

HEALTH MARKETING: "AN APPLE A DAY" TAKES ON NEW MEANING

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New research is reinforcing the adage "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." Meanwhile, consumers report they are increasingly health conscious, purchasing foods and products to prevent health problems. By coupling these two trends, our association hopes to boost consumers' nutritional image of apples and apple products.

The U.S. Apple Association (USApple) recent~vamped our public relations program to focus on promoting the health benefits of apples and apple products.

Making the Case for Apple Health Promotion

Why health promotion? Consumers are increasingly health conscious, they shop to prevent health problems, and they already understand the importance of fruits and vegetables to better health. In addition, health promotion sells products, as evidenced by the recent experiences of Cheerios, Heinz Ketchup and Calcium Tropicana, to name a few examples. However, consumers are confused about *what* to do to improve their health - creating a tremendous opportunity for the apple industry to fill that knowledge gap.

The apple industry has a great story to tell! Apples pack a number of important nutrients. For example, apples are one of the best available sources of dietary fiber, providing 5 grams per standard serving size (defined by the Food and Drug Administration as one medium apple weighing 154 grams, halfway between a 113- and 125-count apple). That's more fiber per serving than most grains and cereals. Further, apples contain both soluble and insoluble types of fiber, providing health benefits ranging from reducing cholesterol and promoting heart health, to maintaining digestive regularity and a healthy body weight.

Apples are also a rich source of phytonutrients ("plant-based nutrients"). Cornell University researchers recently reported that antioxidants found in apples and apple juice pack more cancer-fighting capability than a 1,500-milligram megadose of vitamin C. Flavonoids, a powerful antioxidant found in greatest volume in apples and onions, have been linked by Finnish researchers to reduced risk of heart disease and lung cancer. Apples and apple juice also contain potassium, which has been found to reduce the risk of stroke. Apples and apple juice are two of the best dietary sources of boron, a trace mineral that may reduce calcium loss and promote bone health.

Apples are also notable for what they *don't* contain -no fat, no cholesterol, and no sodium. These nutrients, when overeaten, can cause serious health problems, including obesity and heart disease.

USApple's Nutrition Research and Promotion Program

To encourage consumers to eat more apples for their better health, USApple is sponsoring new apple nutrition research and promoting apple health benefits messages. The health benefits messages are coupled with "how to" information that will help consumers actually change their dietary behavior -that is, to eat more apples and apple products. Examples of apple "how to" information include variety descriptions, storage and preparation tips, and recipes and other easy usage ideas.

Last year, USApple and its partner, the Processed Apples Institute, funded four new apple nutrition research projects. Two studies involve cardiovascular health, one involves cancer prevention, and the fourth relates to neurological health. These studies seek either to identify new apple health benefits, or to uncover the specific mechanism by which apple nutrients can protect against a certain disease. In addition, a cardiovascular research project recently

completed at the University of California-Davis is expected to be published sometime this year. By sponsoring new research projects, we hope to ensure that the apple industry has *new* health benefits news to report in the months and years to come.

Our promotion effort focuses on consumer "influencer" audiences including the media, and health educators such as dietitians and nutritionists. Media coverage of nutrition and health is increasing, and consumers report that newspapers and magazines are their *most frequent source* of health information. Meanwhile, consumers report that health professionals are the *source they most trust* for health information.

In 2000, USApple successfully raised the nutritional profile of apples through a range of activities, including conducting a media symposium attended by major media representatives, publicizing breaking research news such as the Cornell study and launching a healthy new holiday tradition with apples at its core: wishing Santa a healthy Christmas, with apples. As a result, USApple generated more than 200 million media "impressions" since April 1999.

Promoting Apple Health Benefits Locally

Jump on the health bandwagon! Incorporate health promotion into your apple marketing program. Here are some tips for crafting health messages:

- C Keep it simple.** Convey research findings and health benefits in short, simple language, and include concrete health benefits. For example: "British researchers report that apples may reduce the risk of lung cancer among men who eat an apple a day."
- C Keep it positive.** Scaring consumers about potential health risks usually does not motivate them to purchase more healthy items.
- C Provide easy advice on what to do to achieve better health.** For example: "Want to lose weight? Snack on apples to satisfy your sweet tooth without adding to your waistline."
- C Differentiate apples from other "health foods."** Stress apples' particular nutrition power points, as well as their year-round availability and ease of storability. Apples are a better regular source of nutrients than foods with limited availability, or that spoil before they can be eaten.
- C Don't forget taste.** Above all, consumers want a tasty eating experience -and apples, in their multitude of varieties and flavors, provide just that.

To maximize your health promotion program, communicate consistently, repeatedly and through a range of activities and venues. Here are some suggestions:

- C At retail:** Promote apple nutrient content and health benefits on stickers and packaging, on point-of-sale signage, and in take-home brochures; tie into existing promotions, such as the "5 A Day -For Better Health" campaign; provide product samples; cross-merchandise apples with healthy tie-in products; and offer free recipes.
- C In the media:** Include apple health benefits messages and how-to information in your paid advertisements; provide breaking apple health news to your local news reporters; develop custom recipes for your newspaper's food editor.
- C In the community:** Team with your state's 5 A Day Coordinator or health organization to sponsor a local health event; partner with local employers to stuff coupons in paychecks; conduct school tours; provide local health educators with apple nutrition education materials.

"An Apple a Day" Takes on New Meaning

Now perhaps more than ever is the time to market the health benefits of apples. We have a great story to tell to a receptive consumer audience, with myriad avenues to tell our story -at retail, in the media, and in our local communities. To boost apples' nutritional profile, the apple industry must differentiate apples from other "health" foods and stress the flavor experience of

eating an apple. And above all, have fun doing it!

USApple: Reach for the Summit

The U.S. Apple Association (USApple) is the apple industry's only national trade association. USApple's mission is to provide the means for all segments of the U.S. apple industry to join in appropriate collective efforts to profitably produce and market apples and apple products.

The U.S. apple industry is facing a number of serious challenges, including stagnant domestic consumption, increasing competition from other produce items, retail consolidation and expanding global apple production. As a result, U.S. grower prices have been steadily declining since 1995.

These factors present our industry with a Mount Everest-sized challenge. Yet, even Mount Everest can be scaled with the right tools. USApple is seeking to maintain and enhance our current level of services in these areas, to ensure we remain an effective advocate for the U.S. apple industry. Our recent successes demonstrate the value we return to the industry, and make the case for increasing our funding.

Recent USApple government affairs priorities included resolving our antidumping case against unfairly-priced imports of Chinese apple juice concentrate, seeking federal programs to provide economic relief and enhanced risk management tools to growers, monitoring implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA), and seeking H-2A farm labor reform.

Imports of cheap Chinese apple juice concentrate flooded the United States between 1995 and 1998, increasing 1,200 percent. During that same time, juice apple prices fell from a national average of \$153 per ton in 1995 to \$57 a ton in 1998, costing U.S. apple growers an estimated \$135 million in lost revenue. USApple filed the industry's trade case against China in mid-1999, which slowed these imports to a trickle. As a result, U.S. juice apple prices rose to a national average of \$98 per ton, and growers received \$49 million more for their 1999 juice apple crop than their 1998 crop. In May 2000, the U.S. government levied duties of 52 percent on most of these imports.

In 2000, USApple secured \$100 million in market-loss assistance and \$38 million in crop-loss assistance for U.S. apple growers. USApple also gained \$200 million for federal surplus commodity purchases of fruits and vegetables including apples, to remove excess supplies from the market. USApple also achieved approval of a new \$99 million federal low-interest loan program for apple producers, and gained a record \$81 million in apple purchases for federal feeding programs including school lunches. USApple worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to overhaul that agency's apple crop insurance program, creating a new pilot program offering expanded quality coverage at lower premiums to most apple growers.

USApple estimates that our government affairs activities generated at least \$332 million in grower funds, returning \$1,045 for every dollar invested in USApple's government affairs program. We were successful because we aggressively promoted the industry's agenda in the halls of Congress, we recognized our allies by awarding them with the association's newly-created "Golden Apple Award," and we utilized our newly-formed Political Action Committee to support their re-election.

As previously noted, our recent public relations activities targeting media generated an estimated 200 million media impressions, generating \$6 worth of positive media coverage (ad space equivalent) for every \$1 invested in USApple's public relations program.

The U.S. apple industry faces a host of considerable challenges. The Chinese government recently petitioned the U.S. government to permit imports of fresh-market Fuji apples. In addition, ongoing FQPA implementation threatens to reduce our industry's access to effective and affordable crop protection tools. Finally, we are still striving to reform the current H-2A farm labor program to meet our industry's labor needs.

Yet even Mount Everest be scaled with the right team and the right tools. Last fall, USApple introduced a strategic plan to maintain and enhance our government affairs, nutrition

research and promotion, and crisis communications efforts on behalf of the entire industry. USApple dues were last increased in 1989, following the Alar crisis, to create USApple's government affairs program. Our industry is clearly facing another period of financial crisis. With additional funding, USApple will be able to maintain and enhance our efforts to correct the problems confronting our industry. Without additional funds, USApple's efforts in these critical areas will have to be cut back.

I encourage the industry to provide USApple with the tools we need to maintain our financial footing and to reach the much-needed next level of service to our industry. Please voice and vote your support for increased USApple funding when your group considers our association's proposal in the near future.