, authenticity is a chance to make your brand impossible to ignore; TLC specializes in making that happen without ever touching price.

As the global market leader in non-price-based sales promotions, we use our fixed-fee reward model to protect your margins while delivering engaging rewards that blend seamlessly with your brand story. (Think travel, entertainment, wellness, sports, or cultural experiences.)

We leverage deep consumer insights to tailor every program to your audience's lifestyle and values, making your product stand out for more than just what's inside the pack or on the price sticker.

VISIBILITY

SECURE AWARENESS AND SELL THROUGH



Why Visibility Is Harder Than Ever

Even great campaigns fall flat without visibility. For brand marketers, this isn't just about getting noticed – it's about proving your campaign has earned its place. Retailers are looking for initiatives that protect margin, drive category growth, and justify valuable space.

At the same time, online grocery penetration is up, and retail media is booming, forecast to reach **\$100 billion by 2026**. Beyond the store, brands need to figure out how to reach their target audience and build genuine connections with them.

That means your campaign must deliver omnichannel consistency, compelling retail sell-in, and transparent ROI – all while reinforcing your brand story and standing out against private label pressure.

Think Like a Retailer and Plan From the Store Back

Visibility is often treated as an afterthought, with campaigns that look great on paper but don't necessarily translate to store realities.

The most successful brands start with the shelf: they analyze foot traffic flows, category adjacencies, and retailer priorities, and then build a promotion that grows the entire category. They also recognize that planning cycles are accelerating; **traditional monthly planning is shifting to weekly or even continuous cycles to keep up with volatile consumer demand**.

This means adopting an agile mindset, testing campaigns quickly, and providing data that proves ROI and helps retailers make decisions faster.



CASE STUDY: ENTENMANN'S



“Entertain Your Senses”: Scoring Big with Gamification and Good Times

The Challenge:

How do you bake brand love into a new generation's traditions?

The Context:

With a loyal customer base primarily consisting of Gen X women, Entenmann's wanted to reward their brand fans while attracting millennials who were no longer under their parents' roofs.

To counter the standard dip in sales at the start of the year, they needed to increase engagement with this heavily online younger demographic – meaning that Entenmann's had to be visible on the right platforms, with the right incentive for both audiences.

The Solution:

Offer a range of rewards to engage Entenmann's diverse target audience.

With the purchase of 4 promotionally marked boxes of donuts in participating stores, customers could choose from:

- a National Days Out Pass (a proprietary TLC reward including fun, family-related activities like mini golf, roller skating, and zoo visits);
- a \$20 live event credit; or
- 1 free Fandango movie rental.

A gamification element via a custom sweeps overlay added awareness and levels of engagement. By scoring digital basketball hoops using Entenmann's Pop'ems donut holes, players had the chance to win a trip for 4 to Orlando.

The Takeaway:

Using strategic shopper marketing overlays with a creative, brand-centric twist led to record results for brand and sales objectives.



The Impact:

13% SALES UPLIFT IN A HISTORICALLY NEGATIVE SALES MONTH

150,000+ PLAYS OF “POP’EMS SHOTS”

74% OF CUSTOMERS INFLUENCED TO PURCHASE BY THE PROMOTION



CASE STUDY: DOLLAR SHAVE CLUB



“Celebrating Dads: Turning Annual Events into Accessible and Memorable Moments

The Challenge:

How do you turn Father’s Day into a gifting occasion that boosts shaver sales and brand engagement in a competitive category?

The Context:

Unilever’s Dollar Shave Club partnered with TLC to launch a nationwide Father’s Day campaign across Target stores.

The Solution:

The promotion offered shoppers a choice between a free 12-month gaming membership or a \$25 dining eGift card – rewards designed to appeal both to gifting shoppers and everyday customers.

The promotion was complemented by high visibility in-store displays, shelf talkers, and digital ads on Target’s site. Campaign materials featured QR codes linking to a branded microsite, providing heightened brand awareness and easy participation for customers.

The Impact:

48%

AVERAGE WEEKLY SALES
LIFT OF SHAVERS AND
BLADES IN STORES WITH
PROMOTIONAL ASSETS

15%

ADDITIONAL SALES LIFT IN
STORES WITH SHELF TALKERS

61%

OF PARTICIPANTS
PURCHASED DOLLAR SHAVE
CLUB FOR THE FIRST TIME

The Takeaway:

The campaign successfully combined gifting appeal with clear in-store differentiation and disruption, leading to sales growth and new customer acquisition.

DSC DOLLAR SHAVE CLUB

Give Father's Day a boost

Buy any one (1) Dollar Shave Club® product and choose between these two rewards:

FREE \$25 Dining eGift Card* **FREE 1-Year Gaming Membership***

Available at **Target**



HOW TLC DRIVES VISIBILITY

TLC helps brand marketers win visibility by giving your team the commercial firepower to pitch with confidence and credibility. We combine proven insights from thousands of CPG promotions with ROI projections, visuals, and case studies that show how experience-led, brand-centric promotions yield commercial results:

- Increase rate of sale.
- Expand baskets.
- Bring new shoppers into the aisle.

This evidence gives your team the confidence and proof to negotiate for secondary placements, endcaps, and other high-traffic spaces. Our proprietary insights reporting adds weight to your story with real-time dashboards showing sales by store and participation heat maps, so you can optimize execution and share results with retail partners.

We help you plan omnichannel activation from the shelf to the screen, and our team handles everything – from ideation and fulfillment to compliance and partner sourcing – so you can focus on brand storytelling, retailer negotiations, and building visibility. Our solutions are smart, fast, and built for brand managers who want their big ideas to land where it counts: on the shelf, in carts, and in consumers' hearts.

Turning Strategy into Action: Your Roadmap to Value-Led Growth

You've seen how disruption, authenticity, and visibility work together as strategic pillars to deepen brand love, protect margin, and drive omnichannel visibility.

But how do you embed these into your brand plans while you're juggling long-term equity and short-term targets?

Shifting from discount-based promotions to experience-led incentives is easy when you start with your brand's "why" and what your target customers value most. Using TLC's strategic framework, you can unlock higher rate of sale, secure secondary space, and differentiate without discounting.

Here's your roadmap for applying the 3 strategic pillars – and moving from price-driven tactics to value-driven growth.

1. Audit current promotions and establish goals.

- Analyze the share of marketing spend currently devoted to discounts. Calculate the margin impact and cannibalization effects.
- Identify key commercial objectives such as increased sales, basket size, data capture, strengthened retailer relationships, and visibility.

2. Segment audiences and map your needs.

- Use existing data and personas to understand motivational drivers.
 - E.g., Gen Z values unique experiences and social sharing, while parents seek family outings and moments to recharge.
- Match reward categories to audience interests and align with brand positioning.
 - For example: pair adventure experiences with energy drinks targeting Gen Z thrill-seekers; kids' sports with laundry detergents; or wellness experiences with personal care brands. This way, the reward doesn't just add relevant value, it reinforces the brand's positioning in each shopper's mind.

3. Select the right reward mechanics.

- Guaranteed vs. chance-to-win: Guaranteed rewards engage everyone and get added value from their purchases, while high-value prizes can add excitement and a "wow" factor (but rewards are limited to the lucky few who win).
- Mechanics designed for engagement:
 - Use a straightforward claim mechanic for reach and simple redemption; use gamification with randomized outcomes to boost excitement and repeat visits.

- Choose a reward currency value that can be accumulated with every purchase and spent on free experiences.
- Utilize physical or digital collector cards that unlock rewards upon completion.
- Offer different reward tiers for different spend levels or qualifying purchases.

Selecting the right combination – based on shopper behavior, brand objectives, and retailer expectations – ensures that your reward mechanic supports your goals for disruption, authenticity, and visibility.

4. Choose smart partnerships and align with brand purpose.

- Partner with experience providers that reflect your brand values and audience aspirations (e.g., fitness brands, streaming platforms, hotels, attractions).
 - Ensure supply and quality.
- Incorporate sustainability and inclusion by selecting partners with environmental and social credentials.

5. Integrate data capture and measurement.

- Require registration for reward redemption to collect first-party data. Be transparent about data use and offer value in return (e.g., tailored offers).
- Use unique codes to track purchase, participation, and subsequent behavior.
 - Combine with retailer data to measure uplift and ROI.

6. Test and optimize.

- Pilot experiential promotions within your marketing calendar.
 - Compare the results against your usual price discounts to prove the business case for a differentiated approach.
- Optimize reward mix, communication channels, and creative based on performance data. Personalize all follow-up offers.

7. Scale and embed into loyalty strategy.

- Integrate experience-led rewards into existing loyalty programs or create new paid tiers offering premium experiences (e.g., annual subscription with monthly experiential perks).
- Train sales and trade marketing teams to pitch experiential promotions to retailers, emphasizing how they deliver across all three pillars:
 - Disruption at the shelf.
 - Authenticity to the brand.
 - Visibility gains in-store and beyond.

8. Communicate boldly.

- Harness the emotional storytelling potential of experiences in creative campaigns. Focus on how rewards make consumers feel, rather than their monetary value.
- Leverage social media and influencer partnerships to amplify the experiences and encourage user-generated content.

By following this roadmap, you can pivot from the discount trap to a more sustainable, emotionally resonant growth model.



YOUR 3 PILLAR ADVANTAGE

Powered by TLC

We know the idea of rethinking your promotional strategy can feel daunting: more perceived complexity, cost, set-up time, and resource.

That's where TLC comes in.

We've created thousands of successful campaigns across global CPG brands for the last three decades, so our experts take care of the heavy lifting for our clients.

Our teams handle the entire promotion lifecycle – from strategic planning and creative ideation to launch, fulfillment, compliance, reward management, and real-time reporting.

Leveraging deep consumer insights, our exclusive global partner network, and a fixed-cost reward model, we bring the 3 Pillars to life without adding strain to your team. Our campaigns help you drive basket expansion, improve sell-out, win secondary space, and delight retail partners – all while protecting your margin and enhancing brand love.

With TLC as a partner, the 3 Pillars go beyond theory; they become a practical, repeatable, and powerful formula for sustainable commercial success.

**Ready to turn disruption,
authenticity, and visibility into
your competitive edge?**

[Book your discovery call today.](#)

