

BRAND DOCTOR

PATIENT INFORMATION

Patient name

Reitmans

Reason for today's visit

Target is pulling out, but the pressure is still on, retailers. Reitmans is folding its Smart Set brand, but needs to know if it has the right focus with what's left—Reitmans, Penningtons, Addition Elle, RW&CO and Thyme Maternity.



Doctors on call



Luke Sklar

Partner
Sklar Wilton & Associates

TAP HERE

1 / 3

DIAGNOSIS

Reitmans, you deeply understand sourcing great product, operating good stores, squeezing nickels to deliver profit and even have the guts to shutter once-thriving Smart Set. But unless you pick your spots very carefully, no doctor can help you. If each of your banners is not the very best in Canada at something, it's over.

PERScription

First, skip the youth market. Zara, H&M, revitalized Old Navy and soon Uniqlo will dominate fast fashion. Second, sharpen each banner and spend to strength. With Penningtons and Addition Elle, you should fuel your leading position in the growing plus-size market. Finally, bring hope and enthusiasm to your thousands of employees. Every problem is solvable if you manage expectations. Here's the good news: womenswear is uniquely fickle from season to season. Why shouldn't Reitmans win big in 2015?

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Chris Staples

Founding partner and creative director
Rethink

TAP HERE
2 / 3

DIAGNOSIS

H&M and Zara are on the march and online shopping is relentlessly chipping away at mall traffic. Reitmans seems to have the products, but not the savvy to market them. Their website looks like it's peddling office supplies, not fashion. And their "Fits Your Beautiful" campaign is so obtuse it needs subtitles.

PERScription

Reitmans has been underestimated before and came back strong. This year will tell if it has the guts to do it again. Despite the doom and gloom about online shopping, there will always be a market for physical locations where women can try on clothes in person. There will also always be a need for affordable, stylish basics. Bring back the "Designed for Real Life" campaign. As the Gap has shown with "Dress Normal," there's nothing wrong with being suburban. You just have to do it with style.

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Alan Middleton

Assistant prof. of marketing
Schulich School of Business, York University

TAP HERE
3 / 3

DIAGNOSIS

There are a number of areas that it needs to shore up. The present advertising campaign fails on all fronts. After many years of a fairly clear value positioning against the middle age/older buyer, this is slipping. This buyer is now looking for greater fashion, a better price and, most importantly, a full online presence.

PERScription

More offense. It needs a makeover in advertising and its supply chain (especially in the cost area). The first step is to review positioning in the market. But most importantly, it must remake the experience and convenience of its online site. It must also recapture the fashion approach they nailed brilliantly with Armand and Albert's "Designed for Real Life" campaign. Then you have to tell people about it with stronger marketing.