



Marketing For a Cause

Affiliating your product with a charity or social cause adds value to your brand

Food producers are increasingly on the lookout for ways to add value to their brand. After all, who doesn't like to walk out of a store thinking they got more for their money? Think of how you feel when you find that your favourite brand of cookies, for example, is being offered at a higher volume but for the same price. In the great scheme of things, this may not be monumental, but deep down I bet you feel like a winner.

Adding value can also mean differentiating the product by making it more convenient for consumers. For example, manufacturers may add resealable packaging, introduce portion-controlled sizes or remove all the trans fat, making the product more usable and desirable to consumers. These changes add a certain cachet to the brand.

Another way of adding value to a product is by establishing some sort of emotional connection between the consumer and the brand, making the purchasing decision a deeper, more meaningful experience. The feeling, and hopefully the loyalty, it may inspire is priceless. One effective way to do this is through cause marketing, a trend that is becoming more and more popular with food and beverage producers.

This April, Mississauga, Ont.-based Second Cup Ltd. introduced Foster Parents Plan pure spring water. The bottled water is sold through each of the company's stores, with proceeds going to help children in developing countries have better access to clean drinking water. "It's a way for us to give back to the countries that are growing our coffee and help them improve their lives," says Karen Gold, director of Marketing for the Second Cup. The company has had a relationship with Foster Parents Plan for more than 10 years, starting in 1995 when it set up each of its franchises with a foster child. "We source all of our coffee from the developing world," says Gold, "and you want to feel like you're making a contribution aside from buying coffee."

Gold says the key to success in partnering with an organization is finding a group that is a natural fit with the manufacturer's business. That's one reason why Kitchener, Ont.-

based Dare Foods Ltd. chose to partner with the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation (CBCF). Dare's Simple Pleasures line of cookies appeals to women, many of whom are keenly aware of breast cancer and its effects, according to Louise Falcioni, brand manager – Cookies. For the past three years, Dare has carried the CBCF logo on all of its Simple Pleasures' skus. This summer, in tandem with strawberry season, the company is launching a bright pink limited-edition Simple Pleasures cookie stamped with the CBCF logo.



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Women are already buying the cookie, says Falcioni, but the affiliation with the CBCF is an "added benefit." There's added recognition for Dare, and a "feel-good" element for consumers because when they see the tie-in with a charity they know "that makes [the cookies] even better."

Jane Knox can add to that list of benefits. Knox, who is associate director of National Corporate Programs for the

CBCF in Toronto, says the organization's focus is to raise funds for research and educational awareness programs. For food manufacturers, who tend to approach the CBCF with their ideas, "their interest, as we understand it, is about distinguishing themselves in the marketplace," says Knox.

But the benefits go even further. Knox says that a relationship with an organization such as the CBCF succeeds in engaging both consumers and employees. Many employers meet with employees to explain the program, and often the CBCF will go in and meet with employees at the end of a program to "applaud their success." Partnering, she says, also raises the brand's exposure.

Finally, we can't underestimate consumers, many of whom want to contribute to a worthy cause, and who enjoy knowing their purchase helps in some small way. As Gold says: "We feel really good about what we're doing – the profit just doesn't go to our corporation, it's going to a worthwhile cause to improve people's lives...it's a win-win situation for both because consumers feel good, too."

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