

Marketing For A Good Cause (Even In Bad Times) Part 2

As cause marketing becomes increasingly popular, suppliers and retailers can use it as an additional marketing tool as well as an opportunity to do something good.

BY JODEAN ROBBINS

This is the second part of a 2-part article. Part 1 appeared in our December 2008 issue and covered Produce For Kids, the American Diabetes Association and the American Heart Association.

Cause marketing, also known as cause branding or cause-related marketing, is a business strategy that helps an organization stand for a social issue to gain significant bottom-line and social impacts while making an emotional and relevant connection to stakeholders.

"It is not a company's overall corporate responsibility efforts or even its philanthropy," says Sarah Kerkian, senior insights associate for Cone, a strategy and communications agency, in Boston, MA. "Rather it's one strategy where companies can bring their commitment to social issues to life by tapping marketing resources and channels."

Retailers and suppliers can capitalize on cause marketing as consumers become more selective about where they spend their money. "It's about leveraging your dollars," explains Frank W. Muir, president/CEO, Idaho Potato Commission (IPC), Eagle, ID. "You have to spend money to make money. In hard economic times, you can't cut back your advertising or promotion because consumers need to be reminded to buy the products. They will be selective in how they spend their money, so what better way to leverage it than with other causes already sharing a positive outlook with consumers. If anything, there may be more reason to tie into cause marketing as the economy tightens."

"We believe efforts like this might actually give consumers a greater reason to purchase a product," notes Jay Alley, vice president of sales, Fresherized Foods/ Wholly Guacamole, Fort Worth, TX. "As personal

funds tighten, it is harder to make large donations, yet people still have to eat. When consumers can purchase a product knowing a portion of the proceeds will go to an organization they support, they feel good because they are still helping the cause."

Retailers should still remember the cardinal rule — consumers must want the product. "Value must be a part of the equation to get them to purchase," notes Brian Coates, senior buyer produce for in Lansing, MI-based Meijer, which operates 185 super centers. "Produce is still a luxury for many consumers, and we need to offer a value for them to spend money on food items that have a higher risk of spoilage versus frozen or canned alternatives. As long as the items we include in the [program] are priced at a value to the consumer in conjunction with the cause, then we see good success with the items. We do not feel customers will purchase just because we have signage about a cause on the item."

PINK RIBBONS

One of the most familiar cause-marketing campaigns involves the pink ribbons that signify breast cancer. The Pink Ribbon Produce program, managed by Rocklin, CA-based Consumer Effects International, a premier consumer marketing agency, was developed in an attempt to provide a comprehensive produce fund-raising campaign for breast cancer at the retail level with the proceeds principally going to the Susan G. Komen Foundation in Dallas, TX. The campaign works directly with non-competing retailers who then identify potential vendors they would like to work with in the campaign. "We approach the vendors to see if and how they want to participate," says Stacey Larson, president of Consumer Effects. "We produce the POS for the retailer, which includes a freestanding sign and a pocket for a takeaway brochure with educational information that can be customized for each retailer."

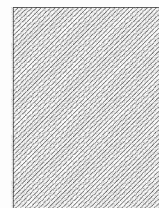
Shoppers were able to support the Pink Ribbon Produce promotion by purchasing participating



Photo courtesy of Dulcinea Farms



Photo courtesy of Fresherized Foods/Wholly Guacamole



partner products in Meijers, based in Lansing, MI; Harris Teeter, based in Matthews, NC; Price Chopper, based in Schenectady, NY, and other retailers' produce departments. In the Meijers program, over 50,000 brochures, each featuring partner logos, were distributed at store level and POS was professionally merchandised at 181 Meijer locations. Participating suppliers showed a combined lift of 157 percent at Meijer when compared to the prior year.

"The program brings awareness to healthful benefits of eating fresh produce in an effort to help prevent cancer and also helps us tie into corporate programs for Breast Cancer Awareness Month [October]," says Brian Coates, senior buyer produce for Meijer, which has 185 super centers. "This was our second year with the Pink Ribbon Produce program and we have done a couple of other programs with them resulting in good success with sales."

This year Pink Ribbon raised upwards of \$60,000 to \$80,000 in total. "The money is donated to the local chapter of the Komen Foundation designated by each retailer," reports Larson.

Dulcinea Farms, Ladera Ranch, CA, participated with Consumer Effects in the Pink Ribbon Produce program. "This program provides positive exposure helping to drive sales and providing an opportunity to make a donation toward the fight against breast cancer," says Monique McLaws, marketing manager. "Over \$18,000 were raised during the program with Meijers Supermarkets through the participating produce brands."

Other vendors and retailers are contributing to the cause of breast cancer through their own efforts. C.H. Robinson Worldwide, Inc., Eden Prairie, MN, created its own campaign, *A Sweet Way to Stay Healthy - Pink Ribbon Watermelon*, which focuses on consumer education as well as donation. "We have high graphic bins and PLU stickers with the pink ribbon, both of which attract the consumer," says Bud Floyd, vice president. "We also provide brochures and a brochure holder. The brochure has information on self-examination as well as recipes. We created a consumer site with more information and when the retailer agrees to handle this product, we make a donation to the cause of their choice."

Kings Super Markets, a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, ran an ad linked to produce suppliers for breast cancer awareness during October. "Our produce, floral and grocery did ads with products contributing to breast-cancer awareness," reports Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral.

During this past Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Fresh Express, Inc., Salinas, CA, cre-

ated bags featuring 'Pink Sunray' artwork on four Fresh Express Salad Blends as well as themed shelf-talkers, stanchion signs and hi-lo channel enhancers. Its Web site showcased the different ways consumers could support the cause including offering pink-inspired prizes and donation support through the company's new Fresh Funds program. Additional fund-raising for the Komen Foundation was achieved through a 6-month point donation program, in which consumers collected Fresh Fund logos on bags of Chiquita and Fresh Express healthy snacks and salads; the points were redeemable for merchandise, prizes or charitable contributions. Total contributions from Chiquita Brands North America, Cincinnati, OH, and Fresh Express to both Komen and Dallas, TX-based American Heart Association organizations was expected to surpass the \$1,000,000 mark with October/November returns.

The Cameo Apple Marketing Association (CAMA), Wenatchee, WA, offers a POS-based promotion in which 10 percent of Cameo apple retail sales are donated to the Komen Cancer Foundation. "The promotion aids in breast-cancer awareness and taps into our key demographic, women 35 to 54 years of age," says Kevin Precht, CAMA marketing program director. "It will run through the end of April. American Cameo apples are marketed with POS materials designed with the Komen Foundation and explaining the

program to consumers."

This year, Freshherized Foods/Wholly Guacamole, created a pink box with a portion of proceeds from sales going to the Komen Foundation. Alley explains, "This cause was chosen because it is an association in our own backyard, for the potential reach it has personally with employees within our own organization and customers, and also the good association given the super-food potential of the avocado including proven cancer-fighting power.

"The feedback we got from consumers via our Web site was tremendous," he reports. "Several customers commented they picked up extra boxes due to the pink box. In markets where traditional box and the pink boxes were both on the shelf, the pink boxes sold before the regular packaging. The 30 percent increase in October sales from a year ago speaks for itself."

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE

Other programs look for a fit between their products and a socially responsible cause. "We look for a connection making sense to potatoes," reports IPC's Muir. "Our Recipes for Relief program is a good example. The United Nations announced 2008 would be the international year of the potato and it is encouraging countries to grow more potatoes since they provide a bigger nutritional bang than rice, wheat or many

The Programs

The Fisher House Foundation, Rockville, MD: The Fisher House program is a not-for-profit organization established to meet the needs of wounded and fallen veterans and their families beyond that is normally provided by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Special Olympics, Washington, DC: Special Olympics is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition. Special Olympics offers children and adults with intellectual disabilities year-round training and competition in 30 Olympic-type summer and winter sports.

Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, Dallas, TX: The Foundation is the global leader of the breast-cancer movement, having invested more than \$1 billion since inception in 1982. As the world's largest grassroots network of breast-cancer

survivors and activists, it is working to save lives, empower people, ensure quality care for all and energize science to find the cures. Thanks to events such as the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure and generous contributions from partners, sponsors and fellow supporters, it has become the largest source of nonprofit funds dedicated to the fight against breast cancer in the world.

UNICEF, New York, NY: For more than 60 years, UNICEF has been the world's leading international children's organization, working in over 150 countries to address the ongoing issues that affect why kids are dying. UNICEF provides lifesaving nutrition, clean water, education, protection and emergency response, saving more young lives than any other humanitarian organization in the world. While millions of children die every year of preventable causes such as dehydration, upper respiratory infections and measles, UNICEF, with the support of partnering organizations and donors alike, has the global experience, resources and reach to give children the best hope of survival. **pb**

other products. We proactively contacted UNICEF to ask if they wanted to participate in a program. We've now partnered with 11 well-known chefs across the country who have donated their favorite Idaho potato recipe. Every time a consumer clicks on the recipe, we donate 10¢ per click up to \$50,000 to UNICEF."

Another cause this year for potatoes is the International Special Olympics, which is coming to Boise, ID, in February. "We have Special Olympics permission to create a cobalt blue jacket for 7,000 Spuddy Buddies,



Photo courtesy of Idaho Potato Commission

The back of IPC's Special Olympics Spuddy Buddy

our mascot, which we will give to every one of the athletes who participate," explains Muir. "We hope to bring Denise Austin [an IPC spokesperson] to the event and do a media tour during it as well."

Seald Sweet International in Vero Beach, FL, contributes proceeds from fresh citrus commodities in special promotional packaging to help wounded and fallen service members and their families through the



Photo courtesy of Seald Sweet International

Special packaging promotes help for wounded and fallen veterans and their families

Fisher House Foundation, which provides help for wounded veterans and their families. The program commences in conjunction with Seald Sweet's summer citrus program with plans to run throughout the year.

Identification with the cause may help sway some purchases. "We have received correspondence from consumers who have purchased our citrus based on the packaging," says Kim Flores, from Seald Sweet. "Some, in fact, had not even tried our products until they saw the information on the packaging and bought it for the cause — then found out they like it.

In 2006, the DeMichaelis family started Olivia's Organics, Chelsea, MA, as a way to fund the work of the Olivia's Organics Charitable Foundation. "We felt passionately the Olivia's Organics Charitable Foundation should invest in small non-profit organizations in the communities where our products are sold," explains Hadley Douglas, marketing manager for Olivia's Organics and managing director of Olivia's Organics Charitable Foundation.

"In focus groups, it became clear our target consumers — organic shoppers who also support sustainable agriculture and local businesses — responded well to our pledge to support smaller non-profit organizations. Because Olivia's Organics is a kid-friendly brand, it also made sense for us to invest in children, and they have been our main focus for the past three years. Consumers have definitely shown a positive reaction to our foundation," states Douglas. "Time and again, it is cited as a reason shoppers pick Olivia's Organics over another brand."

Consumer Effects also has worked with a pre-school educational cause-marketing program in addition to its involvement in Pink Ribbon Produce. "We worked with partners to provide teaching materials and information for families of pre-school children to help them learn how to eat more fruits and vegetables," explains Larson. "Our first campaign was called the *Wacky Days of Summer* and we partnered with the Cartoon Network, after we changed it to *Good to Grow* and partnered with the Discovery Channel. We did this for five years with Albertsons [Boise,

Suggestions For Success

Frank W. Muir, Idaho Potato Commission: For very little expense, retailers can tie into and support an ongoing program like Special Olympics, for example. They can become a sponsor, put up some cobalt blue signage near the potatoes, and cross-merchandise potatoes with other Olympian products.

Jay Alley, Fresherized Foods/Wholly Guacamole: Run a display contest — it can get very creative with increased signage and secondary displays really selling the product.

Stacey Larson, Consumer Effects: Don't do a cause-marketing program just because everyone is doing it. It will show up if you're not truly committed.

Brian Coates, Meijer: Build displays that create excitement and help with impulse sales on items involved with the promotion.

ID]/Supervalu [Eden Prairie, MN] and various produce industry vendors as sponsors."

TIGHT ECONOMY

"Cause marketing could persuade consumers to feel more confident purchasing products," notes Seald Sweet's Flores. "Consumers will be more aware of the tight economy and these products may make a consumer feel more confident their choices are good choices. As the economy tightens, consumers tend to put a lot more thought into their selection."

"We fully expect our customers will stay with us through this economic downturn," Olivia's Douglas continues. "In fact, the Olivia's Organics Charitable Foundation has never been more relevant than in this time of neighbor helping neighbor. Buying our salad is good for our customers, good for their families and good for their communities."

However, defining real success may still be difficult for retailers and suppliers. "Quantification of results is still difficult because this is so new to produce," says Larson of Pink Ribbon. "It's hard to know if raising \$30,000 is good or not because some retailers have never raised anything before. The main thing is to define attainable goals and expectations before you go in and then make sure you know how they measured up. Define what you can do and not what everyone else is going or even grocery versus produce."

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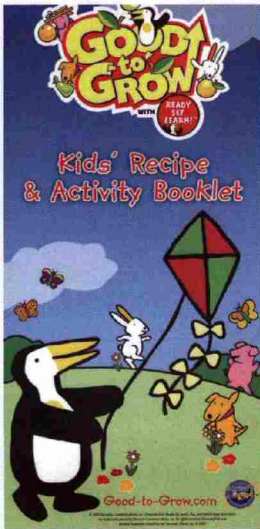


Photo courtesy of Consumer Effects International

Good to Grow teaches pre-schoolers to eat more fruit and vegetables