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Best Use of Print: Maxus

By Lucia Moses

For the better part of 15 years, Welch's behaved like a typical packaged goods company when it came to marketing, setting itself apart with network TV ads featuring tots espousing the great taste of its 100 percent grape juice.

But with sales down, growing competition from other beverages and mounting concern about the high sugar content of fruit juices, the Welch's message was losing its punch with young moms. "We had a traditional CPG approach: heavy on TV, talk to as many people as possible, say as many great things as possible," says Chris Heye, VP of marketing at Welch's.

But, he adds, "As the consumer changed, the message wasn't working as well." Upon being tapped as marketing chief in April 2007, Heye set out to overhaul the brand's message and to rethink how it was delivered. What followed was a campaign that emphasized Welch's "2x antioxidant power of OJ" attributes via a print execution that put the juice literally on the tips of millions of consumers' tongues. The campaign earned agency Maxus Global this year's Media Plan of the Year in the Print category.

"Chris wanted us to really, really push the envelope," says Lauren Scorsone, who shepherded the plan at Maxus, a boutique agency under GroupM. An offshoot of MindShare, Maxus' growing client list includes Miramax, Cellular South and Rubbermaid.

Others involved in the campaign at Maxus include Jessica Gordon, planning supervisor; Danielle Brown, planner; Lukeisha Paul, associate print director; and Justin Williams, print planner.

Scorsone, Maxus senior partner and strategic planning director, says that to rid Welch's of its "white picket fence" image, she knew she had to go to "places that traditional brand was not feeling that comfortable," conscious of the fact that "we're not going to break through with just a page."

The first objective was to create an ad that would get people talking. After looking at other interactive ads, including those that included fridge magnets or emitted noises, creative partner JWT found First Flavor, which developed a lickable ad using "Peel 'n Taste" taste strips that dissolve on the tongue like a breath strip. First Flavor already had snagged buzz with a mojito-flavored ad to promote CBS' series *Cane* that ran in Wenner Media's *Rolling Stone* last September.

For Welch's, the strips were used to invite people to sample the bold taste of the famed juice. This, while the copy touted Welch's antioxidant properties. "We know they're going to open the ad," Heye explains. "Whether they peel and look at it, we know they're going to look at our health message."

There were plenty of considerations at the outset. Would the ad hold up in the production process? Would people feel comfortable licking an ad? And with a total budget of less than \$10 million, would the ad be worth the cost? With those concerns in mind, Scorsone and her team chose the granddaddy of celebrity weeklies, Time Inc.'s *People*, which had experience handling creative units using materials ranging from sound chips to bubble wrap that require extra care in the production and distribution process. People had the added benefit of reaching massive numbers of young moms, the Welch's target.

"Print was a very effective way to reach Gen X; *People* was a good way to do that. They have strong, strong numbers," says Heye. Conventional print ads also ran in smaller-circulation books like Conde Nast's *Cookie* and *Domino*, as well as traditional parenting magazines. The *People* ad appeared in the Feb. 18, 2008, issue that graced newsstands over President's Day weekend, timing that was fortuitous. That holiday-weekend issue featured Britney Spears on the cover, ensuring a large audience.

The ad was more successful than Welch's could have imagined, sparking a flurry of news coverage from *The Wall Street Journal* to *Good Morning America* to The Huffington Post.

"The *Journal* picked it up, and it just became a frenzy from there," Scorsone says. An estimated 16 million consumers said they'd heard the Welch's name the month after the ad ran, which Heye says was "extremely high for us." Better yet, Welch's enjoyed a 10 percent sales bump during the run of the campaign.

People publisher Paul Caine says that as advertisers look to break out of the clutter, executions like Welch's that break the mold will become more common. "There's definitely a new direction in creative units," he says. "We're hearing from marketers, it's challenging to get a large enough audience. Where do you turn to differentiate?"

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