

# Obesity & Marketing: How We Can Help America Tighten the Belt & Get Results

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The obesity epidemic presents an opportunity for all marketers to learn how to position their brands as a motivator of change. A growing problem that affects the entire nation, obesity can be addressed not only by the food and beverage industry, but by all marketers, from apparel to beauty to technology. Here are some lessons to be learned, and some tips for how marketing pros can play a role in helping Americans face their weight reality, tighten their belts and get results:

- Keep abreast of lifestyle trends/issues (like obesity) that your brand can capitalize on in its marketing efforts to make a difference in consumers' lives.
- Be prepared to proactively respond to general changes in consumer behavior, wants and needs, to continue to build your brand and create a loyal consumer base.
- Take appropriate action to help make a difference.
- Identify influencers that resonate with your brand and its consumers, and who have the expertise to convey your key messages in a meaningful and impactful way to help motivate change.
- There are even greater opportunities for those of us in food and beverage marketing. Specifically, we can help fight America's obesity epidemic by helping consumers break barriers to better choices.

According to a recent survey by Pollock Communications, consumers are still struggling with making healthy food choices, making it harder to make significant improvements in their eating and lifestyle behaviors. Although national surveys show that 67% of Americans are overweight or obese, this latest survey reveals that *only* 52% of Americans believe they are overweight or obese. Experts suggest that Americans' lack of knowledge about body weight and diet may be one of many contributing factors in the nation's growing obesity epidemic. Therefore, consumers benefit from health information from food companies and in the supermarkets. In fact, according to the Pollock survey, three-fourths of Americans (76%) say in-store nutrition information helps them make better choices

This is an area of opportunity for food and beverage marketers to build relationships with key decision makers in the supermarket to help brands creatively and successfully engage and influence their target consumer.

Considering the ongoing diet challenges of Americans, Pollock encourages marketers to look beyond the traditional advertising and media efforts to impact consumers at point-of-sale in the supermarket. A comprehensive food/beverage marketing campaign should include programs developed specifically for decision makers who work directly with consumers at the retail level to combat diet confusion. It would be wise for food and beverage marketers to tap

the expertise of these decision makers who connect with consumers through meaningful platforms, right where they shop. A successful program should help break barriers to good nutrition, while building brand loyalty.

Some suggestions for successful and impactful health partnerships include:

- 1. Build Brand Loyalty by Providing Tools & Resources.** Marketers can reach consumers by providing supermarkets with tools and resources they can use in their shopper communication channels. Consumers want and need information to help them make healthier food choices. Provide supermarket decision makers with relevant and helpful brand information that reaches shoppers in ways that go beyond the traditional point-of-sale promotions. Supermarkets are already producing point-of-sale materials on a regular basis, but they are eager for new content that incorporates brands within the context of a healthy lifestyle.
- 2. Offer Shoppers Help.** Work together with key decision makers in the supermarket to create shopper outreach programs that benefit the consumer, as well as the brand. By educating consumers on healthy habits, it helps to build consumer loyalty – a win-win for all. For truly effective communication, ensure that the outreach program timing and effort makes sense for your brand and engages consumers. Marketers can work with the retailer to create programs that suit their shoppers, as well as provide expertise and insights for healthful brand positioning. For example, many retailers are working with outside companies to offer nutritional labeling programs. This type of retail program can help educate consumers about nutrition labels and encourage them to make healthier food choices.  
  
But what can you do if your brand is excluded from the “good for you” label, color or number? Work with experts such as registered dietitians to determine how your brand can fit into a healthy lifestyle. Create a brand experience that goes beyond traditional benefits and reaches shoppers through other communication channels in the supermarket. By connecting with and empowering consumers, you can help drive change and consumer loyalty.
- 3. Be Innovative at Point-of-Sale.** Explore new and exciting strategies to reach shoppers at the point-of-sale in a way that helps improve their shopping experience and encourages healthier food choices for their family. Take the opportunity to creatively feature nutrition information and unique brand health strategies, in order to motivate consumers and drive sales.

The survey of 1,000 Americans by Russell Research was commissioned by Pollock Communications, a full service NYC public relations agency specializing in food and nutrition communications, as part of its ongoing work to understand and translate key consumer health and nutrition trends for its clients. ♦

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*Louise Pollock has more than 25 years of experience in food and wellness public relations. Through the decades, she has helped clients build relationships and impactful public relations programs with key influencers, scientific experts, policy makers, registered dietitians, healthcare professionals and researchers. She is a veteran in the food, health and agricultural arena, with a focus on developing strategies and programs to enhance public and professional acceptance of food and agricultural technologies, commodities and ingredients. As president of Pollock Communications, Louise helps clients develop targeted marketing campaigns that cultivate positive perceptions among decision makers.*